Landmarks in Higher Education in 17th Century Cluj

DORU RADOSAV

"Oportet ut illustrissima nostra schola quam proxime accedat et instituat at ideam illam, quo celeberrimis Germania, Galliae atque aliorum locorum scholis et seminariis expressa est..."

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HE DISSOLUTION of the Jesuit College of Cluj in 1603 interrupted the natural evolution of higher educational institutions in the city for quite some time. However, the institution remained present for a long time in the collective and individual memory of its former students. The Jesuit Stephanus Mory's statements made in 1625 are relevant with regard to the prestige and standards of the former university: "I remember when in Cluj, 28 years ago, one could study rhetoric and philosophy, and learn in this school for three years after becoming a member the Society [a member of the Jesuit Order]" (memini enim ego . . . cum Claudiopoli abhinc pene 28 anis rethoricae studere et philosophiam audirem et tribus in scholis docerem iam Societate existens). According to the text, these schools were closed due to the "great fury" of the Calvinist princes (Quantae fuerunt horum furiae). 1

The closing of the college brought about the recession in the educational system coordinated by the Catholic Church, which consisted of gymnasia and lyceums (secondary schools). A schola di grammatica² was mentioned in 1624, supported by the "Catholic masters" István Erdély and János Vass, sponsors and benefactors of the Transylvanian Church. They are also mentioned as supporters of the schools of Mănăștur (Monostor) and of the Jesuit college, paying the salary of a magistrum scholae and of the church choir leader (cantores musicos prousu templi suo sumptu alit). The Jesuit Stephanus Mory also offered his financial aid for the subsistence and salary of the masters who taught in the two classes of the Mănăștur school, with approximately 80 students. The school probably opened in 1622-1623, as results from a letter of Mory to Muzio Vitteleschi, the superior of the Jesuit Order in Rome. In 1625 the school was noted to have a magister from outside the city, and the students were not very numerous, but enough "to be able to sing in a choir in the church" (Scholas Etiam Habeo ac magistrum externum. Quae licet non sint adeo frequentes discipulorum numero sunt tamentot, ut in ecclesia sufficienter decantare possint). In the same year the documents made reference to 60 students, meaning that their number decreased. However, it was likely to increase should an adequate master be found (schola ante bienuim aperui in qiubus 60 circiter numerantum discipuli plures utique futuri si magistrum nanscicerer idoneum).5

School life and higher education institutions in the 17th century were strongly conditioned and influenced by an often violent competition, as seen above, and by the proselytizing strategies of the two main denominations, Catholic and Calvinist. Thus, the documents of the time made note of the fact that in 1603 the Unitarian magistrate of the city of Cluj, incited by the Unitarian bishop Toroczkai, destroyed from its foundations the Jesuit College of Cluj, while the members of the Society of Jesus were expelled and one of them was even slaughtered (*Sed anno 1603 Collegium Claudiopolitanum, cuj ab Arianus Funditus est eversum, homines Societatis expulsi, unus trucidatis*).⁶

The Reformed confessional choice made by the great Transylvanian nobility and princes in the 17th century was enforced by educational measures, regarded as state policy aiming at cultural emancipation and at the formation of a category of intellectuals serving the administration, culture, and spirituality of the Principality of Transylvania. The prince's generosity and patronage in the matter of establishing an academic higher education institution in Cluj was associated with the Diet's decision of May 1622 to lay the foundations, by *communis votis et sufragiis*, of a Protestant College in Cluj on the premises of the old monastery⁷ situated on Farkas Street, near the church.⁸ At the same time the Diet's decision also stipulated the organization of a similar college in Alba Iulia. The initiative of establishing a higher education institution, a *collegium academicum*, in Transylvania was part of the cultural program assumed by the principality's leadership and the Diet. This school was intended to form "learned

men who would usefully serve in many important affairs of the homeland." The tradition of a Reformed higher education dated back to 1610, when Prince Gábor (Gabriel) Báthory had laid the foundations of such a school by providing the necessary funding. It was on his advice that the Cluj Diet of 1608 donated the "church of the old castle" to the Protestants. This was to be the place of the new school. It seems that it was only from 1638 onwards that the Protestant College of Cluj started to effectively act as a superior school.

