

Die Kirche (the Church)

When the pastors of the Mediasch Chapter reached an agreement in the year 1283 with the bishop of Weissenburg about the levy of three ten-quarts, which he had demanded of them, Theodricus de Copus was also among the chaplains mentioned. From his notes one can conclude that the community not only had a pastor but also a church, which stood on the same place as the one today. It is possible that a chapel of the Szeklers had been there before, as it had been proven by digs in the case of the church of Mediasch.

When today's impressive place of worship in Grosskopisch was built cannot be determined with certainty, because no written records are available about it. Based on considerations of historical and architectural styles the estimated time of its construction lies between the years 1300 to 1330. After very accurate checks of its proportions it is assumed that at first the church was built as a three-nave, Romanesque basilica with a flat roof and without a tower. Then, during the years mentioned, it was rebuilt as a three-nave Early Gothic basilica. The main nave juts out over the lower side naves which one reaches under three pointed-arc arcades which rest upon rough-treaded sandstone capitals on top of pillars that were more than one meter thick. Over the roof of the side naves clerestories let enough light fall into the main nave. When they erected the saddle roof across all three naves the clerestories were obscured by the roof. They were then closed with bricks and are recognizable today only at the outer wall of the main nave.

The tower was built on the west side of the building at a later time. It has two stories, the second of which consists of brickwork. Up to that height it had been constructed with stones like the main nave. It has the same height and seamlessly connects to the nave. This means that this part was built at the same time together with the nave and stood under the same roof. The upper story was added later, as the bricks testify. The tower also received a parapet and the pyramidal roof. This happened around 1250.

Plan of the church and church castle of Grosskopisch. Please see page with plan at the end of the chapter.

Another reason to accept this time frame is represented by the large window openings in the west wall of the first story. They had been closed off with bricks and changed into narrow gun holes. Until then the ringing of the bells sounded beyond the village. This indicates that at this point in time the Gothic church also had no tower. The ground floor of the tower was incorporated in the main nave and was bordered by the side naves with which it shared rounded-arc arcades. Broken pieces at the southern inner wall show that the ground floor of the tower had a pointed-arch and a domed roof. It has fallen victim to the reconstruction in 1799.

Through a pointed-arch portal made from treaded sandstone one steps over stairways in front and below the tower into the house of God. In the year 1955, during repairs, the fragment of a mural appeared in the left corner of the niche in the portal. It showed the face of a woman, which was then covered again with lime.

If one looks at the doorway more closely you can detect deeply furrowed grooves in the lower half. According to the opinion of experts these were supposed to be caused by a pagan custom which had continued to be practiced in Christian times, reportedly the swords were sharpened here in the sanctuary before departing for battle. This was done in the faith that its owner shall be victorious in combat and return home unharmed.

The ground floor of the church nave ascends somewhat. Over five steps, which cover the whole width of the room, one reaches the choir, where another step leads to the foot of the altar. Between the entrance and altar there is a difference of about three meters, which lends an uplifting appearance to the church.

Because the danger from the Turks became more and more threatening at the beginning of the 16th century, the community began to set the church up for defense. The side naves were taken down and the arcades were closed with

bricks. The west walls were not completely broken off but rebuilt to support pillars for the tower, which is clearly recognizable in its plasterwork. The basic ground walls of the side naves are still ascertainable.

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At the south side the walls are plainly visible. At the north side one found them at a depth of thirty centimeters when anchoring the lightning rod was attached which had been attached to the tower before. Where the roof of the church met the tower a stripe of lighter plaster was visible into which the number of the year 1567 was inscribed. This was probably the year in which the works had been completed. In the process of the rebuilding the tower had received the upper storey and a defense corridor. The main nave also received an upper storey of timberwork with small embrasures.

In the year 1519 the new construction of the choir was completed. This is indicated by an inscription on an upper transverse beam of the door to the sacristy. It says: "PLEBANUS LAZARUS PREERAT AD 1519." On top of the engraved inscription is the coat of arms of the lamb with the flag is displayed. At the foot of the door frame two lion heads are represented, both of which are weathered. The choir has a width of seven meters and the impressive height of eleven and a half, with a length of 10.6 meters. The effect it has on people has been put into words by one visitor: "This is a devout church." The unusual height of the choir had a number of peculiar consequences. The regularly, doubled, starred dome extends by three meters the dome of the middle nave, which is separated from the choir by a rounded arc. Above it, concealed by the roof of the church, emerges a pointed arc, which carries the pediment of the choir. Between these two arches a wall of boards was erected, which separates the choir from the loft of the church nave. A Gothic round window and four two-part pointed windows with Late Gothic tracery, in quatrefoil, trefoil, and fish bladder design let bright light flood in. The ribbed vault rests on high consoles of different forms. There are no keystones.

The sacristy which is at the north side of the choir has net vault. The ribs of the sacristy and of the vault of the choir are of fired clay. From the sacristy a spiral staircase made of stone leads upstairs where a chapel was accommodated.

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From this point it was possible to climb to the level of defense of the choir. The floor of defense was erected on a protruding round arc which rested on the buttresses of the choir. Between the wall of the choir and the wall of the upper floor a gap was formed which was open to below, which could be serve in defense. A door opening in the pediment of the choir presented the connection to the floor of defense of the main nave and the tower. The east side of the choir lies two meters in the earth because of the sloping terrain. The foundation of the choir was entrenched even deeper by two meters in a waterproof layer of marl and clay.

A short time after completing the choir Siebenbürgen came under Turkish supremacy. Pillage, high levies, and internal unrest in the country led to great impoverishment of the population. Therefore the works to further enlarge the church of Grosskopisch were also put on hold. Between the arcs of triumph which separated the nave from the old, smaller choir, a room of three meters was planned to lengthen the main nave. This did no longer happen, but instead two small cross naves were built between the choir and the side naves. These opened from the middle nave with a high round arc and were provided with flat arced vaults. Today they are illuminated by large rounded-arc windows, offensive to the prevailing styles, which were put up at a later time. The arc of triumph was taken down. Remnants of it can still be observed under the roof. The cross naves are closed off by bricks from the side naves and do not reach beyond them.

After 1796 a large rebuilding of the church were carried out. The estimate of the cost, prepared by 'Komitats' (committee)-engineer J. Stammer foresaw the following expenses for taking down the paneled ceiling and replacing it with a Bohemian vault:

1.	28.000 wall bricks (1 Gulden equals 15 Kreutzer)	Gulden 55
2.	1040 quarter lime at 15 Kreutzer	" 260
3.	Wood for scaffolds	" 20
4.	Oaks	" 12

5. Handy-men	“	48
6. Planks for scaffolds and vaults	“	12
7. For the mason Simon Peter from Kleinschelken, including Security deposit	“	108
8. For J. Marhofer, mason polisher, from Mediasch	“	60
Total sum	Gulden	576

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In the archives of the rectory the contract with Simon A. Peter is kept, which was completed in December 1795. According to the contract the paneled roof of the main nave was taken down. Remnants of it were found in 1976 under the floor of the gallery of the northern side nave and were covered again as the floor was redone. On the underside of the floor, beams, nails, and fragments of painted panels of stylized flowers in bright yellow, green, and other colors still attest to the flat, wooden roof that had been there. Not only was the roof destroyed, but also the murals at the north side of the main nave, which had been prepared by Pastor Samuel Hermann from Zeiden, who was in Grosskopisch from 1646 to 1663. In order to erect the barrel vault with arcs and lunettes a niche had been hewn into the wall. Remnants of the painting reappeared when the church was repainted in 1977. Because only the legs of the depicted figures could be made visible the figures were again whitewashed. Through the brick vault the clerestories were also covered up and bricked over. To compensate for clerestories the windows of the two cross naves were enlarged as well as one above the gallery for the organ. In the course of this work the gallery of the organ received a new, very flat-arched vault. The pointed-arc vault, mentioned before, above the ground floor of the tower was demolished and replaced with a vault of the same form as that under the gallery. The tower can be reached beneath a pointed-arc of the two meter thick wall above the gallery of the organ.

To enlarge the church space two arches of the arcades were reopened on both sides of the main nave, and the side naves were rebuilt at a length of eight to nine meters. At earlier times they had been twenty meters long and had included the tower. But now the new vaulted ceiling beneath the gallery of the organ and the tower obscured one arch and the side opening of the tower. Therefore the side naves were expanded in height, receiving one new gallery. Two rounded-arc windows each provided the necessary light for the side naves and also the main nave. The ceilings of the side naves consisted of a brick vault.

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When Siebenbürgen in 1802 experienced a heavy earthquake several fissures appeared in the vault of the main nave, while the vault in the northern nave was so severely damaged that it had to be demolished. After that, it was replaced with a board ceiling.

Thirty years later, in 1831 and 1832 the damages caused by the earthquake had been completely cleared away. Especially the side naves “the halls attached to the church” had to be repaired. These works were performed by the master mason Michael Frank from Mergeln. It included placing new floor boards. When the floor was completed, following prolonged rainy weather, a new spring broke loose behind the altar and the water flowed across it, out to the west portal. Because of it grooves were hewn into the oak steps which were still visible in our days. The pastor at that time, Georg Gottlieb, therefore put a note in the commemorative book: ...”Our descendants may not be surprised if the floor boards do not last very long”. Because of the large amount of moisture behind the altar the floor there was covered with large stone plates. One of them stands out by its size and form of a rectangle. It is possible that it had been once the table plate of the first altar. It is likely that at an earlier time the entire floor was paved with bricks. When in 1976 a new floor was laid a forty centimeter wide band of bricks came to light along the north wall which had been covered with fifteen centimeter thick layer of earth. This was likely the remnant of the former brick floor.

