

THE IMPACT OF REFORMATION IN THE TRANSYLVANIAN DIOCESE AND THE BEGINNINGS OF CATHOLIC REVIVAL¹

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Abstract: At the beginning of the 16th century the Diocese of Transylvania, which was over 60,000 square meters, had an extensive ecclesiastical infrastructure. Under the bishop's leadership, a 24-member cathedral chapter led the 600 parishes in the thirteen main districts. More than 1,000 monks lived in over fifty monasteries. This seemingly powerful community has practically ceased to exist within the short 25 to 30 years due to the desire for spiritual renewal and social policy. Without its bishopric and chapter leader, there was only one monastery and about thirty parishes. It was saved from the total destruction by the incredibly coherent and persistent work of the Jesuits, and by the counter-reformation that strengthened with the help of the Habsburgs, and by - most of all - the few faithful Catholics and their self-organizing activities. Thus, the Catholic autonomy was strengthened by the hierarchically organized Catholic Church that secular believers gained a status that is unique throughout the world. The purpose of my paper is to present that age and the birth of Catholic Status, also known as Catholic autonomy.

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Introduction: ‘Ecclesia semper reformanda est’

The pursuit of reform goes back long in history. One can meet the verb ‘to reform’ as early as in classical Latin.³ It was generally a reference to the revival/rejuvenation of a community or institution by way of returning to their origins. During the time of the Church Fathers, the concept of ‘reformatio in melius per Deum’ was used in the sense of transformation for the better. This way, it gained a religious content, and this is also how the 1415 Council of Constance formulated it upon declaring that: ‘ecclesia sit reformata in fide et moribus, et capite, et membris’,⁴ whereby it urged, for church leaders and members alike, on the reformation and reversion of the church to its original state of early Christianity in matters of faith and morals.

The spirituality of reform became characteristic first and foremost of mediaeval monasticism. St Benedict of Nursia may be considered a ‘reformer’ in his own way as early as the 6th century since as the father of Western monasticism he was not the one who came up with the idea of the monastic system, but he reformed it and renewed it.

At the time of the Carolingian Renaissance, the second father of Western monasticism, St Benedict of Aniane, carried on with this reformation in the 9th century. This served as the basis for the Cluniac Reforms and the Hirsauer Reform, considered as the German counterpart of the movement, which aimed at the reversion of secularized monasticism to discipline and studiousness as well as at ensuring the independence of the monasteries. The Gregorian Reforms played a central role in clarifying the power relations between state and church. In the 12th century, the Cistercians and the Premonstratensians while in the 13th century the Dominican Order and the Franciscans (both mendicant orders) were the next in line to carry on the flag of reforms.

³ Cf. Mahlmann, Theodor. 1992. *Reformation*. In: Ritter, Joachim–Gründer, Karlfried (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 8. Basel. 416–427.

⁴ *Delectus actorum Ecclesiae Universalis seu nova summa conciliorum, epistolarum, decretorum SS. Pontificum, capitularium, et quibus Ecclesiae fides et disciplina niti solent cum notis ad canones*, Tomus primus, Lugduni: Joannis Certe 1706, p. 1654.

The idea of reform was still as relevant as ever even after the period of the Reformation. Jodocus van Lodenstein (1620–1677) of the Low Countries writes in his book *Beschouwinge van Zion* published in 1675 that the Protestant Church of his era is ‘ecclesia deformata’, and he outlines the tasks ahead as follows: ‘one should always strive for rejuvenation, which is why a learned man once wished for the Reformed Church not to be named *reformed* but *to be reformed*’ (my emphasis and transl.).⁵

Therefore, we may say that ‘ecclesia semper reformanda est’.⁶ This principle gained popularity through the established terminology within the context of Reform Catholicism starting from the 50s of the 20th century.⁷

Although the Second Vatican Council did not make it literally its own, it formulated beautifully the nature of the church as holy and always in need of purification: ‘Ecclesia in proprio sinu peccatores complectens, sancta simul et semper purificanda, poenitentiam et renovationem continuo prosequitur’,⁸ meaning that ‘the church that includes the sinful as well is at once holy and always in need of purification, wherefore incessantly following the path of penance and revival’. The Catholic Church of the 15th–16th centuries would have also been in dire need of such a spirit to be able to prevent the schism caused by the Reformation. All the more so since the continued hostilities between the church and the various

⁵ Lodensteyn, J. Van. 1718. *Beschouwinge van Zion: ofte Aandagten en Opmerkingen Over den tegenwoordigen toestand van't Gereformeerde Christen Volk*. Amsterdam.

⁶ In all likelihood, this sentence was first put down in this form by Karl Barth in 1947; however, it had not yet come into circulation. Cf. Bush, Michael 2008. Calvin and the Reformanda Sayings. In: J. Selderhuis, Herman (ed.), *Calvinus sacrarum literarum interpres: Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research Göttingen*. Vandemhoeck & Ruprecht 2008, 285–299, here: 289. It became more widely known after it came out in 1952 as the title of the commemorative book written in honour of the 50-year-old Protestant historian Ernest Wolf, Professor at the University of Göttingen. Cf. Schneemelcher, Wilhelm–Steck, Karl Gerhard (eds.). 1952. *Ecclesia semper reformanda. Theologische Aufsätze*, F. S. Ernst Wolf, Munich – qtd. in: Abraham, Martin. 2007. *Evangelium und Kirchengestalt: Reformatorisches Kirchenverständnis heute*. Berlin–New York.

⁷ Cf. Abraham, 511.

⁸ *Paulus Episcopus servus servorum Dei una cum sacrosancti concilii patribus ad perpetuam rei memoriam constitutio dogmatica de ecclesia lumen gentium* 8. Available at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_lt.html (downloaded on: 7.10.2019).

kings and princes, the Avignon Papacy, and the subsequent reform of papal taxation all made their contribution to the disruption of the church. By the end of the Middle Ages, bishops had increasingly become bodies governed by public law and secular rulers. The gap had widened between the higher and the lower clergy both in financial and educational terms.

Reform initiatives have been known from times immediately predating the Reformation. Simultaneously with the Reformation, Catholic revival was inaugurated, hard on the heels of which came Counter-Reformation. The concept of Catholic revival in the church refers to the constant internal revival launched in the 15th century, whereas Counter-Reformation is the counter-attack of the Catholic Church aimed at the recovery of losses either through peaceful or violent means, even by using military means in joint actions with secular powers.⁹ The true revival of the Catholic Church was brought about by the Council of Trent (1545–1563). It reorganized the church and did away with the excesses, bringing new dynamism to ecclesial life. It turned out as a major weakness of the Council that in numerous cases it formulated its theses as refutations of the doctrines disseminated by the Reformation.

The Status of the Transylvanian Diocese in the Early 16th Century

Fulfilling its role as the suffragan diocese of the Archdiocese of Kalocsa–Bács, the Transylvanian Diocese was the most extensive one in terms of surface area among the Hungarian dioceses at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, second only to the Diocese of Eger. Although it did not comprise the southern part of the Saxon deanery lying in the vicinity of Brassó (Braşov) and Szeben (Sibiu) on the territory of historical Transylvania, its area of more than 60,000 km² also

⁹ The term ‘Counter-Reformation’ was first used by a Lutheran lawyer from Göttingen, named Pütter, in his work published in 1776 (Cf. Pütter, Johann Stephan. 1776. *Die Augsbürgische Confession*. Göttingen). Historian Moritz Ritter generalized the term, providing specific meaning to it as follows: ‘the aggressive reconversion to the Catholic Church of the countries and subjects that turned Protestant’. Ritter, Moritz. 1889–1908. *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Gegenreformation und des dreissigjährigen Krieges* (1555–1648). 3. k. Stuttgart. The pair of terms ‘Catholic revival’ – ‘Counter-Reformation’ was introduced by German historian Hubert Jedin in 1946. Since then, this dual aspect of re-Catholicization has been naturalized in the literature. Cf. Kohler, Alfred. 2011. *Von der Reformation zum Westfälischen Frieden*. Munich.

covered the regions beyond the Meseş Mountains, the present-day counties of Szilágy (Sălaj) and Szatmár (Satu Mare).¹⁰ At this time, in terms of its outward appearances and institutional system, the Diocese still gives the general impression of a well-organized and strong institution. Under the governance of the bishop and a chapter,¹¹ who had received training in humanistic spirituality – mostly at Western universities –, it comprised over 600 parishes organized into thirteen archdeaconries.¹² At the same time, 56 well-distinguishable convents and monasteries operated in the region, giving home for religious sisters and brothers alike.¹³ Despite all of this, monasticism also found itself in a dire need of reform as consequent upon the Reformation, in the course of a few decades – caused by internal decay and external political circumstances –, this large monastic system quite simply ceased to exist, ‘sparing’ only the Franciscan monastery in Csík-somlyó [Șumuleu Ciuc].

¹⁰ János Karácsonyi. 1925. *Erdély és a kapcsolt részek vallási állapota 1526-tól 1570-ig* [The Religious Situation of Transylvania and the Annexed Parts in the Period of 1526–1570]. In: Elemér Gyárfás (ed.), *Az erdélyi katolicizmus multja és jelene* [Past and Present of the Transylvanian Catholicism]. Dicsőszentmárton. 31–45, here: 31. In 1512, at the request of Tamás Bakócz and following the earlier disputes over jurisdiction, the pope removed the deaneries of Braşov and Sibiu once again from the jurisdiction of the Transylvanian bishop and placed them under the Archdiocese of Esztergom. Cf. György Piusz Szabó. 1921. *Ferencrendiek a magyar történelemben. Adalékok a magyar ferencrendiek történetéhez* [Franciscans in Hungarian History. Annotations to the History of Hungarian Franciscans]. Budapest.

