

PRAYING THE NATION: At The Crossroads Of Religion, Nationalism & Politics

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Abstract

The Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is well known for his integration of religion and nationalism into the domain of EU politics. While this political confluence of politics, religion and nationalism might be surprising, it is by now a real phenomenon in the region. This thesis aims to investigate the complex histo-political context of Central Eastern European politics that allows for this merge, as well as to evaluate what this fusion achieves.

To explain the underlying tendencies of the region while avoiding the multi-vocal disturbances of (inter-)national politics, this thesis chose to look at the case of Hazatérés Temploma (Church of Homecoming), a small parish in the centre of Budapest that takes this dynamic one step further by merging these concepts in the domain of faith, thereby creating sacrosanct nationalism. The research consists of participant observation during 17 different events organised by the parish, an analysis of 10 YouTube videos (mainly sermons) uploaded by Hazatérés Temploma, as well as of the content of their web- and Facebook-pages.

The aim of this thesis is to show that the parish and Orbán try to challenge the concept of Europe and the nation through the merge of religion, nationalism and politics as both feel a kind of othering in their respective fields. This is not only due to the fluidity and malleability of these concepts and their different historical development in Central-Eastern Europe, but more importantly due to present systemic obstacles and prejudices created by the West.

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Introduction

The doctrine that “democracy can only be liberal” – that golden calf, that monumental fetish – has been toppled. ... In their attacks liberals take aim at the very things that are most important to us, the cornerstones of the political order we wish for, the values at the core of conservative-Christian democratic heritage – such as the nation, the family and religious tradition. (Orbán 2020 (2)).

Due to commentaries like this, the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán received a lot of criticism at the heart of the European Union (EU) and many started wondering how it would be possible to sanction his behaviour within the EU framework (Bozóki, Hegedűs 2018). Even though, his open denunciation of and his provoking actions against liberal democratic norms on the European scale have shocked many, his line has been followed by most post-Soviet countries within the EU. This however, was according to Enyedi (2020, 368) less due to an actual interest of those countries in European politics than due to a lack of interest that allowed Orbán “to make the Eastern bloc, and especially the Visegrad alliance, to appear as ideologically more cohesive than it was in reality.” While the “structural weakness of civil society” (Enyedi 2020, 363) plays an important role, a “combination of victimhood, self-confidence, and the resentment against the West” (Enyedi 2020, 365) regarding both history and economy is also at play. The rhetoric goes that the “West has abandoned those traditional values that made it so successful in the past” (Enyedi 2020, 365) and that therefore a “resurrection of Christian political identity” (Enyedi 2020, 365) along with an emphasis on the nation would be crucial. However, this “Christianity typically appears in the political discourse divorced from actual beliefs or religious practice” and is more focused on those European values the West allegedly abandoned (Enyedi 2020, 372).

Yet, whether or not the Hungarian elites actually believe in the ideological postulates that drive their political crusade, the emerging confluence of politics and religion they publicly promote has become a real phenomenon in the region. The Polish and Hungarian governments made anti-LGBTQ campaigns, labelling them as a communist ideology working against the European Christian values, Poland turned abortion into something illegal, the two parties collaborate with the churches in their country as those give their argument more legitimacy and used Europe's Christian identity as means for their anti-immigratory stance (e.g. Walker 2019), just to name a few examples (Bozóki, Ádám 2016; Pronczuk 2021; Easton 2021; Enyedi 2020; Iwaniuk 2020; Wigura, Kuisz 2020; Zubrzycki 2006; i.a.). With the decline of the left in the region, these empowered centre- and far-right parties and ideologies prosper and try to challenge the rules of the EU game – regarding values and definitions of Europe and democracy – from within (Enyedi 2020). Thereby the integration of Christian faith into the narrative of the real Europe and real European values within a framework of “paternalist populism” (Enyedi 2016) is an ideological phenomenon important to understand because it reflects the utilization of the complexity of a historically developed context.

This thesis is an attempt to understand the complex histo-political context¹ of Central Eastern European politics and especially their relation to religion by looking at the case of Hazatérés Temploma, the Church of Homecoming, a small parish located on *Szabadság tér* (Liberty Square) in the centre of Budapest that takes this dynamic one step further by merging these concepts in the domain of faith. In the church context we could try to examine the nature

¹ By this I mean the historical development of the concepts religion, nationalism and politics, their interconnectedness, as well as the current political challenges of Central Eastern European countries face.

of this merge as if through a looking glass, for it remains relatively low-profile and is not contaminated by multi-vocal signalling (i.e. speaking to several audiences simultaneously).

The parish of *Hazatérés Temploma* (Church of Homecoming) is blending nationalist elements with religion, performing them in the religious space of a church, while remaining an essentially religious organization. At the same time their services have a very strong international political agenda. This started already with the creation and name giving of this parish, as it was created in the event of the 2nd Vienna Award,² to celebrate the homecoming of some of their lost territories. Besides, this parish was created and mainly consists of refugees from the lost territories, wherefore it could be seen as the physical incarnation of the lost home. They pursue this political goal until today, trying to reach a broader public through both, the organisation of different events and the creation of new symbolism in the public sphere of the state. Henceforth, this parish is a good ground of analysis to contribute to the literature on nationalism and religion adding another aspect to the complication of the different ways this relationship can take place.³

By focusing on the relationship within the religious framework of the parish, thus changing the main space of analysis, from the secular public space to the religious space of a parish I will be able to ask the question what it is in the specific Hungarian current and historical

² Hungary lost two thirds of its territory after WW1 and was granted back some of their territories in the Vienna Awards by Nazi Germany.

³ This is not identical to what Orbán is doing, nor fully representative of how the population at large may think about the politics-religion nexus, yet the activities of that parish help create the conditions of possibility and resonance for Orbán's rhetoric

context⁴ that enables the fusion of nationalism, religion and politics within the space of faith.⁵ More importantly, I will be able to show the fluidity that can occur between these two concepts with a case in which the very space of analysis does not allow for a simple argument that religion is used for national purposes only, but in which we really see the creation of a *sacrosanct nationalism* – that is a histo-political rectification of faith proper on national lines, in which the nation as well as national symbolism reach another level of holiness within the domain of faith and almost become one of faith’s main pillars thereby creating an urge for political action framed as Christian duty.⁶ This fluidity goes beyond “tak[ing] seriously the Christianity within Christian nationalist ideology in Hungary” for which Hanebrink (2006, 3) urges in his analysis of Christian nationalism in Hungary from the 1867 Compromise until WW2. Instead, “nationalist aesthetics – its symbols, stories and rituals... through... [which] people become emotionally invested in the nation” (Zubrzycki 2006, 28) are turned into sacred secular symbols through a contextual shift to the domain of faith, thereby obtaining another level of sacredness.⁷ This is possible as both “the religious and the ‘secular,’ and thus nationalism as well, are not essentially fixed categories. There is nothing *essentially* religious, nor any universal essence

⁴ Anderson (1991), Asad (2003), Greenfeld (1996), Hobsbawm (1983), Verdery (1993), Zubrzycki (2006), among others, stressed that the character of nationalism/emerging traditions/secularism in a specific country or region is always shaped by the historical circumstances, as well as the current political need in the area of meaning-making.

⁵ Not to be confused with phenomena like Islamism or Zionism (see Chapter 1.2)

⁶ Greenfeld (1996, 181-182) states that “[r]eligious nationalisms do not constitute a separate type of nationalism”, as nationalism is created by secular constraints, by things “religion dismisses as vanity”.

⁷ I use the term sacredness here because my case especially adds to Zubrzycki (2006, 219) argument that “religious symbols ... [can be] first secularized and then *resacralized as national*” (Zubrzycki has borrowed the term from Greenfeld 1996), being aware that the term ‘sacralization’ talking about nationalism can lead to conceptual misunderstandings. This is the case because nationalism, arising from ‘the secular myth,’ and religion are very distinct phenomena – the former believing in redemption in this world, the latter waiting for it in heaven thank to the suffering of the Christ – a fact that might be blurred by the use of this specific term (Asad 2003, 62). (I will further elaborate on those in the following section). Nevertheless, I believe that in my case the use of this term makes sense as I am talking about the religious space.

that defines ‘sacred language’ or ‘sacred experience.’” (Asad 2003, 25). This means that it would be a fallacy to ask if what they are doing is religious or secular, as these concepts are defined by the practitioners. Instead, one should ask for a specific reason for the redefinition of what is religious in the specific context. This will usually be an answer to current political and social problems, as the emergence of any specific kind of new conceptualization of the world – be it nationalism, tradition, secularism (only to mention concepts relevant to this thesis) – always happens as an answer to present circumstances (Anderson 1991; Asad 2003; Greenfeld 1996; Hobsbawm 1983; Spohn 2003; Verdery 1999, 1993; Zubrzycki 2006; i.a.). From the above follows, that the important question to ask will be: *What is it about the specific Hungarian context that makes the integration of nationalism into the practice of Calvinist faith possible, more importantly what does this fusion achieve?* To do so one will have to consider the following sub-questions as well. *Which ‘nationalist aesthetics’ (Zubrzycki 2006) and ‘performances’ (Butler 1988; Butler 1990) have been included and how do they contribute to the formation of the sacrosanct nationalism and why? When and why did this inclusion happen at a specific point in time? How does the fusion look like and what does it tell us about the kinds of relationship nationalism and religion can take?*

Methodology and Limitations

In order to understand the way nationalism, politics and faith are intertwined in the case of Hazatérés Temploma and to understand how the church-goers are constructing their Post-Trianon Hungarian situation in terms of faith, I conducted a 7 month participant observation⁸

⁸ From September 2019 until March 15th 2020, to the service in memory of Trianon (04.06.2020) and the service in remembrance of the second Vienna Award (30.08.2020). In total I took part in their service 17 times.

which mainly consisted of me actively taking part in their church service and in a few of their other events. Out of respect of their service, I did not take notes during the service or their events but made sure to write down everything I remember as soon as it was over. Respecting their practice helped me build trust, which eased the further development of my research. Thus, it made keeping the preciseness of their wording difficult, as I needed to rely on memory only. In order to move around this limitation, I used video content the parish uploaded to YouTube, namely their pastor's sermons uploaded Corona times and the service in remembrance of Trianon and the content the parish uploaded to their web and Facebook page.

My access to their community was rendered easier because I spent a voluntary year in 2013/14 with the Hungarian minority in Ukraine and got fluent in Hungarian language there. There, I first encountered the post-Trianon Hungarian situation and the feelings of Hungarians living outside the Hungarian borders. On a rock festival consisting of Hungarian bands only, the famous Hungarian band Tankcsapda, which could be deemed far-right due to their nationalistic and revisionist lyrics, used the occasion for praying for Great Hungary on Ukrainian soil. As a half-German this shocked me deeply as I drew the comparison of Germans doing something similar regarding e.g. Polish territory which I deemed unimaginable back then⁹. Following up on that issue, I started to understand the strong feelings many people in that region still have regarding the border shift.

As the parish is a part of the Hungarian far-right, and far-right ideas are something that I cannot sympathize with, I had to make sure that my negative feelings towards the far-right

⁹ Hazatérés Temploma was visited by elderly male members of a German church who had these revisionist ideas for Germany, and wanted to get back the Wilhemian Germany, deeming that the country is reduced to a short period in which it was taken over by a dictator. (Hazatérés Temploma 15.09.2019).

ideology would not negatively influence my research. To do so, I used Agnieszka Pasieka's (2017; 2019) approach to anthropological research of the far-right to try not to other the people I work with because of their far-right ideology. This is very important already when trying to get access to far-right circles as

“[t]he notion of ‘them’ [in approaching people of the far-right] ... conveys an absolute, repulsive otherness which no one would purportedly wish to engage with ... [and] implies that any anthropologist would find far-right interlocutors so repugnant and condemnable that this would simply preclude any fieldwork encounter.” (Pasieka 2019, 3).