Even before one made the church defense-ready, it was surrounded by a protective wall. The church should only offer the last refuge when the encircling walls had been breached. These walls enclose an irregular, rectangular area, have a

thickness of slightly more than one meter, reached a height of four to five meters, and had a passage way with holes for guns on the inside. At the north wall the rotted ends of the support beams are still visible today. As times became more quiet the walls were neglected, eventually demolished, and in its place storerooms were built, which offered their owners the possibility to store here their reserves of fruit, lard, and meat, but also linens and others, protected from fire and robbery.

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After the Second World War these storage rooms deteriorated and were demolished because they no longer offered a secure place for their contents. Only on the south side two chambers next to the entrance were repaired by the church community and decreed to the guardian of the church castle.

At the north-east and south-west corner of the church-castle two bastions stood at an angle to the walls. They had three stories and were equipped with embrasures and noses for tar. Because of their oblique and protuberant position they offered the possibility to observe and shoot into two front sides of the walls. Both bastions had a lectern-like roof which slanted down to the inside and was covered with scale-like bricks. In the east wall was a door, which in danger allowed the guardians from the top of the castle to quickly escape into the security of the walls. The entrance was on the west side and secured with a trap door. The tracks of its guiding groove one can still be recognized at both pillars of the dwelling for the guardian of the church-castle. The arch of the gate is still present under the plasterwork. The gate itself was closed with bricks.

In the years from 1826 to 1832 greater reconstructions were performed at the west side of the church -castle. On top of the entrance a dwelling for the guardian of the castle was built in 1826. The bastion on the south side was decayed and was entirely taken down. In its place, directly connected to the dwelling of the guardian, a school for girls with two classrooms was built. Next to the school a new entrance was made on the south side, whereby the steep slope on the west was circumvented by a somewhat longer, but easier roadway. Across the west portal a door was cut into the encircling wall. It is called s. "port" and can be reached almost in a straight line from the street by a staircase of natural stones.

In the earthquake from 1916 the sacristy had been severely damaged. On the east and west side a wedge shaped gap had formed, which reached from the roof to the first floor. On the east side it was twenty centimeters wide in the upper portion. As a result, the north wall, which was supported in the middle by a pillar, was completely separated from the choir of the church.

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Photo of the church castle. Please see photo at the end of the chapter.

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In the spring of 1969 this support pillar was bent by the burden of the wall and fell down. At the rings of iron with which the wall had been attached to the choir in 1957, a threatening strain had appeared. It signaled danger of collapse, not only for the wall, but also for the ribbed vault, which hung in the air because of the deviation of the wall on one side. At the request of the community to the building department of the Office for 'Landeskirche' (Central Church Affairs) a project for restoration of church and church-castle was approved by the administrative offices of the state. When the work was begun to be carried out in the year 1966 oppressive difficulties piled up. But finally the works were successfully carried out in stages over a period of ten years. The members of the church community deserve highest praise for their sacrifices and undaunted commitment to the cause. Of course the pastor had to lead by example. This was also expressed by the architect of the Office of the State Architectural Bureau, responsible for the restoration of monuments, Mrs. El. Greceanu, at the official opening of the repaired church castle, speaking to a young pastor from Tartlau: 'if he did not know how to renovate his church that all he had to do was to turn to the pastor of Grosskopisch. He could advise him'. To address words of acknowledgement to him directly was refrained from, because this could have been interpreted as presumptuousness. The sacrifices made by the pastor of Grosskopisch were greater than what he could expect to receive from the support that the church community received from the state. Had he not for five years put the earnings from the pastor's garden into the church cash box as donations for the construction costs? Also how many cans of honey he

bartered in exchange for construction material from the Co-op? After a one-time contribution by the state for 15.000 Lei, the support by the state was discontinued. Perhaps the responsible inspector for cultural affairs had received an unfavorable report from the (Communist) Party office about the relationship of the pastor to the Party organizations so that the pastor was no longer worthy of support.

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The work did not stop as the church community did not learn much about the manipulations necessary to finance the ongoing construction. They knew that more urgent tasks in the country waited for their fulfillment. They were also keenly aware that the church was not only a monument of culture but also the house of God that they had inherited from their fathers. As owners and beneficiaries of it we did not want to divest of our rights and responsibilities to come up with the means for its upkeep. For the help that we received from church organizations we were deeply grateful. The church not only had a material but also a moral value. Especially grateful we were to Secretary Paul Hansen from the 'Lutherischen Weltbund' (Protestant World Federation), who viewed the work on location. He recognized the bottleneck in which the church community found itself and assigned a substantial sum to them. Such assistance showed the members of the community that they were not forgotten in their remote village, but were members in a living community of faith.

The work started at the sacristy. It was anchored by two iron-concrete belts in the wall of the choir and thus connected the sacristy to the choir. Two obliquely ascending iron-concrete support pillars gripped at the corners and in the middle of the wall of the sacristy into these belts. They had 3.2 meters deep foundations above which then three buttresses were built with stones. The endangered ribbed vault of the sacristy was grasped from above with a reinforced ceiling of concrete. After that the gaping fissures in the walls could be bricked up. After this the choir also was encircled with a belt, into which through the opening of the pointed-arc aperture below the pediment of the choir a beam had to be poured. After a belt was laid also around the main nave, the southern side nave was fitted with one, and the northern nave with two belts, and thus firmly attached to the main nave. On the north side the three pillars were so much damaged that they were useless as supports. They were replaced with new ones, which also received two iron-concrete buttresses, like the ones at the sacristy.

The two meter thick east wall of the tower, which separated the tower from the main nave, showed two fissures.

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Both cracks began on the base of the pointed-arc arch, behind the organ, and then turned obliquely to the midline above, where they joined. Because of the crack a boulder, heavy as a ton, had formed in the crack, which was held on suspension only by the stony arc. It could break loose, fall down any moment, and destroy the organ. Only when it was secured by the belt around the main nave on the inside, they proceeded to pull an iron-concrete beam from the other side in the church, which was then extended to a belt encircling the entire tower.

In this way the entire building was secured in a way by its two hundred meter girdle and six newly built buttresses that proved its effectiveness in the earthquake in the year 1975. There was not one new crack or fissure, nothing broke off in small pieces or fell down. How big the damage could have been then is hard to imagine. How corroded the brickwork was in some places was shown by the incidents during the repair work on the inside of the sacristy as the north wall of the first floor collapsed up to the level of the newly constructed supporting belt. In the northern cross nave the separating wall to the main nave and half of the vault collapsed. This happened every time when only one brick got loose. The collapse of the small pediment of the southern vestibule had a tragic consequence as one woman was fatally injured. Failure and thoughtlessness drove the community into deep repentance.

The roof was severely damaged in the place where it meets the tower. Since it had been put up broken tiles, ice, and snow had fallen down from the roof of the tower and had smashed the tiles from the main nave. Until the damage had been repaired, each time the 'Dachstuhl' (loft?) had suffered from the moisture and had to be replaced in parts. To prevent more damage on the east side of the tower roof a mechanism to catch the tiles was attached, which proved to be very effective in the following winter.

The lack of gutters had the consequence that water ran into the foundation of the walls, which together with the large moisture of the ground, not only caused damage to the walls, but also led to perpetual wetness of the ground floor in the church interior and partly had destroyed it.

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Therefore gutters were installed around the church.

In order to catch and redirect the ground water, which flowed above the impermeable layer of marl at three meters below the ground into the valley, a 3.2 meters deep drainage ditch was dug around the church. Drain tubes were placed and the water let out at 1.5 meters below the portal of the church castle. Pastor Karl Werner already had used the water of this geological stratum as he dug a well in the garden, twenty three meters above the choir, and led the water flow in tubes of iron to the door of the rectory. During the repairs lasting for years the well was tapped and the construction site received water through its natural gradient. How much relief this brought, one recognized especially in dry years when the well dried up and the necessary water had to be carried in buckets up the mountain from the houses below.

To protect the building from lightning, lightning rods were placed on the choir and the tower.

In the year 1976 the church received a new floor. After only three years a strong wood fungus appeared which spread out more and more.

Instead of the old, decayed window frames made from wood, new frames made from metal were bought, set into the existing stone sockets and provided with strong glass.

Already in 1958 the church and all buildings belonging to it received natural gas heating. In 1974 a project was prepared to get electricity for the church and the application for this service was sent to the appropriate places within the state government for approval. It was neither approved nor rejected.

In the postwar years of need, the roof tiles, slats, and rafters of the bastion had been used to repair other roofs. Because of that the walls had badly weathered. They were rebuilt to their former height and provided with a new roof.

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Photograph of the south east view of the church castle, please see photo at the end of the chapter.

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When the repair of the encircling wall was begun it became clear that the wall had so much deteriorated in some parts that it had to be demolished. The east wall had to be rebuilt from the ground up and covered with hollow tiles. The door to the top of the castle mentioned earlier was not rebuilt. At the north side 12.5 meters were cut off because the wall at the bastion had slanted more than its width into the court yard of the church. But because it hung over to the outside at the other end an iron-concrete girdle was poured into the wall. In addition five new pillars were erected to replace the ones that were old and decayed. After the wall had been rebuilt almost to its previous height it received a roof just like the one on the east wall. At the west side fewer repairs were necessary. It had collapsed in 1847 and had to be rebuilt. Therefore here only the plastering and the roofs on the buttresses needed patching up. A lot more difficult, however, was the work at the south wall. Outside of it was the garden of the school. The earth in it had been dug up over the years up to the wall, so that the foundation now was only thirty centimeters deep in the ground. The part of the wall that was endangered by this had a length of fifteen meters, beginning at the two chambers that had been preserved. Here feet of concrete were poured below the wall at intervals of two to two meters and a buttress was placed on every other concrete foot. This secured the wall. At the two chambers the ring wall which formed the outer wall of the chambers had to be rebuilt, because it had been split in its entire length. Also the roof of it had to be restored.