The organization and activity of *collegium academicum*-type schools in Cluj, Alba Iulia, and Aiud was stimulated by the presence of European personalities of great prestige. They imposed a high standard in education, comparable to that found in many European universities.

Philipp Ludwig Piscator, a professor and theologian of Melanchthonian inspiration, taught at Alba Iulia until 1645. The most renowned foreign professor of European stature was Johann Heinrich Alsted. He was a professor of philosophy and theology at Herborn (Germany), and became a real *spiritus rector* of Transylvanian academic life following his appointment to the college in Alba Iulia. He was an encyclopedic mind, completing over 60 works, the most notable of them being his *Encyclopedia*. By his prestige, he attracted several foreign students to that aulicum collegium in Alba Iulia. As a representative of dogmatic Calvinist theology and philosophy, of Reformed scholasticism and Calvinist millennialism, he was an adept of the so called Föderaltheologie. The concept of *foedus* occupies a central place in Calvinist theology (as opposed to Lutheranism and Anglicanism), primarily meaning the treaty or contract between the members of a community, who respect the evangelic precepts together, in harmony. Alsted was the professor of Comenius and of Johann Heinrich Bisterfeld, who later became his son-in-law and also a professor in Alba Iulia. After his studies in Herborn, Alsted attended Oxford University, where he had the chance of becoming familiar with Francis Bacon's natural philosophy. He applied Bacon's inductive method in Alba Iulia, where he taught natural sciences, philosophy, and theology for 26 years, and his works in logic and metaphysics were used in Unitarian schooling.¹¹

János Apáczai Csere was another of Alsted's students to become a professor at Alba Iulia. As a representative of Puritanism and Presbyterianism, he soon became one of the most devout promoters of Reformed higher education in Transylvania. In the wake of his professor, he claimed that the Bible could only be fully understood by way of complex philological research, including the knowledge of Hebrew, Syrian, Aramaic, etc. He studied at the universities of Franeker, Leyden, and Utrecht, becoming familiar with Bacon's empiricism and with Cartesian rationalism. As an expert in Oriental languages, he was invited to teach at the University of Utrecht, but he chose to return to Transylvania,

becoming a professor at Alba Iulia in 1653. There he taught logic, rhetoric, Hebrew, and Greek, being considered a real doctus doctor of Transylvania. He published his Magyar Encyclopedia (Hungarian Encyclopedia) in 1653, a work influenced by the writings of Descartes, Ramus, Regius, Copernicus, and Alsted. He gained remarkable prestige, and was meant to run the faculty, but due to his Puritan and Presbyterian views he was forced to leave for the Reformed Academic College of Cluj in 1656. He gained fame because of his plea for a radical reform in education centered on the study of vernacular languages and of the sciences (natural sciences, geography, economy, hygiene). He expressed his ideas of didactic reform in several studies. One of these bears the title De Studio Sapientiae and criticizes the backward status of Transylvanian education. Another of his works was entitled Oratio de Summa scholarum necessitate, and it was actually the lecture he gave while teaching at the Reformed College in Cluj. In in he analyzed the role of schools in society and explained the necessity of state and Church support. He also stated how important it was for the Transylvanian students who studied abroad to return home. He called attention to the fact that these young men, who were very appreciated in foreign universities, were not offered the possibility to take any jobs in their own country.

Apáczai Csere's ideas as presented in this lecture offered a synthesis of the high standards that the Academic College in Cluj was supposed to reach by the planned disciplines and curriculum: "We have no academy where one could study *ethics*, that is, the remodeling and recovery of the sinful, *economic sciences*, which aid in coordinating one's household, *medical sciences*, that is, the maintenance of health, *mathematics*, that is, the science of building cities, streets, churches, castles, or towers, *philosophy*, that is, the root of all sciences and arts. To say nothing about *eloquence and history*, or about *logic, metaphysics, geography, astronomy, optics, music, or cosmography*. The scarcity of books and typographies cannot lead to the hope that the sciences will flourish."¹²

In Apáczai's view, a Transylvanian academic college—similar to those in Scotland—should have had a budget allowing for 10–11 professors and 100 students. The faculty structure should have been the following: 2 theology professors, 1 professor of Hebrew and Oriental languages, 1 professor of Greek, 1 professor of jurisprudence, 1 professor of medicine, 1 professor of ethics and politics, 1 professor of physics, 1 professor of mathematics, 1 professor of dialectics, 1 professor of eloquence and history.

