

## Chapter 3

### A TURBULENT PRIEST

ANOTHER IMPORTANT ASPECT of Vitez's life is his career as a prelate. Unfortunately, we have very little information regarding his spiritual views, and what we do know about his ecclesiastical career is mostly confined to his actions as a great lord of the realm (which he, as a bishop, certainly was), the ruling of his domain, and the relations with his neighbours. This, along with some scattered information about the construction of his cathedral and the issues concerning the clergy under his supervision, is all that we know regarding that aspect of his life. Of course, that does not mean that his ecclesiastical career was simply an extension of his political one, but the information at our disposal forces us to treat it as such. Therefore, in the following sections we focus on Vitez's investiture as bishop of Oradea, on the group of clerics—his “inner circle”—on whom he relied to maintain his rule, on his relations with his neighbours and, finally, on his concerns regarding the spiritual life of his diocese.

Vitez did not become a bishop easily. Although he was elected by the chapter of Oradea and had John Hunyadi's support, Pope Eugene IV considered his election invalid. He considered the right to appoint the bishop of Oradea reserved to himself, which would, at least in his eyes, automatically invalidate all elections. Vitez claimed that he had not known of this, which gives us reason to doubt whether the pope was acting within his rights, especially considering his close relation to Frederick III, who was Hunyadi's enemy at the time. As soon as he found out about the reservation, claimed Vitez, he decided to submit his case to the papal consistory. It took some persuasion from the cardinals, but the pope ultimately agreed to confirm him as bishop and issued the document stating so on June 1, 1445.<sup>1</sup>

By the time of his confirmation Vitez was an ordained priest, but we do not know the date of ordination. The only document which mentions his status prior to that is the supplication to the pope in which he sought confirmation in his office as *custos* of Zagreb in 1438. He had not been ordained to any of the holy orders until then, being still a simple cleric.<sup>2</sup> That was the lowest order of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. However, it was not unusual for clerics to postpone their ordination until after they received some office.<sup>3</sup> Age was also a requirement, but as Vitez did not request a dispensation for being a minor in 1438, he had likely by then passed the age limit for receiving a chapter office, which was twenty-one.<sup>4</sup> It was expected of the recipients

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<sup>1</sup> *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 24, doc. 18. All this information comes from this document.

<sup>2</sup> MHEZ, 6:539, doc. 512.

<sup>3</sup> Razum, “Osvaldo Thuz,” 84–85.

<sup>4</sup> Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 119.

to be ordained to priesthood within a year,<sup>5</sup> but they would often omit to do so.<sup>6</sup> We cannot rule out the possibility that he was ordained as late as the time of his episcopal election.

It was customary for elected prelates to employ one or several cardinals to support their appointment at the consistory,<sup>7</sup> and it seems that Hunyadi's diplomatic interventions were successful in that regard. In late 1445 Hunyadi and Vitez sent a number of letters expressing their gratitude to various cardinals, which show that Vitez's main promoter had been the old cardinal Giovanni Berardi dei Tagliacozzi, the grand penitentiary.<sup>8</sup> Cardinal Lodovico Trevisan also played a role,<sup>9</sup> as well as Jean le Jeune, to whom Vitez apologized several years later for neglecting to send him a gift for the favour.<sup>10</sup> And finally, one of Vitez's most influential promoters was the already mentioned Taddeo degli Adelmari, who also received a letter of gratitude for currying favour for Vitez with the pope and the cardinals.<sup>11</sup>

The custom of offering gifts to cardinals in exchange for their favour was so routine that it could hardly be called bribing. For example, in the 1460s Stephen Várdai sent an ornate chalice to Cardinal Jacopo Ammannati Piccolomini so that the latter would support his bid to become a cardinal.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Vitez's omission to do the same could have been seen as tactless. He was also not the only Hungarian candidate whose bid Jean le Jeune supported that year—in the autumn of 1445 he played a crucial role in Augustine of Shalanky's confirmation as bishop of Győr.<sup>13</sup> It seems that Jean was open to cooperation with Hungary. The fact that Vitez did not send him a gift when it was appropriate indicates that he had financial problems during the first years of his episcopate.

Vitez's troubles did not end with his confirmation. The first significant problem was his failure to pay the dues for it—the *servitium commune* and the minor *servitia*,

**5** Admittedly, this rule was more insisted on if the office included pastoral care. See Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 119 and Jerković, "Kandidati za prebendu," 35–36.

**6** For example, Demetrius Čupor held the archdeaconry of Küküllő in Transylvania for many years without being ordained (*Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:46, doc. 29) and Oswald Thuz was ordained to holy orders only after being appointed as bishop of Zagreb (Razum, "Oswaldo Thuz," 83).

**7** Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 25–26.

**8** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 58, doc. 16 and 60, doc. 19. Paul of Ivanić noted that this cardinal was Vitez's main promoter in note c to the latter letter. Regarding Berardi, see Lorenzo Cardella, *Memorie storiche de' cardinali della santa romana chiesa*, 9 vols. (Rome: Pagliarini, 1792–1797), 3:70–71 and Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:7.

**9** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 57, doc. 15.

**10** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 157–58, doc. 75, especially note a. According to Piccolomini, Jean was one of the more pragmatically inclined cardinals: see Piccolomini, "Historia Friderici," 130ff. See also Cardella, *Memorie storiche*, 3:87 and Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:8.

**11** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 56–57, doc. 14.

**12** Pajorin, "The First Humanists at Matthias Corvinus' Court," 140.

**13** Nemes, "Salánki Ágoston," 10–11.

owed to the Apostolic Camera by all prelates confirmed at the consistory.<sup>14</sup> For the bishopric of Oradea, the price was two thousand florins.<sup>15</sup> Thanks to Cardinal Trevisan's intervention, the Apostolic Chancery issued Vitez's bull of confirmation immediately after his procurator in Rome, Peter of Crkvica, made an obligation in his name to pay the *servitia*.<sup>16</sup> The papal bureaucracy was usually not this lenient and would issue bulls only after payments were made. Nevertheless, it seems that Vitez did not make a single payment until March 1446, and was punished for it with excommunication. That was also not unusual. Bishops would often delay paying their *servitia*, and the Holy See would punish them by seizing their diocese or excommunicating them.<sup>17</sup> Luckily for him, Vitez soon managed to have the censure lifted. He immediately remitted five hundred florins, claiming that until then he had been too financially bereft to send any money. Thanks to this, the excommunication was lifted, and Vitez was even granted an extension to pay the rest of his debt, as he claimed that he was still destitute. The incident was most likely mitigated by Taddeo degli Adelmari, who received Vitez's payment in the name of the Apostolic Camera.<sup>18</sup>

During the next several years, Vitez delayed paying this and other debts he incurred after he was made bishop. It seems that he really did have financial difficulties, which is unsurprising, considering that he was not a member of a wealthy family and did not have the time to accumulate money from the offices he had previously held. In August 1446 he remitted another hundred florins to the Camera,<sup>19</sup> and after that no payments were made in his name until May 1448, when he remitted another 220 florins. The whole debt was never repaid, as he was forgiven the rest of it after making that last payment.<sup>20</sup> In a letter to Cardinal Berardi from early 1446, Vitez apologized for being unable to send him any gifts for promoting his cause and lamented the trouble he had to go through to gather the money for his *servitia*.<sup>21</sup> Jean le Jeune still did not receive any gifts by 1451, and Vitez claimed he had sent him a gift through Nicholas Lasocki, but that the latter neglected to deliver it, which Vitez purportedly found out only after Lasocki's death.<sup>22</sup>

Vitez also owed money to Taddeo degli Adelmari, who had borne the cost of bringing about Vitez's confirmation and provided at least some of the money for his *servitia*. It seems that this debt was settled sometime before mid-1450, when Vitez sent Taddeo a rather insulting letter, telling him his favours were not worth much. Vitez

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**14** See Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 68.