¹¹ Cf. József Marton. 2013. *Az erdélyi egyházmegye a középkorban* [The Transylvanian Diocese in the Middle Ages]. Miercurea Ciuc. 149–155.

¹² The papal tithe register of 1332–1337 informs us of the existence of 610 parishes organized into thirteen archdeaconries on the territory of the Transylvanian Diocese. The thirteen archdeaconries are: Fehérvár, Hunyad, Kézsd, Doboka, Küküllő, Kolozs, Szolnoki, Torda, Telegd (seats of Udvarhely, Csík, and Maros), Ózd (Upper Maros Region), Ugocsa, Szatmár, and Kraszna. Cf. János Buday. 1916. *A hunyadi főesperesség rövid története* [The Brief History of the Hunyad Archdeaconry]. Budapest. 20.

¹³ Cf. Beatrix Romhányi. 2000. *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok a középkori Magyarországon. Katalógus* [Monasteries and Collegiate Chapters in Mediaeval Hungary. Catalogue]. Budapest: Arcanum; László Makkai: *Erdély a középkori Magyar Királyságban (896–1526)* [Transylvania in the Hungarian Kingdom of the Middle Ages (896–1526)]. In: Zoltán Szász (ed.). 1988. *Erdély története a kezdetektől 1606-ig* [The History of Transylvania from the Beginnings to 1606]. Budapest. 235–408, here: 373–376.

At this time, the population of the diocesan town of Gyulafehérvár [Alba Iulia] was in the range of 670–1,200, around 10% of which were supposedly clergymen.¹⁴ According to available data, the episcopal household of the last bishop before the Reformation, Pál Bornemissza, consisted of a 114-strong staff.¹⁵ In the same period, the ecclesiastical middle class included about 49 clergymen – diocesan officials, canons, chantry priests –, while the lower clergy – deputies of dignitaries, chaplains, scholasticus, the chapel master of the St Nicholas Chapel outside the walls, hospital superintendents, the friars of the Dominican Monastery of the Blessed Virgin Mary – was made up of further 39 clergymen.¹⁶ Thus, the number of church officials that can be backed by available data included approx. 88 clergymen. At the same time, we have no data concerning the low-income prebendaries and choir priests (*sacerdotes de choro*),¹⁷ forming the lower clergy of the chapter, and regarding members of the Augustinian monastery dedicated to Saint Stephen the Protomartyr, just as is the case with the inmates of the school and the hospital.¹⁸ Therefore, if we were to add their approximate numbers, we would get a more than 100-strong clerical staff.

The need for reformation, striving for internal revival already manifested itself in the Catholic Church in times predating the Reformation.¹⁹ This way, reform

¹⁴ Cf. Emőke Gálfi: *Gyulafehérvár a középkor végén* [Gyulafehérvár in the Late Middle Ages], *Erdélyi Múzeum* 77(1): 27–41, here: 33.

¹⁵ Gálfi, *Gyulafehérvár*. 35.

¹⁶ At the end of the mediaeval period, 24 canons formed the canonical body, whereas the cathedral had at least 33 altars. However, due to the practice of accumulation of church property, several canons were at the same time chantry priests, and with 8 such documented cases the author determines 49 as the number of the clergymen representing the clerical middle class. Cf. Gálfi, *Gyulafehérvár*. 36.

¹⁷ The prebendaries and choir priests were those low-income members of the lower clergy who worked by the side of the chapters and deputized for the canons in performing various services. In the absence of the canon, they were in charge of the canonical hours and of celebrating the mass.

¹⁸ Cf. Gálfi, *Gyulafehérvár*. 36.

¹⁹ In regions to the west of our country, committed priests and laymen did their best to support revival efforts by introducing various reforms. The most appreciable impact of these efforts on the Transylvanian Diocese came in the wake of activities carried out by the stricter (observant) branch of the Franciscans and the *mulieres religiosae*, or the beguines. Both communities underwent a vigorous development, built several monasteries and convents, and worked hard towards the internal revival of ecclesial life.

movement initiatives became permanent – and still, in this climate of yearning for revival, the Reformation was launched on its way instead of the reforms.

If we are to come to grips with the above discussed state of affairs, we must first take a closer look at the era under study, the historical context which the church is embedded into, its driving forces and guiding ideologies in order to understand the origin of this narrative if it is possible at all to unravel and explain its mysteries in retrospect. People of the era had within them a greater desire to seek chances for salvation, which is why many of them turned to religious orders as well, but they often did not find what they were looking for. The regulations and statutes of religious orders lost their effectiveness, the founders' ideals fell into oblivion, a period of moral breakdown set in, and an increased thirst for reform impregnated the air.²⁰

External as well as internal signs were all over that indicated the untenable situation prevailing in the church that was in dire need of reforms. As humanist Bohuslav of Lobkowicz and Hassenstein claimed, clergymen became secularized to such an extent that most of them 'speak of money more often than of heaven, their lips form the words Nemesis and Lais more frequently than the name of Christ, and it is almost intolerable how they rather delve head-first into Plautus and Virgil than into the Gospel and study the doctrines of Epicurus with greater fervour than the canon law'.²¹

More serious charges are brought against the church by Bishop of Syrmia, István Brodarics, formulated in one of his letters on the spread of Lutheranism, addressed to Pope Clement VII.

The doctrines of Luther and his followers are slowly taking possession of the whole of Hungary, while in some places – especially in regions still obedient to the most majestic king, Ferdinand – everything is performed and taught in accordance with his theses. Priests enter into marriage openly, whilst pilgrimages, absolutions, and the like, which were once of value, are now held in contempt. Even we, observers of the Holy See, are puzzled how

²⁰ Cf. Klueting, Edeltraud. 2006. *Monasteria semper reformanda: Kloster- und Ordensreformen im Mittelalter*. Münster; Eberhard, Winfried–Machilek, Franz. 2006. *Kirchliche Reformimpulse des 14./15. Jahrhunderts in Ostmitteleuropa*. Köln–Wien.

²¹ Hassenstein Lobkowitz Bohusláv levele Budáról, 1502. augusztus 1-én [Bohuslav of Lobkowicz and Hassenstein's Letter from Buda, on 1 August 1502], qtd. in: Rabán Gerézdi. 1946. Aldus Manutius magyar barátai [The Hungarian Friends of Aldus Manutius]. In: *Magyar Könyvszemle* 1945. Jan.–Dec., vol. LXIX. Budapest. 38–98.

to respond to such matters or how to prove their views wrong. Because if we claimed it was a holier thing and agreeable to God that priests had prostitutes (which happens almost everywhere) rather than wives (to say nothing of even more shameful things), we would most certainly risk making a highly challengeable statement.²²

Monasteries of other religious orders lined up next to the more than twenty, by then partly defunct, Pauline hermitage-monastery.²³ The most significant of these was the Benedictine Abbey of Kolozsmonostor [Cluj-Mănăştur]. Among the orders of preachers, the Dominican Order operated monasteries in nine towns. As at 1524, these nine monasteries gave home to 171 friars altogether as follows: in Brassó [Braşov] 32, Beszterce [Bistriţa] and Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca] 28 each, Szeben [Sibiu] 27, Segesvár [Sighişoara] 24, Gyulafehérvár [Alba Iulia] 12, Udvarhely [Odorhei] 9, Szászsebes [Sebeş] 7, and in Alvinc [Vinţu de Jos] 4 Dominican friars carried out their activities.²⁴ The Franciscan Order operated thirteen monasteries. The monasteries of Beszterce, Szászsebes, and Szeben belonged to the Transylvanian custody of *Provincia Hungariae Sanctae Mariae* [Hungarian Province of Virgin Mary] that had developed from the more lenient conventual branch. The Franciscan monasteries of Brassó, CsíksomlyóFehéregy-

²² Brodarics István szerémi püspök levele VII. Kelemen pápához a lutheranizmus terjedéséről [Letter from István Brodarics, Bishop of Syrmia, on the Spread of Lutheranism, Addressed to Pope Clement VII]. Buda, 1 August 1533, qtd. in: Zoltán Csepregi. 2011. *Bebek Imre prépost budai menyegzője (1533). A szabadság evangéliumától a házaspapok rendjének regulájáig* [The Wedding of Provost Imre Bebek in Buda. From the Gospel of Freedom to the Rule of the Order of Married Priests]. *Acta Historiae Litterarum Hungaricarum* XXX. Balázs Mihály köszöntése [Congratulating Mihály Balázs]. Szeged. 95–103, here: 98.

²³ Cf. József Darvas-Kozma. 2012. *A pálos rend története Erdélyben, Partiumban, Bánságban és Kárpátalján* [The History of the Order of Saint Paul the First Hermit in Transylvania, Partium, the Banat, and Subcarpathia]. Miercurea Ciuc. 111–189.