The three German professors who taught in Transylvanian schools, Johann Heinrich Alsted, Philipp Ludwig Piscator, and Johann Heinrich Bisterfeld, also proposed a model of organization for the academic colleges in Transylvania. They outlined certain principles, norms, and rules for an academic college, which

they presented to Princess Catherine of Brandenburg, the widow of Prince Gábor Bethlen, in 1630. The three professors based the statute and the didactic functions of a Transylvanian academic college on the model of German, French, and other university-level institutions (oportet ut illustrissima nostra schola quam proxime accedat et instituat at ideam illam, quo celeberrimis Germania, Galliae atque aliorum locorum scholis et seminariis expressa est...).

The statute drawn up by Alsted, Piscator, and Bisterfeld was structured into two chapters: one presenting the budgetary and functional organization of the school (Articuli concernentes illustram Transylvaniae Scholam), and an educational one, concerning the professors' competences and the curriculum (Leges Illustris Schola Transylvaniae). The first chapter underlines the need for a welldefined and established place of the school "in an integral and peremptory way," in the context of the patronage and financial support of the princely court. It also requested the construction of a college building, in a first instance, and of residences for the faculty, at a later stage. Another set of conditions contained in this first chapter mentions the financial resources of the college and their administration. It requested that the school's income (budget) be established with great accuracy (Ante omnia oportet inire rationem reditum illorumque summa accurate subducere). The administration of the school's income and expenses (salaries, quarterly scholarships), as well as of the building itself, had to be the province of an the elected administrator, assisted by two members of the Advisory Board, appointed from among persons close to the prince and the governor (ne quaestor scholae exorbitet, duo scholarchae sunt constituendi, penes quos suprema potestas. Principem et dominum gubernatorem potestas sit). Financial support and basic resources were not to come only from alumni donations, but also from other sources.

Another ingredient of the college's foundational conditions were the basic structures and norms regarding the staff. It had to be decided therefore whether the rector was to be elected on a yearly basis or permanently (*Deliberandum est an rector scholae publicae debeat esse perpetuus vel annus*); the youngest professor was appointed to serve as the school's secretary or notary. At least four professors were needed to teach languages, but in public schools even more were necessary (*ea enim in schola publica est plusquam necessaria*), as five pedagogical preceptors had to be subsidized by individual salaries. A series of additional rules and norms concerned the school's foundation documents, connected to the legal establishment of the school's identity: the privileges of the school, of its faculty and students, had to be clearly formulated and presented in the school's statute; the school's laws and statutes were established by analogy with the laws and statutes of the Herborn and Heidelberg academies, and had to be considered "the school's governing principles" (*Leges quae ex academia*

Herbornensi, illustris schola Heidelbergensi et huius nostri collegii . . . matriculis in eum ordinem a nobis redactae sunt, principali authoritate confirmare oportebit). The school's documents, that is, its statutes, laws, and norms were qualified as the legal, symbolic and sanctional heritage of the school, meaning that the students' registration certificates and albums, and the book of school statutes, had to be bound in elegant volumes, and the documents had to be stamped with the rector's and the Senate's seal. The school curriculum had to be printed and posted in public places, both close and more remote, so that others may know the regulations of this outstanding institution (ut aliis innotescatur fundatio huius illustris seminarii).

s A result of the demanding educational objectives of the three famous professors, it was not accidental that the first chapter of the school's constitution mentioned that the school should be provided with books, publications, and a printing press, that it should follow the "critical philological consciousness" of Renaissance and Reformation culture, and should possess the basic schoolbooks used in the standardized educational model of the culture of the age. Accordingly, article 9 of the statute's first chapter mentioned that the college's printing press had to be properly organized, so that the printer would know how to print in a correct and orderly fashion, also using Greek and Hebrew letters. The printing press had to publish the necessary schoolbooks: the Heidelberg Catechism, grammars of Latin and Greek, handbooks of rhetoric, logic, etc.