**15** Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:262.

**16** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 57, doc. 15, especially note a. Peter was sent to Rome to bring about Vitez's confirmation: see Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 56, doc. 13, note f.

**17** Neralić, *Put do crkvene nadarbine*, 70 and 74.

**18** MCV, 1:569–70, doc. 1069; see also MCV, 2:375, doc. 665.

**19** MCV, 2:376, doc. 667.

**20** MCV, 2:377, doc. 669.

**21** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 60, doc. 19.

**22** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 157, doc. 75.

had previously sent him six hundred florins seemingly accompanied by quite unflattering comments, in which Vitez called Taddeo avaricious. Understandably, Taddeo took offence, and sent a letter expressing his indignation in return.<sup>23</sup> He had by then become one of the four papal registrars.<sup>24</sup> Vitez's comment that Taddeo had "become comfortable" probably refers to him gaining this post.<sup>25</sup> We do not know whether Taddeo reconciled with Vitez before his death in 1454.<sup>26</sup>

## Being a Great Lord

As we have examined the conditions in which Vitez became bishop of Oradea, let us now look into the state of his diocese. The diocese of Oradea, a suffragan of the archdiocese of Kalocsa, was located in Transylvania and northeastern Hungary, although its episcopal estates were scattered throughout the kingdom. By the order of precedence, the bishop of Oradea was the fourth-ranking prelate in Hungary, behind the archbishops of Esztergom and Kalocsa and the bishop of Eger, although his bishopric was perhaps richer than some of theirs.<sup>27</sup> Most of its area was relatively unspoiled by the Habsburg-Jagiellonian War.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, some of the episcopal estates were occupied by lay magnates during the period of vacancy after John de Dominis's demise,<sup>29</sup> and it seems the latter had pawned some prior to it.<sup>30</sup> De Dominis had probably exhausted the diocese's resources to gather the enormous troop he led to Varna in 1444.<sup>31</sup> Also, the dynastic struggle had damaged his income. For example, in 1441 Cardinal Szécsi forbade the Transylvanian clerics to render to De Dominis the tax usually rendered to newly installed bishops.<sup>32</sup> After Vitez took over the diocese, it took much time and effort to put its affairs in order.

One of the first charters Vitez issued as bishop of Oradea was a deed of grant to Nicholas the Vlach, an official (voevode) in his service. As the charter states, Nicholas was endowed with an estate, which he had prepared (presumably, populated) himself, as a reward for his service to Vitez's predecessor—especially for his help with gaining

**23** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 160–62, doc. 78, especially notes h, r, t, and x. Cf. Perić, "Zbirka pisama," 108–9. Taddeo's letter is not preserved; all of this information comes from Vitez's response.

**24** Marini, *Degli architri pontificii*, 1:153.

**25** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 160, doc. 78 and 162, note m. Paul of Ivanić commented that by that Vitez meant the Roman Curia.

**26** Marini, *Degli architri pontificii*, 1:155; cf. Beinhoff, *Die Italiener*, 291.

**27** Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:291. See also Pannonius's poem on Vitez's elevation to the archbishopric of Esztergom in Pannonius, *Epigrammata*, ed. Barrett, 112–13.

**28** At least Paul of Ivanić thought so: see Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 54, doc. 11, note b.

**29** Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:269–70.

**30** Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:291.

**31** Although an extraordinary tax was exacted to subsidize participation in the crusade, it is unknown whether Dominis received any of the funds thus gathered. See Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 122–23.

**32** Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 126.

new estates and populating them with serfs brought not from other episcopal estates, but from elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> Populating estates with serfs was a serious problem. Due to Ottoman raids, the whole kingdom was facing a population loss, and serfs became valuable assets.<sup>34</sup> The way in which the aforementioned Nicholas was bringing serfs not from episcopal estates, but from elsewhere, can perhaps be discerned from the following example. In the summer of 1448, acting on the orders of Vitez himself and his official Paul of Kartal, two of Paul's retainers invaded the estate called *Babona* in Heves county, owned by the Rozgonyi family. There they captured a serf, tied a rope around his neck and led him away. However, other serfs followed them, wanting to release the captive. The two retainers attacked them, but the serfs managed to kill one of them. Afterwards, George and Sebastian Rozgonyi demanded that the Heves county officials investigate the incident. We do not know what happened with the captured serf, but the officials decided that the fallen retainer was caught stealing (the serf) and therefore justly killed as a thief.<sup>35</sup>

This incident did not mean that Vitez and the Rozgonyis were in conflict. In fact, Sebastian Rozgonyi was one of Hunyadi's most loyal supporters,<sup>36</sup> and George was one of the seven captains of the kingdom appointed in 1445.<sup>37</sup> It would have been foolish indeed for Vitez to seek open conflict with them. However, stealing serfs was a low-level incident that did not have to have anything to do with politics. Conversely, Vitez's subjects were not exempt from such treatment. A charter issued by King Ladislaus V in 1453 states that in 1450, Paul Hédervári captured Clement Krutzel, a serf of the diocese of Oradea, held him captive for seven months and stole a large sum of money from him. When the king visited Oradea in 1453, Vitez and the chapter of Oradea brought this case before him and an investigation was opened.<sup>38</sup> Although we do not know what happened afterwards, it seems this serf was abducted in a manner similar to the one Vitez's own men employed. It is possible this one was a merchant or a craftsman, considering the large sum of money he carried and his German surname.

Although small, such conflicts were numerous. It was difficult to face them alone. By making alliances, a magnate would simultaneously gain supporters and eliminate potential adversaries. Vitez made an alliance with Albert Losonci in 1449, when they agreed to support each other militarily and to peacefully resolve their mutual conflicts. On that occasion they exchanged ownership of the estates that might cause disagreements between them. Albert received several estates in Zărand county—of which some were pawned to one of Vitez's predecessors by one of Albert's ancestors—and a sum of three hundred florins, which Albert was to spend on redeeming the estate of Abádszalók. Vitez in turn received two thirds of the latter estate and the whole estate

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**33** DL 44 405.