In other words, it is decisive not to let the dislike of their beliefs rule the research as this would destroy the very aim of understanding their beliefs. Instead it is important to understand the fieldwork as researching “people holding ‘unlikable beliefs’ ... to present the individuals studies in their full complexity” (Pasieka 2019, 3). This can be done by including other aspects of their life and accepting that one might have positive feelings to some of the people researched despite their ideology even going as far as liking them (Pasieka 2019, 4), as it was the case with some of the parish members. Therefore, as Pasieka (2019,6) stresses, it is vital to find the right balance between ‘*othering*’ and ‘(over)*familiarizing*’, thus to make sure that while one does not want to diminish them to their beliefs one should also take care of not making those vanish as part of their personality. At the same time, it is crucial to “take far-right claims seriously and literally” (Pasieka 2017) by putting them into their transnational, as well as their historical context in which the latter explains the former. To achieve this, this thesis starts with a theoretical review of the relevant concepts to create a solid theoretical background. It then moves on with an historical development and contemporary context of sacrosanct nationalism and finally ends with an empirical chapter.

1. New Theoretical Perspectives on the interplay between Nationalism and Religion

This chapter offers new theoretical perspectives on the interplay between nationalism and religion and will gradually lead to a better understanding of sacrosanct nationalism as well as build the theoretical framework for the chapters to come. To achieve this, it will start by showing why new theoretical perspectives on this topic are needed, stressing religion's constant "involve[ment] in the world of power" (Asad 2003, 200) and using the example of Hazatérés Temploma to exemplify how the world of power can be integrated into the domain of faith, giving the opportunity to elaborate on arguments on international politics that might be problematic within another context. Thereby it will become evident that looking at the interlinkages of nationalism and religion in terms of shifts (active changes of ideas, practices¹⁰ and space) through their contestation from within bears a more fruitful approach for understanding these kinds of phenomena. In the end the alleged specificity of Eastern Europe will be problematized to contextualize sacrosanct nationalism in the specific case of Hazatérés Temploma.

For a long time, nationalism has been conceived as an ideology replacing religion by becoming one itself (evolutionist-functionalist theory); or nationalism and religion have been seen in terms of a relationship of historical continuity in which religious material is used as building material for nationalism (perennialist view) (Zubrzycki 2006, 20-21, Asad 2003, 25).¹¹

The re-emergence of religion in contemporary secular states and its high significance regarding

¹⁰ Asad (2003, 194) urges to look at this process in order to understand any kind of phenomenon.

¹¹ Asad (2003) is talking about the secular and not nationalism here, thus he is talking about what he identifies as the precondition of nationalism (Asad 2003, 193).

the idea of the nation, has shown those theories – especially the first with its notion of progress – to be wrong (Zubrzycki 2006, 20-21; Asad 2003, 1; Spohn 2003, 265; Greenfeld 1996, 176). Beyond that, Asad (2003) urges to consider the importance of religion as constitutive part of power in “modern nation-states”, stating that

what many would anachronistically call ‘religion’¹² was *always* involved in the world of power. If the secularization thesis no longer carries the conviction it once did, this is because the categories of ‘politics’ and ‘religion’ turn out to implicate each other more profoundly than we thought, a discovery that has accompanied our growing understanding of the powers of the modern nation-state. The concept of the secular cannot do without the idea of religion. (Asad 2003, 200).

In other words, more attention needs to be given to the interconnectedness of religion and politics in order to understand the secular, and thus nationalism as well, because religion is a constitutive part of power in modern nation-states all around the world and can be found everywhere¹³ – even and especially in the world of power.

Thus, something similar can happen vice versa, meaning that, the secular, as well as the secular world of power, can also come to play an important role in faith proper. By this I do not mean that church officials merely play a politically important role in the secular space, neither am I talking about church politics. What I mean instead is that aspects of the secular can be integrated in faith proper, becoming part of the faith by being integrated at the core of its practice.¹⁴ In the case of Hazatérés Temploma this is most drastically exemplified in their use

¹² By “anachronistically call religion”, Asad (2003, 222) refers to the things that are considered religious in secular states and their secular constitutions.

¹³ Asad (2003, 31-32) sees no differentiation between ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ prior to modernity and stresses that the “‘logic of atheism’ is itself the product of a modern binary” (Ibid., 55).

¹⁴ Note that I am solely referring to modernity here, I am not talking about any phenomenon that might have occurred before, because the distinction of “sacred” and “profane” did not exist prior to modernity (Asad 2003,

of the *Magyar Hiszek Egy* – a reaffirmation of their believe in their country – at the liturgical place of the Apostolicum – the reaffirmation of Christian faith.¹⁵ It shows us that religion proper also has the ability to integrate secular ideas in their tradition, that it can even accommodate nationalism, something that has long been conceived as its biggest threat. Thus, not only is religion involved in "the world of power," as Asad writes above, but the world of power – on national and international scale – is also involved in religion when nationalism and revisionism become a matter of faith. This, however, happens only in accordance to the specific local context as an answer to specific social needs, as Asad's overall argument confirms.

1.1 Religious Tradition's Adaptability in a Complex Understanding of Time

This aspect of adaptation to specific social needs is crucial for understanding the different aspects of sacrosanct nationalism. Thereby it is important to look at the adaptability of religious tradition in a complex understanding of time allowing for constant rectifications of the interpretations of past and future to make sense of the present (Asad 2003, 222-223).

At a first sight, this might remind one of Hobsbawm's (1983) famous idea of 'inventing traditions,' that he defines as a process in which "ancient materials [are used] to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes" (Hobsbawm 1983, 6). Although he does not refer explicitly to religion here, he did so in a later writing, stating that "world religions ... were invented at various times between the sixth century BC and the seventh

31-32) and because context, self-perception and meaning-making were very different prior to modernity (see e.g. Greenfeld 1996, 174-75).

¹⁵ Asad (2003, 25) opened the space for this kind of argument, to him "there is nothing *essentially* religious" as just for the secular, the religious is not an "essentially fixed category". He also perceives religious tradition as something evolving in response to current conditions (Asad 2003, 222-223).

century AD” (Hobsbawm 1992, 68-69).¹⁶ Still, Hobsbawm’s (1983) interpretation of traditions invented in this sense does not fit the sacrosanct nationalism in Hazatérés Temploma perfectly; to him, traditions stay invariant after their invention, an aspect that does not fit the flexible adaptivity and re-adaptivity of this parish.¹⁷ In other words, to him it would be possible to integrate new traditions in the parish, but those would have to stay invariant thereafter, whereas Hazatérés Temploma, as I will show, constantly re-invents its practices and enriches its nationalist symbolism.

However, Asad (2003, 222-23) finds a more fruitful interpretation of religious tradition, urging to look at tradition using a more complex understanding of time. To him, looking at it as something that constantly reconnects textualized memory and memorized history, thereby being reinvented and reinterpreted repeatedly, seems to be a more fruitful approach. He thereby considers the use of time in Koselleck’s (e.g. 1989) sense – in a framework of multiple temporalities and a simultaneity of the noncontemporaneous – to be the best approach, because of the central role that current events play regarding the meaning-making within tradition and the way history is interpreted within that tradition.

In tradition the ‘present’ is always at the center. If we attend to the way time present is separated from but also included within events and epochs, the way time past authoritatively constitutes present practices, and the way authenticating practices invoke or distance themselves from the past (by reiterating, reinterpreting, and reconnecting textualized memory and memorialized history), we move toward a richer understanding of tradition’s temporality. (Asad 2003, 222).

¹⁶ Hobsbawm (1992, 68) is talking about religion as “paradoxical cement for proto-nationalism, and indeed for modern nationalism”, referring to world religions’ unifying role that theoretically goes beyond ethnic, linguistic, political, etc. differences, which has historically not always been the case.

¹⁷ He differentiates between traditions, which for him are invariant, tracing themselves back to a past that might have been invented, and customs he believes to be changing with society according to societal needs.

In other words, through traditions people try to make sense of the present thereby using an always rectified construct of their past. Applied to the case of Hazatérés Temploma, this means that the inclusion of nationalism in faith proper should not only be analysed in the historical development of its emergence, but also regarding the interplay of contemporary national and international politics, contemporary narrations of history as well as the moments in which aspects of the past have been revived, and turned into rectified constructs of the past.

1.2 The Relationship of Nationalism and Religion as Contestation from Within

Now that the complexity of the relationship between nationalism and religion has been established and that the role of history's temporality and adaptivity in its creation of rectified constructs of the past has been discussed, we will turn to the main space of contestation that leads to those rectifications, which is a contestation from within. Thus, the indicated inclusion of nationalism in faith proper in the case of Hazatérés Temploma, needs to be conceptualized as a contestation of the meanings of Christian faith from within. Clearly then, it needs to be differentiated from phenomena like Islamism and Zionism (just to cite a few examples) which are often used as exemplifications of meaning-making contestations from without. In the former, very specific interpretations of religion are turned into an ideology. Thereby, Islamism cannot be reduced to nationalism as Asad (2003, 200) rightly pointed out, because its focus on state power originates in "the modern nation-state's enforced claim to constitute legitimate social identities and arenas" and not in nationalist ideas. However, there might be specific cases in which something similar to the case of Hazatérés Temploma – the inclusion of nationalism in faith proper – might come to happen, as Asad (2003, 200) also pointed out that many individual Islamists (especially those with Arabic origin) believe in the compatibility of Arab nationalism and religion. Thus, he also stresses that this is perceived as an inconsistency by

many others (mostly Islamists of European origin). This in turn does not mean that Islamism is a case of sacrosanct nationalism, rather the opposite as *exceptio probat regulam in casibus non exceptis* (the exception proves the rule in cases which are not exception). Zionism, however, is in its common understanding (political Zionism)¹⁸ a nationalist movement interpreting Jewishness in national terms and seeking for the creation of a state for that nation while legitimizing their colonial aspirations through the atrocities Jewish people had to endure in the third Reich (Butler 2012).¹⁹ Thus it is not a case of sacrosanct nationalism either.

In this respect, Islamism and (political) Zionism are not the norm, but rather exceptions. Contrary to Huntington's (1993) argument on the *Clash of Civilizations* stating that the next fight will happen on civilizational (and not the economic or political) line, which is, according to him mainly defined by religion, contestations happen from within, as I will show later. In this respect, Huntington (1993) is rightly criticised by Katzenstein (2013, 15-16) for replicating an 18th century unitary view that differs from the older version only in the sense that it sees different standards of conduct depending on the specific civilization. While Huntington sees clashes happening on the civilizational lines, Katzenstein (2013, 16) stresses that "clashes occur primarily within rather than between civilizations".

The specific Hungarian case of Hazatérés Temploma is a perfect example for this clash *within* civilizations. It is yet another case that drives Huntington's (1993) thesis at *ex nihilo*,

¹⁸ Butler (2012, 18) clearly differentiates this from the "cultural Zionism which is not necessarily linked to the defense of a particular state formation" that sometimes makes a clear distinction between the land and the nation.

¹⁹ Butler (2012) rightly drives to our attention that a problem here is that in the common understanding the mere fact to identify as Jewish is often equated with Zionism. This is not only problematic because many people conceiving themselves as Jewish do not agree with the politics of the state of Israel, but also because many people seem to equate Jewishness with (political) Zionism (Ibid., 3). Therefore, according to Butler, criticism of the state Israel is often conceived as an inappropriate, anti-Semitic stance attacking Jewish people in a similar way as the Nazis, which derives from the founding contradiction of the state even though Zionism and Jewishness are two very distinct phenomena (Ibid., 25-26).

revealing a crack in the Western Christian civilization, as there is not only a fight between several competing nationalisms (Hungarian nationalism and the nationalisms of the states with Hungarian minorities) but even a contestation of the main characteristics of Christian tradition. This means that we do not see a shift from ideological boundaries to religious boundaries leading to a “clash of civilizations” as brought forward by Huntington (1993), but quite the opposite, that is a multitude of contestations in the world of meaning-making from within. This thesis shows that, as nationalism, politics and faith melt together in faith proper in the case of Hazatérés Temploma, the contestation happens not only within Hungarian society but within the Christian faith as well. Thus, the contestation happens at the core of Christianity which Huntington (1993) had wrongly conceived as the unchangeable essence of the West and, according to him, a main factor for the clash of civilizations. Therefore, instead of looking at differences between groups, we would have to turn to inner struggles within groups regarding interpretations of core assumptions – conception of history (regarding both the definition of important, forming events, and their narration), the definition of core values and identity, the definition of in- and outgroup, thus the definition of the Self and the Other and so forth – of a nation.