The second chapter of the regulations and norms formulated in the three professors' project indicated the attributions and functions of the school's Board of Trustees, of its professors and the preceptors, of the Senate and the rector, all of which had to be standardized according to the model of European schools. The school's Board of Trustees (*De scholarcha sive curatore scholae*) had to pledge loyalty to the prince, and the dignity and honor of the men who looked after the school was also to increase its prestige. The Board of Trustees had to perform a quarterly inspection of the school, see to the professors' salaries, participate in the school's events, and provide the administration of school buildings and properties.

A series of articles and regulations about the functions and attributions of professors and preceptors stipulated the essential aspects of the educational process: the professors had to teach their lectures according to a precise schedule and didactic norms; learning was to take place under the sign of *cui bono*—what is the use of the subject taught; they had to prove their skills in teaching and be affectionate with the students, and not discriminate between students of noble origin and the others. They were to prove temperance in their educa-

tional behavior (*mutua benevolentia*), especially in the context of intellectual and religious controversies and disputes, and they had to be severe but not cruel in punishing all trespasses (*severi non autem saevi sunto*).

The attributions and role of the Senate were stipulated as follows: the Senate occupied the third place in the school's hierarchy of authority, following the prince and the Board of Trustees. The Senate only included the professors, and the rector was the head of the Senate, but he could not decide the the Senate's dissolution, as his decisions had to be approved by the Senate (*Rector suffragia senatorum petito*); the Senate had the duty to take care of the students' board and lodging, life, and morals, which were to be moderate and prudent (*ad hibitas singulari in inquerendo moderatione et prudentia*); it organized public debates and lectures; it had to make sure that all subjects proposed for public debate were controlled and advised by all the professors (*quod prius censurae omnium et singulorum professorum fuerit subjectum*).

The rector, as the highest official of a public school, had to publicly communicate the statutes to the students; lead in the best interest of his subordinates (civibus quorum interes commendato); organize the inaugural lecture of newly-employed professors; inspect public lectures; watch over the professors' morals (mores singulorum professorum observato); obey the Senate's decisions (senatus justis decretis pareto); request the professors' salaries from the Board of Trustees each month, and frequently ensure that order was respected in the school (oeconomiam Scholae interdum lustrato).

One of the subchapters of the school's organization project set the rules for didactic methods of high efficiency and self-imposed exigency. Each professor was to present a solemn lecture at his employment (*orationem solennem habeto*), followed a solemn pledge to respect "the word of God and the laws of the school." A professor had to teach the complete lessons, from the beginning to the end (*suo congruenter lectiones suas incipiunto et finiunto*), and abstain in his lessons from "strange and useless" digressions. If a teacher neglects his lessons, he was not to be paid for the given period. The professor had to repeat the lesson as often as necessary in order to ensure that its ideas and structure were understood by the audience (*Saepenumero repetunto et inculcanto auditoribus suis ideam seu synopsis ejus materiae*). The lessons he could not teach for legitimate reasons were to be covered by other professors. Also, the professors had to be active in public debates, and collegiality and the expectations from students were to be balanced.

Two special subchapters discussed the duties of theology, philosophy, and philology teachers. The professors of theology were mentioned in relation to their teaching responsibilities and also the organization of the famous *controversiae theologicae*. They were to organize such public debates and declamations

with their students every Wednesday and Friday, and practice common declamation in Latin every Sunday. They also had to organize compulsory Hebrew lessons using a pair-work study method (*linguam Hebreaam alteruter doceto publice*). The philosophy professor was to teach logic twice a week, and in each the remaining days two hours of metaphysics, physics, and mathematics. He was also supposed to teach the Greek language and practical philosophy. Every Wednesday and Saturday, ordinary disputations and public orations were organized.¹³

Starting from this project of organizing an academic college in Transylvania, János Apáczai Csere also drew up a set of rules regarding teaching, trying to apply them beginning with 1656, when he arrived at the Reformed Academic College of Cluj. Teaching according to these rules demanded a high ethical and pedagogical level, in which emphasis was laid on the professional as well as on the moral qualities of professors and students alike. More than in other similar cases, he insisted upon the ethics of higher education and on a culture of behavior in which, in keeping with the ethical-religious concepts of Calvinism, the individual and the individual handling of one's behavior and life were essential. Schooling meant first of all one's individual education and modeling, constructing one's self-consciousness in the manner of individual salvation. The Puritan version of the Calvinist pedagogical code supported by Apáczai highlighted one's individual qualities and the need of individual emancipation, the ethical value of which was paramount. According to Apáczai, a professor's individual duties and qualities were his exemplary life and morals, his erudition, devotion, professional conscience, parental affection towards his students, flawless character, his efforts to gain the affection of his students, his competence and his ability and skill in the moral and scholarly instruction of his students.