²⁴ Cf. Registrum Noviciorum conventus Schegeswariensis – Fabri Antal domonkosrendű predicator generalis egykorú följegyzése alapján [Based on the Contemporary Records of Dominican Predicator Generalis Antal Fabri]. In: Bunyitai, V.–Rapaics, R.–Karácsonyi, J. (eds.). 1902. *Emlékek a magyarországi hitújítás korából I. 1520–1529* [Reminiscences from the Age of Reformation in Hungary]. 528–532. Cf. also: Fabritius, Karl. 1861. *Zwei Funde in der ehemaligen Domonikaner kirche zu Schäßburg*. In: *Archiv des Vereines für siebenbürgische Landeskunde*. Neue Folge Fünfter Band, I. Heft. Kronstadt. 1–40, here: 29–33.

háza [Albești], Hátszeg [Hațeg] and then Vajdahunyad [Hunedoara], Kolozsvár, Marosfalu [Suseni], Marosvásárhely [Târgu-Mureș], Medgyes [Mediaș], Székelyudvarhely [Odorheiu Secuiesc], and Tövis [Teiuș] belonged to the Transylvanian custody of the Salvatorian Province (*Provincia Hungariae O.M.S. Francisci Stricterioris Observantiae sub titulo Sanctissimi Salvatoris*) – as at 1523, 218 friars inhabited the ten monasteries.²⁵ Of the above-listed residences, the monasteries in Marosvásárhely, Kolozsvár, Fehéregyháza, Csíksomlyó, Medgyes, and Tövis survived by the year 1554, while as of 1558 the single remaining convent was the one in Csíksomlyó, left with eight friars altogether.²⁶ The Augustinians had monasteries in Gyulafehérvár, Dés [Dej], and Torda [Turda].²⁷ The most important religious orders for women were made up, again, of the Franciscan as well as Dominican sisters, who established their own cloisters in every town beside the monasteries built for religious brothers, their numbers coming close to that of the friars.²⁸

These monasteries and convents, more than fifty altogether, yielded an extremely high number of religious sisters and brothers and were teeming with life considering that, for instance, in the period of 1520–1527 fourteen novices entered the Dominicans' monastery in Segesvár.²⁹ In addition, their number was

²⁵ Cf. Szabó, *Ferencrendiek* [Franciscans]. 73, 78, 263. János Karácsonyi. 1923. *Szt. Ferencz rendjének története Magyarországon 1711-ig* [The History of the Order of St Francis in Hungary until 1711]. Budapest. 377, 386.

²⁶ Cf. Szabó, *Ferencrendiek* [Franciscans], 105. Karácsonyi, *Szt. Ferencz rendjének története* [The History of the Order of St Francis], 420.

²⁷ Cf. János Jerney. 1855. *A magyarországi káptalanok és konventek, mint hielmes és hiteleshelyek története* [The History of Chapters and Convents in Hungary as Testifying and Authentic Places]. *Magyar Történelmi Tár II.*; Attila Weisz. 2011. *Az ótordai református templom (volt ágostonos kolostor) lehetséges művészeti kapcsolatai* [The Possible Artistic Relationships of the Reformed Church (Former Augustinian Monastery) in Old Torda]. In: Kovács Zsolt–Sarkadi Nagy Emese–Weisz Attila (eds.), *Liber discipulorum. Tanulmányok Kovács András 65. születésnapjára* [Studies for the 65th Birthday of András Kovács]. Cluj-Napoca. 19–38; Beatrix Romhányi. 2005. *Ágostonrendi remeték a középkori Magyarországon* [Augustinian Hermits in Mediaeval Hungary]. In: *Aetas – Történettudományi folyóirat* 20(4).

²⁸ Cf. Makkai, *Erdély* [Transylvania]. In: Szász, *Erdély története* [The History of Transylvania]. 235–408, here: 375–376.

²⁹ Cf. *Registrum Noviciorum conventus Schegeswariensis* – Fabri Antal domonkosrendű predicator generalis egykorú följegyzése alapján [Based on the Contemporary Records

on the rise in the early 1500s. While, e.g. – as we could see above –, there were 24 of them in the Segesvár monastery in 1524, their number increased to 25 in 1525 and remained so by the year 1529; however, outside the walls of the monastic quarters, an additional 17 friars carried out their activities.³⁰ This extensive infrastructure ceased to exist practically in a few years' time in the wake of the Reformation.

Obviously, not everything revolves around numbers. The level of education was in strong correlation with the educational level of the clergy. While in the early 16th century names highly respected in foreign academia, too, in terms of scholarship and whose bearers graduated from foreign universities were not absent from the ranks of the higher clergy and the monastics, the bar was placed much lower among the members of the lower clergy. The decisions of the diocesan synods in Esztergom (1493), Nitra (1494), and Veszprém (1515) set minimum requirements for admission in the holy orders. In order for candidates to be ordained for the priesthood it was sufficient if 'they had reached the required age, had good morals, came from a legitimate marriage, could read and sing well, and were somewhat versed in elementary knowledge'.³¹

Protestantism was spreading like wildfire in mid-16th-century Transylvania, attesting to a never-before-seen moral decay and weakness lying behind the outward lustre, power, and wealth of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. In terms of the religious situation on the ground, it shared the same fate with Hungary. The prosperous era of the Middle Ages with Christianity turning inwards and towards God, when the cult of the Eucharist and the Marian devotions were so widespread, while monasteries and churches were erected one after another

of Dominican Predecessor Generalis Antal Fabri]. In: Bunyitai–Rapaics–Karácsonyi, *Emlékek* [Reminiscences], 527–528. Cf. also Fabritius, Karl. 1860. *Zwei Funde in der ehemaligen Domonikaner kirche zu Schäßburg*. In: *Archiv des Vereines für siebenbürgische Landeskunde* V(1). Kronstadt [Braşov]. 1–40, here: 20–22.

³⁰ A kolozsvári, gyulafehérvári, nagyszebeni stb. konventek tagjai 1524-ben [Members of the Convents in Kolozsvár, Gyulafehérvár, Nagyszeben, etc. in 1524]. In: Bunyitai–Rapaics–Karácsonyi, *Emlékek* [Reminiscences]. 528–532.

³¹ Carolus Péterffy, *Sacra Concilia Ecclesiae Romano-Catholicae in regno Hungariae celebrata. Pars prima in qua concilia & constitutiones Ab Anno Christi MXVI. usque ad Annum MDXLIV. prodeunt. Viennae Anno M.DCC.XLII.* 227, 249, 288 – qtd. in: Vilmos Frankl. 1873. *A hazai és külföldi iskolázás a XVI. században* [Domestic and Foreign Schooling in the 16th Century]. Budapest, p. 4.

was succeeded by the Renaissance. The Holy Roman Empire born out of the Augustinian concept of *civitas dei* [the city of God] and the global power of the papacy were now clearly shaken. The economic strengthening leading to political independence in the cities of Italy as well as the gradual estrangement from the ascetic-mystical ideology generated wide-ranging social changes. Although at first the high priests and the leading circles in general were the only ones to enter into the secular spirit of the Renaissance, and the populace retained their religious identity, the effect was not wide of the mark.

The secularization, lust for power, and financial ambitions of the clergymen immensely contributed to the rise of tensions between the bishop and the lower clergy as well as between the clergy and the congregations of believers, thus to the progressive deterioration of the general religious situation. In this social and religious state of affairs, as a prelude to the Reformation, a series of popular religious movements, the heresies of the patarenes, the Waldenses, and the Hussites emerged within the Western Church, each one with its own separate agenda offering remedies for the social and religious problems. Although they could not gain considerable ground, they did manage to disperse revolutionary ideas among the populace by their interpretation of poverty, using the Holy Scripture as the exclusive source of faith, promoting the idea of secular priesthood, and rationalizing the holy mass and the sacraments.³² Hostilities, lawsuits, and outbreaks of violence taking place consequent upon the factions and abuses of the clergymen and the greediness of the laity undermined the authority of the church in the eyes of the Catholic population of Transylvania too, planting the seeds of enmity and dissension. This situation was further exacerbated, on the one hand, by the crusade launched in 1514 that soon evolved into an anti-feudal peasant war and by the unfortunate outcome of the Battle of Mohács to which six bishops of the Catholic Church – led by the Archbishop of Kalocsa, Pál Tomori – fell victim. Consequently, the church lost a significant part of its lower clergy in the peasant war, considering its members that changed sides in favour of the peasants' revolt, and yet another significant part, this time of its higher clergy, in the Battle of Mohács.

³² Cf. György Balanyi, *Papok és hívek* [Priests and the Faithful]. In: *Magyar művelődéstörténet* [Hungarian Cultural History], vol. II, *Magyar renaissance* [Hungarian Renaissance], Budapest (reprint: Szekszárd, 1993). 381–426, here: 414–421.

The Bishop of Transylvania, the pro-Ferdinand János Gosztonyi, fell victim already in 1527 to the rivalry for the throne developed between Ferdinand and John Sigismund Zápolya. He was beaten up by Zápolya's followers so badly that he eventually died of the injuries sustained. To ensure a successor, Ferdinand I nominated his chamberlain, Miklós Gerendi, while John Zápolya appointed János Statileo as bishop. Thus, Transylvania had two bishops at the same time, which technically equalled zero.

Albeit Gerendi occupied the episcopal see in 1528, he was forced to flee two years later, in 1530, as Statileo entered Gyulafehérvár –the former would act as Zápolya's diplomat for the rest of his life.³³ On behalf of John Zápolya, he concluded the Franco-Hungarian alliance with Francis I, King of France, on 28 October 1528, thereby facilitating the continuation of war against the Habsburgs. Similarly, he played a crucial role in securing the Treaty of Nagyvárad [Oradea] on 24 February 1538 between two Hungarian kings, Ferdinand I and John Zápolya. Under such circumstances, however, his full schedule left him very limited time for performing the duties of managing his diocese.

The Impact of the Reformation

Internal and external conditions alike had become ripe for a comprehensive reform. This is the milieu wherein the Reformation made its appearance and, instead of reforms, brought along the disruption of religious unity in Europe just as in Transylvania. Born in Brassó and having Saxon origins, Johannes Honterus, upon his return from his studies in Vienna, Krakow, and Basel, brought along the impact of Martin Luther's disciples from Switzerland, and from the year 1533 he started his missionary activity in the city of Brassó. Following the 1542/43 elaboration of the fundamentals of the emerging Saxon Lutheran denomination and church, he was appointed the parish priest of Brassó on 22 April 1545. The Saxon settlements followed in the footsteps of their most populous city, and the *Universitas Saxonum*, the local authority of the Saxons in Szeben, unanimously adopted Luther's theses on 28 November 1545. As the principal supporters of the Catholic Habsburg government and taking advantage of its powerlessness, the synod of the Saxon clergy elected its own bishop, 'superintendent', in the person

³³ Cf. József Marton. 1993. *Az erdélyi (gyulafehérvári) egyházmegye története* [The History of the Diocese of Transylvania (Alba Iulia)]. Alba Iulia. 47.

of Paul Wiener.³⁴ The Reformation, quickly gaining popularity among the Saxons of Szeben and Brassó, would soon get a foothold in the city of Kolozsvár and other parts of Transylvania as well.