1.3 *The Power of the Frame of Contestation: Conceptualization of State, Nation & Religion*

To understand those developments of meaning-making in a specific context, it is useful to consider the frame within which they happen as the effect of one’s speech is defined by the power an actor has within the public space (Asad 2003, 184). In this regard, Zubrzycki (2006, 25 italics in original) observes a constant “conflict *within* the nation over the nation’s meaning, project, and destiny” in which different actors with different amount of power compete against

one another on the state level. She therefore stresses the importance to look at the triangular relationship of state, nation and religion to understand the connection between nationalism and religion (Zubrzycki 2006, 208, 218).

In modernity, state, nation and religion are conceptualized in specific ways. Anderson (1991), Buzan and Lawson (2013) and Hobsbawm (1981), among others, have argued that the ‘long 19th century’²⁰ has been a great conceptual shift in many ways, shaping the conception of our current system and thus modernity. Although some terms might have been borrowed from history (e.g. state, democracy, etc.), the conception behind the terms was different to an extent that it cannot be conceived the same (Asad 2003; Verdery 1993, 37; i.a.). On the one hand, there was a drastic change on the local scale. As Anderson (1991, 6) famously pointed out, the perception of identity changed at that time with the rise of national feeling, through which the nation was conceived as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. On the other hand, the long 19th century had also a great impact on the international level, recasting the international order and building the modern international society generated by industrialization, ideologies of progress and the rational state (Buzan and Lawson 2013). The evolution of the latter meant a complete re-conception of the state’s role, as Buzan and Lawson (2013, 627) and was a phenomenon of the long 19th century (although there were antecedents in earlier centuries). In the process of formation of the rational state,

²⁰ From the French Revolution until WW1

states attempted to assume monopolistic control over the use of legitimate force within a particular territory – authority over domestic conflicts shifted from being “dispersed, overlapping and democratized” to being “centralized, monopolized and hierarchical.” (Buzan and Lawson 2013, 627).²¹

In short, the 19th century brought forward the notion of the state as controlling mechanism for domestic issues. At the same time, nationalism did not only “shift the locus of sovereignty from ruler to people, it also identified the territory of the state with the people rather than seeing it as determined by hereditary rights or dynastic inheritance” (Buzan, Lawson 2013, 628). Thus, these are not the only conceptions that changed in that time with the emergence of modernity. Asad (2003) rightly pointed out that even our most basic conceptions were shaped in that period:

“What we now retrospectively call *the social*, that all-inclusive secular space that we distinguish conceptually from variables like ‘religion,’ ‘state,’ ‘national economy,’ and so forth, *and on which the latter can be constructed, reformed and plotted* didn’t exist prior to the nineteenth century.” (Asad 2003, 191 italics in original).

In other words, the very fundament of our conception of the world, on which all other new conceptions are built is also a child of the long 19th century. Therefore, an analysis of this period and of the specific conceptual ground is fundamental to understanding not only the main conceptualizations this century brought, but also to understand specific cases, like the sacrosanct nationalism in Hazatérés Temploma.

1.3.1 Nation as a Symbol and the effects of its implied ambiguity

To Verdery (1993, 37-38), nation can have three more or less distinctive meanings (nation as “an aspect of the political and symbolic/ideological order and also of the world of social

²¹ In the quotation marks the authors use Thomson (1994, 3) wording.

interaction and feeling” used for social classification with varying ordering principles (Ibid, 37), nation as “an ideological construct essential to assigning subject positions” in modernity (Ibid., 38) and nation as a symbol), out of which the last is the most important for this thesis. It is the conception of nation as a symbol. Taken this way nation has an ambiguous meaning whose

use evokes sentiments and dispositions that have been formed in relation to it throughout decades of so-called nation-building. Nationalism, in this perspective, is the political utilization of the symbol nation through discourse and political activity, as well as the sentiment that draws people into responding to this use. (Verdery 1993, 38).

In other words, once nation is considered as an ambiguous symbol, the feelings connected to its different (historically created) meanings can be activated by political actors through discourse. Thus, nation as an ambiguous symbol allows for the same conclusion as made in the previous subchapter, just like the relationship between nationalism and religion is shaped by contestations from within, contestations about the meaning of nation as a symbol also always happen from within. This is the case because different actors can utilize the different meanings of ambiguous symbols in different ways to meet their ends. Thus, not every actor’s ambition to utilize those meanings will have the same effect due to the place they inhabit within the frame of contestation.

1.3.2 The Shift from the Space of the Nation to the Space of the Parish as Shift in Power

To decide how effective a certain “political utilization of the symbol nation” (Verdery 1993, 38) will be, one needs to take into consideration the notion of power as well, as different actors might not have the same amount of power to shape the discourse within a certain frame. In this

regard, Asad (2003) rightly points to the different kinds of power that play a role regarding one's ability to shape the discourse with effect and influencing different conceptualizations through free speech. He reminds us that

the public sphere is a space *necessarily* (not just contingently) articulated by power. ... The enjoyment of free speech presupposes not merely the physical ability to speak but *to be heard*, a condition without which speaking to some effect is not possible. If one's speech has no effect whatever it can hardly be said to be in the public sphere, no matter how loudly one shouts. *To make others listen* even if they would prefer not to hear, to speak to some consequence so that something in the political world is affected, to come to a conclusion, to have the authority to make practical decisions on the basis of that conclusion – these are all presupposed in the idea of free public debate as a liberal virtue. (Asad 2003, 184).

In other words, it is not enough to have the right to speak freely in order to have an impact on the public debate, but one also needs to have the power “to be heard” and “to make others listen”, thereby this power is less determined by the loudness of one's speech, but more by the willingness of others to listen. While the effect of Orbán's speeches on EU level shows that some of his arguments are deeply rooted in several European countries, the parish of Hazatérés Temploma brings forward more radical arguments wherefore it needs to create its own frame with different limitations than the frame of the public space of the nation. While to be heard to some extent they have to shout as loud as possible in their demonstrations within the public sphere of the state, as most people would not be willing to listen conceiving them merely as the far right, the words of their pastor become much more weight once pronounced from the pulpit. This is not only due to his position but more importantly to the frame of the parish in which these kinds of views are not only accepted but wanted as people *choose* to go to Hazatérés Temploma because of its special content. Therefore, the frame of the parish does not only

strengthen the pastor's words in his position, but also the words of other people holding a speech during the church services.

In this regard, Asad (2003) makes another important point regarding the temporality and spatiality of free speech. To him, free speech's limitations

are also intrinsic to the time and space it takes to build and demonstrate a particular argument, to understand a particular experience – and more broadly to become particular speaking and listening subjects ... *there is no public sphere of free speech at an instant.* (Asad 2003, 184 italics in original).

In other words, the effect one's free speech will have is also dependent on the time and space given to an argument, as it defines the ability of comprehension. Thus, the frame of a parish is a good space to bring forward this kind of free speech, as it is a repeating event and arguments can be built throughout time and associated to a person.

1.4 The Relationship of Nationalism and Religion as an Active Process of Changing Practices and Ideas

Now that we have demonstrated that the shift from the public space of the state to the public space of the parish allows for a different power framework in which the nationalist ideas of revision find a more flourishing ground, we will turn to the consideration of the attributes of nationalism and religion that allow for the merge within one space, shifting the focus toward the active process of changing practices and ideas (Asad 2003, 194).

In this regard, it is important to understand how the break of the alliance between church and state came into being. While many authors acknowledge that the specific character of Christianity (and its relationship to power) in a state played an important role regarding the kind of secularism, (political) institutions, nationalism that emerged and the redefinition of religion, morality and national politics (Asad 2003, 208; Greenfeld 1996, 177-81; Spohn 2003, 272;

Zubrzycki 2006),²² beyond that it is important to acknowledge that this development happened out of “religious arguments aimed at securing the freedom of Christ’s church from the constraints of an earthly power” (Asad 2003, 190).²³ Nationalism (as well as its relationship to religion) is a work in process constantly evolving in response to the current needs (see: e.g. Zubrzycki 2006, 25, 222; Asad 2003, 222-23). Greenfeld stresses that it is important to realize that there is merely a “*functional* equivalence of nationalism and religion” (Greenfeld 1996, 176 italics in original) for both of them are “order-creating cultural systems ... belong[ing] to the same category of sociological phenomena” (Ibid. 170). This can be explained by nationalism’s secular focus with its

perception of the mundane as meaningful in its own right [which] implies its sacralization. With nationalism, the heavens, so to speak, descend to earth; this world, the world of empirical reality and social relations, becomes the sphere of the sacred. (Greenfeld 1996, 173).

Thus, instead of saying that nationalism is a religion, Greenfeld argues that it has the same social function as a religion, meanwhile shifting the focus from the life after death to earth. Asad (2003) makes a similar argument stating that the worldliness of nationalism which had already been rightly recognized as yet another ideology by Anderson (1991),

²² Asad stresses that although there are several kinds of secularisms, the differences within Europe should be interpreted more like family differences “articulat[ing] particular struggles over whether religious doctrines and communal morality – in their historical variety – should be allowed to affect the formation of public policy.” (Asad 2003, 208).

²³ Greenfeld (1996, 176 italics in original) makes a similar argument stating that “*secularization must be traced back* to that last heroic burst of religious energy in the history of Christianity.”

requires the concept of the secular to make sense. The loyalty that the individual nationalist owes is directly to and exclusively to the nation. Even when the nation is said to be “under God,” it has its being only in “this world” – a special kind of world. (Asad 2003, 193).

In other words, there cannot be nationalism without the concept of the secular, and its aspect of worldliness as its sincere fidelity belongs to the nation, an aspect of “this world”. Thus, Asad urges to go beyond Anderson’s (1991, 22-36) elaboration on the change of the conceptualization of temporality,²⁴ looking at the way that

the complex medieval Christian universe ... is broken down by the modern doctrine of secularism into a duality: a world of self-authenticating things in which we *really* live as social beings and a religious world that exists only in our imagination. (Asad 2003, 194).

In other words, secularism brought an extreme change in the conception of the world dividing the complex conception of the medieval universe into the reality of the material world and a world of religion left to the imagination.

To Asad this is a revolutionary change which needs to be taken seriously. Therefore, he urges to ask different question and to shift the focus of attention from a mere consideration about what parts of religion play a role in nationalism, to the question “what people do with and to ideas and practices” instead (Ibid., 194). Zubrzycki does exactly that in her analysis of the case of Poland in which “religious symbols [...] were first secularized and then *resacralized as national*” (Zubrzycki 2006, 219).

²⁴ Anderson (1991, 36) describes a shift from “a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men essentially identical” to our modern conception of temporality in which time sequences can be broken up into something linear enabling the imagination of simultaneous actions.

Biblical allegories, religious symbols, hymns, and iconography as well as religious practices such as processions, pilgrimages, or simple participation in Sunday Mass were largely politicized as carriers of national identity. (Zubrzycki 2006, 219-220).

In other words, with their politization former religious content could go through a shift in their deepest symbolical meaning by becoming symbols of national identity.

Something similar happened in Interwar Hungary, as well as after the fall of communism (e.g. Zubrzycki 2006). Thus, the sacrosanct nationalism we observe in Hazatérés Temploma, is a slightly different phenomenon. Indeed, we see the reverse of what Zubrzycki (2006) describes happening. In this specific case nationalist symbols get sacralised or if they were originally religious symbols that went through a sacralization as national symbols, re-sacralised in the domain of faith. This does not only show that the relationship between nationalism and religion is more complex, but also that there is the possibility to rethink the worldliness of “the special kind of world” (Asad 2003, 193) we live in, as both the earthly connection and the heavens get integrated in sacrosanct nationalism.

1.5 Nationalism and Religion: The specific case of Eastern Europe?

Now that we have established a complex view of the relationship between religion and nationalism, as resulting out of different contextually shaped discursive and symbolic contestations (about the meaning-making, the important symbols and the narration of history) of the nation from within and stressed the importance of looking at what people actively “do with and to ideas and practices” (Asad 2003, 194), we will turn our attention to the allegedly specific case of Eastern Europe. This notion thus has been sharply criticized by Zubrzycki (2002; 2006) who points out that the development of ethnic or civic nationalism in different regions was shaped by “set[s] of specific political conditions” and not by the alleged

backwardness of Eastern Europe and the East (Zubrzycki 2006, 43). She considers the concepts of ethnic and civic nationalism only as helpful if one thinks about them as what they are, namely purely analytical ideal types in the Weberian sense, “value-free constructs that we compare with reality, looking at how and why a given empirical case differs from the ideal type” (Zubrzycki 2002, 277). Thereby, she stresses, the juxtaposition of the two as ‘good’ civil (western) nationalism and ‘bad’ ethnic (eastern) nationalism has not only to be seen in the historical politicized context in which it has been developed but also as a strongly politicized (both popular and academic) discourse today (Ibid., 277-84).²⁵ Zubrzycki (2002, 283-84) brings to our attention that even in Post-Constructivist times civic and ethnic nationalism are often attributed a value. Following Yack (1996), she sees therein “an underlying moral purpose” (Zubrzycki 2002, 284), which is felt by Central-Eastern European politicians (e.g. Orbán 2017).