Already a few years before the gate to the castle had been set so far outside so that the entrance to the former girls' school, which had been given to the guardian of the church castle to use, could lie within the church court yard, and therefore belonged to the church. This set an end to the unwarranted desires of certain powerful people.

During the digging at the outside of the south wall one found a male skeleton, which was already severely decomposed. It is possible that it had belonged to a suicide victim.

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It was generally known that suicide victims were buried outside the cemetery during the Middle Ages. But it was also possible that a soldier of a different religious faith met his death here and to whom a place of rest in holy ground was denied. From the neighboring village Birthälm it is known that three Tartars were buried in the cemetery who had died of the plague.

With the finishing painting and smoothing of the interior, the church had been restored to a dignified state after ten years of laboring. It had cost sacrifices of time and money, but far more weighed the expenditure of nervous energy to procure the necessary materials for the construction. Some questioned why such an effort had been made since all members of the community wanted to emigrate. To such a question there is only possible an answer given in three ways:

1. Not everybody will have the opportunity to emigrate. There will be many bleeding hearts who will have to stay and they will be too few to get such a large house of God in good condition. Even if all could move away, it will be many years until the last person leaves the village. Therefore it is our duty to care for those left behind that they can utilize an appropriate church as long as they have to live here.
2. But even if all emigrated, nobody could blame us, or complain later, that we would have been unfaithful to our Saxon character, but everybody would be compelled to respect us, as it is usually the case.
3. We, ourselves, will have the inner conviction to have completely fulfilled our duty and responsibility towards our homeland and the community. All who have helped here can go on with confidence to new tasks as life presents them, with the feeling of one's own inner spiritual strength.

The Altar

Today's altar was built in 1854 by the sculptor Friedrich Pökatz.

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Photo of the altar and the basin for baptism, please see photo at the end of the chapter.

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His project and the contract are preserved in the archives of the parish. The altar is built in the Classicist style. Three Corinthian pillars stand on both sides of a large image in the middle, which shows Jesus Christ in conversation with the Samaritan woman, in accordance with St. John, 4th chapter. On the predella below the middle picture is a gilded wooden relief which displays the presentation of the Last Supper. On the six visible sides of the quadrangular sockets upon which the pillars rest, are other wooden reliefs with scenes from the Bible. They too are gilded. Above the middle image a small painting in oil is located which shows Jesus with the disciples from Emmaus at the table. On top of that is a wooden sculpture of a chalice, on the right of it, a Bible, on the left the two Panels of the Law, flanked by two angels. Two flower garlands fall from each angel to urns standing above the pillars. In front of the Late Gothic round window the gilded sculpture of the Eye of God and a gilded aureole adorn the altar. The altar stands on a brick socket. In front of that is a two-step mobile platform and on top of it a wooden box table.

About the old altar a description is preserved by Friedrich Müller. In his treatise: "The defense churches in Siebenbürgen. A contribution to the provincial art history". It was published in 1857 in Vienna. He writes about the "wing altar of the Late Gothic"..."the last one shows the Savior and the two Marias as the Middle Image, below the 'Weg des Leidens' (the Way of Suffering) and around that, twelve pictures taken from the Holy Scripture. These were not painted in a bad form and could have belonged to the most recent examples of such pictures in Siebenbürgen, according to an inscription on the back. This inscription reads: 'p.C.h.f. 1558' (post Christum hoc factum 1558). That is freely translated into German: This work of art was made in 1558 after Christ.

Unfortunately, these images have not been preserved. Only broken pieces of a wooden sculpture, severely damaged by rot, were left. It probably had stood in the shrine of the altar. This can be concluded from the fact that the backside had been left uncut.

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Contrary to the opinion of Friedrich Müller, Harald Krasser places the origin of the images into the first quarter of the 16th century. He believes that the year 1558, cited in the inscription, relates only to a repair. He justifies this assumption by the stylistic statement of the group. It depicts the Man of Sorrows with two angels. Fr. Müller had assumed the figures were two Marys, which Krasser refutes because women in those days were pictured with longer hair and with headscarves. Besides, the faces of the figures were strikingly without gender identification, while in paintings and in sculptures this motive usually shows three independent figures, isolated from each other. In this case the figures are fused into a group as the two angels lift the sheaths of Christ so that the martyred body and the stigmata would be more visible. Whether the angels had wings and whether the angel to the left originally held the tools for torture, like it is the case in other images of this topic, remains a possibility.

The professional woman, who restored the sculpture, joined the broken pieces together with great artistic sensitivity and competence in her craft. Thus she saved a valuable work of art from total ruin.

In the assessment of the whole group Harald Krasser writes in Nr. 10/75 of the "Kirchliche Blätter (Church Notes)": "During her work the restorer sought...by consulting all material available to her for comparison, to find out from which art school or community this valuable work of carved wood sculpture could have originated. She came to the conclusion that most likely it was connected to the main Frankish school in succession to Tilman Riemenschneider...the treatment of the main parts, the folds of the gowns, and the anatomical details of the almost gender-neutral angels, but also the total mood,"...the pose full of sorrow and humble dedication to a destiny fulfilling itself" (after J. Bier) point to the succession of the "greatest lyricist of the German sculpture", as W. Pinder once said of Riemenschneider.

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Photo of the altar in the Ferula/Hermannstadt, built with the wooden sculpture from Grosskopisch. Please see photo at the end of the chapter.

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In Riemenschneider's language of form, the original sense of the compassion image is fulfilled here once more again. Being used to Riemenschneider's compassionate style manifest in the best works of the Siebenbürgen sculptures, one also was searching for signs of his greatest opponent, the dramatic Veit Stoss. At that time the influence of this artist had worked its way into Siebenbürgen via Krakau and the Zips' (?), mediated by his sons. Through the recovery of the "Man of Sorrows" sculpture in Grosskopisch, this eventful epoch of our art history, the first quarter of the 16th century, was enriched by the emotional tone in this work that pointed in another direction.

Since the church community was occupied with the costly restoration of the church with its ring walls it could not carry the expenses of the restoration of the sculpture of the group. Neither was the community able to store such a possession safely and properly. It also could not defend or use it appropriately, according to its significance. During the deliberations about this issue a depressing circumstance carried a lot of weight: the community became smaller from year to year for a variety of reasons. Therefore the broken pieces were turned over to the consistory of the country so that after the restoration a house altar for the Theological Institute in Hermannstadt could be built, based on a blueprint prepared by the architect Hermann Fabini. For reasons unknown this plan was abandoned. At this point the church community of Hermannstadt took over as a loan the restored group sculpture including the plan by Fabini and arranged for the building of a new altar in the so-called "Ferula". Especially weddings were performed here ever since.

At the official opening of the altar the pastor Andreas Türk, who had made significant contributions to secure the fragments, took part in the ceremony, as did the members of the Presbytery of the church community Johann Zultner, Johann Schuller, Friedrich Schell, and Michael Mauer with their wives, Margarete Zultner, Johanna Schuller, Maria Schell and Margarete Mauer. The striking men and women in their best church finery with their faces tanned from the sun and wind gave the event an especially festive note.

After the invocation sermon by the town pastor H. Rebner the pastor Andreas Türk spoke. He drew a picture of the condition of the community, spoke of their needs, but also about their perseverance and loyal persistence in the faith of their fathers because in hard times they experienced and still learn every day that God is their only strength and trust in times of need, but also their source of joy, and Jesus Christ will be an unshakable cause for hope, for time and eternity, and for everybody who believes in him. He thanked all of those who had endeavored to restore the sculpture and expressed the wish that it may lead the viewer not only to admire and enjoy the art, but also to invoke a deep experience of faith that will move their hearts, just like this person who, as he was allowed to experience it, put it into the following words:

At the Cross

Christ speaks:

I was hanging in the searing sun on the stake of torture,

Infinitely stretched the hours of the day,

Congeaed the air was in the valley.

From my brow's wounds caused by the thorny crown

The red blood trickled drop by drop that -

Before it mingled with the hot sand –

Counted bitter hours like the grains of sand in an hourglass.

Meanwhile my tired limbs slackened,

The thirst devouring my last strength within me,

And as I, with parched mouth,

Craved for feasting on a drink,

One scornfully offered me vinegar mixed with bile.

When I rebelled against it, it appeared

As if Your hand as well, fell off my staff.

The cemetery

The cemetery originally was located next to the church, within the encircling wall. Believing that the ground next to the church is sacred, everybody wanted to be buried in holy ground. Also, one would not like to leave departed relatives to the mercy of enemies. Therefore, for centuries the dead were buried here. No wonder that, during digging in the entire church yard, one encountered bones. Within the church, outlines of a grave in front of the altar was visible because of a different shade of color in the earth. It is possible that up until then, a chaplain was interred here when he had died in the community.

When the Austrian government decreed in the year 1819 that cemeteries had to be moved to places outside of villages and towns a new cemetery was to be located in Greveln for Grosskopisch, which still is in use today. With the transfer of the cemetery to outside of the community the Grosskopisch villagers apparently found it difficult to come to terms with, because as late as 1830 the pastor Stephen Ludwig Roth made this the topic of a sermon. His "Father-in-Law" pastor

Georg Gottlieb Auner had been at a church community in the 'Burzenland', therefore he celebrated the church service and gave the sermon. At this occasion he preached in a folksy-didactic manner about the gospel of the 16th Sunday after Trinity, St. Luke, 7th chapter, verses 11-17, which reported on the raising from the dead of the young man at Nain. The verse 12 "when Jesus came close to the gate of the city, a dead man was carried out of it" he took the opportunity to explain the following:

In those days it has been the custom what we also now do on the command of our blissfully passed on Emperor Joseph: we bury the dead outside of the gates of the city, that is, outside of the dwelling of the living. The grave of Lazarus was outside of Bethania, the grave of Arithmatia outside of Jerusalem...This tradition also existed in other nations. It was also in use with the first Christians who in such cases followed the customs of the country and its people anyway in which they lived. And this occurred also for good reasons.