**34** Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 173; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 329–30.

**35** DL 14 195.

**36** Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 510, 514, 521, and 530; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 294.

**37** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 288; Held, *Hunyadi*, 116.

**38** Keresztúry, *Compendiaria descriptio*, 220–21, doc. 2N.

of Tomajmonostora, both in Heves county, together with Albert's inheritance rights to all estates owned by his relatives in that county. If some of them were to die without legal heirs, what was supposed to go to Albert would go to Vitez.<sup>39</sup>

This agreement was beneficial to both parties, as Albert regained estates pawned long ago, and Vitez was given the opportunity to expand his holdings in Heves county. Soon after the act, Vitez reported the exchange to Governor Hunyadi who, acting with royal powers, confirmed it and ordered a livery of seizin. He stipulated that in case of obstructions, Albert would have to deal with them in court, as he was the previous holder of the estates and would therefore be held responsible. This was good for Vitez, as there indeed were obstructions—the abbot of the local Benedictine abbey challenged the seizin of Tomajmonostora, and some nobles that of Abádszalók.<sup>40</sup>

This was not Vitez's only livery of seizin that was challenged in court. A similar occurrence took place in 1451. Vitez and the chapter of Oradea requested that the Hungarian Estates allow them to take possession of the estate of Poroszló, also in Heves county, not far from the previously mentioned two estates. However, it seems that the Rozgonyis and the Vetési family challenged the seizin, as their officials prevented it from taking place.<sup>41</sup> It is possible this was one of the episcopal estates alienated after John de Dominis's demise.<sup>42</sup>

Judicial procedures such as these were part of Hungarian magnates' everyday life, and it was not uncommon for them to last for years. Although Vitez was apparently trying to consolidate and enlarge his demesne, that was not a simple task, as he would incur a lawsuit whenever he would try to gain a new estate. The alliance with Albert Losonci strengthened his standing among the Hungarian nobility, but he was still weighed down by the fact that he was a newcomer from Slavonia, without a powerful family to support him.

Nevertheless, Vitez persisted. He did his best to perform his seigniorial duties. In May 1446 he confirmed the existing privileges of the episcopal town of Beiuș. That was done regularly by all new bishops of Oradea upon their accession, as the town was their property; De Dominis had done the same in 1442. However, Vitez went a step further and on October 28, 1451 personally issued Beiuș a municipal charter, stating he had composed it himself after consulting many distinguished men of the realm, as well as his retainers and servants. According to him, his motivation was to revitalize the town and encourage its growth both in size and population, as it had previously been devastated and impoverished by lay governors. The charter was primarily a measure meant to prevent depopulation, as it did not grant any significant liberties to its

**39** *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczi Bánffy család történetéhez*, 1:664–69, docs. 468–99. The Losonci family got its name from Lučenec in today's Slovakia. Regarding Abádszalók and Tomajmonostora, see Ferenc Balászy and Nándor Szederkényi, *Heves vármegye története*, 4 vols. (Eger: Az Érseki Lyceum Könyvnyomdája, 1891–1898), 1:14, 1:16–17, and 1:97–102.

**40** DL 38 839. Regarding Tomajmonostora Abbey, see Romhány, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok*, 99.

**41** DL 14 461.

**42** Bunyitay thought so: see Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:269–70. Regarding Poroszló itself, see Balászy and Szederkényi, *Heves vármegye*, 1:3 and 1:156.

citizens; its greatest aim was to prevent further abuses of power by the local castellan and other episcopal officials.<sup>43</sup>

After he was appointed as King Ladislaus V's privy chancellor, Vitez usually did not reside in his diocese. However, his absence did not mean that his interests were neglected, or that quarrels with his neighbours ceased. For example, although Vitez had an alliance with Albert Losonci, he was locked in a bitter dispute with the latter's brother, Stephen. In early 1454 Vitez ordered some of his men, all distinguished members of the local nobility—John Peterdi, Thomas Radványi, Bernard Dengelegi and Sylvester Bályoki—to occupy four of Stephen's estates in Crasna county. Stephen insisted this was done illegally, although Vitez previously contested ownership of those estates and a court ruling was brought in his favour by John Hunyadi, Palatine Ladislaus Garai and Nicholas of Ilok.<sup>44</sup> In fact, a deputy of the palatine performed the livery of seizin which made Vitez owner of the disputed estates, and it seems that the latter paid a price of 4200 florins for them.<sup>45</sup> Stephen Losonci apparently did not agree to the transaction and his family brought the case before King Ladislaus himself. They requested the king not to delegate the case to the count nor the viscount of Crasna, as these were Thomas Szécsi and Sylvester Bályoki, both enemies of the plaintiffs; in fact, as we have seen, the latter acted on Vitez's orders during his takeover of the disputed estates. The king ordered some local nobles to investigate the case, instructing them to call Vitez and the four accused nobles to the court of the king's special presence if the accusations were confirmed.<sup>46</sup> It would have been interesting to see how that case would be tried, as the chairman of the court of the king's special presence was the high chancellor,<sup>47</sup> Cardinal Szécsi. We do not know whether the case was brought before that court, but Vitez continued to hold the contested estates until 1457, when the Losoncis took them back by force during Vitez's captivity.<sup>48</sup>

This case indicates that by the mid-1450s, Vitez had become quite entrenched in his role as bishop of Oradea and magnate. Numerous local nobles, even higher-ranking ones, were ready to do his bidding and careful not to cross him. For example, in mid-1454, an official of John Vitez Kállói arrested one of Vitez's serfs, Lawrence the Croat, due to the accusations brought against him. However, the citizens of Ajak, where the arrest was made, begged their lord Kállói to release Lawrence and compensate him for

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**43** Transcripts of confirmations of municipal privileges issued by Vitez, Dominis, and their predecessors, as well as the new charter issued by Vitez, can be found in DL 50 326. Bunyitay summarized Vitez's charter in Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 3:354–58. See also Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:292 and Vera Bácskai, *Városok és polgárok Magyarországon*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 2007), 1:140–41.

**44** *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczy Bánffy család történetéhez*, 1:676–77, doc. 475.

**45** Keresztúry, *Compendiaria descriptio*, 222, doc. 20. See also Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 2:258, but the data here are somewhat skewed.