Now, the aspect of value has been stripped from the different ideal types of nationalism in the Weberian sense, one can move to the identification of historical similarities of some Eastern European countries that might have led to certain similarities in the way nation and thus nationalism is conceived. In a similar manner, Verdery urges to target nationalism through

the study of historical processes that have produced a particular political form – the nation states – differently in different context, and of the internal homogenizations that these nation-states have sought to realize in their different contexts. (Verdery 1993, 43).

In other words, in order to understand nationalism, one must try to understand the nation state’s historical development in relation to its political context. While Western European countries were mostly over sea empires, Eastern Europe consisted of land-based empires like the

²⁵ The academic discourse upholding such a division between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ nationalism has been most drastically exemplified in the work of Hans Kohn (1946) whose argument was later taken up by Sugar (1994).

Habsburg, the Ottoman or the Romanov empire. This, as Miller and Berger (2015) point out, led to very specific challenges due to the proximity of different nationalities within the empire's territory. Therefore, the nationalism of the empire's core, being only one out of many, was challenged by competing nationalisms of the empire's different ethnicities that were in close proximity to the core (Berger and Miller 2015). It was thus less easy for them to deal with the issue of rising nationalisms, wherefore, as recent research has pointed out, elites were actively involved and utilized nation building "as a part of their strategy for survival against the challenges of national movements within the empires as well as of inter-(imperial) state rivalry" (Komlosy 2015, 369). Thus, the Habsburg empire chose to take a different path by "maintaining an imperial, multi-ethnic self-understanding of its state" (Komlosy 2015, 369), which it was able to uphold until the Compromise of 1867 when an exception was made for the territories of the Hungarian crown.²⁶

Now that we have established the macro context of Eastern European states as land-based empires, we can move to the consideration of national identity formation. Spohn (2003) identifies three important phases regarding national identity formation in Eastern European countries. First there was the pre-Communist phase in which religion had a strong influence, then the Communist phase in which he sees a "rift between secularist and religious features" and finally the post-Communist phase characterized "by a general restrengthening of the religious components" (Spohn 2003, 271; 1998; 2002). This restrengthening can be explained by various reasons; Spohn (2003, 247) drives our attention to the close link between religion

²⁶ The Compromise, or Dual Settlement, "established the separate rule of the Austrian and the Hungarian part of the Monarchy as distinct political entities, held together by a common sovereign and only submitting military, foreign policy and some finances to a common government" (Komlosy 2015, 370).

and nation-building processes before the Communist period, a link that was reinforced by the imposed Communist regime. Both the historical connection of nationalism and religion, as well as its reinforcement in Soviet times, eventually led to “a revival of nationalism” and a “strengthening of religion and religious nationalism” once the Communist regime was dissolved (Spohn 2003, 247 following Ramet 1998). This “countermove” led to different configurations of secular-religious character, that were shaped by “the civilizational foundations, the forms of state formation, nation-building and democratization as well as the type of religion and the related secularization pattern” of the specific country (Spohn 2003, 274-75). Thus, this is only one part of the story, Asad (2003, 170-71) rightly added, that the rise of politics of civilizational identity is partly also due to Eastern European countries’ wish to be part of European civilization, which they try to achieve by distancing themselves from their socialist past.

Verdery (1999) makes a similar argument, adding a reasoning of utility.

In Eastern Europe, however, rewriting history has been perhaps unusually necessary because of powerful pressures to create political identities based expressly on *rejecting* the immediate past. The pressures came not just from popular revulsion with communism but also from desires to persuade Western audiences to contribute the aid and investment essential to reconstruction. (Verdery 1999, 52).

In other words, the distancing from the socialist past is more than repulsion of a political system, it is also mainly about getting advantages within the new European system. In this regard, it is also important to note the history of othering Eastern Europe and contesting their Europeanness, what Bakić-Hayden (1995) calls “Nesting Orientalism” and which he believes to still play an

important role today.²⁷ Thereby, the definition of Europe itself and what it means to be European needs to be seen as a constant process of re-adaptation, as “[t]he borders of political Europe have varied not only over time, but also according to the European model governing global relations.” (Asad 2003, 172).

Thus, Post-Socialist states need to adapt to a model that has evolved in their absence and which in some instances has created different moral norms. Verdery (1999, 35) describes this as “a problem of reorganization on a cosmic scale” which “involves the redefinition of virtually everything, including morality, social relations and basic meanings. It means a reordering of people’s entire meaningful worlds.” To that end, people are in need of ambiguous symbols from the past to create a basis for this new kind of meaning-making, to Verdery (1999) dead bodies figure among the best symbols for these kind of actions and have often be used in post-Socialist Eastern Europe (Hazatérés Temploma for example uses Admiral Horthy, the interwar leader of Hungary).

Still, this “reordering of people’s entire meaningful worlds” does not only imply contestations within the small space of the nation state itself, but can happen as a contestation of the “Nesting Orientalism” (Bakić-Hayden 1995) Eastern European people face, as the case of Hazatérés Temploma (and arguably Hungary and Poland in their role within the EU) shows. Instead of simply accepting the values of the West, there is a conception of a “positive collateral damage” regarding the maintenance of *real, Christian European values* that have not been spoiled by the US (fieldwork 15.03.2020, male parish member in his 30ies). Thus, cases like

²⁷ Bakić-Hayden (1995) derives his concept from Said’s (1997) famous thesis of Orientalism, arguing that this concept can be applied to other instances as well (anything that is Easterner, even within the frontiers of Europe, whatever would be conceived to be the East).

Hazatérés Temploma beyond problematizing the relationship of nationalism and religion might be taken as means of analysis to target inner-European contestations regarding the core values of the EU as well.

In this thesis I am going to contribute to the field by nuancing the interplay of nationalism and religion, driving attention to the ways in which nationalism and religion can merge into sacrosanct nationalism as an act of contestation from within in which ideas, practices and space are actively changed to generate a greater effect of the argument. As these contestations are contextual in their essence, the following chapter will establish the basis for the analysis of the mechanics of sacrosanct nationalism as enacted in the case of Hazatérés Temploma.

2. Hazatérés Temploma's Historical and Contemporary Context

Isten, áldd meg a magyart

Jó kedvvel, bőséggel,

Nyújts feléje védő kart,

Ha küzd ellenséggel;

Bal sors akit régen tép,

Hozz rá víg esztendőt,

Megbünhődte már e nép

A multat s jövőndőt!

O Lord, bless the nation of Hungary

With your grace and bounty

Extend over it your guarding arm

During strife with its enemies

Long torn by ill fate

Bring upon it a time of relief

This nation has suffered for all sins

Of the past and of the future!

Himnusz Kölcsey, Ferenc (1823)

Hungarian Anthem (translation Kőrösy)

In order to understand any kind of phenomenon in our current world one needs to consider the history of its concepts, looking at their development and at their redefinitions at different points in time. Thereby the way people use rectified constructs of the past (Koselleck 1989; Asad 2003, 222-23) to make sense of their present is essential for understanding phenomena such as Orbán's political behaviour on the EU scale, as well as the sacrosanct nationalism in Hazatérés Temploma. Pursuing the complexity of historical as well as contemporary challenges leading to the formation of a sacrosanct nationalism this thesis will start its contemplation of history with the long 19th century in which "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) and thus nationalism and most of the other relevant definitions of our time were born (Asad 2003; Buzan and Lawson 2013; Verdery 1993; Hobsbawm 1981). I will focus on nationalism and its relation to religion and politics as those are the most relevant concepts to be considered for our purpose.

Towards this end, this thesis will first turn to the history of Hungarian nationalism, its challenges and development, looking at how macro- and micro-political circumstances shaped

and reformed its character as “contemporary nationalism is the heir of two centuries of historic change” (Anderson 1991, 159). And second, how this conception changed throughout time and which symbolism was kept and which replaced in the narration of history and its conceptualization; focusing on the nation’s foundational myth, “its linked plots of growth and development, crisis and resistance, doom, victory, and rebirth” as well as their adaptation to new times (Zubrzycki 2006, 34).

Thus, to get a better understanding of Hungarian nationalism and its connection to religion today, we should first examine the foundations of this nationalism especially focusing on how and when ideas and practices changed. Accordingly, the analysis will start with the time the *Himnusz*, the Hungarian anthem, was written; considering the importance Anderson (1991) attributes to print language, poetry and songs in building those “imagined communities.” This process laid “the bases for national consciousness” by creating non-Latin “unified fields of communication” and “a new fixity of language” (Ibid., 44). Nonetheless, this process also created hierarchies between the different vernaculars, depending on how close a spoken variety was to the new print-language emerging (Ibid.); and was further intensified by political power relations as the Habsburg empire and later the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was a land-based empire, and thus had the problem of different nationalisms competing close to its core (Miller and Berger 2015; Komlosy 2015; Anderson 1991, 78). This chapter will show how the shifting power relation among those competing nationalisms played an important role in shaping the character of contemporary nationalism in Hungary, as well as the case specific characteristics of sacrosanct nationalism in Hazatérés Temploma.

2.1 Defining the nation's history & character through the choice of the anthem

A nation's history and character are reflected and modelled in the choice of the national anthem which is in itself an act of meaning-making. The case of the *Himnusz* shows, that this act of meaning-making can be reiterated repeatedly to answer changing contexts and challenges, adding new nuances to its meaning. In this regard, it played an important role throughout Hungarian history, and still plays an important role today. In Hazatérés Temploma, as this “prayer of the nation” (Lóránt, fieldnotes) is used in the liturgy of nearly each service, the exception being some services that stress the suffering of the Hungarian nation in particular, in which it is replaced or accompanied by the *Szózat*, the second Hungarian anthem (fieldnotes). This liturgical change is of great importance as the *Szózat* works through completely different literally tropes than the *Himnusz*, shifting the focus from the faith in God and sins of the nation to a fatal connection in which all Magyar “must live and die” in their homeland “[m]ay fortune's hand bless or beat them” (Vörösmarty 1836, translation Kőrösy).

Thus, the choice of singing the *Himnusz* or the *Szózat* or both in church services is always actively made and connected not only to their meaning for the nation as an anthem/second anthem, but beyond that to their *literal meaning* and *historical meaning* as interpreted by the parish which directly targets the international relations of Magyars. This is possible because both, *Himnusz* and *Szózat*, perfectly fit the two main narratives of the parish and the Hungarian far right about what it means to be Magyar; the Christian aspect of being Magyar and the notion of the nation's constant suffering. The former aspect completely lacking in the case of the *Szózat*, is exemplified in the *Himnusz*' very first sentence, in which it turns to

God in a prayer-like manner, asking him to “bless the nation of Hungary”.²⁸ The second narrative about the nation’s constant suffering shows itself throughout the whole lyrics of both the *Himnusz* and the *Szózat*.

In the *Himnusz* the narrative of suffering starts in the first stanza with the words that “[t]his nation has suffered for all sins [o]f the past and of the future” (Kölcsey 1823, translation Körösy), accentuating Hungarian guilt. This is not the case in the *Szózat*. Here “fortune” determines the Hungarian fate. While the *Himnusz* was addressing God, the *Szózat* addresses the Hungarians directly, urging them to remain “faithful” to their homeland as “[i]n the great world outside of here [t]here is no place for” them, that Hungary is the place where they “must live and die”.²⁹ Ergo, right from the beginning, Hungarian nationalism had a second, more people centred narrative; taking over the aspect of suffering of the *Himnusz*, yet adding a fatality that connects Hungarians and their life directly to the soil of their country, as those “thousand years of suffering demand life or death”. The century to come brought new sufferings for the Hungarian nation – WWI, Trianon, the Nazi occupation, Socialism and 1956 – adding new layers to the interpretation of the first and second national anthem and the feelings they evoke.