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Why should the dead harm the living with the vapor of putrefaction? If the deceased had been a villain who caused much damage in his life – aren't we glad to bring him to a place where he cannot do more harm? If he had been a good man why should we bury him in a place where he would have to harm against his will after he had lived his whole life with the intention to harm nobody? Only when the doctrine of the purgatory came up (to which we Protestants do not give anything), where the souls of the people were cleansed by fire, fear and worry about the fire was brought to the people with all diligence so that they wished their corpses would be buried closer to the church. They believed that this sacred place, close to the pastor, the consecrated wafer, and the community would help them so that they wouldn't have to languish too long in this fire....everybody wanted to rest attached to the church, in the choir, next to the altar, the best place...

You poor, frightened Christians! Just like in baptism it is not the water that does it, but the promise, just as when dying, it is not the earth, but the salvation through Jesus Christ...the earth is everywhere of the Lord!"

So, subsequently, the dead were buried in the new cemetery in the under the south side of the 'Burgkoppe'. There also the pastor Georg Gottlieb Auner was interred, as well as Simon Joseph Theil, Petrus Traugott Meyndt, and Ferdinand Zintz; also preacher Michael Wölwel, Johann Closius, Johann Schell, and Johann Schuller. They were embedded there for their last rest amidst their former church children.

The antipathy towards this decree maybe found its last expression in the wayward disposition of the grave sites. Not until 1962 they were ordered and walkways in between the graves were prepared. At first the cemetery had a fence of switches and sticks. This was enough as long as a Saxon man was in charge for maintaining order in the village. This was still the case between the two World Wars. But when in 1944 the living lost their rights, the dead too lost their dignity and respect.

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Faith and reverence faded. In the summer the fence was riddled with holes so that the lambs and swine were feeding between and on top of the graves and the chicken scraped on them. In the winter the fence was stolen and used as firewood. Even a fence made of thin wire-netting often had a similar fate. Only the fence made in 1962 of a strong mesh of wire with stakes made from concrete in between secured the peace again. Both the wire mesh and the stakes of concrete were manufactured by the men in their free time without remuneration. Now, when in spring the white spireas bloom, which had been planted all around at the fence of the cemetery, flowers were blooming on the graves again too. The paths were kept clean by the women. It is again a dignified place of calm. This appearance was supported by the new head stones which individual families placed on the graves for their departed.

The pulpit

The pulpit is at the north side of the church between the main and cross nave under the broken off triumph arc from which only one pillar remained. This pillar is rounded off on the side toward the side nave with its pillars. The first arc rests on a natural stone that has a slightly slanted lower edge similar to the capitals on the pillars of the arcades. On the other side of this pillar, where traces of former demolition appeared during repair work, the round arc is supported by the pillar that connects the main and the in-between naves. At its front site the pulpit is located. In 1796 Simon Peter built it with bricks

as he committed himself to do in point 2 of the already mentioned contract: "To freely construct a new pulpit like they are not found in this region". In the years 1790/91 a Mr. Petersberger received several applications for the construction of the ceiling and the crown of the pulpit. Both are made of wood. Several garlands of rays decorate a crown. At the underside of the ceiling a small oil painting is visible, representing the dove of the Holy Spirit.

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Wooden tassels decorate the lower edge. In the years 1857/58, according to a contract with the master Carl G. Hoppe from Mediasch, the gilding was renewed, not only of the pulpit but also the organ.

The organ

In the first preserved bill of the church community from the year 1763 expenditures for the organ are mentioned. This happened again in the year 1770 when the carpenter master Czillmann received wages for "the carving at the 'Positiv'(part of the organ)". Also, in 1789 a repair at it was performed. But ten years later a contract for building a new organ was negotiated with the organ builder Samuel Metz from BIRTHÄLM. In the year 1800 it was set up on the newly constructed gallery. This organ is equipped with a manual with ten registers. It has a beautiful, pleasantly soft sound, but today it is very needy for repairs. A large tin pipe has been robbed during the years of violence and lawlessness after the year of 1945. Because the construction of the gallery required so many modifications at the church, it has to be assumed that there had been no gallery before, and that the old organ had its location in the choir above the altar, like it still is the practice today in some communities.

The niche for the sacrament

In his report about the church of Grosskopisch from the year 1853 the bishop at that time Fr. Müller writes about the presence of a niche for the sacrament, at the right of the altar, extra elevated by what is called 'a donkey's back'. Today only a rectangle in the plasterwork of the brick wall indicates its former location. It is probable that the niche fell victim to human error during a repair.

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The font

Today a large chalice made of wood with a half-sphere lid serves as a font for baptism. The lid can be lifted with help of a roll affixed to an iron rack. This device has been lost. It is probable that the iron fixture which had been screwed to the floor, no longer found the necessary fastening in the decayed wooden boards. The chalice as well as the lid of the baptism basin is decorated with four carved, gilded ornaments of leaves, while the background beneath has been painted with a brown marble imitation. It is of a newer, unknown date. For the water for baptism a small copper bowl is used. Earlier there was probably a bowl carved of stone.

The bells

Today the community owns two bells. The old one, which was called the 'middle one' by Fr. Müller, carries the inscription from Isaiah, chapter 40, verse 8: "Verbum Domini manet in eternum inviolatum – hoc factum est per M. Sigis . Tempore V lhero pie 1550." (The word of God remains for eternity). This bell inscription was customary in Siebenbürgen after the Reformation. For this bell it was used for the first time, according to Dr. Victor Roth. About the other two bells, which were confiscated and taken away in the First World War, Fr. Müller writes: "the oblong form of the other two, which do not contain an inscription or pictorial representation, let these appear even older". This assessment seems to have not been known to the administrations, or to the representatives of the church. This was the fateful cause why their age and their high value had not been recognized, and nobody protested about taking them away. So they were melted down.

About personal troubles and sorrows at the time of the First World War members of the community, who had lived in it, told little, but the loss of the bells still rang in their hearts with poignancy.

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There was a story, that on one summer day all of a sudden all three bells had rung from the tower. They had run into the village from their work in the fields, because they suspected a fire had broken out. Then they learned that the large and the little bell already had been thrown down from the tower and had been taken away. To ring for peace had been the purpose of the bells, when they had served during troubled and hard times in the past. Now they were made to serve the war, destruction, and death. Who would feel shame about the tears that flowed? The tears were not so much for the bells, but more so for the wrong human heart that could act so unpredictably in uncertain times. How much the people were attached to their bells is told in the story by Adolph Buchholzer in which he writes that ringing the bells in a storm, the sound of the large bell could be heard across the Fettendorfer Mountains down to the communities of the Herbach valley. Therefore their residents were warned of enemies in time. This infuriated the Turks so much that they had tried to smash the bell. But they only succeeded to break off a few pieces at the edge as one could see. Others wanted to have heard, or they surmised that transport of the bells had gotten stuck in the train station of a community in the Kokel Valley. The communities in close proximity had hauled back their bells, but there also had been mix-ups. Because of it, one of the bells of Grosskopisch may now ring in one of these villages. The pain about the loss, when thinking hearing the dear sound of the bell again, was so great as to let the impossible seem to be true.

The two bells which were lost to the war were not only missed by the church community residing in the village, but also by those who lived in the United States of America when they came for a vacation at home. Among them was also Pastor Johann Zultner, who then lived in Ellwood City. He published an appeal to his compatriots in the Siebenbürgen-American Peoples Paper. There it says, among others:

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“But something indispensable is still missing which requires for its acquisition our help. Those who have been there after the war miss most painfully the familiar beautiful triad sound of our bells because the large and the small bell are still missing, having been taken by the insatiable war and which could not be replaced due to poverty.”

And in a letter to his compatriots in Canada he wrote:

“In gratitude, it is our holy duty to help to alleviate the suffering which has been brought to our people by the hard times of war. We want to help so that our children can have joy just like we had once. What eyes they would make How much heartfelt joy would fill their receptive young hearts, if they suddenly could hear the beautiful triple sound from the tower, like we always heard it in our blessed childhood and youth...we should help if we want to appear worthy in front of our ancestors”....and a little later:...”how could we stand before our children? Can we deny to them, when they want to learn the history of our ancestors and compare their accomplishments with ours to look at us with loathing and contempt? If we don't want to experience this, we must do what we owe, owing to the ancestors and to the descendants!”

Such admonitions were not without success. As we can take from another article, quoted elsewhere, from the Siebenbürgen's Daily, 32.000 Lei were donated to the Bell Foundation. But the bells were not purchased. Another letter from Pastor Zultner that he wrote to Adolph Buchholzer in Canada informs us about the cause of it. In the letter it says: The Presbytery...”determined to use the amount for the long overdue salary for Pastor Salzer, but the money was only to be borrowed. It was never repaid by the administrative authorities who should have paid his salary in the first place....We were happy, that Andreas Klöss, when he came from America, donated 13.000 Lei for a small bell and had it installed.”

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Pastor Hermann Salzer retired in 1931 and had left the church community. They still owed him a large sum of salary. According to administrative directions by the church the community could only vote for a new pastor when this debt was paid for. This was the reason for the encroachment by the Presbytery who used the bell fund for this purpose. Most certainly, it was done with the best intention to replace the money, but the needs had no ends, and therefore it remained a good intent. From the money both bells could have been replaced, but on the other hand the church community had to be left longer without a pastor.