Starting from the efficiency of Alsted's teaching method, Apáczai drew up, also in eight points, the principles of teaching in academic colleges: to discuss one problem at a time, and return to it several times, until all the students fully understand it; to teach only the necessary matters, and not to distract attention with digressions; to teach in an entertaining and joyful manner; not to neglect the dialogue with the students; students should be trained in disputes; in matters of discipline professors should be affectionate and try to prevent punishment; physical education was quite important, but was not to be exaggerated; students had to be warned and prepared for the things they must know in the course of their lives.¹⁴

In what regarded the students' obligations and status in the school, it was presented in the same kind of ethical tone, which portrayed the ideal student and then presented what Reformed theology saw as a major flaw, namely, the impulse to exceed oneself and consolidate faith, according to the precept pecca

fortiter crede fidelius. The students' obligations as laid down by Apáczai included: to love and enjoy their studies, to have an ardent wish to learn, to be guided by a certain, high, but never vain purpose, because "he who strives too little, will never become a learned man," to learn thoroughly, not to concern themselves only with intellectual problems, but also with physical education. Moreover, he emphasized the nine obstacles that lay before the student: sins which could be eliminated by learning, the poverty and ugliness of student's behavior, envy, vanity, isolated learning, idleness, lack of determination, unorganized and unmethodological studying, which erodes and undermines the spirit, as the key to learning is permanent study, reading, and writing.¹⁵

The professors of the Academic College of Cluj were remarkable personalities educated in European university centers. Benedek Bihari studied in Heidelberg and became the rector of the Cluj College. Márton Talyai studied at Frankfurt an der Oder and at Leyden, distinguishing himself in disputes with the Anti-Trinitarians of Cluj on the subject of the Holy Trinity. János Tolnai had also been a student at Leyden, and an adept of Puritanism. Elek Mogyorósi attended the University of Franeker, and wrote the *Panoplia Christiana verae fidei hostibus opposita*, a polemic theological text published in 1641. György Batay also graduated from the University of Franeker, and became a professor at Cluj. András Porcsalmi was a professor at the College of Cluj for 26 years, and he wrote the work *Elementa oratoria*, published at Alba Iulia in 1642. Kálmán Igaz or Colomanus Justus studied at the University of Utrecht, and taught at Cluj between the 1652 and 1656. János Sikó was a student of Franeker, and authored the work *De deitate Spiritus Sancti*, written during his student years, and the religious dispute *Problemata aliquot de Scriptura*. ¹⁶

All of these elements combined to create a stimulating intellectual and educational atmosphere at the College of Cluj, which, beginning with the middle of the 17th century, was defined by the personality of Apáczai, who created a school of advanced studies of the precepts of Puritanism and of the rationalist trends of thought and theology developed in certain Reformed intellectual environments, always open to the ideal of the Western European universities.

HE 17th century Transylvanian intellectual climate, concerned with the establishment of a European-level higher education institution, produced an intellectual elite which imposed itself by cultural initiatives and remarkable academic activities. Romanians from Transylvania and Banat, who attended higher education institutions in Transylvania or elsewhere in Europe, also distinguished themselves by way of their cultural and educational activities in European universities. Mihail Halici (1643–1712) came from a Romanian cultural environment in the vicinity of Caransebeş, being a Romanian

nobleman exceptionally aware of his ethnic identity and of the Latin origin of his nation, and calling himself Nobilis Romanus Civis de Caransebes and Rumanus Apollo, that is, a Roman poet. He may well be regarded as a citizen of a Respublica litteraria extending all over Europe. He studied in Caransebes, Aiud, Sibiu, and became the rector of the Reformed school of Oraștie (Rector Scholae Saxopolitanae) between 1662 and 1666. This college was one of the first Reformed schools in Transylvania. He then studied in Leyden, between 1679 and 1685, in the atmosphere of Professor Jan Koch's (Cocceius) rationalist thinking, opposing the orthodox Calvinist conservatism dominant in Transylvania. Halici cultivated a non-ethnic friendship and intellectual solidarity with Transylvanian humanists such as Valentin Franck von Franckenstein and the Hungarian Ferencz Pápai Páriz. This kind of solidarity was typical to the "citizenship" of a European literary republic's Humanist and Baroque intellectual society. He authored the first Romanian-language ode printed in Latin letters, dedicated to his friend Pápai Páriz, and he was also the owner of the largest private library in 17th century Transylvania, amounting to 540 volumes.