**46** *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczy Bánffy család történetéhez*, 1:677–80, doc. 476.

**47** Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus*, 34.

**48** Keresztúry, *Compendiaria descriptio*, 222, doc. 20; see also Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:276.

his troubles, as his accuser was neither one of them nor a serf of the bishop, and was therefore an impostor.<sup>49</sup>

Vitez quarrelled not only with lay lords, but with other Hungarian bishops as well. For example, Vincent Szilasi, bishop of Vác, accused Vitez in early 1455 before Pope Nicholas V, Archbishop Raphael Herceg of Kalocsa, and Bishop Peter of Cenad, of illegally extending his authority to some fringe areas of Vincent's diocese.<sup>50</sup> There were also cases where Vitez would have to pass judgment on clergymen. In one of the rare instances when he resided in his diocese, in November 1454 in Kölesér, parishioners from Kisvásári brought before him a complaint, saying the parish priest of Ghiorac had usurped some incomes belonging to their parish. As the accused was not present, Vitez could not pass judgment, so he ordered the parish priests of Arpășel and Cighid to prevent further usurpation and to offer the offending priest a chance to defend himself from these accusations before Vitez's vicar.<sup>51</sup> On this occasion, Vitez was probably resolving issues which had accumulated during his long absence.

Among the ecclesiastical disputes Vitez took part in is also the one between the already mentioned Stephen Losonci and his brother Albert. The contentious siblings quarrelled over the right of patronage over the parish church of the city of Reghin, located in the part of Transylvania under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Esztergom. In 1451 the pope entrusted the case to Vitez, the Benedictine abbot of Cluj and the dean of Sibiu.<sup>52</sup> After the latter passed verdict against Albert, he, perhaps prompted by Vitez, complained to the pope that the city's parish was not within this dean's authority, as his deanery was rural. The pope agreed and in 1452 returned the case to Vitez, this time appointing Vitez's vicar and the provost of Oradea as co-judges.<sup>53</sup> It is likely that Vitez would have taken care for the case to end in his ally's favour. However, Stephen Losonci appealed to the pope for a second time in 1453, and this time the pope decided that the original verdict was valid.<sup>54</sup>

The longest dispute Vitez got himself involved in was that over the bishopric of Zagreb. Although its history goes much farther back, it escalated in 1444, when Ban Matko Talovac installed Demetrius Čupor, then bishop of Knin in Croatia, as the bishop of Zagreb. Although Demetrius managed to temporarily occupy the episcopal see, in March 1445 he and his adherents were driven away by an army of the counts of Celje and their candidate for the bishopric, Benedict of Zvolen.<sup>55</sup> Militarily beaten, Demetrius was taken in by his friend, John Vitez, in Oradea.<sup>56</sup> John Hunyadi, as the counts'

49 DL 44 729.

50 *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:331–32, doc. 1350.

51 DF 278 585. All these parishes were located within the Kölesér archdeaconry in Vitez's diocese, in today's western Romania: see Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 3:448, 3:453, 3:455, and 3:479.

52 *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:299, doc. 1237.

53 *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:313, doc. 1284.

54 *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:322–23, doc. 1420.

55 Pálosfalvi, "Cilleiek és Tallóciak," 70ff; cf. Lukinović, "Biskup Demetrije Čupor," 203.

56 Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 63, doc. 21, note a.

enemy,<sup>57</sup> supported Demetrius's cause, despite the pope's objections. In 1446 Vitez composed a letter to the pope in Hunyadi's name, in which he defended Demetrius's reputation.<sup>58</sup>

Demetrius was a fellow Slavonian (the Čupor family estates were not far from Sredna),<sup>59</sup> as well as Vitez's colleague from the University of Vienna.<sup>60</sup> It is possible that Vitez lent him the money to pay his *servitia* for the see of Zagreb; the payment was made by Natalis of Venice, bishop of Nin, in September 1447.<sup>61</sup> A few months later, Vitez thanked Natalis for the favours he had done unto Demetrius, promising to return them as if they were done unto himself.<sup>62</sup> It is likely that Demetrius depended on Vitez financially, as the Croatian nobility started denying him the tithe due to him as bishop of Knin.<sup>63</sup> Vitez also continued to compose letters to the pope in Hunyadi's name, in which he repeatedly endorsed Demetrius's bid for the bishopric of Zagreb.<sup>64</sup>

Probably by using the services of Nicholas Lasocki, Hunyadi persuaded the pope to entrust the investigation of the dispute over the bishopric to Vitez. The latter received a list of questions from the pope, and his answers, sent on December 20, 1450, make up a report on the contemporary state of the diocese of Zagreb—of course, according to how Vitez wanted to present it. He called Bishop Benedict a pawn of the counts of Celje, who squandered away episcopal goods and was even imprisoned by the counts for more than a year. Vitez claimed that Demetrius would have made a much better bishop of Zagreb, as he would liberate the diocese from lay control and could count on Hunyadi's support to do so.<sup>65</sup> Although this was only partly true—Hunyadi probably did not intend to liberate the diocese from his own control—the pope took Vitez's report seriously and ordered a commission, made up of Cardinal Szécsi, Vincent Szilasi and Bishop Gabriel of Koper, to visit the diocese. Its findings corresponded with Vitez's claims, and in April 1451 the pope declared Demetrius bishop of Zagreb.<sup>66</sup>

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**57** Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 290. Vitez wrote a letter of apology in Hunyadi's name to Frederick III for damages Hunyadi's troops did to the latter's estates during their campaign against the counts in early 1446: see Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 64–65, doc. 23.

**58** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 66–67, doc. 24.

**59** For the family's history, see Nikolić Jakus, "Obitelj Čupor Moslavački," 269–300.

**60** See further in the following chapter.

**61** MHEZ, 7:117, doc. 114 and 7:121, doc. 119. Natalis was bishop of Nin from 1436 until his death in 1462 and papal emissary to Bosnia for the last two years of his life. See Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2:204 and Jadranka Neraić, "Udio Hrvata u papinskoj diplomaciji," *Hrvatska srednjovjekovna diplomacija. Zbornik Diplomatske akademije* 4, no. 2 (1999): 89–118 at 111.

**62** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 62, doc. 21. Judging by this letter, Natalis was a friend of Demetrius's, who had introduced him to Vitez.

**63** MHEZ, 7:149, doc. 148.

**64** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 94, doc. 38.

**65** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 149–53, doc. 72. Paul of Ivanić claimed (in note w) that Benedict was imprisoned because he had tried to defect to Hunyadi. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 71–72.

**66** MHEZ, 7:197, doc. 192.

However, he rescinded this decision a few months later, fearing its enforcement would cause much bloodshed.<sup>67</sup>

The dispute dragged on for years. It outlasted Benedict, whose death prompted Thomas Himfi of Döbrönte, a protégé of Nicholas of Ilok,<sup>68</sup> to seek the bishopric for himself. He managed to get himself confirmed by the pope, formally elected by the chapter, and even consecrated in Rome in March 1455.<sup>69</sup> However, Count Ulric of Celje, who actually controlled the diocese, did not acknowledge any of it and made his own chancellor, Balthasar Montschiedel, its bishop.<sup>70</sup> Later in 1455, after Count Ulric's reconciliation with King Ladislaus V, the king declared that Thomas had lied to him about having the count's consent to be made bishop of Zagreb, and that he therefore ceased to recognize him as such.<sup>71</sup> This only made the situation more confusing, as now there were three potential bishops. However, by then Vitez was not involved in the dispute, at least for the time being.