2.2 Magyar (Christian-)Nationalism as Constant Contestation to a Powerful Other

Looking at Hungarian history in general, and the history of Hungarian nationalism in particular, it becomes evident that Magyars were constantly facing a Powerful Other – the Habsburg, the Ottoman, the allies in WWI and WWII responsible for the division and re-division of the lands

²⁸ Kölcsey was inspired by ecclesiastical Hymns (Sinka 2012).

²⁹ Note that God is addressed indirectly in the 5th stanza: “[f]ervent prayer yearns [o]n thousands’ lips” for better times.

of the Hungarian crown, Communism and, if one adheres to the far right narrative, the European Union – that threatened or occupied their territory. Thus, they tended to create their identity in relation to the specific circumstance the Powerful Other created at a certain point in time. In this regard there were two distinct narratives through which Magyars could interpret their history which correspond in a sense with the religious affiliation of the people in question (Hanebrink 2006, 18-19, Horel 2014, 12; 2017, 2). These narratives originated in 1526 when parts of Hungarian kingdom went to Habsburg and big parts were conquered by Ottoman, who established direct rule in contemporary Hungary and indirect rule in Transylvania (Komlosy 2015, 373, 407).³⁰ This division led to a violent conflict between the *Labanc* (pro-Austrian, mainly Catholic) and the *Kuruc* (secessionists, mainly Protestant) that as Horel (2014, 12; 2017, 2), among others, argues goes like a red alternating thread through Hungarian historical consciousness since the 17th century.

The following sub-chapters are going to examine the development of Magyar nationalism and its connection to religion looking at the power relationship to the Powerful Other Magyars were facing throughout time, starting with the long 19th century due to its importance for the formation of nationalism (e.g. Anderson 1991; Komlosy 2015, 277).

2.2.1 European Macro Political Effects on the Power Relation between Habsburg and Magyar and their Effects on Magyar Nationalism

The first two waves of Hungarian nationalism emerged while Hungary was part of the Habsburg empire which formed the Powerful Other throughout this period. However, the balance of power later shifted in favour of the Hungarian nation, due to macro-political changes on the European scale. While the first wave was marked by a relationship of subordination that turned

³⁰ re-conquered by the Habsburg in 1687

into repression (after the lost war of independence 1849), the second wave was characterized by an upgrade of the Hungarian status within the empire with the Compromise of 1867 that created the Dual-Monarchy. This Dual Settlement turned the Hungarian kingdom into a separate political entity and elevated the Magyars above the other ethnicities within the territory of the Hungarian kingdom; and formed the only small period in which the Magyars were themselves the Powerful Other to the different arising nationalisms within their territory.

Before the national awakening, belonging to Hungarian land-owning nobility was the only precondition for being part of what they defined as the Hungarian nation and was completely detached from ethnic and linguistic factors (Komlosy 2015, 385). Therefore, the character of the first wave of Magyar nationalism mobilized people throughout different ethnic groups living in the territory of the Hungarian kingdom, among them many Slavs and Jews (Komlosy 2015, 387). This process is best exemplified in the famous poet and national hero Sándor Petőfi³¹, who Magyar-ized his name, spoke in Magyar vernacular to eliminate differences between the people and finally died for the Hungarian cause (Franyó 1975). While Petőfi's Hungarian-ness does not seem to be contested, other cases are more ambiguous. In a conversation with a parish member, I was told the *Aradi vértanúk* (blood witnesses of Arad)³² of German ethnicity “chose to die for the Magyar cause because they believed in it even though they would have survived by simply saying that they are Germans.” (15.03.2020, male in his 30ies). At the same time their names were read in their Magyar-ized version in the service of remembrance of the martyrs of 1848/49.

³¹ Alexander Petrovics

³² 13 generals executed in Arad for their involvement in the Hungarian revolution and independence war

The second wave of Magyar nationalism was of completely different character. Due to macro-political circumstances, the status of Hungarians was elevated to an almost equal position to the Habsburg with the Compromise of 1867 which turned the lands of the Hungarian crown into a distinct political entity (Komlosy 2015, 402).³³ Once introduced, Magyarization of the country through active assimilatory tactics, modelled on the French example (introduction of Magyar as only official language, utilization of schooling, etc.) could start (Komlosy 2015, 377, 411). This affected the relationship between the different ethnicities drastically, led to many runovers during WW1, and arguably played an important role in the outcome of the peace treaty of Trianon (Gradvohl 2007).

2.2.2 “Nem! Nem! Soha!”³⁴ Religious Nationalism and Revision in Interwar Hungary

By the end of WW1, huge parts of the Hungarian crown’s territory were occupied by the surrounding countries which were home to larger parts of the ethnicities that had felt oppressed by Hungarian nationalism. Those territories were officially written over in the “Treaty of Peace Between the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary” (June 4th 1920) – more often referred to as ‘Peace Treaty of Trianon’ or simply ‘Trianon’,³⁵ which meant a loss of 70% of the Hungarian territory and a third of its ethnic Hungarians (Horel 2014, 140; Murer 2018, 197; i.a.). This was – and still is – perceived by many Hungarians as a great injustice, to such an extent that Murer (2018) describes Trianon as Hungary’s far-right’s “chosen trauma”.³⁶ Thus, the

³³ For an historical explanation why the case of Hungary was treated differently see Komlosy (2015, 371, 408).

³⁴ “No! No! Never!” famous poem by József Attila (1922).

³⁵ Those territories had been promised to the surrounding countries gradually from 1915 already (see: e.g. Feketéné Cselényi 1984, 113). This led to a multitude of problems throughout the war, such as the run over to the enemy of ethnically non-Hungarian soldiers who had felt oppressed by Hungarian nationalism’s assimilatory and discriminatory tactics (Gradvohl 2007).

³⁶ According to Murer (2018) a “chosen trauma” can be activated by collective “pathological mourning” (a mourning in which the act of remembrance of the lost does not help to overcome the pain, but re-intensifies it, keeping it alive), a concept he borrows from psychology.

introduction of the treaty was met with a lot of public outrage in which many different artforms were used to voice the protest against Trianon – artforms that keep being reactivated until today. This protest, against the redraw of the borders was supported throughout all social classes and all political spectra (Horel 2014, 175). “Nem! Nem! Soha!” (No! No! Never!) famously countered the leftist poet József Attila (1922), in his poem of the same name. This exclamation became the slogan of the Horthy era (Horthy 2000, 159) and is still used in commemoration ceremonies and revisionist aspirations (mainly by the far right) until today (e.g. Lóránt 04.06.2020; Jobbik 2015³⁷).

Despite the overall outrage against the imposition of the Trianon borders, different political actors, including the churches, had divergent approaches to how this problem should be solved. Here, Hanebrink (2006), among others, stresses, the historical affiliations of the churches with their respective political agendas played an important role. While Protestant churches (adhering to the Kuruc narrative) identified with liberalism and change more comfortably, Catholic churches (adhering to the Labanc narrative) were more at ease with the conservative approach of the government. Moreover, Catholic churches’ symbolism seemed to be more easily usable for revisionist purposes. In this regard, Hanebrink (2006, 3) argues that “it is necessary to take seriously the Christianity within Christian nationalist ideology in Hungary” because it was utilized as a building block for Hungarian identity.³⁸ Thereby, the different players activated different narratives through which they thought they might gain political influence. While the Catholic church (and the far right in the beginning) played on

³⁷ This picture has since been removed.

³⁸ The anti-Semitic rhetoric of that period was also present in the churches in form of a Christian anti-Semitism; thus, they had another approach to converts (Hanebrink 2006).

Christian symbolism, the Calvinist church stressed its “leading role in the struggle for independence from the Catholic Habsburg dynasty” and considered themselves the “ethnic ‘Magyar religion’” due to their almost exclusively Magyar composition which allowed for “explicitly ethnic nationalism” (Hanebrink 2006, 9).

2.2.3 Keeping up with Appearances: Magyar Nationalism’s Rejuvenating Beauty Sleep in Soviet Times

Although nationalism itself and especially revisionist aspirations were not welcomed by the Soviet elites³⁹ and Hungarian nationalism was officially sentenced into hibernation, Hungarians found manifold inventive solutions to turn this into a rejuvenating beauty sleep. Verdery (1999, 44) argues that “socialism did not *suppress* these [national] identifications but *reinforced* them in specific ways.” One example for this might be the invention of the *táncház mozgalom* (Dance House movement) in Transylvania invented in the 1970s as a countermove to the official state imposed cultural centres that evolved from a folkloristic revival to something very political, mobilizing the Magyar national identity in Hungary and abroad (Kürti 2001, 136-64, Kuligowski 2001, 330). Thus, the efforts of the Communist regime to send nationalism and religion to sleep, did not only reinforce both, but also strengthened their previously existing interconnectedness (Spohn 2003; 1998; 2003; Ramet 1998). Although, churches in general were targeted by the regime for being religious institutions, protestant churches had a little bit more freedom as they were conceived “as much less of an ideological threat” by the Communist Party (Hanebrink 2006, 229). This, Hanebrink (2006, 229-30) argues, was the case because the party in its search for valuable legitimizing symbols for their rule took up the anti-Catholic anti-

³⁹ As the re-introduction of the Trianon borders was considered an act against Nazi-Germany, the official narrative of the Hungarian Communist Party approved this reintroduction to please their proletarian brothers (Polgár 2009, 31-32).

Austrian *Kuruc* narrative of Hungarian Protestantism. However, the party still imposed itself in church politics forcing some of the inter-war church leaders to leave their office (Ibid., 234). Still, Protestant churches were left with more space to act than their Catholic counterpart. Spohn (2003, 274), following Ramet (1998) argues that it is specifically this superimposition of the regime and its secular and anti-religious, anti-nation-building stances that made “religion, nation-building and nationalism fuse... even more,” preparing them for a powerful reawakening.

2.3 *Hazatérés Temploma in the Contemporaneous Hungarian Political Context*

The Hazatérés Temploma has been a very controversial parish in many ways; this started with the very context of its creation (by refugees from former Great-Hungary territories which were lost in Trianon to celebrate the partial territorial re-gain granted by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in the Vienna Awards) and its thereof following political agenda, revisionism. Its pastor Lóránt Hegedűs junior, originating from the Hungarian minority in Romania, had several clashes with the Calvinist Church and has often been criticized for his open affiliation with the far-right,⁴⁰ an affiliation that was possible because the Calvinist Church was the last among the big churches forbidding their pastors party membership.

Already his father Bishop Lóránt Hegedűs senior was known for “actively support[ing] the Party of Hungarian Life and Justice (MIÉP),⁴¹ a nationalistic and anti-semitic party” and his son, the pastor of Hazatérés Temploma had even been that party’s chairman (Enyedi 2003, 164).

⁴⁰ He believes open political affiliations to be very important for a matter of transparency, however, he sadly admits, that it has a price; some people rather choose not to send their children to his classes, and some other pastors do not want to let him preach for their parishes (fieldnotes).

⁴¹ the predecessor of the now greatly established far-right party Jobbik

In this position Lóránt “Hegedűs junior was indicted in 2001 by the state prosecutor for publishing an article in which he explicitly asked for the ‘exclusion of Jews’”, wherefore pastors were forbidden party membership⁴² by the Calvinist Church and party-related organization had to be removed from church institutions (Ibid., 164). Later, Hazatérés Temploma was affiliated with Jobbik⁴³ – the successor of MIÉP – having many joined events in the church and with the pastor’s wife Hegedűs Lórántné being an active member and holding a mandate in parliament (Bozóki, Ádám 2016, 112). In February 2019 though, this affiliation ended; Hegedűs Lórántné first left the party and then her mandate in parliament (Dull 2019, NYG 2019).⁴⁴ The parish now organizes joint events with and promotes events of the *Mi Hazánk Mozgalom* (Our Home Movement) which is constituted of people who broke with Jobbik due to the party’s move towards the centre and strive to go back to the original, more radical roots of the party (Várnagy 2019, 128).

Now, that an explanation of the historical development of the underlying concepts, as well as the contemporary context allowing for sacrosanct nationalism in Hungary, and especially Hazatérés Temploma, has been established, this thesis will turn to the ‘nationalist aesthetics’ (Zubrzycki 2006) and ‘performances’ (Butler 1988; Butler 1990) the parish included at different points in time for its creation. Furthermore, it will attempt to explain the effects and probable reasons for the different integrations the parish made at different points in time. This will help

⁴² disobeyed by many pastors who still ran as candidates for MIÉP (Enyedi 2003, 164).