Another outstanding figure of the 17th century intellectual milieu was Gabriel Ivul, a member of the Romanian nobility from the autonomous districts of the Banat region. His figure is best characterized by the motto missio et eruditio. As a graduate of the Jesuit universities of Graz and Trnava, he was shaped by the spiritual and religious model of the High Baroque, aiming at the revival of Catholic revolutionary models in order to regain and reconvert to Catholicism certain territories that had been lost to the Reformation. He had a career in education unique for the 17th century Romanian intellectual environment. He became a doctor of the universities of Trnava and Vienna in 1650. He taught philosophy at the University of Košice (Cassovia), then theology at the Jesuit university of Vienna, where he served as university chancellor for 12 years. Between 1669 and 1672, Gabriel Ivul was Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Trnava, and his educational activity was remarkably diverse: philosophy, theology, logic, dialectic. He can be associated with 16th–17th century neo-Aristotelianism, when the Counterreformation launched a second Scholasticism. He is also the author of a Tractatus de Virtutibus Theologicis et de Paenitentia (1663), and he supervised several doctoral dissertations in philosophy and theology, which later became important works: Philosophia Novella (1661), Theses et Antitheses Catholicorum et Acatholicorum (1667).¹⁷

The institutional aspects of 17th century Transylvanian higher education, as well as the distinguished figures of the local or European academic environment, stand as landmarks of an educational system that based its projects on the model of the European universities of the age.

Notes

- Erdélyi és hódoltsági jezsuita missziók, vol. I/2, 1617–1625 (Szeged: Scriptum, 1990), 468.
- 2. Ibid., 419.
- 3. Ibid., 421.
- 4. Ibid., 447.
- 5. Ibid., 468.
- 6. Lucian Periș, *Prezențe catolice în Transilvania, Moldova și Țara Românească, 1601–1698*, ed. O. Ghitta (Blaj: Bunavestire, 2005), 40.
- 7. Régi magyar egyetemek emlékezete. Memoria Universitatum et Scholarum Maiorum Regni Hungariae, 1367-1777, ed. László Szögi (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Könyvtára és Levéltára, 1995), 114.
- 8. Ibid., 123.
- 9. Zsigmond Jakó, Philobiblon transilvan (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1977), 130.
- 10. István Török, *A kolozsvári ev. ref. collegium története* (Kolozsvár/Cluj: Steif Jenő és Társa Könyvnyomó Intézete, 1905), 14–17.
- 11. Gyula Bisztray, Attila Szabó T., and Lajos Tamás, eds., *Erdély magyar egyeteme* (Kolozsvár/Cluj: Erdélyi Tudományos Intézet, 1941), 62 sqq.
- 12. Ibid., 66.
- 13. Régi magyar egyetemek emlékezete, 115–120.
- 14. Török, 47.
- 15. Ibid., 48.
- 16. Ibid., 23–27.
- 17. D. Radosav, *Cultură și umanism în Banat: Secolul XVII* (Timișoara: Ed. de Vest, 2003), 155–225.

Abstract

Landmarks in Higher Education in 17th Century Cluj

The study presents the main events in the life of Cluj higher education institutions during the 17^{th} century—a century marked by the rivalry between the two main denominations, Catholic and Calvinist—from the closing down of the Jesuit College and the subsequent blow to the Catholic educational system in the principality to the establishment of Protestant higher schools (*collegium academicum*) in Cluj, Alba Iulia, and Aiud. The latter institutions employed famous Protestant scholars, such as Philipp Ludwig Piscator, Johann Heinrich Alsted, János Apáczai Csere, and Johann Heinrich Bisterfeld. Attention is also paid to the draft statute for this type of school, as devised by the German professors teaching in Transylvania, and to the didactic norms laid out by János Apáczai Csere.

Keywords

Cluj higher education, Reformed Academic College of Cluj, college statutes, János Apáczai Csere