Invoking the old Hungarian rights and considering the wartime conditions, the Diet of Segesvár of 29 August 1540 linked the temporalities of the episcopal benefices and tithes to the obligation of maintaining the armed forces. Following the death of Bishop János Statileo on 8 April 1542, the Diet of Marosvásárhely held in the very same year transferred the possessions of the bishopric to Queen Isabella Jagiellon to cover her royal household expenses.³⁵ Albeit episcopal possession thus became nationalized, the proprietary rights of the church had not yet come under questioning at this point. The diet held in Kolozsvár on 6 August 1542 called upon the king for the nomination of a suitable bishop to succeed Statileo in the episcopal see, and the Diet of 26 February 1542 prohibits the pledging or disposal of episcopal assets as well as prohibits reformation in several decisions of the diet, but by ordering to maintain the status quo it recognizes the *raison d'être* of the Evangelical-Lutheran form of Protestantism.³⁶

Having reached an agreement with the Habsburgs, George Martinuzzi [in Hungarian: György Fráter] forced John Sigismund to renounce his throne in 1551, who then left to Poland with his mother at his side. The episcopal palace thus became vacant, and, after a ten-year vacancy, when Ferdinand's troops occupied Transylvania, Pál Bornemissza was appointed Bishop of Transylvania by way of royal ordinance on 26 May 1553. By that time, in the political and social anarchy, most of the canons had already left either the territory of the bishopric or their faith and converted to other denominations.³⁷ Such was the case of Can-

³⁴ Cf. Gábor Barta. 1998. *Az Erdélyi Fejedelemség első korszaka (1526–1606)* [The First Period of the Principality of Transylvania (1526–1606)]. In: Zoltán Szász (ed.), *Erdély Története a kezdetektől 1606-ig* [The History of Transylvania from the Beginnings until 1606]. Budapest. 409–541, 461.

³⁵ Cf. Sándor Szilágyi (ed.). 1876. *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], vol. I (1540–1556). Budapest. 9.

³⁶ Cf. Mihály Bochkor. 1911. *Az erdélyi katolikus autonomia* [Transylvanian Catholic Autonomy]. Kolozsvár. 49–50, with ref. to *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], I. 95, 112–114, 119, 122–124, 197.

³⁷ Cf. István Monok. 2007. *Az alsópapság szerepe az európai szellemi áramlatok befogadásában a koraiújkor Magyarországon* [The Role of the Lower Clergy in the Reception of the European Spiritual Schools of Thought in Early Modern Hungary]. In: *Historicus So-*

on Márton Kálmáncsehi Sánta (Kálmánca, end of the 15th century–Debrecen, 1557), who was the rector of the chapter school in Gyulafehérvár in the 1530s and became one of the most influential missionaries of Calvinism. At a doctrinal discussion taking place in Segesvár in the year 1538, he and another person took the floor as the advocates of the Catholic faith – however, they were overmatched in the debate, and his faith was shattered. Thereafter, he would act as a highly influential Calvinist speaker and became the bishop of the congregation.³⁸ A further example is Mihály Csáki (cc. 1492–1572, Gyulafehérvár), who was member of the chapter from 1539 and then episcopal vicar, but, following George Martinuzzi's death, one of the most influential figures of the Transylvanian political arena converted to Lutheran faith.³⁹ Following his studies in Krakow and Wittenberg, Sebestyén Károlyi Boldi (Nagykároly [today also: Carei], cc. 1500–?) fulfilled his duties as a canon of Gyulafehérvár in 1543, whereas from 1555 he became a Lutheran bishop and then a Reformed minister.⁴⁰ He must have defected to the Protestant camp in a very short period as sources refer to his family and his sons as early as 1566.⁴¹ As provost in Gyulafehérvár, Imre Bebek was also member of the city's middle clergy – he converted to the Reformed faith in 1534.⁴² His secretary, a Catholic cleric called Gergely Simontornyai, also converted to the Lutheran faith. It was in this spirit and frame of mind that he attempted to convince Pauline monk Gergely Ferenc Coelius of the value of Luther's postil, telling

cietatis Jesu: Szilas László-emlékkönyv [László Szilas Commemorative Book]. Budapest. 89–103, here: 96.

³⁸ Alajos Boga. 1940. *A katolikus iskolázás múltja Erdélyben* [The Past of Catholic Schooling in Transylvania], Kolozsvár, 27–28; Jenő Zoványi. 1977. *Magyarországi protestáns egyháztörténeti lexikon* [Protestant Church History Encyclopaedia in Hungary] (ed. Sándor Ladányi), Budapest. 289–290.

³⁹ Zsigmond Jakó. 1977. *Csáki Mihály (1492–1572) erdélyi kancellár származásáról* [On the Origins of Mihály Csáki (1492–1572), Chancellor of Transylvania]. In: Zsigmond Jakó, *Társadalom, egyház, művelődés: Tanulmányok Erdély történelméhez* [Society, Church, Education. Studies on the History of Transylvania]. Budapest. 91–96.

⁴⁰ Zoványi, *Magyarországi protestáns* [Hungarian Protestant]. 296.

⁴¹ Cf. József Pokoly. 1904. *Az erdélyi református egyház története I. 1556–1604* [The History of the Reformed Church in Transylvania I. 1556–1604]. Budapest. 44.

⁴² Ferencz Balogh. 1872. *A magyar protestáns egyház: történelemrészletei a reformation korától jelenig* [The Hungarian Protestant Church: Historical Details from the Age of Reformation until Present Times]. Debrecen. 43–44.

him that ‘this world has never seen a more beautiful book than this postil’. The Pauline, however, was not willing to give in, and so a somewhat lengthy correspondence began between the two of them, each one defending their own belief system with gentle irony, as it was customary in that era.⁴³

If we consider that besides the bishop it was the chapter who acted as the main bastion of the Transylvanian Diocese, and this layer of the clergy was represented by canons with a perseverance as described above, then in addition to political pressure and other driving factors this state of affairs can help us easily understand how the Reformation managed to conquer the whole of Transylvania in thirty years’ time after the Battle of Mohács.

Religious Tolerance: Banishing of the Catholic Bishop

As it had become clear for the now independent estates of the realm in Transylvania, torn between the Ottoman and the Habsburg powers, that Ferdinand I was unable to defend Transylvania against the Turkish attacks, they chose to favour Turkish-friendly policy at the diet held in Szászsebes on 8 March 1556, reinstating John Sigismund and electing Péter Petrovics,⁴⁴ the leader of the anti-Habsburg Transylvanian opposition, as his locumtenens. Pál Bornemissza, the bishop appointed by Ferdinand in 1553 was amicably but squarely threatened:

We have ordered that envoys be sent to my Lord Bishop [...]; my Lord Bishop is to be reminded that... His Grace hand over both the town [Gyulafehérvár] and the castles [the ones of Gyulafehérvár and Gyula / Giläu/] to my Lord Locum Tenens or to our kindred national ambassadors; [should he wish so] he can remain among us, and for his sake we are willing to try our best both before His Majesty and my Lord Locum Tenens. If he is to act upon this, he is welcome to do so, but if not, then he should go

⁴³ Imre Révész. 1864. *Simontornyai Gergely ösméretlen magyar reformátor 1534-ből* [Gergely Simontornyai, an Unknown Reformer from 1534]. In: *Sárospataki Füzetek: Protestáns tudományos folyóirat*. Sárospatak. 585–594, here: 593.

⁴⁴ Péter Petrovics, a chief representative of pro-Turkish policy, Lord Lieutenant (in Hungarian: *főispán*) of Temes County, and one of John Sigismund’s guardians, after having a quarrel over the Turkish fraud committed in 1541, he sided with Ferdinand and, taking this hatred to theological heights alongside Cardinal Georg Utiessenovicz-Martinuzzi, chief justice and treasurer of the country, he became one of the chief protectors of the religious reformers.

in peace and leave his estates, taking all his cattle [here: effects]; since from then on we cannot say [ensure] whether His Grace is to go in peace or not.⁴⁵

In consequence of such threats, the bishop took all his personal effects and left Transylvania from the Castle of Gyalu on 11 April 1556.⁴⁶ This way, regarding the hierarchical government of the Roman Catholic Church on the territory of the Diocese of Transylvania [under this name until 1932; today: Archdiocese of Alba Iulia], the year 1556 marked the beginning of a 160-year oppression that lasted until the 1716 return of the Catholic bishop supported by the Habsburgs.

The Partial Diet of Kolozsvár convened by Péter Petrovics the very same year (1556), on the days following St George's Day, decided that until the arrival of Queen Isabelle and Prince John Sigismund, the income of the monasteries and churches be collected and kept so that they can decide what holy purposes or schools to spend them on. However, according to Elek Jakab, the secularization of church properties in Transylvania originated from this particular decree. Indeed, what this assembly started was carried on by the national diet chaired by the returned Queen Isabelle and convened on St Catherine's Day, 25 November 1556, as the Diet came to the decision that 'the properties taken from the churches are to be appropriated for the sake and needs (fiscus) of the Princely House and the country, entrusting it to the discretion of the Queen and the Council to take further measures'.⁴⁷ Thus, it becomes evident that the estates of the realm wanted to take the final decision on the secularization of the orders' and the church's properties, which had already been placed under the management of Queen Isa-

⁴⁵ *Articuli dominorum — Universitatis trium Nationum Regni Transsylvanie — in Generali eorum Congregatione in Szászsebes, ex Edicto spectabilis et Magnifici Domini Petri Petovich circa Dominicam Oculi, Anno Domini 1556 celebrata, editi.* (8 March 1566). In: *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], I.: 566–573, here: 572.