⁴³ Jobbik is known for its “high profile and aggressive demonstrations against the established government, corrupt elites, and hard austerity measures” (Kim 2016, 349), and other acts of high visibility, like the creation of the Hungarian Guard (paramilitary organization allegedly aiming at protecting Hungarians from ‘gypsy crime’) (Enyedi 2015, 235; Kyriazi 2016, 2530; Kim 2016, 346-348).

⁴⁴ This might be due to Jobbik’s ideological rapprochement of the party with the leading Fidesz (who appropriated some of their political goals) and its thereof resulting moderation, as well as the two parties similar approach in making politics, ‘paternalist populism’ and ‘illiberal elitism’ (Enyedi 2016, 12). Thus, while “Jobbik tends to mainstream extremism, Fidesz radicalizes the mainstream” (Bozóki and Ádám 2016, 99).

to create a deeper understanding of the character sacrosanct nationalism can take and hence generate a better comprehension of the underlying dynamics shaping Orbán's EU politics as well as the international politics of the whole region.

3. Hazatérés Temploma: Religiosity at the Crossroads of Nationalism and Politics

Hiszek egy Istenben, hiszek egy hazában:

Hiszek egy isteni örök igazságban,

Hiszek Magyarország feltámadásában.

Ámen.

I believe in one God; I believe in one home⁴⁵:

I believe in God's eternal justice/truthfulness,

I believe in the resurrection of Hungary.

Amen.

Magyar Hiszek Egy

Hungarian I Believe (translation by the author)

In Hazatérés Temploma, the Church of Homecoming, the prayer above is pronounced every Sunday instead of the 'Apostolicum', the famous oecumenical Creed of the 5th century, which is traditionally used in protestant and roman-catholic services to reaffirm the most important aspects of Christian religion. In this contemporary Hungarian parish, its classical religious version is reserved for religiously highly important events only, such as baptism or the Holy Communion, which gives the impression that the focus of this church lies less on the religious teachings.⁴⁶

Regardless of the question of the prayer's compatibility with Christian faith, the very fact that it is pronounced in every service and the Apostolicum's liturgical place shows that the belief in the fatherland and the resurrection of Hungary takes a more important place in the

⁴⁵ The Hungarian word "haza" has a much stronger connotation than its English equivalent. It means their homeland, their safety, them being Hungarian. It is strongly connected to their national identity.

⁴⁶ The parochial church council was very reluctant commenting on the unusual liturgy, especially on the use of this prayer. The only thing he would tell me, was that the prayer is in accordance with the Calvinist tradition and faith (fieldnotes 08.09.2019).

practice of their faith than the New Testament and Jesus. Judith Butler's famous idea of performativity (Butler 1988; Butler 1990) supports this argument, as "identity [is] tenuously constituted in time ... [and it is] instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1988, 519). Accordingly, the parish's choice to perform a big part of its religious service through the repetition of national content turns nationalism into a part of their religious identity.

3.1 *Integration of Nationalism into the Domain of Faith*

This blend of nationalist elements into the domain of faith proper happens on several levels. Through performativity the parish socio-prudently uses the "reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (Butler 1993, 2), thereby creating sacrosanct nationalism. This performance of nationality at the heart of a religious service is achieved through textual integrations – repetitions of chosen texts and songs in the liturgy –, visual integrations – inclusion of national symbolism in the church building –, active performances – re-enactments of past events and other acts of high visibility –, as well as through Lóránt's sermons in which he reiteratively creates a bridge between religion, nationalism and politics. Thereby the interplay of the different levels intensifies the belief in the *haza* (home/homeland) and the god-giveness of the nation, including its national territory.

While many far-right events use the same performative acts and symbols, their integration into the domain of faith proper adds another layer of meaning. Therefore, this chapter will elaborate on the ways in which nationalist symbolism and performances are integrated into the domain of faith proper, creating sacrosanct nationalism. More importantly, it will look at effects of those integrations within the current Hungarian context, as it is through asking "what people do with and to ideas and practices" (Asad 2003, 194) that one can get to the driving forces behind our current society. Thus, looking at the challenges Hazatérés

Temploma faces within the Hungarian society will reflect one of the aspects of the Hungarian society's political logic, which in turn creates the conditions of possibility for Orbán's discursive merge of nationalism and religion on the EU scale.

3.1.1 Creation of a Sacrosanct Nation through a Socio-Prudent Choice of Symbolism in Accordance to Space

Next to the liturgical choice to use the *Magyar Híszek Egy* instead of the Apostolicum and the singing of the *Himnusz* or *Szózat* depending on the specific event as well as singing the *Székely Himnusz*⁴⁷ in every service, nationalism is most strikingly integrated into the domain of faith proper on the visual scale by the physical addition of nationalist symbolism within the building of the Church as well as on the steps of its entry and, since the service in remembrance of Trianon, on the Liberty Square in front of the church building as well. With the physical integration of the national symbolism into the domain of faith proper the “conflict *within* the nation over the nation's meaning, project, and destiny” (Zubrzycki 2006, 25 italics in original) is moved to another space, which (re)-sacralises national symbols as religious.



Picture 1 - Sanctuary of Hazatérés Temploma. Pulpit framed by the different Hungarian coat of Arms on flags and the tables with the Himnusz and Szózat written in runes. The (Rákóczi) coat of Arms of the pulpit reads "iustam causam deus non derelinquet" (God does not let go of the just cause). (Hazatérés Temploma 2019).

⁴⁷ Anthem of the substantial Hungarian minority in Székelyföld, Romania, which urges God to make sure that this region will not be lost.

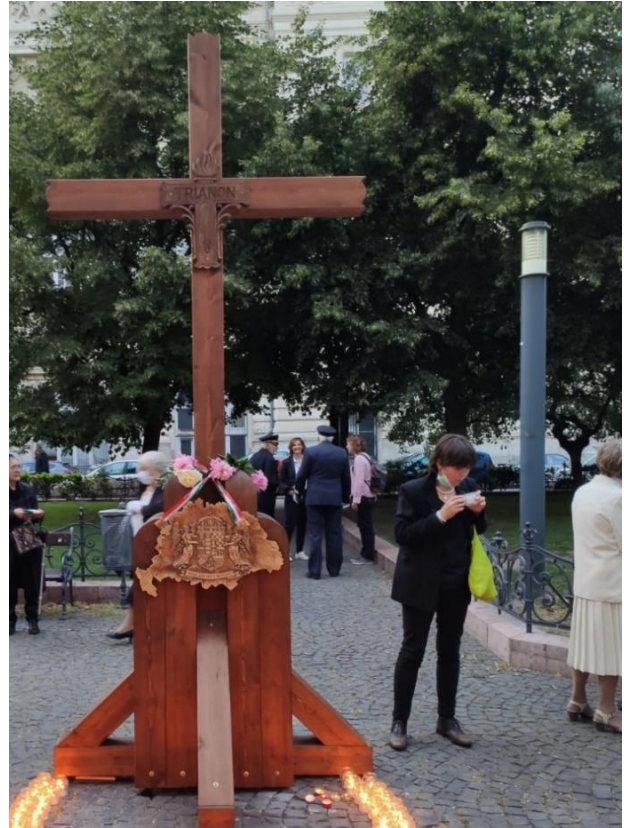
Within the church building, nationalist symbolism almost substitutes Christian symbolism. Instead of Christian symbolism – there is not even a cross in the church – one is faced by historical Hungarian banners,⁴⁸ which frame the pulpit and the lord's table along with tables with the Hungarian anthem – the Himnusz – and the second anthem – the Szózat –written in Runes (picture 1).⁴⁹ At the same time the whole decoration of the church is kept in traditional Hungarian manner. One might argue along the line of an elderly parish member I talked to that as members of the Reformed Church (Calvinist) they are not in need of Christian symbolism for their believe. However, I argue that this makes the integration of national symbolism into their church building even more noteworthy as the disputed elements of their faith are integrated visually. While the parishioners do not need a reaffirmation of their belief in God and the Christ, they need a constant visual and performative reaffirmation of their belief in their *haza* and its resurrection, the symbolic contestation of what belongs to Christian faith.

Thus, the choice of symbolism seems to be directly connected to the discourse of the space in which it is integrated. While there was no need for a symbolical reaffirmation of the Christian faith within the church building, this reaffirmation seems to be more important within the public space of the nation. For instance, a different kind of symbolism was chosen when erecting the Trianon-cross on Liberty square in the event of the 100-year anniversary of the treaty. While the mere integration of national symbolism and sometimes political sermons creates the bridge between nationalism, religion and politics within the space of the church

⁴⁸ Added in 2000 in the event of the fourth Hungarian Reformed world meeting (Hazatérés Temploma 2020).

⁴⁹ The runes trace Hungarian culture back to pre-Egyptian times (probably Sumerian) and show that the richness and long history of Hungarian culture is comparable to the French (head of parish council, Hazatérés Temploma 08.09.2019). This so-called Turanism is recurrently arising in the rhetoric of the Hungarian far-right (see e.g. Pap, Glied 2018).

building, the public space of the square urged for a more elaborated construct able to symbolically create this bridge (picture 2). It is a classical wooden Latin cross on which a smaller cross with the word Trianon is added on the intersection. The upper part of the smaller cross is burning and underneath there is a woodcarving of Greater Hungary in which the coat of arms is held by two angels. The choice of this specific coat of arms bears political meaning in itself; it is the so-called *középcímer*⁵⁰ including the regional coat of arms of Bosnia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Fiume, Slavonia and Transylvania, territories lost due to Trianon and could thus be an urge for revisionism.



Picture 2 - Wooden cross erected by the parish to commemorate Trianon (picture taken by the author)

While Christian faith was not a matter of contestation for the parishioners, wherefore no Christian symbolism was needed within the church building, this symbolism seems to be crucial within the public space of the state. Here, the double cross portraying both, Christian and nationalist-revisionist symbolism at the same time, creates the bridge between nationalism and faith on the symbolical level. One explanation of the symbolical choice and its positioning could be that people without the church building are less familiar with faith and might not even

⁵⁰ Introduced in 1915, abandoned in 1918, reintroduced in 1938 (first Vienna Award), abolished by the Nazi occupation in 1944 (Hytinen 2016, 65).

be believers. This in turn, might create the need to add Christian symbolism as part of the contestation to turn sacrosanct nationalism into a part of the discourse.

The importance of the reaffirmation of Christian faith on the public square gets more obvious when looking at the inauguration ceremony of the cross. The ceremony outside the church building started with the triple sanctification of the cross by a Catholic priest, an evangelical pastor and a reformed pastor (Lóránt himself), thus the three main Hungarian religions, giving the Christian aspect more weight and legitimacy.⁵¹ Then after the spiritual aspect had been created within the public space of the square, the sanctification/benediction of a Hungarian flag and finally a wreath-laying in front of Horthy's statue to pay honour to their hero of faith who had strived towards the goal of getting the lost territories back. This was done by members of the church and the leaders of the Horthy association.⁵² After laying down the wreaths, the responsible people always stood still in front of their leader and lowered their head in his honour. During the ceremony, the crowd sang the *Székely Himnusz*, which once again stressed the revisionist aspirations.

3.1.2 Theological Justification of the Holy, God-Given Sacrosanct Nation & Open Revisionism

Next to the symbolical and liturgical creation of their sacrosanct nation, the parish also creates a theological bridge between religion, nationalism and politics through the sermons of their pastor. They accomplish to merge those revisionist national aspirations with the teachings of the bible successfully, interpreting several big concepts of Christianity from a different point of

⁵¹ All had different approaches; the Catholic priest sprinkled holy water, the evangelical pastor chose a simple blessing and Lóránt “forgot to do it properly”.