In the brief period between Vitez's arrest and liberation in 1457, it seems that his enemies took advantage of his captivity and tried to resolve conflicts that were simmering for years. A lawsuit against Vitez's supporter John Vitez Kállói at the episcopal court in Eger is a good example of this. It had been going on for years and verdicts had been postponed at least twice (in 1455 and 1456), once on the direct intervention of the bishop of Eger, Ladislaus Hédervári.<sup>72</sup> However, after Vitez's fall from grace, the court promptly reached a verdict against Kállói.<sup>73</sup> Not only Vitez's supporters, who depended on his protection, suffered. He himself suddenly became an acceptable target. His enemies in the chapter of Zagreb were publicly insulting him during his captivity.<sup>74</sup> Stephen Losonci violently retook the contested estates in Crasna county,<sup>75</sup> and his family prevented Vitez's men from taking over Piatra Șoimului Castle. But their advantage vanished quickly; by the autumn of 1457 Vitez had reintegrated himself in King Ladislaus's court enough for the king to summon the Losoncis to his palatine's court to answer for the mentioned incident.<sup>76</sup>

**67** MHEZ, 7:209, doc. 202. See also Canedo, *Un español*, 263.

**68** András Kubinyi, "A kaposújvári uradalom és a Somogyi megyei familiárisok szerepe Újlaki Miklós birtokpolitikájában—Adatok a XV. századi feudális nagybirtok hatalmi politikájához," *Somogy megye múltjából* 4 (1973): 3–44 at 21–22.

**69** MHEZ, 7:259, doc. 245 and 7:265–66, docs. 251 and 253.

**70** MHEZ, 7:269–70, doc. 259. See also Krones, *Die Freien von Saneck*, 107, and Klaić, *Zadnji knezi Celjski*, 84.

**71** MHEZ, 7:281, doc. 263.

**72** DL 14 996 and 15 024.

**73** DL 15 188.

**74** MHEZ, 7:333, doc. 312.

**75** Keresztúry, *Compendiaria descriptio*, 222, doc. 20. See also Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:276.

**76** DL 88 433. The case dragged on for years nonetheless.

## All the Bishop's Men

Ruling a diocese as large as Oradea was not a simple task, and Vitez did not perform it all by himself. He was helped by subordinates he could trust and rely on despite the numerous plots and power plays, to which Hungarian bishops were not at all immune.<sup>77</sup> Judging by the people he employed, he had to build his power base from the ground up, and he trusted newcomers like himself more than established members of the chapter of Oradea. The group of his most trusted subordinates was made up of men he brought from the diocese of Zagreb. Hunyadi's partisans were unwelcome there at the time of Vitez's investiture, as they were expelled by the counts of Celje and their bishop Benedict of Zvolen in 1445.<sup>78</sup>

The most important among these was Peter of Crkvica, son of Michael.<sup>79</sup> He was the one who carried the letters to Rome when Vitez sought the pope's confirmation in 1445. He was a notary and chaplain of John Hunyadi at the time.<sup>80</sup> He was also a canon of Zagreb, but while in Rome he tried to obtain the office of custos of Oradea, vacated by its previous holder's, John of Tapolca's, promotion to the office of provost.<sup>81</sup> Although the office of custos eluded him,<sup>82</sup> he did become a canon of Oradea. As such, he carried Vitez's and Hunyadi's letters to Rome on two more occasions. In early 1446 he was sent there to deliver Vitez's thanks to the cardinals for supporting his confirmation and to settle his debt to the Apostolic Camera,<sup>83</sup> and in early 1450 he carried the messages from Hunyadi and the Hungarian Estates to Nicholas Lasocki, along with a personal message from Vitez.<sup>84</sup>

Vitez chose Peter as his assistant, and probably recommended him to Hunyadi, not only due to their common Slavonian background (Crkvica was a parish in Križevci county),<sup>85</sup> but also because he possessed at least some education. He enrolled in the

**77** Bisticci recounted how Janus Pannonius told him that after he was made bishop of Pécs, some "envious prelate" tried to poison him, but he discovered the plot and kept it secret to avoid a scandal. Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Greco, 1:1:331.

**78** Pálosfalvi, "Cilleiek és Tallóciak," 72ff.

**79** For his biography, see Tomislav Matić, "Peter of Crkvica, a Man who Could Be Trusted—The Career of a Middle-Ranking Cleric and Diplomat in the Kingdom of Hungary in Mid-Fifteenth Century," in *Secular Power and Sacral Authority in Medieval East-Central Europe*, ed. Kosana Jovanović and Suzana Miljan (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 153–65.

**80** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 49–56. Only one of those letters identifies Peter as its carrier, but Paul of Ivanić explains that he carried all of them. See Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 56, note f. See also Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 24–33.

**81** MHEZ, 7:48, doc. 54.

**82** After John of Tapolca the office was held by Andrew of Timișoara: see Kristóf, *Egyházi közélet*, 252.

**83** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 48, doc. 5. and 60, doc. 19.

**84** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 120–21, doc. 57–58.

**85** Ranko Pavleš, "Srednjovjekovni posjedi na području Poljane, Đurđica i Treme kod Križevaca," *Cris* 9 (2007): 26–35 at 33.

University of Kraków in 1430,<sup>86</sup> but as he was never mentioned bearing any academic titles, it seems that he, like Vitez, did not manage to complete his studies. The fact that he carried Vitez's personal letters indicates that he had the latter's trust, as letters were regularly accompanied by confidential messages to be delivered orally.<sup>87</sup> Peter also handled Vitez's other affairs. In 1454 he acted in Vitez's stead, confirming that Nicholas Várdai had settled a debt of one hundred and fifty florins to the bishop.<sup>88</sup> It seems that at least some of Vitez's accounts were managed by Peter.

Peter formally remained a canon of Zagreb and in 1447 he tried to obtain that chapter's lectorate.<sup>89</sup> In this he did not succeed, but he did become custos of Oradea around 1449, and its lector around 1452.<sup>90</sup> His previous office was then given to Janus Pannonius, to provide him with an income during his studies in Italy.<sup>91</sup> It seems that by 1453 Peter had reconciled with his colleagues in Zagreb, as he acted as its Chapter's representative and defended its interests at the Slavonian ban's court.<sup>92</sup> He was not mentioned after 1454, so we can assume that he died around that time.