⁴⁶ Cf. Bochkor, *Autonomia* [Autonomy], 52 – ref. in: Sándor Szilágyi. 1866. *Erdélyország Története I* [The History of Transylvania I]. Pest. 333.

⁴⁷ Elek Jakab. 1867. *Erdély egyháztörténelméhez. I. Apátságok. – II. Apáczaklastromok Erdélyben* [On the Church History of Transylvania. I: Abbeys – II: Nunneries in Transylvania]. In: *Magyar Történelmi Tár* (XIII or series 2, vol. I). Pest. 6.

belle as by the decision of the 1542 Diet of Marosvásárhely, but under Ferdinand they were returned to their rightful owners.⁴⁸

Over and above religious conviction, the Catholic animosity towards Ferdinand of Habsburg along with the Turkish-friendly policy, the latter being more efficient in supporting the country's existence, were lining up an ever-growing number of aristocrats in the anti-Catholic camp of the Reformation, resulting in the conversion to a new religion of almost all the nobility and their serfs except for certain members of the Apor, Báthory, Jósika, Keresztúri, Kornis, Kovacsóczi, Lázár, Mikes, Szentkereszt, Telegdy, and Toldy families and the Szeklers. Thus, the secularizing ambitions prevailed even without a final decision as – except for the friars of the Franciscan monastery in Csíksomlyó – the chapters and monks/friars of the Catholic Church left without a hierarchical structure of command were driven away and their possessions seized.⁴⁹

The diet held on 1–14 June 1557 still declared free exercise of religion for the Catholic and Lutheran religions but at the same time opened the door to the spread of Calvinism under the protective wings of the big Petrovics by – although not yet granting full religious freedom – declaring that ‘everyone is free to follow the faith they wish to, according to the old or the new rituals, so that the followers of the new faith not do any harm to the followers of the old faith’.⁵⁰ This line of ideology was made complete by the Partial Diet of Torda on 4–5 June 1564, declaring full religious freedom for both the followers of Luther and Calvin.⁵¹

The Rectification of Adherents to Papal Sciences [Faith]

This way, Luther's ideas spread like wildfire – however, reformation did not stop there, but soon enough Calvin's doctrines followed by antitrinitarianism took hold of the majority of the Hungarians and Szeklers. The Diet of Torda held on 10 March 1556 already hosted a majority of religious reformers. The so-called Edict of Torda drafted in the course of this Diet expelled from the country not

⁴⁸ Cf. Sándor Szilágyi (ed.). 1876. *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], vol. II (1556 September–1576). Budapest. 11.

⁴⁹ Cf. Karácsonyi, *Erdély* [Transylvania]. In: *Az erdélyi katholicizmus multja* [The Past of Catholicism in Trnasyvania]. 38.

⁵⁰ *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek*[Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], II. 21.

⁵¹ Id. 171.

only the bishops now but all clergy members of the Catholic Church, meaning every single priest, deciding as follows:

[S]ince the Lord, out of His good will, has sparked the light of the Gospel all over His Majesty's kingdom and wishes to cleanse the Mother Church from false knowledge and all aberrations, a unanimous decision has been taken that such members of holy orders who adhere to papal science [faith] and earthly possessions and do not wish to forsake them should be banished from every corner of His Majesty's kingdom.⁵²

The above resolution clearly shows the direction of the prevailing ambition and that the mentality at the Diet of 1557 adopted the decision that 'everyone is free to follow the faith they wish to' could turn into such a dangerous anti-Catholic weapon in the hands of the reformers found under the protection of the reigning prince and drunk with their own power.

Ferenc [Francis] Dávid, a Catholic priest turned superintendent in 1556 at first within the Evangelical Church of Augustan Confession and then within the Reformed Church, had already been watching the recent trends of the Reforma-

⁵² *A magyarországbélieknek és erdélyországbéli három nemzetnek, nemeseknek, székelyeknek és szászoknak, ez elmúlt Reminiscere [„Emlékezzél”, nagyböjt második vasárnapja] vasárnapjára hirdetett hordai rész szerint való gyűlésbe [részsországyülés], közönséges [közös] akarattól szerzetetett articulusi [törvénycikkek] 1566. márczius 10–17 [The Articles Resulted from the Joint Intention of the Inhabitants of /the Kingdom of/ Hungary, the Three Nations of Transylvania, the Nobility, the Szeklers, and the Saxons as formulated at the Partial Diet of Torda Announced to be Held on the Occasion of the Recent Reminiscere ('Remember' –the Second Sunday of Lent) – 10–17 March] [emphasis and italicized insertions by the author of the article]. In: *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], II. 299–303, here: 302–303. Although it seems so that the orders – perhaps in a fit of temper – banished every Catholic churchman, this law was never enforced. This is borne out, in particular, by the decision of the 1–2 November 1591 Diet of Gyulafehérvár, which formulated the following with regard to the Franciscans at Csíksomlyó: 'the cloister in Csík along several other pertaining places, as the Roman Catholic procession has never been rescinded there; our kindred from that place, to salve their conscience, are to be left as they were before'. Károly Veszely. 1860. *Erdélyi egyháztörténelmi adatok* [Data on the History of the Transylvanian Church], I. Kolozsvár. 225.*

tion with growing interest.⁵³ After he had become the court preacher by order of Prince John Sigismund, it was in the princely court that he came under the influence of court physician Giorgio Blandrata and converted to antitrinitarianism, therefore denying Jesus Christ's divinity. He turned the Prince's attention, too, in this direction. Since the pastors of the Reformed faith – first of all, Transtibiscan Superintendent Péter Melius Juhász – violently opposed the new faith, the Diet of Torda held on 6 January 1568 deemed it necessary to come out in support of the freedom of preaching to avoid religiously motivated riots. Therefore, making reference to earlier decisions, the following was decreed:

Since in the previous diet His Majesty, our Lord, decided upon certain religious affairs, He confirms by way of this assembly that all preachers should preach the Gospel, spread the word of God, everyone according to their own understanding, and if the public receives it, they are welcome to do so, but if not, no one is to resort to force for their conscience's sake, although one can keep any preacher whose teachings are to their liking. And for none of this shall any of the superintendents or anyone else do any harm to the preachers, no one should be disparaged by anyone for matters of religion, as stated in the former provisions, and no one shall be permitted to threaten anyone with imprisonment or sending them off for their preaching, because faith is a gift from God, it is transmitted by hearing, and hearing exists through God's word.⁵⁴

This decision of the Diet implemented the peculiar Transylvanian tolerance, unique among the contemporary circumstances, securing the freedom of the four received religions. In practice, however, after the recognition of the Lutheran, Reformed, and Unitarian faiths as received religions, this tolerance law meant nothing else but their confirmation in addition to the continuing repression of

⁵³ Cf. Barta, *Az Erdélyi Fejedelemség* [The Transylvanian Principality]. In: Szász, *Erdély Története* [The History of Transylvania]. 472.

⁵⁴ Ez Erdélyországbeli háromnemzetü Magyarországbeli atyánkfiaival egyetembe való végezéseink, melyeket végeztünk ez mostani részszerint való gyűlésünkbe, kit urunk ő felsége az elmúltVízkereszt napjára tétetett vala ide Tordára 1568. Esztendőben [Our Decisions as the Three Nations of Transylvania in Agreement with our Kindreds from /the Kingdom of/ Hungary, Adopted in the Present Partial Diet That His Majesty, Our Lord, Ordered to be Held in Torda on the Day of Epiphany in the Year 1568] [author's emphasis]. In: *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], II. 338–344, here: 343.

the Catholic Church. That is why in his 1930 treatise *Az első erdélyi törvénykönyv és a katholicizmus* [The First Transylvanian Code of Law and Catholicism] Fortunát P. Boros chose his words out of character with his profession as a historian, perhaps not aiming at *objectivity* but approaching the issue with kindness, suggesting that it would be an ungrateful proposition to overshadow the muscle-bound thesis of ‘Transylvania as the land of freedom’ by setting theory against practice. He also backs up his reasoning. In minority existence, under the weight of national oppression between the two world wars, ‘for today’s struggling politician, leading priest going through the mill, this is a veritable oasis, where he can go to take a rest, find some relief. And nowadays there is great need for that’; still, ‘we get much closer to reality if we define it as an age of storm and stress’. Although his ambitions do not include shedding light upon the striking contrast between certain paragraphs of the law and practice, he remarks that ‘whoever deals comprehensively with Transylvania’s history of politics and religion has to admit that Transylvania was never to be the homeland of religious freedom as we conceived it since its creation encountered psychological difficulties’.⁵⁵ This ‘oasis’ is still very much needed today, but we must get a clear picture of that age as it (also) accounts for the status of the Transylvanian Catholic Church. This was the situation on the ground in the Catholic Church that belonged for the most part to the Szekler and Hungarian nations: dwindled in its numbers, having approximately 30 parishes in the Szekler region and the support of only a few noble families in Transylvania, left without a bishop, a vicar, a dean, and religious orders, and forced to rely exclusively on the lower clergy whose qualification often left a lot to be desired. This desperate situation called for the close cooperation of the Szekler and Hungarian nobility, still adhering to the Catholic faith, towards the preservation of their faith.