⁵² Lóránt himself is the new chairman of the association since January 2020 (Lóránt, 19.01.2020).

view. These concepts are, among others, the love of the neighbour, the need for true freedom and a need for the god given order of the world, stressing at the same time the importance of always asking God for “Your will be done” (Lóránt, 17.05.2020, Our Father), thus to acknowledge that God always knows better than we do what is good for us. Here, however, the context within which Lóránt puts this urge for God’s will to be done in his YouTube Sermons uploaded during Corona, is striking. To show the importance to please God and not people, he uses the legal case he had with the Calvinist church for erecting a Horthy statue in the entrance of the church building.⁵³

This leads to one of the main problems the parish is facing as many “misconstrue as hatred, what is, in fact, nothing else than passion for the love of the *haza* and its advocacy” (Lóránt 07.05.2020) which is, so goes the argument, a great problem from the theological perspective as the Bible pities “those who call evil good and good evil” (Holy Bible, Isaiah 5:20). Therefore, Lóránt urges, it is important to stand up for “our blood beyond the borders”, as

Standing up for one-self is not happening against others, but a striving for the persistency of God’s law of creation and its accomplishment, thus a fundamental Christian duty in accordance with the Christs’ intentions. (Lóránt 07.05.2020, translation by the author).

For this reason, the neighbouring countries in which Hungarians live are those “living in the lie,” as they do not respect those God given truths (Lóránt 01.09.2020).⁵⁴ It is in this way that the love of the neighbour plays an important role within the parish and their relation to the *haza*

⁵³ During the Sunday service of November 4th, 2013, in a joint event with Jobbik, the parish of Hazatérés Temploma put the statue of Horthy in front of their church building which caused a lot of agitation throughout the country (Csaba 2018; felvidék.ma 2013; Index 2013) and in the Calvinist church (Csepregi 2013).

⁵⁴ He admitted that the Habsburg monarchy was also living in a lie, immediately weakening this objecting saying that this happened in another historical situation (Lóránt 01.09.2019).

and their nation. According to Lóránt (19.04.2020) the love of the neighbour does not mean the love of the whole world, but rather the love of smaller circles, whereby one must start with the smallest, as the responsibility towards the whole world starts at this level. Therefore, one's responsibility goes first towards the own nation and only then one can work on the relationship with different nations. Although he acknowledges that “real love is able to go beyond the category of the nation, certes without disdaining or betraying the own nation” (Lóránt 19.04.2020). The nation is an important point in this regard as it refers to people created of the same blood, which they obtained as a present from God through his creation⁵⁵ and thus need to proudly show, otherwise one would “represent a similar kind of internationality as the godless communists did” (Lóránt 16.04.2020), which only creates an illusion of freedom.

Real freedom on the contrary, argues Lóránt in his YouTube Sermons (03.05.2020), is built on three pillars, namely God, the *haza* and the family, which is the forerunner of heaven. Thereby the *haza* needs to be honoured, protected and defended, to make sure it will be forever bequeathed as the true motherland. Unfortunately though, Lóránt continues, current day politicians are not acting accordingly and one has to realize looking at their political non-action in favour of the Hungarians living abroad, that “it turns out the regime change was not even a change of method” (16.04.2020) and that international relations are still given more value on the political scale than is actually given to the people.

In this regard the main challenge seems to be the loss of Hungarian territory after WW1 and the unwillingness of open revisionist aspirations on the state level where “the historical skirmishes have been replaced by the civilizational conflict that is about the survival of

⁵⁵ The same importance is given to the protection of nature as well as to the preservation of the natural gender identity and gender roles (Lóránt 26.04.2020, 20.10.2019, 10.11.2019; male in his 30ies 15.03.2020).

Christian culture, nations, nation-states and traditional families.” (Enyedi 2020, 367) in the rhetoric on the state level. This, however, does not mean that the revisionist aspirations disappeared from Hungarian society but rather illustrates “how the elite-level changes precede the mass level dynamics.” One could interpret some of the things the parish does thus as a counter move to the changes, they feel are tried to be enforced on them by the government. Although the official discourse also “borrows a lot from the inter-war discourses” (Enyedi 2020, 365) there are small but significant differences in the narrative propagated by the government and the one propagated by the parish. While both condemn the new western values (multiculturalism, LGBTQ rights, etc.), Orbán is seeking power on the European level and thus has divergent political views on the Carpathian Basin. He utilized the disinterest of most Central and Eastern European countries in European politics to make them “appear as ideologically more cohesive than it was in reality” and “to turn the V4 into a vessel of his own ideas” (Enyedi 2020, 368). To do so however, he had to do some small but decisive changes to some of the main narratives and to shift the guilt from the neighbouring countries to the West (Enyedi 2020, 368-69).

“The West raped the thousand-year-old borders and history of Central Europe. They forced us to live between indefensible borders, deprived us of our natural resources, and made a death row out of our country. Central Europe was redrawn without moral concerns, just as the borders of Africa and the Middle East were redrawn. We will never forget that they did that.” (Orbán 2020 (1)).

This re-interpretation of the events of Trianon allow for a new framing of the event itself, which does not match the historical interpretation of the event by the parish members (see below).

To Lóránt politicians in general are often living in the lie, as most politicians forget about the truth with time (Lóránt 01.09.2019). This is especially true for the surrounding

countries in regard to their new post-Trianon territories and the way they treat the Hungarians living there (Ibid.). Another aspect which seems to play an important role in this regard is the infamous lie speech of 2006⁵⁶ (Lóránt 13.10.2019; 23.10.2019; 03.11.2019; i.a.), just as in the 56 revolution, Lóránt (23.10.2019) explains, the people had the courage to stand up for their rights, something that is lacking today. Fortunately, though, the Hungarians still have hope as the first pillar of freedom is God himself. Therefore, they can expect to be liberated the same way the chosen people in the old testament once did, something God already proved repeatedly throughout Hungarian history (16.04.2020).

3.1.2.1 National Heroes of Faith as Bridging Force

This proof of God helping the Hungarian nation can be seen throughout Hungarian history, personified in “leaders with a prophetic view” who knew what to do in the difficult situations (Lóránt 16.04.2020). Lóránt generally believes in the importance to remember and praise those heroes of the faith who were ready to stand up for the nation as there are no “saints in the Reformed Church” (Lóránt 06.10.2019). In the same sermon he stressed the importance for every nation of worshipping the national saints (the “Árpád faith heroes” in the Hungarian case) even though some of them might not be canonized (which he attributes to the fact that there would simply be too many).

This gives the opportunity to worship national heroes or even politicians like Horthy; meanwhile turning him into a saint or at least a “*reformatus hit hőse*” (a faith hero of the

⁵⁶ A leaked speech in which the Prime Minister admitted to socialist MPs that he lied about the state of economy and needed austerity measures in his electoral campaign. Protests, thereafter, were brutally repressed by the police which helped right wing propaganda getting a grip on the country (see e.g. Enyedi 2006, 230-31, 325).

Reformed Church) (Lóránt 19.01.2020) for his revisionist politics and short time partial success.⁵⁷ This process is even further intensified by the erecting of a statue as statues

symbolize a specific famous person while in a sense also *being* the body of that person. By arresting the process of that person's bodily decay, a statue alters the temporality associated with the person, bringing him into the realm of the timeless or the sacred, like an icon. (Verdery 1999, 6).

Applied to this context, erecting the statue of Horthy, and especially putting him on the steps of their church building turned him even more into a kind of saint or *reformatus hit hőse*. Thus, this process can be reversed by tearing down statues (Verdery 1999, 6) which probably explains why the Horthy statue has been attacked several times and covered with red paint (last attack: 03.07.2020 (Nagy 2020)).⁵⁸

3.2 The Mainstreaming Effect of the Commemoration of Historical Events

Another important way through which the message of the parish is more easily spread are the numerous commemoration events that the parish organizes. These ceremonies do not simply connect different streams of Christianity, but also give people with similar ideas as the parish the opportunity to elaborate their arguments in a space in which their power to be heard has been multiplied. Due to the fact that Hazatérés Temploma has a monopoly on some of the events in the domain of faith, like for the commemoration events for the revolutions of 1848 and 1956, those events are often highly visited, which gives the parish (and the different, sometimes political actors) the opportunity to reach more people, even those who might not have listened

⁵⁷ Towards that end, Horthy collaborated with the Nazis. He was also very anti-Semitic and is therefore a very controversial figure (see e.g. Horel 2014).

⁵⁸ The colour is even more symbolically loaded as Horthy led the army to Budapest in 1919 to liberate the city from the so-called Red Terror – overlooking what is known as the White Terror (a massive murder of Jewish compatriots) carried out by many of his leading army officers – and was then himself succeeded by communism.

to sometimes extremely radical arguments within another context. Thereby the overall acceptance of the event within Hungarian society seems to define the public the events attracted. While moderate events, like the service in remembrance of the victims of the revolutions seemed to attract church goers that usually go to other parishes, mainstream events like the service of commemoration of Trianon, as well as niche far right events like the marches for Horthy and especially the service in commemoration of the 2nd Vienna Award, seemed to attract people who attended the events more out of a political choice. Looking at the different events themselves gives the impression that the choice of the specific content of and different reenactments/performances within different events is tailored to the expected public in a very socio-prudent manner.

3.2.1 Attracting Christian Patriots with Commemorative & Ecumenical Events

This socio-prudent tailoring creates a mainstreaming effect for sometimes very radical ideas and targets different strands of the Hungarian society. The first group, patriotic regular churchgoers belonging to other parishes, is targeted in ecumenical services⁵⁹ and moderate commemorative events, like the services held in remembrance of the Hungarian revolutions in 1848 and 1956. Here, the trump card of the parish is that they are the only parish that has commemorative events for people dying for their fatherland like the 13 *Aradi vértanúk* (blood witnesses of Arad)⁶⁰, as I have been told by a professor of the Semmelweis university who came with his parents for that event only (Hazatérés Temploma 06.10.2019).

⁵⁹ On one occasion the parish invested 150.000HUF to impress their audience with a performance of Ady poems (13.11.2019).

⁶⁰ 13 generals/officers executed by the Habsburg after the failed Hungarian revolution and secession war (for more information see Koranyi 2015)

Those events, however, seem to be of lesser importance for the parish. The church service in remembrance of the *Aradi vértanúk* – or martyrs as Lóránt prefers to call them⁶¹ – was held by two other pastors, as Lóránt himself was absent,⁶² and no other speakers were invited to the event. Thus, not even the sermon itself was political. However, the event was still attributed value by the parish. The holy communion was held⁶³ and the *Szózat* sung in honour of the Arad heroes and Hungary's first Prime Minister, Gróf Batthyány Lajos⁶⁴ whose last letter was exposed on the altar. One of the regular church goers even counted the names with his hand to make sure that none of his heroes would be forgotten when the commemoration story was read.

Thus, one might argue, those moderate events can strengthen a patriotic feeling of Christian nationalists, by playing with the overall nationalist feelings through symbolism and chosen songs (e.g. the *Szózat*), but do not convey the main message of the parish. At the same time these services give an occasion to leave a good impression and thereby get a more favourable reputation throughout society as well as it might also recruit some new parish members in some cases.

3.2.2 Popular Far-Right Events

While the moderate events mentioned above, mainly attracted Christian patriots, popular far-right events, like the commemoration event of the 100 years of Trianon (04.06.2020), attracted

⁶¹ as they died for their nation, thus for the God-given order of the world

⁶² At a church service in honour of his father in Rumania

⁶³ For this kind of religiously important occasions, the Apostolicum is pronounced as well. Still, the *Magyar Hiszek Egy* is not left out.

⁶⁴ executed in Budapest on the same day

more young people who would usually not go to church;⁶⁵ and give the parish the opportunity to spread their political message, the need for a re-united Hungary as a part of God's holy plan. At the same time, this kind of event has a greater visibility – something that the parish socio-prudently used choosing this event for the inauguration of the Trianon cross –, as the memory of the historical event is a contested topic within Hungarian society. Apparently, the government feared violent incidents for this reason, as armed police, holding machine guns, was placed near the church throughout the time of the ceremony.

Despite the current Corona crisis and the official forbiddance of public events, the church was extremely packed and multiple people gathered in front of the building without wearing a mask. The whole ceremony resembled more a political event than a church service despite the presence of 3 church men (Lóránt himself, a catholic priest and an evangelical pastor). There were many different speeches, most of which were rather political than religious, multiple cultural contributions (songs, piano pieces and poems) and in the end the inauguration of the Trianon cross on the square, coupled with a veneration of Horthy, stressing the importance of what he did for his country with his revisionist politics ending in the first and second Vienna Awards. Thereby all the guests seemed to have been strategically chosen to create a welcome mix. This can best be seen through the example of the invited churchmen.