So it was that Andreas Klöss, the Elder, donated a small bell, in memory of his wife who had died during their stay in North America. It was cast by the Firm Pacha in Hermannstadt, which was documented in the inscription on the bell. It

also contains, besides the dedication and the name of the donor, the beginning of the song by Luther: "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott! (a strong castle is our Lord)." This bell is rung on Sundays and Holy Days together with the old bell, and it is also used as bell for the dead. It was inaugurated by Pastor Johann Zultner, who had returned to his homeland.

As long as there still a Protestant school existed, a little school bell called for the children to attend every morning. Now it is cracked and no longer in use, but also for other reasons.

The clock in the tower

Within the bills of the church in the year 1763, an expenditure is listed for oil for the clock in the tower. Therefore a clock existed already at that time. It seems that it was repaired in the year 1880, because the clock face painted on the wall of the tower shows this date. At the most recent repair of the church the clock face was newly painted, but left otherwise unchanged. Today's movement was delivered in 1907 by the Firm J. Fuchs from Bernburg. Thanks to meticulous maintenance the clock announces to the residents of the village time and hour with great accuracy.

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Parts of an old hand-forged movement still lie in a corner of the attic of the church. For maintaining the clock the guardian of the church castle received one 'Los' firewood each from the church and the community as long as they still owned forests. Today he receives free heating for his service apartment.

The tools for the Last Supper

The church owns two chalices for the Last Supper, two patens, and three decanters. For each chalice belongs a special paten, which have different uses. The large chalice is used to celebrate the Holy Supper for the community in the church. It has a height of 205 mm and a diameter of the cup of 100 mm and it weighs 630 Grams. The shell of the chalice consists of Late-Gothic scrollwork and was cast in the same pattern as the plant frieze at the upper edge of the chalice. It also has six figurines and as many cut flowers. A semiprecious stone forms the center of each flower. The foot of the chalice with its six sides is connected to a support base by a cast lacy wreath of plant tendrils. The junction between the foot and the cup is studded with small hammered-out blossoms and strawberries. To this chalice belongs a platen, into which a cross of boughs is engraved in a circle on its inner rim.

The smaller chalice is designated for the Last Supper for the sick. It is 200 mm tall, has a cup diameter of 90 mm and weighs 450 Grams. The shell of the cup consists of large cut-out leaves and has a cast frieze of lilies. The leaves are adorned with twelve flying birds, from which four got lost. The hexagonal foot has a smooth edged socket with a cast lacy, wave-like connecting piece in a Gothic fish-bladder tracery. The sides of the foot are bordered with notched wire and covered with one cut leaf each at which lower part is a blossom with a strawberry center affixed. This chalice is damaged. Part of the edge of the socket is missing as well as a leaf of the foot.

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Photo of the chalice for the Last Supper for the sick at the beginning of the 16th century. Photo at end of chapter.

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Also the gilding of the stem is defective and the exposed silver beneath it is blackened. Most likely this chalice had been made by a master in Mediasch at the beginning of the 16th century, who applied the art of cut leaves, also present in other objects of the Mediasch and Hetzeldorfer tools for the Holy Supper. To this chalice belongs a paten, whose edge is mostly broken off and shows tin at the underside, a sign that it was tried to solder broken pieces together.

Both chalices and patens consist of gilded silver. In their perfect form and beauty they testify to the high standard of the art of goldsmithy in our cities. To own beautiful chalices was the pride of our communities. Even the smallest and most remote among them competed to own something special. But like all possession – yes, just like life itself – even these were not secure. At times of great distress, if it counted to escape bondage, to obtain justice, to buy freedom, or to save the homeland, they would be sacrificed.

This was also necessary at the end of the 18th century when the state of Austria was close to financial ruin. At this time there was a call for the churches to contribute to the recovery of the economy of the country. In the yearbook of the church community one finds a receipt with the following entry:

4th September, 1799

At the Mediasch mayor's office the following items were deposited by Georg Kraft to the k. and k. Mint

1. A tin-gilded can with forged Antiga leaf work on the outside of 13 'löthigem' silver, weighing'Loth' 26
2. A paten, gilded at the in- and outside, made of 13 'löthigem' silver, weighs 5 ¼ 'Loth', together: 31 ¼ 'Loth'.

Mayor J. Georg Binder, e. h.

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Photo of the chalice and platen for the community Last Supper. Photo at the end of the chapter.

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In the context with the submitted can various questions arise. First, it can be surmised that it dealt with a jug belonging to the small chalice and that the Mediasch cut-leaf technique was performed by the same master at the same time. Furthermore, the expression "tin-gilded" has to be labeled as misleading. In the same certificate the specification "out of 13-löthigem silver" corrects the possible misunderstanding and then the sum of the can and the paten were summed up which would not have been acceptable for objects made of different metals. Also in the loan document of the "Thesauriat" (?) there were not two cans which again proves the point that the submitted can was made of gilded silver.

Of the three existing tin cans one is of particular value. Supposedly, it came from a master in Schässburg who signed his objects with the initials H.B. On this he engraved a jumping little horse. In addition the upper and lower edge of the vessel and the rim of the cover carry a wreath of stamped palmettes.

In the year 1974 the law came out about establishing an office for the patrimony of culture. This ordered that all objects of cultural or artistic value, irrespective whether they were owned by religious, other institutions, or were privately owned, were to be transferred to ownership by the state. This was reasoning that the treasures were preserved more properly and securely this way. Already a few years earlier it had been demanded that special inventories of objects of precious metals and their registration be made at the National Bank in Kronstadt. Such an inventory is also present at the clerical archive in Grosskopisch. In it are listed the chalices and the patens with precise information about their form, size, and weight. Listed was also the organ, the bell of 1550, and a document which contains the judgment of the National University in the litigation of the community with the Count Jacob of Hetzeldorf about the right of inheritance for the Earl over Grosskopisch from the year 1477.

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These entries could be made without difficulties, because Dr. Viktor Roth had accurately described and investigated with regards to their value of all objects of art owned by the Protestant church community in his treatise "History of the German Craft in Siebenbürgen". The high regard as to their values did not need to be questioned because they had been carefully watched over in loyalty for centuries. What for us was self-evident, that their conscientious storage, secured against theft and fire hazards, as well as protecting them from ever being sold, was now being required by law. It was a measure that our diocese (Landeskirche) had already taken long before, when they demanded that the tools for the Last Supper had to be stored in the bedroom of the pastor if there was no iron cashbox. The state now took account of the new conditions of the times and clamped down on the greed of collectors, aroused by the tourism. The intent to secure such valuable goods could have been admirable, but not in the way it was handled in practice.

The newly created Offices of the Culture Patrimony of the Regional Administrations not only received supervisory rights but also the right to possibly confiscate objects. This must have filled the owners with sorrow and bitterness. Was this provision not the same as expropriation? Was it not securing something by taking it away? It was a new injustice done to our people, even if it could continue to use the objects. Are they not in danger to be taken away at any time, determined

arbitrarily by state agencies, for whatever reason? This new procedure was to introduce measures in Romania that seemed to imitate those used in the Soviet Union. There plain people told about the “Unmengen” (tons) of gold that used to be owned by the churches and monasteries in earlier times and that had now been converted into the property of the people. There is no reason to believe that there were bars of gold. More likely it were religious objects, such as crucifixes, cans, candelabras, and plates, and the removal of those was conveyed as the great announcement of success.

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May the Lord grant that there will be no more encroachments and that the law as given really serve only to preserve these precious items and that our believers, the only legal and rightful owners, can use them without disturbance.

Das kirchliche Leben (The life in the church)

When our ancestors left their homeland at the Rhine River, an enormous religious movement of awakening captured all of their countries which had started in the monastery of Cluny in France. It also found entrance into German countries. Especially eager were monks of various monasteries. The movement of Cluny also captured the people. The large rush to the monasteries soon rendered them as too cramped. They no longer could take in the applicants. Therefore they attached themselves to the monasteries as laymen brothers, which saw as their task to take over the worldly businesses and more mundane works of the day-to-day economy of the monastery so that the monks could devote their time to prayer and study. Even the sons of noble families sought to find their salvation in such a service. Women also followed this example, renounced the world and their natural duties for the family, and lived in pious exercises and services for the goal to earn their bliss.

There is no doubt that this movement had a great influence and say on the religious life of our ancestors in their new homeland. Soon monks of various orders found reception in cities and larger communities. Oral tradition reports that there was also a monastery in Grosskopisch. Supposedly it had its location opposite of the church on the farmstead number 128 with an underground tunnel to the church. Even earlier there had been brotherhoods in the cities under the patronage of a saint. Clerical people and laymen joined together to formed an alliance in prayer to gain salvation.

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Others saw their task in caring for the poor and sick. Already towards the end of the 13th century the presence of hospitals was attested to in the Saxon cities. Guilds positioned themselves under the patronage of a saint in service of the church.

The brotherhoods not only searched for their own salvation, but strove, through living a life pleasing to God, through prayers and holy Masses, to lead other people to the right faith. He, who as a member did not attend the Masses, received a penalty. Women and girls were admitted to such religious communities. Especially eager persons also joined other brotherhoods, so they could be sure to gain bliss. As far as to Rome the contributions flowed for the hospital of the Holy Spirit which looked after poor, abandoned children.

The spirit of such brotherhoods still has an effect today. Purely outwardly it manifests itself that every Saxon man is addressed as “brother” and every Saxon woman as “sister”. Whether or not they are familiar is irrelevant. In the neighborhoods and in the brotherhoods and sisterhoods of the youth this spirit continues to live. It was mandatory for their members to attend church services and participate in the Holy Communion. Ahead of it there was reconciliation service providing an access for the youth to reconciliation and which nobody was to miss. In it disputes were cleared up, discords eliminated, everybody asked forgiveness from the other attendants. Within the family the members of it asked each other to forgive them any known of subconscious mistakes, ensuring that those were not done ‘with intent or evil will’, but out of human weakness. The Holy Communion is received kneeling down even today, as the church goes, according to age, first the men, then the women, step up to the altar in groups of four. Only people who die suddenly, die without having received the Holy Communion for the Sick, but one only asks for it, if one has already reconciled oneself with death. Special emphasis is placed on baptism of the children at the right time, and attendance at the children’s religious school with subsequent Confirmation.