Another important subordinate of Vitez's was Brice of Szeged, son of Ambrose, also a transplant from the chapter of Zagreb. He is probably one and the same as "Brice the Hungarian," a notary of Ban Matko Talovac who illegally held a canonry of Zagreb in 1440.<sup>93</sup> At the outbreak of the succession war, Brice supported King Wladislas, which earned him the wrath of Queen Elizabeth who, at least formally, took the canonry away from him and gave it to Vitez's old rival, Marinus of Sevnica.<sup>94</sup> As Ban Matko was in control of the diocese, this was merely a legal problem for Brice, and in 1442 Wladislas remedied it by formally making him a canon and archdeacon of Zagreb, which was confirmed by Pope Eugene IV.<sup>95</sup>

Brice was one of the canons expelled from Zagreb in 1445. He complained to the pope in 1447 that his enemies had exiled him from the diocese of Zagreb and that Bishop Benedict had unjustly excommunicated him. Pope Nicholas V assigned his case to Vitez, which was probably not a coincidence.<sup>96</sup> Brice simultaneously accused one of

**86** Jerzy Zathay and Jerzy Reichan, *Indeks studentów Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego w latach 1400–1500* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich / Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1974), 251.

**87** Camargo, *Ars Dictaminis, Ars Dictandi*, 18–19; Camargo, "Where's the Brief?," 4–9.

**88** Zichy, 9:442, doc. 328.

**89** *Oklevéltár a Magyar király kegyuri jog történetéhez*, ed. Fraknói, 30–31, doc. 24; MHEZ, 7:111, doc. 108.

**90** Since at least November 1449 and November 1452 respectively: see DL 22 491 and 55 525. See also Kristóf, *Egyházi középréteg*, 205.

**91** Kristóf, "I modi di acquistare benefici," 308.

**92** MHEZ, 7:244–45, doc. 232. See also Ivančan, *Podatci o zagrebačkim kanonicima*, in *Nadbiskupijski arhiv Zagreb*, 190 and Razum, "Osvaldo Thuz," 887.

**93** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:193, doc. 711.

**94** MHEZ, 6:630, doc. 580.

**95** MHEZ, 7:19, doc. 24.

**96** MHEZ, 7:108–9, doc. 105. In this and the next document Brice's father is called Anthony, but

the members of the chapter of Zagreb of despoiling him of the archdeaconry of Komarnica, and the pope, probably also not coincidentally, assigned the case to Andrew Kálnói, who was also an adherent of John Hunyadi.<sup>97</sup> As Nicholas Lasocki was then in Rome as an envoy of Governor Hunyadi and the Hungarian Estates, we can assume that he arranged these assignments.<sup>98</sup>

Unlike with Peter of Crkvica, it seems that the tasks Vitez would give to Brice were less sophisticated. He was made canon of Oradea by 1450, and it seems he had by then become entrenched there, as he himself stated that Vitez had charged him with administering the temporal possessions of the bishopric together with a fellow canon, Blaise son of Ladislaus, while the bishop was absent. In 1450 Brice supplicated the pope to absolve him of the ecclesiastical censures for murder, as he had ordered an episcopal subject to be beaten so hard that he died soon afterwards.<sup>99</sup> Although it seems that Brice was more of an enforcer than an intellectual, he was not uneducated, as he had enrolled in the University of Kraków in 1434.<sup>100</sup> He, like Peter of Crkvica, did not attain any academic degrees. There is no mention of him after the incident in 1450.

The third aide whom Vitez brought from Zagreb was the often-mentioned Paul of Ivanić, son of Demetrius, editor of Vitez's collection of letters. While we do not know exactly when he arrived in Oradea, we may assume he was also one of the members of the chapter of Zagreb expelled in 1445.<sup>101</sup> In that year he was titled as a cleric of the diocese of Zagreb and a chancery notary.<sup>102</sup> He never attained any important offices in the diocese of Oradea; when he finished editing Vitez's collection of letters in December 1451 he was merely rector of the altar of St. Paul in the Oradea Cathedral.<sup>103</sup> Besides compiling Vitez's correspondence, he accompanied Vitez to at least one diplomatic mission, the one to Vienna in 1448.<sup>104</sup> It is probable that he served Vitez as a personal secretary. At least some thought that the way to Vitez led through Paul—for example, Vitus Hündler, titular bishop of Vidin and episcopal vicar of Pécs, repeatedly beseeched Paul to secure for him the office of Vitez's episcopal vicar.<sup>105</sup> Although Vitus ultimately remained in Pécs (he lived to be Janus Pannonius's vicar and the latter

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those are most likely scribal errors.

**97** MHEZ, 7:113, doc. 109.

**98** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 89, doc. 36, note a. See also Pajorin, "Antiturcica," 24.

**99** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:285, doc. 1143.

**100** Kristóf, *Egyházi közlépréteg*, 247.

**101** Cf. Kristóf, *Egyházi közlépréteg*, 218 and Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 2:135.

**102** Kristóf, *Egyházi közlépréteg*, 218.

**103** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 166.

**104** At the end of his commentary on the Hungarian embassy's composition, Paul added the words "ubi et ego interfui" (and I myself was there) and his signature; Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 76, doc. 27, note l, the original manuscript in DF 286 311, p. 18v. As previously noted, although the letter in question was dated 1447, the year was 1448 according to our reckoning.

**105** József Koller, *Historia Episcopatus Quinqueecclesiarum*, 7 vols. (Bratislava: Landerer, 1782–1812), 4:326, doc. 104. Episcopal vicars were often called suffragans, which is the term Vitus used. They were always bishops of titular sees. See Razum, "Osvaldo Thuz," 305.

wrote scathing poems about him),<sup>106</sup> he apparently thought that Paul had an influence on Vitez in matters of staffing. Also, in his letter from October 1450 Vitus addressed Paul as lector of the collegiate chapter of Čazma in the diocese of Zagreb, so we can assume Vitez had secured that office for him.<sup>107</sup>

We do not know whether Paul ever studied at a university, but it seems he possessed at least some knowledge of literature. Vitez probably chose him as his assistant not only because of his background, but because of his education as well. His comments on Vitez's letters reveal he knew Classical Latin well enough to know that the word *avisare* was a medieval neologism,<sup>108</sup> which could mean he was familiar with contemporary literary trends. Klára Pajorin thought that Paul, through his comments, attempted to “freshen up” Vitez's essentially medieval style and explain his expressions in humanistic terms.<sup>109</sup> Paul himself stated something in that vein in the introduction to Vitez's collection of letters, saying, to make the text easier to read, he listed in the margins the names of authors Vitez quoted and added explanations of some of the words or phrases he used, based on the information he received from Vitez himself or read in books.<sup>110</sup> He was relatively well versed in Classical literature.<sup>111</sup> In one of his comments he declared that Cicero was the best among Roman orators, Livy and Sallust among historians, Virgil among epicists, Ovid among elegists, Terence among comedigraphers, and Juvenal among satirists, while Persius was also excellent but wrote very little. Of tragedians, he claimed, Seneca was currently the most popular, and Horace, Martianus Capella and Boethius were also good in various literary genres.<sup>112</sup> In another place he displayed his knowledge of satirists, explaining they are the ones who chastise bad habits or human vices in their works. He wrote that where he lived, only those satirical pieces that are well-known and widespread were available, such as those by Lucilius, Horace, Persius and Juvenal, although he admitted he had never seen a work by Lucilius.<sup>113</sup> It is possible he copied this list from elsewhere.