Their function in the ceremony seemed to be threefold. Firstly the event provided them with a safe space for formulating their argument in their office without getting problems on the church level, secondly turning the ceremony into an ecumenical event allowed for reaching believers of different Christian traditions and thirdly their presence was crucial for the

⁶⁵ Easily spotable due to their different, less conservative attire

inauguration/sanctification of the new Trianon cross that had been erected on Liberty Square shortly before the event, as three churchmen from different Christian currents give more legitimation than one. At the same time, their sermons were rather moderate in nature. While Lóránt's sermons were almost political call to actions, the catholic priest mainly praised God's mercy for helping the Hungarians survive after all their national tragedies, "the 16th century Mohacs, the 20th century's Trianon and after 45 years of Soviet invasion/colonialization," and the evangelical pastor equated Trianon with the phantom pain a patient feels after an amputation. He elaborated on the genuineness of this pain, for both the patient and the Hungarians who still feel the pain of the amputated territories 100 years after the treaty. This however, does not mean that he interpreted this pain merely as something bad, on the contrary, like other speakers on the event, he took up the argument that this pain might have a good side if it helped people understand how important God is, and that we are all under his mercy.

This argument perfectly fits the overall argument of the event. Right in the beginning, Lóránt

Thank[ed] God for the short time he made a healing of the horror of Trianon possible under the government of Nagy Banyai Horthy Miklos, this time in which important territories populated with Hungarians could come back, even if only for a short time. ... [and stressed that] the commemoration of the past always needs to focus on the positive facts to make sure that we are able to bear the moments of grief. (Lóránt, 04.06.2020, translation by the author).

Here we see a combination of gratefulness for God's help to reverse Trianon partly in the past as well as one of the most important political messages of the event, namely that revisionism is important, possible and a good thing to strive for. This might be considered as one of the event's mainstreaming effects, as this narrative clearly diverges from the government narrative interpreting Trianon as the „Day of National Unity”. Thus, to Lóránt, and most of the other

speakers, these are the two days which were not even mentioned in the presidential speech, should be the “Days of National Unity,” while Trianon should be a “Day of National Grief” instead. However, not all claims were welcomed by the whole audience. When one of the speakers asked another speaker, an international lawyer, to start a legal case against the person who turned Trianon into the “day of national unity”, sounds, I interpreted as protest, emerged in the audience.

Nevertheless, the main argument, namely that revision has its place and should be a political goal, was not faced with any protest whatsoever. Lóránt stressed that there were many times throughout history when revision would have been realizable and criticizes the “random assertion of the president that we Hungarians do not live in the time in which revision would be possible for being a lie (Ibid.). Therefore, he wishes that:

the spirit of loyalty towards the *haza* and love of God fills us today, to answer the Zeitgeist of high treason (*hazaárulás*, literally treason of the homeland) of our times. (Lóránt, 04.06.2020, translation by the author).

Moreover, he urges all Hungarian patriots to agree on one political goal, namely asking back all the territory lost due to Trianon. He also invited the audience to take part in the torch march organized by several far-right organisations, including the *Mi Hazánk Mozgalom* on the next day.

Thus, one might argue that ceremony’s celebrating mainstream far-right events, create a frame in which different speakers can elaborate on their revisionist argument within the safe space of a church, at the same time helping the parish to earn a higher visibility and to introduce new symbolism in the public sphere of the state, which in turn can have a direct effect on memory politics. At the same time the different speeches might link some of the attendees might to more radical groups and ideas. This can happen through being exposed to more radical ideas,

Lóránt's urge to join the torch march, as well as through getting in touch with people that might be slightly more radical.

3.2.3 Niche Far-Right Events

Next to the moderate and mainstream nationalist events, there is a third category, namely niche or radical nationalist events that have a lesser acceptance throughout Hungarian society. The commemoration ceremony for the 80 years of the second Vienna Award had the same argumentation as the Trianon event, however, it has far less attendees (30-50) as Lóránt wistfully noted: "it is sad to see how many people came for the sad event, while so few came to embrace the short period of joy" which is very important for the parish and from which it derived its name (Lóránt 30.08.2020).⁶⁶

However, this does not mean that all niche nationalist events are poorly visited, as can be seen through the example of the commemoration of Horthy entering Budapest, liberating the city from its red veil, putting an end to the so-called Red Terror, the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919,⁶⁷ on the 17th of November 2019. This event seemed to highly resonate with a part of Hungarian society, as the church was fully packed, even more it seemed to resonate in other countries as well, as Polish guests came to pay honour to the interwar leader and his granddaughter, the guest of honour. To pay tribute to the Polish guests, an oversized Polish flag hang from the gallery and Lóránt thanked them, stressing how Poles understood and approved of Horthy's political choices. Once more, just as in the case of the German visitors on the 15.09.2019, the parish showed that sacrosanct nation is less about the own nation first, than

⁶⁶ Note that those territories were granted back from Nazi Germany.

⁶⁷ Note that the White Terror (soldiers of Horthy's army taking revenge and sometimes lynching Jewish people with the excuse that every Jew is a communist (see e.g. Horel 2014, 118-128)) was completely omitted.

about the importance to take the own nation first and to respect other nations who do the same in the Christian duty to be a neighbour to other human beings (Lóránt 19.04.2020).

The whole service was focused around Horthy's heroic act and stressed, that one should never lie, because small sins pave the way for bigger sins, as the role many Calvinist church officials played during that period (adhering to and sometimes actively taking part in the more liberal and leftist ideas) shows. After singing the Székely Himnusz, one person added all the other regions lost with the treaty of Trianon, including them into the urge to God not to let them be lost.

Both services, the 80 years Vienna Award, as well as the commemoration of Horthy entering Budapest were held in a very festive, military manner, with many people dressing in traditional clothes. The exit of the church building on the second event is a good example. First, the flag carriers left the church on military commands, positioning themselves on the two sides of the entrance on the square, then the men choir of the Horthy association exited the building taking their places on both sides of the stairs, finally everybody else left and gathered on the square in front of the church building. There, the choir performed one more time and the *Szózat* was sung to honour the victims. Thereafter, the Horthy association and members of the parish paid tribute to their hero and liberator, Admiral Horthy with a wreath-laying. A similar, yet more militaristic, ceremony was held in front of the new Monument of National Martyrs, to which the audience had followed the flag carriers. Thus, these events clearly show, the importance symbolism and performativity play in sacrosanct nationalism and how the parish socio-prudently chooses its performances and inclusions in accordance to the expected public.

This chapter has shown how the parish socio-prudently creates sacrosanct nationalism through the physical integration of national symbolism into their church building and the

creation of bridging symbols in the public space of the Square, through the use of theological argumentation allowing for the belief in a sacrosanct nation and their heroes, as well as through the socio-prudent tailoring of different events creating this merge which create a mainstreaming effect of sacrosanct nationalism targeting different strands of Hungarian society. Doing so, the parish not only gives their revisionist political agenda another level of legitimacy, but also creates a space in which they are the narrators of their story, and in which their argumentation becomes more weight and attention than a far-right demonstration would give them, especially as it gives them the ability to shape collective memory in a way; they achieve this through erecting chosen symbolism in the public space of the state as well as through their mainstreaming events.

Conclusion - Political/Discursive Implications of Sacrosanct Nationalism

This thesis has shown the fluidity context relatedness of the concepts of politics, religion and nationalism and attempted to use a case of sacrosanct nationalism to explain the conditions of possibility for Victor Orbán's rhetorical merge of nationalism and religion on the national and international political scale. In order to understand the rhetorical fusion of two seemingly diverging concepts, looking at a case like Hazatérés Temploma showed to be fruitful as the parish takes this process one step further by shifting this merge to the domain of faith, thereby creating sacrosanct nationalism. At the same time, it allowed for an analysis of the nature of this merge as through a looking glass, excluding any disturbances by multi-vocal signaling as they are found in national and international politics. Still, both, Orbán and the parish, work towards the same goal, that is challenging the conception of Europe and the nation while giving their argument more weight, as both feel a kind of othering in their respective fields. While Orbán, just as the other Central Eastern European countries, is faced with a "Nesting Orientalism" (Bakić-Hayden 1995) at the core of the EU, which partly evolves around their nationalism and its connection to religion, the parish is arguably facing a similar kind of othering within their own nation, taking the same dynamics one step further by integrating nationalism into the domain of faith and formulating an even more radical stance in regard to nationalism by creating the sacrosanct nationalism. This is not only the case because of the divergent historical contexts in which Central Eastern European nationalism evolved, but also because Post-Socialist states needed to adapt to a model, as well as its norms and values, that developed in their absence (Verdery 1999). Instead of accepting the discrimination following thereof they decided to reverse the judgement and turn the former judge (the EU) into the

accused with the claim that the “West has abandoned those traditional values that made it so successful in the past” (Enyedi 2020, 365).

This thesis has argued that not only the specific historical context within which the idea of the nation and its relationship to politics and religion evolved shaped and defined the conception of these terms and their interrelatedness, but beyond that, that those concepts were constantly redefined in a complex understanding of time in which “the ‘present’ is always at the center” (Asad 2003, 222, following Koselleck’s simultaneity of the noncontemporaneous). Thus, one needs to analyze sacrosanct nationalism and sacrosanct nation not only regarding the history of emergence of the different concepts for the region, but more importantly to look at the interplay of historical and more importantly contemporary national and international politics and the way they influence the redefinition of these concepts because the question should always evolve around “what people do with and to ideas and practices” instead (Asad 2003, 194). Consequently, this thesis first paved the way by finding an adequate approach to the concepts of nationalism, religion and politics as well as their relationship, then looked at the history of the relevant concepts starting with the long 19th century because this was the period in which the modern conception of the world was born, including our definitions of all relevant concepts (state, religion, nation, democracy, etc.) (Anderson 1991; Asad 2003; Buzan and Lawson 2013; Hobsbawm 1981; Verdery 1993), and finally looked at the specific developments and changes in practices, happening in the case of Hazatérés Temploma to understand the dynamics/the challenges of our current time to be able to derive certain patterns that might explain Orbán’s rhetorical behaviour on the EU, as well as on the national scale.

Historically, Hungarian nationalism developed in a constant contestation to a Powerful Other – the Habsburg, the Ottoman, the Allies in WW1 and WW2, Communism and today the

EU – which shaped the nature of their nationalism to a great extent and always had a strong connection to religion, which is best exemplified in the choice of their national anthem and which has been seen as a characteristic trait of Eastern European nationalism before the Communist phase and a re-strengthening thereof after the fall of Communism (Spohn 2003; Zubrzycki 2006). At the same time, the choice of the anthem shows yet another important characteristic of Hungarian nationalism, namely the aspect of constant historical suffering caused by the different Powerful Others throughout history which plays an important role until today.

The case of Hazatérés Temploma showed, the character sacrosanct nationalism can take, the theological argumentation it can involve and how its socio-prudent creation, both regarding symbolism added to the public space of the state, as well as the organisation of events socio-prudently targeting different strands of Hungarian society can influence the public discourse. It also shows us, the important role the specific context plays regarding the way concepts – in this case nationalism, religion and politics and their specific interrelatedness – are shaped and constantly redefined in response to contemporary challenges of the people concerned. Thereof follows a fluidity and malleability of these concepts that ask for a case specific analysis within the context in question as this context defines all smaller and larger nuances of their meaning. More importantly, it shows that this constant redefinition happens in regard to any context, even in form of sacrosanct nationalism in the domain of faith proper that goes far beyond the mere political utilization faith. This confirms Asad's (2003) claim that the the religious and secular are anything but essentially fixed categories and should be treated accordingly. Thereby it is important to take into account that what is perceived as "bad and left behind" in the characteristics of Central Eastern European nationalism and its connection to religion is in many

ways a creation of the West through their interaction with the region throughout history as well as their attitude and judgement today that reaches far into academia as well.

If one is really longing to understand the dynamics of Central Eastern European politics it would be a more fruitful approach to move beyond the plenitude of political prejudice and look at small things, their historical development as well as the way their concepts have been changed throughout time and for what reason to try to grasp their essence. Therefore, looking at smaller entities within a nation and the ways concepts are changed at their core, might be a better approach to understand aspects of international political behaviour of the different political actors as well as international relations in general. This thesis might be a starting point for a comparative analysis of sacrosanct nationalism and sacrosanct nations throughout Central Eastern Europe, which in turn would lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon in the region as well as help understand EU internal challenges caused by it.

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