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The religious schooling was of special importance because all religious instruction was banned in the public schools in 1948.

The mentioned associations included all members of the community from the age 15 and up. They watched with zeal that their members followed God's commands and applied the teaching of the Gospel in their lives. Who insulted a neighbor, started a quarrel, disputes or even a brawl, used bad language, led a life without god, disregarded or blasphemed Holy Communion, became subject to severe punishments. If fines were insufficient the sinner was placed on the pillory. Up until the 17th century the block, called s. "fedal" or "feral", stood in front of the church door. Particularly obstinate people were fastened on it and had to stand there, exposed to contemptible glances by the church visitors. The most severe punishment was the banishment which could be imposed on an individual or an entire community. This was a heavy burden for the church. Was it not the church, which had fought for freedom of conscience during the time of the Reformation, and was now forced by the brutalization of the minds, due to the difficult circumstances of the time, to apply constraint and control against its better inclinations?

After the Reformation a constant wrestling started about the pure Lutheran doctrine. Synod and the National University watched that the clerics did not deviate to the doctrine of Calvin or even to the Unitarians. But when later other religious movements came into the country, mostly through students from Germany, the leading men understood to take in the new, valuable insights and avoid splitting up. Sometimes it came to hard struggles to achieve unity. Whether the people of Grosskopisch were involved in this cannot be determined. It appears that they were more interested in the truth of the Gospel than in the fights about the interpretation. This was also the case in the present time when various sects wooed them. Only one family left the church community and sought the community of a sect in Hetzeldorf to where they had moved. They lost more than they gained.

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For the longest time a strict order of seating is the rule in the House of God, which nobody repudiates because a sense of order and a well-developed sense for justice approves this as the right thing. Everybody sits according to age. Only the Presbyters and their wives have special places, which the church bestows on them, acknowledging their honorary service for the church. The children sit in the choir, to the right of the altar sit the boys and to the left the girls. In the front of the main nave sit the maidens. Next to them, from the pulpit to the gallery for the organ, the places for the women are located. Underneath the tower, on the ground floor, a few rows of benches were destined for the oldest men; today these are no longer used. The young men have their seats in the gallery of the southern side nave; below of it sit the older and old men. On the gallery of the northern side nave seats are reserved for the lads. Underneath, in earlier times, sat the men, who lived in common-law matrimony. Surprisingly, the women, who lived in this arrangement, had not been assigned special seats. The responsibility for such cohabitation rested only on the men. They were the head of the family and must bear the responsibility for the consequences. Today these benches are empty despite the fact that there were ten couples who had not been formally married, just a short while ago. It appears that this phenomenon must also have had a greater dimension in the past, because otherwise nobody would have thought about assigning these couples special seating in the church. One could easily be tempted to judge superficially and assume that it was a matter of such couples being careless, indifferent, or even without faith, but since it concerned mostly people who got married for a second time, the reason appears to lie even deeper, namely within the old Catholic doctrine about the uniqueness of matrimony. In our time considerations about property relationships perhaps play a role, especially if children are present from the first marriage.

To the gallery of the organ the organist has access and members of the choir playing wind instruments, the adjutants (from lat. *adjuvare* = assist), and the teachers. They assist the organist to find the songs and sing with the community the replies in the liturgy.

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In the same sequence as the seating arrangement exists for the church goes within the church they also leave it. She or he, as the oldest member of the relevant age group, leave first in their group, then, always in the same order, girls and boys leave, if they had not already left before the sermon. After that the maidens and the women followed, finally the lads and men. The last to leave is the pastor. He was also the first to enter, followed by the maidens, who had waited for him at the entrance and then followed him inside. When leaving the church nobody hurries, nobody pushes. With measured quiet as the silent worship fades away, moved by the thoughts in the sermon, the prayers, and the songs, now everyone turns

to the tasks of life, seeking to fulfill them in Christian responsibility. Active Christendom, which proves itself in love of the one next to one, is valued more than big words, because it attests to a responsibility, able to replace broken orders, places people under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, which is not restricted by human laws and orders, but operates "when and where it wants".

We could experience this during the time after the war in Grosskopisch. No child was left unbaptized. The religious teaching of children and the education for the candidates for Confirmation were held without interruption. A lot of perseverance was called for from the children and their parents to withstand the disrupting maneuvers and intimidations. Celebratory services for Christ, confirmations, and weddings were consistently held, the church services were well attended, and life went on in the community without disturbances, because a conscious affirmation of a Christian life attitude took place and the statutes of the past were replaced with the all-carrying rule of love. This was not only a sign of human maturity, but a testimony of unwavering force of faith.

The chaplains

Who were the pastors who cultivated such faith in the community? This is the question that will occupy us next. Some of them are already known from documents dating to the time before the Reformation. Their names shall follow here. This occurs without a claim of being complete.

1. Theodricus 1283

He is mentioned among the chaplains of the Chapter of Mediasch who negotiated with the Weissenburg Chapter about the levy of three tenth-quarts.

2. Hanselmus 1289

He is mentioned as partner of the Detricus of Grosskopisch in the document in which the bishop affirmed the agreement about the ten-quarts. It is possible that he was the pastor.

3. Bartholomäus 1432

In this year Mrs. Anna from the House of Apa gave as a gift to the church in Birthälm house and land. Then her heir Nicholas Apa came from Malmkrog via Grosskopisch to Birthälm to inquire about this gift, which he acknowledged after his aunt's urgent requests. For this occasion he took the Grosskopisch pastor with him, who was the Master of the Law.

4. Michael

The community of Birthälm had transferred the right to inherit earldom to Nicholas Apa and his brother Georg, which they returned after a short while. At the submission of the declaration of the renunciation, which took place on May 2, 1440 in Waldhütten, the Grosskopisch pastor, who was the Master of Law, attended.

5. Johannes 1454 – 1477

He was a brother of Nicolaus de Copsch, son of Laurentius Homester, who after his university studies came into his homeland community as 'Pleban' and represented it in a process against Jakob from Hetzendorf before the Regional Conference.

6. Anthonius von Tartlau 1499 – 1514

'Pleban" of the community

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7. Lazarus Jacobi from Birthälm 1519

His name was immortalized in the door of the sacristy, because during his tenure the choir of the church and the sacristy were finished. He had been matriculated at the University of Krakau, became Doctor of the Law and came in 1515 to Scharosch, then Grosskopisch, from where he went to Hetzeldorf (1521).

8. Michael Reichhalm (Reicheln) 1530

He was from Grosskopisch, started his studies at the college in Vienna in 1499 and appears at the year cited as pastor of his home community.

9. Martin 1535 and 1536

He had visited Kronstadt as 'Pleban' from Grosskopisch, twice alone during the first year and once in the other year, together with the Birthälm 'Pleban', Magister Lucas.

10. Hieronymus, 'Pleban', visited Kronstadt 1548 and 1549

11. Bartholomäus Theilesius/Hoch 1567 – 1573

He visited 1545 Kronstadt as a student when Honterus was still alive. He came from Durles and was pastor in Grosskopisch and the local superintendent for the school.

12. Georg Hönn from Grosskopisch 1576

He registered 1562 in the Honterus school in Kronstadt, served as a pastor in his home community for a short time and later was employed for twenty years in Draas.

13. Petrus Melas 1577 – 1591

Before his election as a pastor of Grosskopisch he was the town notary of Mediasch.

14. Daniel Schoppel 1591 – 1604

15. Matthias Fabritius 1604 – 1605

He also had been a disciple of Honterus and had registered in Kronstadt in 1599. He experienced the devastation of the church and the demolition of the village by the Szeklers.

16. Franz Gräf (Graffius) 1605 – 1608

He moved from Grosskopisch to Reichesdorf, from where he was summoned to Bistritz. From 1621 to 1626 he was bishop.

17. Daniel 1608

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18. Christian Schiffbaumer 1608 - ?

19. Johannes Weihrauch 1619

20. Simon Hartmann 1621

21. Michael Wagner 1624 – 1634

22. Lukas Hermann, from Keisd. 1635 – 1646

He moved to Trappold, became a pastor in Meschen in 1647 and then was elected as General Dechant in 1651 and 1652 as bishop. As bishop he was in the State Assembly in Neumarkt in 1661, where he was offered the title as prince.

23. Samuel Hermann, from Zeiden 1647 – 1663

He noted in the Commemorative Book that he painted the church with his own hands.

24. Josef Bartius 1665 – 1682

25. Stephan Fabritius 1682 – 1707

26. Johann Schuller 1707 – 1723

27. Stephan Kessler 1723 – 1725

28. Johann Schuller 1725 – 1734

29. Johann Brenner, from Hermannstadt 1734 – 1763

30. Johann Stolz 1763 – 1808

31. Matthäus Theophil. Czoppelt 1808 – 1821

32. Georg Gottlieb Auner, from Mediasch 1821 – 1844

He was the son-in-law of the bishop Daniel Graeser and father-in-law to Stephan Ludwig Roth. He displayed lively activity in construction.

33. Johann Ewert, from BIRTHÄLM 1844 – 1849

During his tenure the school was built.

34. Karl Friedrich Czoppelt 1849 – 1855

35. Simon Joseph Theil 1866 – 1880

As a Dechant of the Mediasch church district he gave the eulogy at the funeral of Bishop Paul Binder in the church of BIRTHÄLM in 1867.