The Beginnings of Catholic Revival

This was the state of affairs in the Catholic Church, dwindled in its numbers, in the second half of the 16th century. István Báthory, upon his election as Prince on 25 May 1571, took an oath that he would not be an aggressive disseminator of religious ideas, but as a Catholic prince he considered the imperative of his

⁵⁵ Fortunát Boros. 1930. *Az első erdélyi törvénykönyv és a katholicizmus* [The First Transylvanian Code of Law and Catholicism]. Kolozsvár. 3–4.

conscience to protect and strengthen the Catholic religion. He expected that the Catholic clergy would undertake this duty. Therefore, in support of the Catholicism diminished in number and strength, and thus almost doomed to extinction, he asked for the help of the newly established (15 August 1534) religious order: the Jesuits. The Jesuits are the vanguardists of Catholic revival, who, in serving this movement, excelled with their eagerness, conviction, irreproachable lifestyle, and thorough grounding. Following lengthy discussions, at the proposal of István Báthori – who in the meantime became Polish king in 1575 –, Kristóf Báthory founded the first Jesuit college in Kolozsmonostor on 5 May 1579.⁵⁶ Led by the Polish provincial, a small group of Jesuits left Krakow on 14 September 1579. The leading spirit of *Missio Transylvanica*, István Szántó (Arator), also joined them.⁵⁷ In December the very same year, the college opened its gates in the buildings of the former Benedictine Abbey in Kolozsmonostor.

Just over a year later, in April 1581, the school moved to Kolozsvár, and through István Báthory's establishing charter issued on 12 May the first modern Hungarian Catholic university was accredited as an academic institution. As he made it clear in the establishing charter, when settling the Jesuits, the Prince was guided by the objectives of strengthening Transylvanian Catholicism on the one hand and establishing a basis for future education on the other.⁵⁸

For the location of the school – whose type laid down in the establishing charter was college of the Society of Jesus⁵⁹ –, the Prince designated the Fran-

⁵⁶ Cf. Csaba Szilágyi. 2006. *Szántó (Arator) István mint a Missio transylvanica szervezője* [István Szántó (Arator) as the Organizer of Missio Transylvanica]. in: Csaba Szilágyi (ed.), *A magyar jezsuiták küldetése a kezdetektől napjainkig* [The Mission of the Hungarian Jesuits from the Beginnings to the Present Day]. Piliscsaba. 131–141, here: 140 – ref. in: Ladislaus Lukács (ed.). 1976. *Monumenta Antiquae Hungariae* II. Rome. 183.

⁵⁷ Cf. Csaba Szilágyi, *Szántó (Arator) István*. 131–141.

⁵⁸ Cf. Vencel Bíró, *A Báthoryak kora* [The Age of the Báthorys]. In: *Az erdélyi katholicizmus* [Transylvanian Catholicism]. 46–60, here: 48.

⁵⁹ College – in contemporary Jesuit parlance – denoted a monastery counting at least twenty members and being connected with a school of higher order. The establishing charter issued in 1581 also urged that ‘whoever becomes well-versed in higher-level sciences – Hebrew, Greek, and Latin literature – and aspires to attain high status at a faculty (theology or philosophy) – after presenting the arguments in support of his teaching – shall be able to advance to bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree, as according to the decision of the College’. Báthori István lengyel király és erdélyi fejedelem alapítólevele a kolozs-

ciscan Order's convent on Farkas Street and the nunnery situated right next to it. In support of the Jesuits, he donated to them part of the estates pertaining to the Benedictine Abbey in Kolozsmonostor –an institution named after Blessed Virgin Mary and dissolved as a consequence of the Reformation –, thus including Kolozsmonostor itself, as well as two further estates pertaining to Kolozs County: Bács and Jegenye, together with their profits and lands found within their borders.

István Báthory was also preoccupied with the restoration of the bishopric, but his plans could not succeed as he was unable to regain possession of the bishop's assets passed into private hands in the meantime. All he could achieve was to issue an order on 28 January 1583 that allowed him to remove the parish priests from the jurisdiction of the Reformed superintendent and granted them permission to choose an Official Principal, who, with the permission of the Prince, could hold annual councils with the more educated Roman Catholic aristocrats.⁶⁰

At the Diet of Medgyes held in the period of 8–23 December 1583, the 16-year-old Prince Zsigmond Báthory – succeeding on the throne of Transylvania István Báthory and his co-regent, Kristóf Báthory –, as the price of his coming of full age as well as demanded by the aristocrats, reluctantly expelled the Jesuits from Transylvania.⁶¹ He did this to those Jesuits who had been rearing him from an early age and of whom, in the course of the negotiations, he wrote in his umpteenth answer to the estates of the realm that 'not only can they not be removed

vári jezsuita academia számára [The Establishing Charter of Polish King and Transylvanian Prince István Báthory for the Jesuit Academy in Kolozsvár]. László Szógi (ed.). 1995. *Régi Magyar egyetemek emlékezete. Memoria universitatum et scholarum maiorum Regni Hungariae 1367–1777. Válogatott dokumentumok a magyarországi felsőoktatás történetéhez* [Reminiscence of Old Hungarian Universities. Memoria universitatum et scholarum maiorum Regni Hungariae 1367–1777. Selected Documents for the History of Higher Education in Hungary]. Budapest. 165–170, here: 169.

⁶⁰ As postulated by Bochkor, the Official Principal is to be considered as a permission not for electing a commissary but only for an archdeacon, as the election of vicars would be specifically granted later by Prince Gábor Bethlen, which otherwise would have been devoid of purpose if a status quo ante had already made that possible. Cf. Bochkor, *Autonómia* [Autonomy], 91, 160. Footnote 126.

⁶¹ Cf. Veszely, *Erdélyi egyháztörténelmi adatok* [Data on the History of the Transylvanian Church], I.190–276; Sándor Szilágyi (ed.). 1877. *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], vol. III (1576–1596). Budapest. 79–90.

from my side, but I owe them a debt of gratitude for being the protectors, supporters of my life and my advisors'.⁶² The Jesuits' defence as well as the protests on the part of the Catholic minority just as the Prince's reasoning proved to be insufficient. He was forced to obey the will of the estates of the realm; all he could do was to set them on their way with a supporting certificate, according to which:

'Zsigmond, by the grace of God etc., we inform everyone concerned that the fathers of the Society of Jesus were expelled against our will and through no fault of their own: as we have always been and still are particularly fond of the aforementioned fathers and their honourable Society . . . we have been forced against our will to turn them away'.⁶³

Yet again, despite Transylvanian religious tolerance guaranteed by law, we can witness another case of clear anti-Catholic manifestation. The decision of the Diet made provision for the Jesuits to never return under any circumstances and that not only can they not carry out public activities but 'no one should keep such Jesuits either around their house or on their estate'⁶⁴ . . . not even 'those whose teaching is to their liking' – we might add with a pinch of cynicism, quoting from the 1568 Diet of Torda. At the same time, the Protestant orders were clearly well aware that their relentlessness in forcefully obtaining the arrangements regarding the Jesuits offended the Prince, which is why they agreed that for his conscience's sake the Prince can have a pious preacher, a priest, or a friar around him, just as 'the rest of our honourable gentlemen and noble kindred' who remained in the Catholic faith 'can keep a teacher of these orders, but not more than one, around their house'.⁶⁵

⁶² *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], III. 89. The Prince yielded to pressure as, prior to these events – during the Diet of Nagyenyed [Aiud] convened in autumn on 21 October 1588 –, the estates of the realm already requested him to expel the Jesuits. Having then denied satisfying their request, they in turn refused to pay taxes, and the Diet dissolved, leaving all state affairs unfinished. Cf. *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], vol. III. 78–79, 235.

⁶³ *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], vol. III. 100.

⁶⁴ Id. 239.

⁶⁵ Id. 240.

The 'Community of the Transylvanian Catholics'

Following the expulsion of the Jesuits, the Prince entrusted his cousin, Polish Cardinal Endre Báthory, with espousing the spiritual matters of the Catholic priests and the congregation. In his report to the Holy See drafted on 15 June 1591, the Cardinal claimed that he had been requested by the Prince and the *Congregatio universorum Catholicorum*, i.e. the community of the Transylvanian Catholics, to take up the Catholic cause.⁶⁶ What is actually meant by this Catholic congregation are the Catholic orders of the Diet, who, but a few years earlier at the 1588 Diet of Medgyes, unanimously acted in the safeguarding of Catholic interests.⁶⁷ Vencel Bíró summarizes the lessons learnt from the above as follows:

In later times, when we can get more insight into the agenda and constitution of Status meetings, we find that they refer to themselves by the same designation. In other words, it seems clear that Status meetings were already held in the age of the Báthorys, which is to say that the Catholic Status, the community of the ecclesiastical and secular element in the protection and safeguarding of the church's interests, was already in flower, but as yet without using the term Status for self-designation. This would take place under the Rákoczys.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ 'Hoc ut efficeret Cardinalis, tam a principe, quam a Congregatione universorum Catholicorum in Transsilvania diligenterrogatus est.' *Memoriale pro Cardinale Batthoreo*. 1591. In: Veszely, *Erdélyi egyháztörténelmi adatok I.* [Data on the History of the Transylvanian Church I]. 301–303, here: 303.

⁶⁷ Cf. id. 188–190.

⁶⁸ Vencel Bíró, *A Báthoryak kora (1571–1605)* [The Age of the Báthorys]. In: *Az erdélyi katholicizmus* [Transylvanian Catholicism], 46–60, here: 57. The first mention of the Roman Catholic Status Foundation of Transylvania is under the name *Status Catholicorum Dominorum*, and it is dated September 1615 when a diet was held in Kolozsvár, in the Principality of Transylvania. The Catholic orders acted under the name of *Status Catholicus* at the 1640 Diet already in the course of the discussions on the grievances committed against the Catholics. Given that despite the declaration of religious freedom at Torda no Catholic bishop could reside on the territory of Transylvania since the Reformation, the Status took upon itself the promotion and defence of Catholic interests until the 1716 reinstatement. Although Maria Theresa's absolutist ambitions restricted the operations of the Status by her right of supreme patronage, the Foundation managed to reorganize itself between 1866 and 1873, following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, and it operated under the chairmanship of the incumbent bishop and was led by an elected secular president charged with the effective management assisted

Once again, on 1 May 1598, the Transylvanian Catholics could welcome a bishop in the person of Demeter Napragy.⁶⁹ This time, it has proved true that the Protestant orders' fear of the Catholic 'genteel' bishop was not unfounded as one week after his inauguration (on 7 April 1598) Napragy is to be awarded the nomination of Chancellor of Transylvania. In this capacity, as King Rudolf's representative, would he receive Voivode Mihai Viteazul upon entering Gyulafehérvár on 1 November 1599. Nevertheless, at the Diet of Kolozsvár held in the period of 21 January–8 February 1601, he shared the fate of his predecessors when being declared *persona non grata* by the estates of the realm, and the newly established benefice of the bishopric was once again seized in favour of the treasury.⁷⁰

As the estates of the realm showed steadfast insistence on the edict of the Diet concerning the expulsion of the bishop, and in a similar vein they would upset all attempts – on the part of the Prince or the House of Habsburg – at appointing a new bishop, 'the bulk of the reorganization activities rested upon the shoulders of the secular leaders, who gave proof of indefatigable spirit and an amazing strength of mind in their fighting for the salvation of Transylvanian Catholicism'.⁷¹

Indeed, there was a great need for the Catholic noblemen's firmness in confessing their faith for as soon as religion came on for discussion at the diets, as a rule, the Jesuits' expulsion would appear on the agenda, sometimes taken over by granting certain concessions for the 'catholica religio', which also corroborates

by the ten-member Board of Directors and the 150–200-member general assembly until the organization's 1948 banning. Cf. László Holló. 2009. *A világiak által vezetett egyházmegye. Az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus társadalmi jelentősége* [Diocese under the Leadership of the Laity. Social Significance of the Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania], vol. I. Cluj-Napoca. 56–127.

⁶⁹ Demeter Napragy, Bishop of Syrmia, was appointed diocesan bishop of Transylvania by Prince Zsigmond Báthory on 1 May 1597. Cf. Emma Takács. 2004. *Náprági Demeter. In: Magyar Katolikus Lexikon* [Hungarian Catholic Encyclopaedia], vol. IX: Meszr–Olt. Budapest. 605.

⁷⁰ Cf. Bíró, *A Báthoryak kora (1571–1605)* [The Age of the Báthorys (1571–1605)]. In: *Az erdélyi katolicizmus* [Transylvanian Catholicism]. 46–60, here: 58; György Jakubinyi. 2004. *Romániai katolikus, erdélyi protestáns és izraelita vallási archontológia* [Catholic, Transylvanian Protestant, and Jewish Archontology for Romania]. Alba Iulia. 25.

⁷¹ Fortunát Boros, *A protestáns fejedelmek kora* [The Age of the Protestant Princes]. In: *Az erdélyi katolicizmus* [Transylvanian Catholicism]. 61–82, here: 61.

the restrictions unworthy of a ‘recepta religio’. Accordingly, at the Diet of Kolozsvár held in the period of 10–24 June 1607, the estates of the realm decreed the following: ‘since the Catholic religion belongs to the rest of the received religions, we decided that Catholic priests are allowed to enter Kolozsvár and other places except for Nagyvárad, they can visit people at their deathbed, confess, baptize, and once having performed these ceremonies, they shall withdraw and are not to perform any other ceremonies apart from these’.⁷²

The 1610 attempt on Prince Gábor Báthory organized – mostly by Catholic noblemen – in Szék [sic] and its thwarting gave yet another reason during the discussions of religious matters at the Diet of Beszterce held between 25 March and 3 April 1610 to make mention of laws made earlier on the curtailment of the received Catholics’ rights. Since ‘the papal priests too approved of the suppressed rebellion, we shall restore the 1588 articles of Megyes, providing for the expulsion of the Jesuits from the country’.⁷³ At the same time, they increased the restrictions on Catholics when decreeing that:

No papal priest is allowed to be in either Tövis or Fehérvár or Monostor or on the Somlyó estates or in Székelyudvarhely or elsewhere in that seat . . . wherever they had a church built for the papal priests, such as especially in Telegd, it shall be demolished. . . . Whoever wishes to keep a papal priest around them shall do it within their household. The papal priests shall not have a bishop.

And, although the noblemen who remained in the Catholic faith could have a papal priest around their house, the Protestant aristocrats did not fail to pay attention to oblige the Catholics to pay their contributions to the sustenance of the Protestant pastors, issuing the following order: ‘should any papist patron be not willing to give their due payment for the maintenance of the pastors’ revenue, as provided by the national law, the counts [Hungarian: *ispán*] and the county [authorities] shall seize their estate and pay the pastors’ revenue out of it and give it to them’.⁷⁴

⁷² Sándor Szilágyi (ed.). 1879. *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], vol. V (1601–1607). Budapest. 511.

⁷³ Sándor Szilágyi (ed.). 1880. *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], vol. VI (1608–1614). Budapest. 34.

⁷⁴ *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], vol. VI. 170. In Székelyudvarhely, Tövis, Kolozsmonostor, and Szilágysomlyó, Catholics represented the

In 1606, appointed Apostolic Administrator by the then pope, the Transylvanian bishop to fill the shoes of Napragy was István Csíkmadéfalvi Szentandrásy OFM. Following his ordainment as bishop on 30 November 1606, he would reside in Transylvania as Apostolic Administrator from 1607 to 1611, but thereafter he, too, is forced to flee. Although the Habsburgs appointed him Bishop of Transylvania in 1618, he had never received any confirmation of such an appointment from the Holy See. Therefore, he would merely own the title of *episcopus electus* [elected bishop], and so he would never even get to enter the country as Bishop of Transylvania since he had previously been condemned to exile at the Diet of Nagyszeben on 15 May 1615.⁷⁵

Under the Leadership of the Vicar

Because in this manner the Catholic community of Transylvania was permanently left without a bishop, on the one hand, and through the intervention of the councillors as well as consequent upon the repeatedly expressed complaints against the indiscipline among the people and the clergy, on the other, Gábor Bethlen provided for a vicar in the person of Márton Fejérdi, Canon of Szepes, on 2 May 1618 and bound both the clergy and the congregation to obey him.⁷⁶

majority, which is demonstrated by the fact that the Diet held in the period of 27 September–13 October 1615 returned the churches to the Catholics on the ground that ‘we have an article providing for a church depending on which party is in majority’. However, they also set the terms, according to which ‘they shall not occupy it until at first those belonging to the two religions have equally paid for and built auditoriums [adequate facilities] in Somlyó and Udvarhely; afterwards, once these auditoriums are ready, they shall restore them . . . for the majority’. Sándor Szilágyi (ed.). 1881. *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek* [Reminiscences of Transylvanian Diets], vol. VII (1614–1621). Budapest. 286.

⁷⁵ Transylvania always had an appointed, so-called elected bishop on an almost continuous basis – with some interruptions – through the intervention of the House of Habsburg for purposes of reservation of rights, but he could not reside in Transylvania and thus had no real possibilities to perform his duties pertaining to church governance.

⁷⁶ Cf. Boros, *A protestáns fejedelmek kora* [The Age of the Protestant Princes]. In: *Az erdélyi katolicizmus* [Transylvanian Catholicism]. 61–82, here: 67. The instrument of appointment was issued in: Veszely, *Erdélyi egyháztörténelmi adatok* [Data on the History of the Transylvanian Church], I. 333–334.

The Status carried out its activities under the vicar's chairmanship up until the bishop's re-entering the country in 1716.⁷⁷ The Transylvanian Catholic vicar appointed by the Prince was, however, not an ecclesiastical but a specific Transylvanian state law institution, and it exercised its power not based on canon law but in accordance with state regulations. It is not the same as either the vicar general described in the canon law or the vicar apostolic. While the former one can be appointed by and would substitute for the bishop, the latter gets appointed by the pope himself to serve in regions with unsettled situation within the Catholic Church. During the time of Gábor Bethlen, jurisdiction was conferred on the Vicar of Transylvania based upon royal decree, whereas from the time of György Rákóczy (1640–) it was made effective by way of election from the Catholic orders as well as upon royal confirmation. The Council of Trent established only the content framework of the jurisdiction, while its actual legal basis was provided by royal appointment.

This practice was legalized by way of codification when the Transylvanian code of law, the *Approbatæ Constitutiones*, Part I, Title I, Article 9, refused the Catholics' request for a bishop but made provision to secure the election of a vicar.

Of the four received religions, the followers of the above-mentioned Reformed, Evangelical, Lutheran, or Augustan Confession, Unitarian, or Antitrinitarian faith shall have their own bishops who share the same religion, whereas the Catholics, or the papists shall have vicars who take charge of the religious orders within their religion and under their supervision; further, according to the practice observed from the beginning, those elected for the episcopal or vicar's office out of the will and based upon the decisions of their common church congregations shall be confirmed by the Prince ... both bishops and deans shall proceed with their visitations, each one of them in conformity with the supervision they have been entrusted with and the observed practice.⁷⁸

The text of the law leads us to the assumption that whoever the common church congregation elected was approved by the prince. This was the practice

⁷⁷ From Márton Fehérdi's (Fejérdi) appointment as vicar on 2 May 1618 – secured by Prince Gábor Bethlen – until 1712, the Catholic congregation of Transylvania was organized by vicars. Bochkor, *Autonomia* [Autonomy]. 108–109; 291–292.

⁷⁸ *Approbatæ Constitutiones Regni Transsylvaniae et partium Hungariae eidem adnexarum*, Ex Officina Nicolai Kis de Miszt-tótfalu, Claudiopoli 1696, Part I, Title I, Article 9.

in the time of Michael Apafi I when the Status elected a candidate for the vicar's office in 1678 in the person of Bertalan Szebelébi, who was confirmed by the Prince.⁷⁹

Therefore, the vicar was elected by the Status made up of the clergymen and laymen of the Catholic Diocese of Transylvania. This further demonstrates the effective functioning of the Status as, although the clergy did not form part of the Transylvanian Diet, the clergy and the laity jointly exercised their right to elect the vicar. Thus, albeit the Status would normally hold its meetings during the diet sessions, these meetings were not merely about the assembled Catholics agreeing on their positions regarding the shared concerns, but the clergy would also make their appearance besides the laity gathered together for the period of the diets and would elect a vicar and make decisions in matters concerning the Catholic Church.⁸⁰

At the same time, Bochkor shows that, although the Catholic orders acted under the name *Status Catholicus* at the 1640 Diet in the course of the discussions on the grievances committed against the Catholics, despite the joint actions of the Catholic clergy and the laity, the community action of the Status 'does not [yet] qualify as a self-government, but it definitely plays a substantial and irreplaceable psychological role in giving birth to self-government, a truly law-making and law-motivating factor, as according to the recent doctrine of legal philosophy'.⁸¹

⁷⁹ 'We kindly understand of the humble reports of our respectable, generous, gentleman-like, and noble followers of the received Roman Catholic faith and adherent of the Roman Catholic Status that following the death of Reverend Pater Casimirus Domokos of happy memory your excellencies have chosen the parish priest of Kézdiszentlélek [Sânzieni], his Excellency Pater Bertalan Szebelébi, out of your common will and the common accord of the honourable fathers to act as the Vicar of Transylvania... we kindly confirm...' *I. Apafi Mihály fejedelem levele Szebelébi Bertalant a vikáriusságban megerősíti* [The Letter of Prince Michael Apafi I Confirms Bertalan Szebelébi's Appointment as Vicar]. In: Veszely, *Erdélyi egyháztörténelmi adatok I.* [Data on the History of the Transylvanian Church]. 355–356.

⁸⁰ Cf. Vencel Bíró. 1930. *Püspök jelölés az erdélyi római katolikus egyházmegyében* [Nomination Process for the Episcopal Office in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Transylvania]. Cluj/Kolozsvár. 3–4.

⁸¹ Bochkor, *Autonomia* [Autonomy]. 117, 170.

Summary: The Legal Basis for Advocacy in the *Approbatae*

Once existing by this name, *Status Catholicus* gained its legal foundation through the 1653 fundamental law of Transylvania: *Approbatae Constitutiones regni Transsylvaniae et Partium Hungariae eidem annexarum*.⁸² Accordingly, Catholics could manage their church-related matters just as non-Catholics did. This code of law is informed by a heartfelt religiosity to which its introductory lines bear witness as well.⁸³ Nevertheless, no matter how hard the codification committee tried to keep up appearances of equality in religious affairs, the legal code was abound with articles derogatory to the Catholics. For instance, its Section 2 confirms earlier decisions on the expulsion of the Jesuits:

Ab initio, the country has had several regulations on the status of the Jesuit Order, which was a highly changing status: at times, their scope of operation was prescribed, and all activities were forbidden apart from teaching in schools. At other times, they were allowed to enter only certain places, and only two or three of such places; but on condition that they would not disrupt the peace of mind of older members on the teaching staff belonging to other religious orders and not give any ground for altercation or dissension. At yet other times, they would be completely banished from all parts of the country and from the empire that it is part of, being both expelled as individuals and deprived of all their possessions for good, even in times of papist princes and influential, powerful men of those eras.

⁸² The very first code of law of the Principality of Transylvania, became known as the *Approbatae*, is the result of the codification work started by György Rákóczi I in 1640 and finished during the reign of Prince György Rákóczi II. This codification was necessitated by the standardization efforts of the highly diversified, often contradictory legislation. Printing it first came under discussion at the Diet of Gyulafehérvár launched on 15 January 1653, and then it was confirmed by the Prince on 15 March and decreed on 7 September. On the 13-member codification committee, there was only one person representing the Catholics: Péter Torma. Cf. Boros, *Az első erdélyi törvénykönyv* [The First Transylvanian Code of Law]. 5–6.

⁸³ ‘This was from the very beginning a highly appropriate and an outstanding example for our country that diets would decide upon the common good; first of all, they began to reflect on matters regarding the honouring of God. Therefore, it is deemed proper that before dealing with any further secular matters those decisions should be presented on the honouring of God.’ *Approbatae Constitutiones*, Part I, Title I, Article 1.

Referring to the acts of the years 1588, 1607, and 1610:

[T]herefore, in order to confirm those articles, it has now been newly decided that the Jesuit Order and the Order's followers shall be – as described above – banished and deprived of all possessions for good and never be invited, taken, or allowed to enter in this country by anyone of any social standing: and if they audaciously entered the country either openly or in secret, then – after having ascertained the actual state of affairs, and not only acting upon some suspicion or based on simple accuses about their status as exiles and notorious persons known as such either by the Prince or by officials of any order under whose inspection they are placed – they shall be openly caught and punishment shall be administered to them as specified in the decisions. Similarly, any person who would go against such explicit decisions of the state either covertly or openly and provide invitation for members of such orders to enter the country or knowingly not report their presence but rather protect them shall be summoned before the Diet for charges of disloyalty.⁸⁴

The Catholics, as followers of a *recepta religio*, a recognized, received religion on an equal footing with the other denominations, had previously requested a bishop. The codification committee did not take this into consideration, however, whereas it was granting the right to elect a bishop for the priests of the merely tolerated Greek Orthodox religion.⁸⁵ Thus, Catholic religion is recognized and has equal rights, but it is subjected to restrictions not applicable to the other accepted denominations. Such contradictions of the legal code cannot be accounted for but by accepting the inferior status of the Catholic religion in those times and the fear of it.⁸⁶

Part I, Title I, Article I of the code of law comprised the decree bearing the most significance for the Catholics. It provides that received religions may manage their religious matters themselves in general assemblies:

[I]n minor affairs and those concerning only the holy orders, the holy orders themselves can take decisions and adopt provisions; but even these can only take place in ordinary general assemblies. Also, matters of common interest with the listeners [the Christian laity] and external orders or

⁸⁴ *Approbatæ Constitutiones*, Part I, Title I, Article 3.

⁸⁵ *Id.* Title VII, articles I–II.

⁸⁶ Cf. Boros, *Az első erdélyi törvénykönyv* [The First Transylvanian Code of Law]. 8.

matters concerning them; but with them, too, through finding common ground, equally to the liking of the chief officials and patrons representing each one's respective religion.⁸⁷

Accordingly, the code of law established two church government and legislative bodies for the received religions, thus, for the Catholics as well: the *General Clerical Assembly* and the *General Joint Assembly*. For matters concerning the holy orders exclusively, i.e. the clergymen, discretionary powers were granted only for the clergy, while for the discussion of issues of joint interest, concerning the laity as well, it provided for the inclusion of secular stakeholders too in the form general joint assemblies. This way, senior officials of the religion in point and authorities next in rank were granted participatory rights in the church government. This category included all senior officials of the central, district, and city government as well as of the management and judicial authorities, starting from members of the Princely Council to the seat authorities (royal high judge and royal judge-administrator, captain, members of tribunals/courts) and the patrons. This latter designation did not refer only to the patrons within the meaning of canon law, but, besides them – as other parts of the legal code also indicate –, it covered the landed nobility as well.⁸⁸

On balance, pursuant to Transylvanian public tradition, the whole of the Catholic nobility in terms of its organization at the diets was a body, acting as such even prior to 1653, qualified for the protection of the Catholic Church and handling some of its internal affairs. This is not an outcome of spontaneous development alone but also the result of a certain disposition of the Prince on a statutory basis since Gábor Bethlen charged the Catholic orders with the organization of vicarial elections. As a matter of course, the peculiar Transylvanian situation would have given birth to the Catholic Status – as the representative organization of the Transylvanian Catholic Church – formed out of the Transylvanian élite and the prominent figures of the hierarchy even if the codification had

⁸⁷ *Approbatæ Constitutiones*, Part I, Title I, Article 3. At the time of the codification, in the then most powerful Reformed Church, among the clergy and the laity, the constitutional fight for the emergence of the secular element and against the form of government based exclusively on clerical hierarchy also had a strong contribution to the ambitions towards ensuring the competence of the 'general assemblies'. Cf. Bochkor *Autonomia* [Autonomy]. 216–224.

⁸⁸ Cf. *Approbatæ Constitutiones* III. 4, 6–7; III. 5, 2; III. 29, 1; III. 32, 1; III. 46, 6.

not laid down the organizational base thereof in the *Approbatae*. This way, however, the ecclesiastical power of the laity extended over all matters of the church not falling strictly within the scope of the power of the order (*potestas ordinis*). It incorporated the organization of denominational education, the management of ecclesiastical foundations, and the election of certain priests at parishes found under the patronage of the Status, and temporarily even the elective franchise to vote for the vicar and later for the bishop as well.⁸⁹

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