Paul knew Persius's writings well enough to recognize and quote them. He referred to them several times, because Archdeacon Paul—the mysterious person to whom Vitez's collection of letters was dedicated—liked that author, to the extent that Paul of Ivanić, speaking to the archdeacon, called him “your Persius.”<sup>114</sup> This is interesting, as Persius's works grew in popularity among humanists and became one of the cen-

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**106** Birnbaum, *Janus Pannonius*, 115.

**107** Kristóf and Bunyitay thought so: see Kristóf, *Egyházi középélet*, 219 and Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 2:135.

**108** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 49, doc. 5, note c.

**109** Pajorin, “Crusades and Early Humanism,” 243–44.

**110** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 28.

**111** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 30–31.

**112** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 42, doc. 2, note uu.

**113** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 36, doc. 1, note R.

**114** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 167, especially notes f, h, q, and r.

trepieces of fifteenth-century Italian curricula.<sup>115</sup> That could mean that Paul of Ivanić was educated in Italy. Also, he called the practice of professors discussing the subject matter with their students after lectures an “Italian custom,”<sup>116</sup> which could mean he was referring to the universities with which he was familiar. Such discussions were practised in all European universities and were not specifically Italian,<sup>117</sup> but it is possible Paul did not know that.

It is possible—although not certain—that Paul of Ivanić is the person to whom Janus Pannonius referred to as “our Paul” in an undated letter to Vitez. In it, he wrote about this person travelling to Italy as Vitez’s emissary and paying a surprise visit to Janus on December 8 (he did not write of which year) in Ferrara, where he stayed just long enough for Janus to write a letter for him to carry back to Vitez, along with a bronze medallion bearing the likeness of Janus’s teacher Guarino Veronese (also known as Guarino da Verona).<sup>118</sup> If this was Paul of Ivanić, it is possible that he was in Ferrara because he was carrying Vitez’s letter, written on October 20, 1449, to Nicholas Lasocki.<sup>119</sup> Perhaps that was when he met or even travelled with Valentine of Kapos. In said letter, Valentine is mentioned as the person who can tell the pope more about its contents, as he had recently visited Hungary and brought the pope’s letter to the Hungarian Estates.<sup>120</sup>

It is possible that Paul of Ivanić was the same “Paul” mentioned in the letter sent by a certain Simon, a Hungarian pupil of Guarino’s, to Vitez on September 4, 1453. In it, Simon wrote that earlier that year, he saw this Paul in Guarino’s house, as Cardinal Carvajal, with whom Paul was travelling at the time, was forced to delay his journey from Ferrara to Venice due to bad weather. He referred to this Paul as Vitez’s “fidelissimus olim famulus” (erstwhile most faithful servant), with whom Simon grew up and became friends at Vitez’s court. On that occasion, Paul told Simon he had to leave Vitez to attend to some urgent business in his homeland (perhaps meaning Slavonia), and that he eventually settled in Rome. Due to his knowledge of Turkish, he found employment at the Curia, and entered the service of Brother Valentine (probably identical to the aforementioned Valentine of Kapos). However, he yearned to return to Vitez’s service, and if the latter would send envoys to Rome, said Paul, they could seek him out

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**115** Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy—Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 247 and 252.

**116** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 156, doc. 74, note k.

**117** Christoph Flüeler, “Teaching Ethics at the University of Vienna: The Making of a Commentary at the Faculty of Arts (A Case Study),” in *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages: Commentaries on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, 1200–1500*, ed. István P. Bejczy (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 277–346 at 279 and 295–96.

**118** *Epistolario*, 3:440–41. Sabbadini, the editor, assumed the letter was written in 1449. See also Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 38, *Matricula et acta Hungarorum*, 3:358 and 3:360–61, and Kristóf, *Egyházi középréteg*, 219. Note that “Veronese” is equivalent to “da Verona” (which is used in some texts).

**119** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 111–13, doc. 51.

**120** Regarding this, see Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 104, doc. 45.

there, and he would make sure their missions would be swiftly accomplished.<sup>121</sup> This raises several questions, such as when did Paul of Ivanić have the time to grow up at Vitez's court? Also, if this Paul is identical to Paul of Ivanić, it seems that between the time he finished compiling Vitez's collection of letters in late 1451 and the end of 1452 he left Vitez's service, as Simon stated that the fact that Vitez was made privy chancellor was news to him. We cannot, however, be certain of any of this.

Based on these three of Vitez's assistants—Peter of Crkvica, who handled his diplomacy and finances, Brice of Szeged, who managed his estates, and Paul of Ivanić, his secretary—we can assume that Vitez chose his subordinates among educated clerics with whom he shared a common background. These were all men he could reasonably believe would not plot against him, and who were newcomers in Oradea, like him. These were all valuable qualities in the perilous environment of Hungary during Hunyadi's regency.

However, Vitez could not work only with outsiders. He needed the help of established members of the chapter of Oradea. His first vicar *in spiritualibus* (not to be confused with episcopal vicar) was a man who suited both him and the chapter—his old colleague from the University of Vienna, John of Tapolca.<sup>122</sup> As a doctor of canon law and provost of Oradea, John was both the most educated and the highest-ranking member of the chapter, and other canons could not dispute his suitability for the office. Sources mention him as vicar in 1446, and as such he was taking testimonies and issuing charters to local nobles.<sup>123</sup>

Based on the small quantity of preserved documents, we can assume that Vitez would delegate less important legal issues to his vicar. However, it seems that he and John of Tapolca never developed a close rapport, as John did not remain vicar for very long.<sup>124</sup> A few years later he was replaced with another cleric, John Sarlói, who could probably thank Vitez for his entire career. We find him as vicar from 1451 on.<sup>125</sup> As he was not an older and established member of the chapter of Oradea, it might be that Vitez appointed him because he could control him better than his predecessor. John Sarlói attained a doctorate in canon law from the University of Padua, perhaps with Vitez's financial assistance.<sup>126</sup> His example also shows that Vitez chose his assistants among educated individuals. Like his predecessor, John acted as Vitez's vicar *in spiritualibus* and *auditor causarum*, and dealt with everyday legal affairs, which Vitez did not have time due to his long absences from his diocese.<sup>127</sup> That was quite usual, as

**121** *Epistolario*, 3:442–43. For Carvajal's mission to Venice in 1453, see Canedo, *Un español*, 136–37.

**122** For his biography, see Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 2:49–52 and Kristóf, *Egyházi közélet*, 103 and 251–52.

**123** DL 38 285, 38 286 and 38 287.

**124** He did remain provost of Oradea until at least the summer of 1457: see DL 25 981.

**125** See Kristóf, *Egyházi közélet*, 242–43.

**126** Kristóf, *Egyházi közélet*, 57.

**127** For example, see DL 62 305, 14 563, and 38 304.

many prelates would delegate legal issues within their jurisdiction to their vicars. For example, Callimachus Experiens stated in his biography of Gregory of Sanok that the latter rarely sat in court himself, and that his judicial duties were usually handled by his vicar.<sup>128</sup> Vitez's predecessor John de Dominis delegated such duties to his vicar as well.<sup>129</sup> Even when a case was brought before him, Vitez himself directed his officials to refer the involved parties to his vicar.<sup>130</sup> In fact, after 1453 Vitez would visit his diocese so rarely that most of the everyday issues would have had to have been handled by his vicars. By then, Sarlói was replaced by a new person, Andrew of Bogyiszló.<sup>131</sup>

### Vitez and Oradea Cathedral

While he was bishop of Oradea, Vitez did not disregard his cathedral. The rebuilding he commissioned there is the first example of his investments in architecture. It was precipitated by a disaster that struck on Passion Sunday, 1443, of which Paul of Ivanić left a dramatic account. On that day, a tower of the cathedral collapsed on top of a vaulted sacristy in which relics of saints were kept and venerated—among others, the head and both arms of St. Ladislaus and an arm of St. Agatha, the latter sent to Oradea by the chapter of Arad for safe keeping, due to the fear of Ottoman raiders. The sacristy was completely crushed by the remains of the tower, but the relics were miraculously preserved. In a letter to Eugene IV, Hunyadi listed the rebuilding of the Oradea Cathedral as one of the reasons Vitez should swiftly be confirmed as bishop. If he is to be believed, the cathedral's towers (note the plural) had already collapsed, and the chancel was threatening to do the same.<sup>132</sup> Vitez probably initiated the rebuilding, but the lack of funds prompted him to send a supplication to the pope jointly with Hunyadi on April 2, 1449, asking him to award the cathedral the privilege to grant indulgences, to raise funds for the construction works. The supplication offers further details on the building's previous state. The collapse of the towers was not mentioned, but apparently King Sigismund began the construction of a new cathedral and died when it was far from finished. The money ran out, and the work stalled. It is possible that this half-finished state contributed to the towers' instability. In any case, the pope granted the privilege, also allowing Vitez to appoint confessors at the cathedral, to minister to the pilgrims attracted by the new indulgences.<sup>133</sup> We do not know how the construction progressed, but a considerable part of the cathedral might have

**128** Callimachus, *Vita et mores Gregorii Sanocei*, ed. Miodoński, XXVIr.

**129** *Codex diplomaticus comitum Károlyi*, ed. Géresi, 2:141–42, doc. 141.

**130** DF 278 585.

**131** DL 38 315. See also Kristóf, "I modi di acquistare benefici," 305.

**132** Vitez, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 50–51, doc. 6. See also Pajorin, "L'Influsso del concilio di Basilea," 102.

**133** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:267, doc. 1059. In the same supplication, Hunyadi and Vitez asked for permission to award the abandoned Augustinian monastery in Oradea to the Dominicans or the Observant Franciscans, and for the monastery to also be given the privilege to grant indulgences. The pope granted both. See also Prokopp, "The Scholarship of Johannes Vitez," 353.

been finished while Vitez was bishop. The inscription “JEW 1456” (the initials possibly meaning *Johannes Episcopus Waradiensis*), which a traveller claimed to have seen on the building at the beginning of the seventeenth century, might have been made to commemorate that.<sup>134</sup>

The Oradea Cathedral was also a place where the jubilee indulgence of 1450 could be obtained. On April 12, 1450, Pope Nicholas V granted the privilege to obtain the jubilee indulgence by visiting the Oradea Cathedral on three consecutive days to John Hunyadi, his wife and sons.<sup>135</sup> Soon afterwards, the privilege was extended to all penitents who would visit this cathedral or the collegiate church of the Blessed Virgin in Székesfehérvár.<sup>136</sup> These churches housed the relics of the two holy kings of Hungary—Ss. Stephen and Ladislaus, so they were the logical choices for this privilege. However, Vitez had probably done some lobbying to bring this about. He was the one who, on behalf of Hunyadi and the Hungarian Estates, composed the letters to the pope in which they asked for the privilege of obtaining jubilee indulgences without travelling to Rome to be extended to all subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary;<sup>137</sup> these were carried to Rome by Peter of Crkvica.<sup>138</sup> The pope agreed to that arrangement, so that the money gathered from the penitents could be used for the defence against the Ottomans.<sup>139</sup> Hunyadi, however, had different plans, using it to wage war against George Branković.<sup>140</sup>

Besides rebuilding the cathedral, Vitez took care for it to be properly staffed. He employed a choirmaster, a certain Peter called *Gallicus* (which could mean he was French), a member of the Hospitaller order, to conduct the cathedral choir and instruct its younger members. On April 29, 1451, Vitez requested and received permission from the pope to keep this Peter as a member of his entourage and to endow him with some ecclesiastical office as sinecure. He also made sure the cathedral had its preacher. On the aforementioned day, he received the permission to keep the Franciscan George of Baranja, who preached to the clergy and the laymen of the city of Oradea and its diocese, as a personal retainer.<sup>141</sup> It also seems that Vitez himself took up preaching, or at least tried to, as in 1459 Pope Pius II allowed him to employ his nephew Janus Pannonius as his coadjutor, allegedly so he would have the time to study

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**134** Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 165–66; Bunyitay, *A váradi püspökség*, 1:289; Prokopp, “The Scholarship of Johannes Vitéz,” 352.

**135** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:277, doc. 1102.

**136** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:277, doc. 1104.

**137** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 113–14, doc. 52 and 131–35, docs. 62–63.

**138** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 162, doc. 78, note b.

**139** Vitéz, *Opera*, ed. Boronkai, 133, doc. 62, note n.

**140** Held, *Hunyadi*, 140.

**141** *Diplomata pontificum saeculi XV*, ed. Lukcsics, 2:296, docs. 1224–25. Preachers were often employed by Hungarian ecclesiastical institutions in the fifteenth century, due to the rise of heretical movements. See Edit Madas, “The Late-Medieval Book Culture in Hungary from the 1430s to the Late 1470s,” in *A Star in the Raven’s Shadow*, ed. Földesi et al., 9–23 at 15.

theology and engage in preaching.<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, none of Vitez's sermons have so far been discovered.<sup>143</sup> One of the few traces of his supposed interest in sermonizing is a codex containing the sermons of St. Leo the Great, in which Vitez inscribed his initials (JEW) and a note saying he had seen the book and emended it somewhat in Esztergom in 1457, and finished emending it and inscribing page numbers in Oradea in 1458. This might mean he started reading the book while he was a prisoner of Cardinal Szécsi.<sup>144</sup>

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**142** Theiner, 2:320, doc. 490.

**143** See Fraknói, *Vitéz János*, 157; Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 44.

**144** Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 112–13.