36. Petrus Traugott Meyndt 1880 – 1886

At the same occasion he gave the speech for the Court as pastor of Nimesch

37. Ferdinand Zintz, from Medaisch 1886 – 1893

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38. Carl Werner, from BIRTHÄLM 1893 – 1913

He was a co-editor of the first volume of the books of documents about the history of the Germans in Siebenbürgen, which was published in 1892.

39. Andreas Herbert, from Grossprobstdorf, 1913 – 1920

40. Hermann Salzer, from BIRTHÄLM 1921 – 1931

41. Lemit Karoli 1935 – 1937

42. Friedrich Kartmann, from Hetzeldorf 1937 – 1955

He served the community in loyalty during the hard times of the Second World War and the difficulties of the post-war times.

At the time of his tenure the church and church castle were renovated, natural gas and electric lights were introduced into the clerical buildings; church garden and cemetery were fenced in, and water pipes and a bathroom were installed into the house of the pastor.

After that the post of the chaplain was not filled again because the number of souls of the community fell below the legally authorized minimum.

Not an insignificant part of preaching and work in education had been taken on by the preachers who assisted the pastor. Among them several could be mentioned:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. Michael Wölwel | 1819 – 1864 |
| 2. Johann Closius | 1865 – 1885 |
| 3. Johann Schell | 1886 – 1910 |

Because of consistent decline in the number of souls he served the preacher function only part-time and finally closed off the line of preachers. The post remained open.

Unless an unforeseen turn takes place, the community might have to give up its independence. But it is a community of age; did they not only construct a new stairway to the church after the pastors and preachers left? Did they not provide the pastor's house with new windows and floors and painted its exterior? All of this happened under the leadership of the Curator Joh. Zultner. He already had emerged as father of the church when he had demonstrated unprecedented willingness at the time of the renovation of the church. But this community also knows the true cause of the faith and shies away from no means to ensure the on-going preaching of God's Good News, even among victims.

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With this history, one reminisces about legacies from the past. From these a few deeds shall be mentioned here as they emanated out of this faith. In the year 1823 Traugott Brenner, senator from Hermannstadt, established a foundation for the community at a value of 500- Rf W.W. or 200 fl. In memory of his father Johann Brenner, who had served as a pastor for many years in Grosskopisch, Unfortunately its value declined through the money depreciation during the First World War and lost all of its value through the revaluation of money after the war. Three years later, in 1826 Catherine Denndorferin, whose husband was notary of the community for many years, gave her land in Remelden at the Hemyen ditch, located in the Marhelt, im Hageln, and in Greveln, to the community. This occurred during the tenure of Pastor Gottlieb Auner, when several clerical buildings were newly constructed.

When at the end of the twenties of this century the world economic crisis cast its shadows already and the community shook from the fevers of dissatisfaction it almost appears as a miracle that the community decided to build the "House of Luther", a Protestant house for the community. With joyful readiness to make sacrifices the women supported the good work. They were inspired by the example of the wife of the notary Grete Lienert-Zultner, whose parents were from Grosskopisch. Her father appealed to all people from Grosskopisch, who lived in America, to help their community in their homeland. A proclamation in the "Siebenbürgen – American people's gazette" stated: "We all owe thanks to our homeland, not with words, but with deeds to earn the respect of our ancestors...we are close to two hundred compatriots here, who wants to be missed in our list of donors?! Our forefathers brought sacrifices...we are proud of it and stand in admiration before the mighty castles and churches, which they built centuries ago, do we want now to rest in silence and in the shadows of their merits?" The proclamation found willing and helping hands. This effort also resulted in a nice sum for the stated goal.

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On the day of the Reformation in 1927 the laying of the foundation stone for the "Luther House" took place. From a poem that Grete Lienert-Zultman wrote for this occasion, I cite the last two verses:

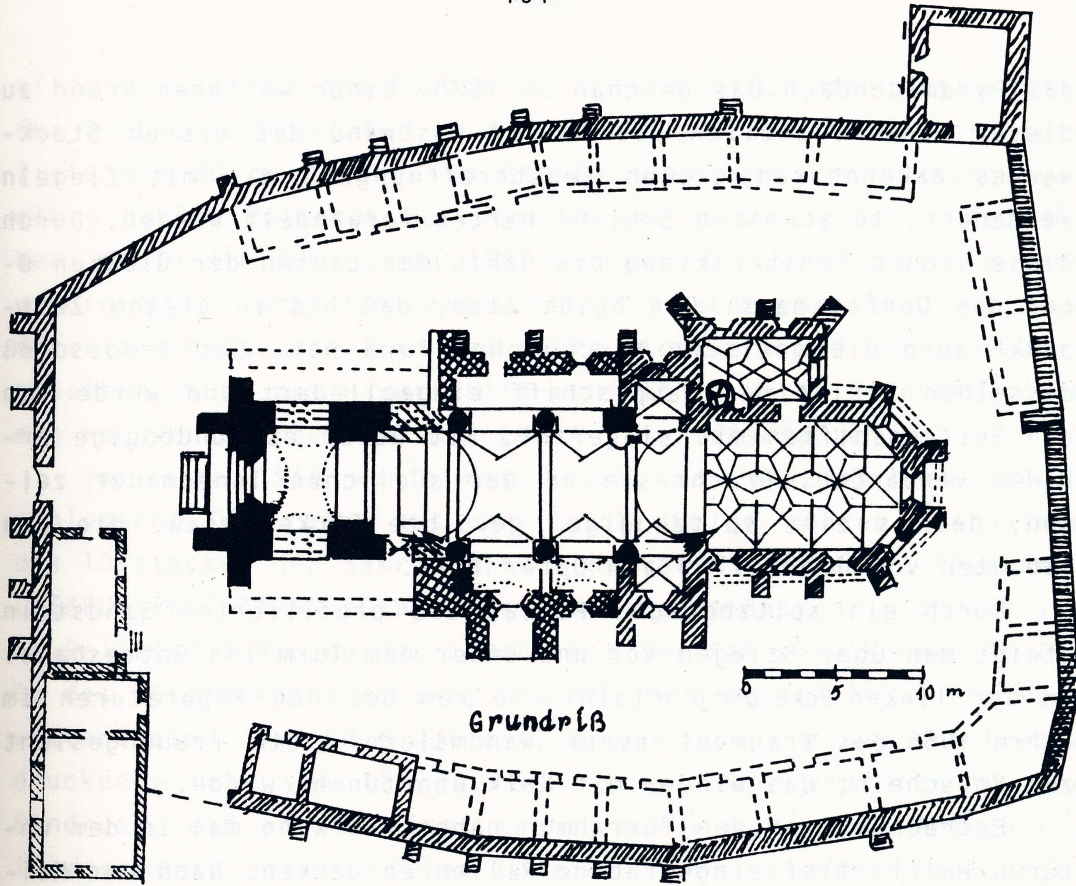
“The big day, on which Luther, full of faith, placed the first stone to our church, may it be for this house in these hard times, a birthday promising good things to come. May God’s blessing reign over this house! May the spirit of Jesus Christ be active inside! May discipline and Saxon customs prevail in it! God help! – thus we place the first stone.”

A year later in a report of the “Siebenbürger-German Gazette” it said: Our religious community house , called “Lutherhaus” stands almost ready within a year’s time, thanks to the energetic support from our American brothers and sisters. A collection initiated in the past year yielded 32.000 for the fund for the bell, and for the “Lutherhaus” 25.000 Lei. Earlier collections, started by our compatriot Heinrich Löprich, who actively expressed his love for his old country by donating every year for the Christmas presents, from our Grosskopisch people in America contributed 35.700 Lei for the fond to build the house.”...For the members of the Saxon Federation (the Unsatisfied ones) the wish is that they come to their senses and return to those who avow: Mer wällen bleiwen wat mer senj! (we will believe what we see)! Not in division, but in unity and love can our work we started be completed. The earnings from theater evenings arranged by youth and adult groups went to the fund for the construction of the community house. For this purpose the folktale written by Grete Lienert-Zultner “Am Ihr uch Gläck” and the musical plays “Die Lindenwirtin” (hostess at the linden tree) and “Das Bauernliesel”(the farmers girl) had their premiere. The women collected self-spun hemp yarn and weaved screens for the scenery. A competitive zeal developed that not only brought fruit for the construction of the house but also contributed to the recovery of the communal spirit, which was the greatest and lasting benefit from this work.

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The ‘Lutherhaus’ was completed in 1930 and had served his predetermined purpose until the end of the Second World War. It was here that all weddings, theater presentations, and balls, as well as the meetings of the members of the community took place. Then it was expropriated and became the property as the so-called “Culture House” of the political community. All events were scheduled for all residents of the village to attend. All theater presentations had to be presented in two languages. During plays presented in Romanian language it was fairly quiet in the auditorium, but when these were followed by a presentation in German all quiet was gone because non-German speaking visitors, not being able or not willing to be of consideration, started loud conversations among themselves. But this also happened, because lengthy political discourses delayed German presentations until about midnight.

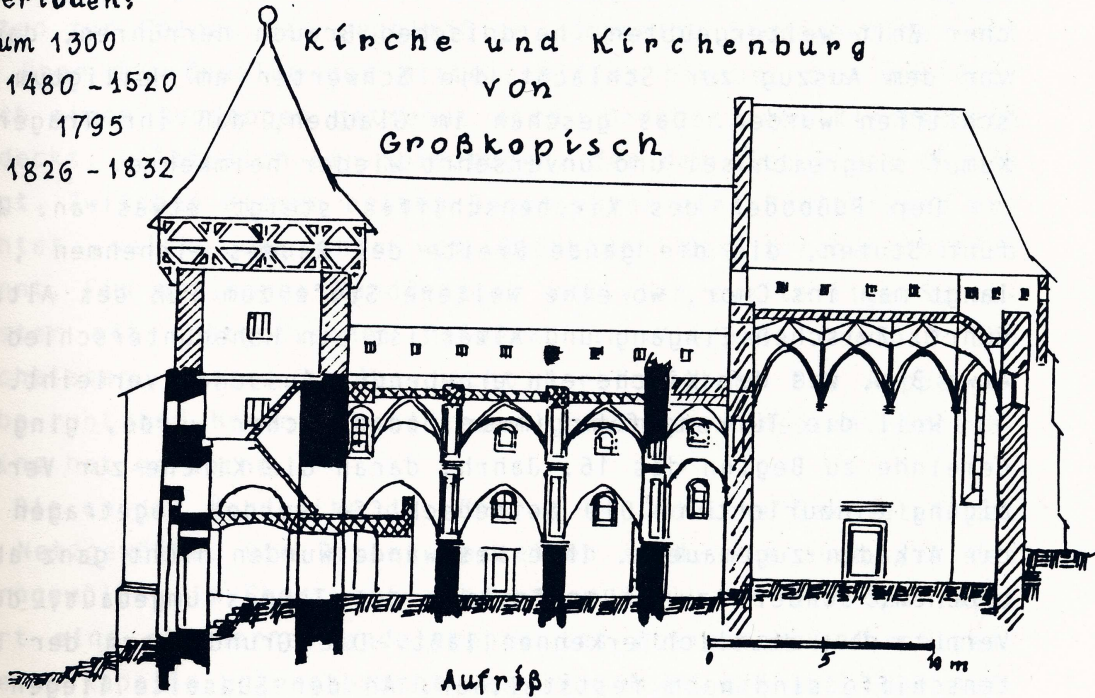
If one wants to plan a wedding in the community house one has to apply to the Council of the Community, who then refers the petition to the leadership of the Communist Youth Organization of the region, who informs you about the conditions to be met for granting their approval. Their first-order request is to waive a religious wedding, and that the chaplain will not be invited for the ceremony. The young people remain silent to such conditions or promise to comply half-heartedly. Nobody follows them, because the wedding will be arranged and paid for by the parents according to a long-standing tradition. Thus the most beautiful festival of life is celebrated with a forced untruth and an uneasy feeling of anxiousness about possible consequences. As far as I know, nobody was made liable because they had a church wedding, since the Romanians, even if they are members of the (Communist) Party, live in their own East-Oriental traditions and therefore are tolerant towards others.

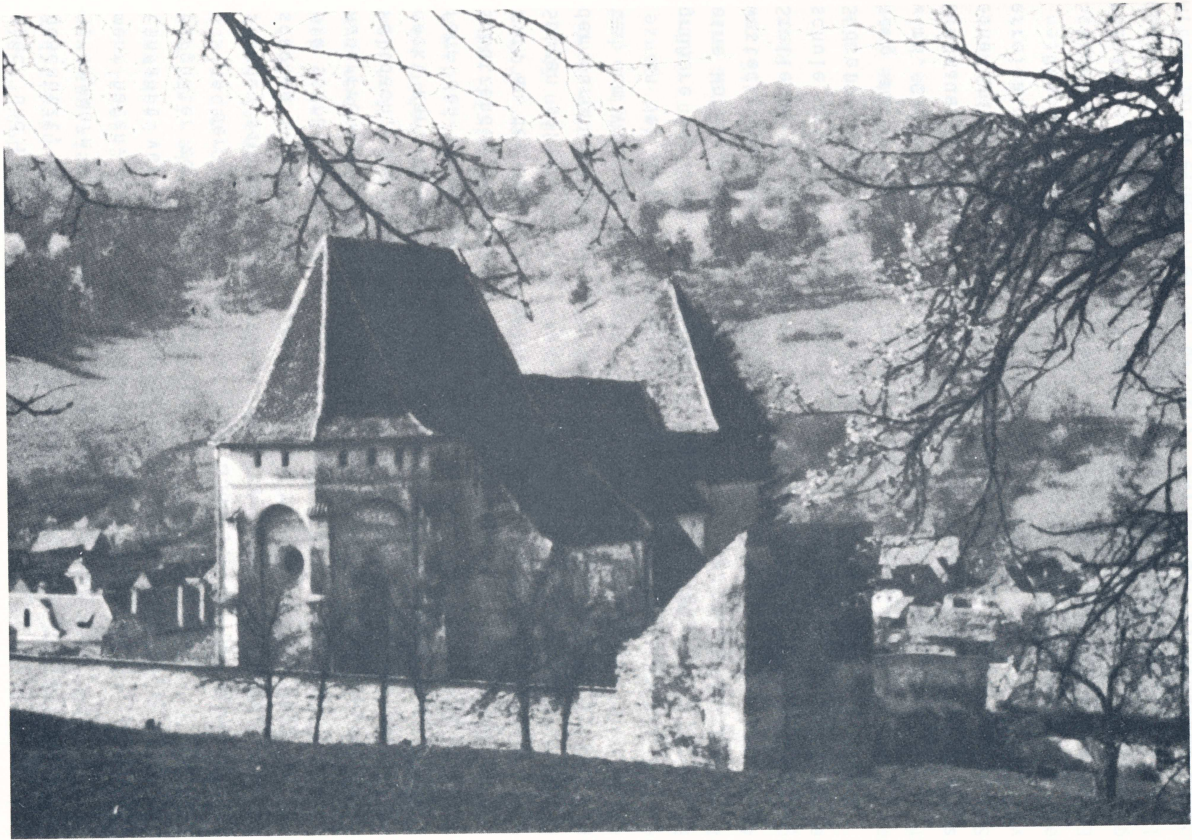


Bauperiodens:

- um 1300
- ▨ 1480 - 1520
- ▩ 1795
- ▧ 1826 - 1832

Kirche und Kirchenburg
von
Großkopisch





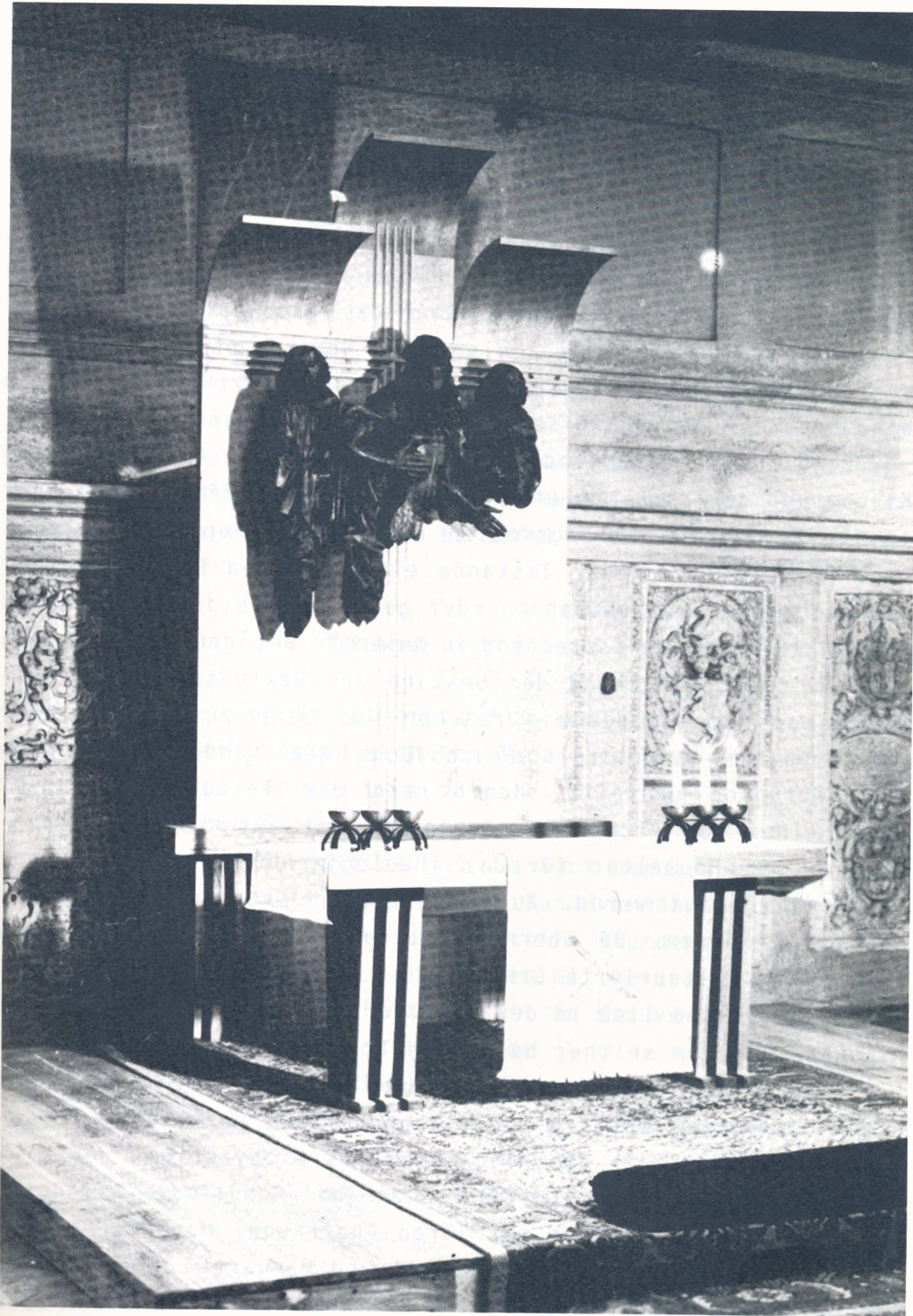
Ostansicht der Kirchenburg



Südostansicht der Kirchenburg



Altar und Taufbecken



Altar in der Ferula/Hermannstadt/
Erbaut mit der Holzplastik von Großkopisch



Kelch für die Krankenkommunion
Vom Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts



Kelch für das Gemeindeabendmahl
Vom Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts