

# Confessional Tolerance and Intolerance in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century Transylvania\*

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**T**HE THEME of religious tolerance has been exhaustively considered as a difficult subject. Nonetheless, it remains a fascinating subject due to its remarkable history in this part of Europe. Owing to its ethnic-confessional aspect, it has been a widely debated subject among Transylvanian historians.<sup>1</sup> The establishment of the religious tolerance at the Diet of Turda of 1568,<sup>2</sup> was a crowning moment, but mainly only among the Unitarian Protestants. However, this event proved to be discriminatory against the Orthodox, and at the same time incomplete and incidental from a Catholic point of view.

The idea of religious tolerance represents, in fact, a complex political confessional project.<sup>3</sup> In 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Transylvania it was a first of its kind in Europe, provided that we do not consider the lexicographic definition which sees the birth of religious tolerance as the Act of Tolerance in England in 1689.<sup>4</sup> Overshadowed by this great event, the concept of tolerance in Transylvania might have become a metaphor and an ephemeral dream of a crude and fast galloping political and confessional reality seeking a relative social balance in its historical and political evolution. By acknowledging the merits of the Enlightenment, we can therefore sustain a thesis: *The Reformation has represented the premise of tolerance. However, this was not its initial purpose.*<sup>5</sup> This is a luxurious definition which was rooted in the humanist and enlightenment terminology and was then rephrased in the war like times of present history. One of its goals was to create a paler version of this “heavenly state”, or at least attempt to reach a rational compromise. Later on, however, this ideal appeared to be far too rigid and lacked mobility.

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Transylvanian Protestantism committed itself to the creation of an original formula of tolerance in being flexible, distinguished and eager to achieve social tranquility and peace. One of the goals of Transylvanian Protestant tolerance was to create a *status quo* which was necessary to maintain political equilibrium due to the confessional and political situation of this small Principality<sup>6</sup>. This equilibrium was required because of the intolerance which was present in the manifestations of past medieval systems which had become vulnerable and unbalanced. In searching for equilibrium within this idea of tolerance, it proposed ideas in which to fill in comprehensive gaps of relations within the new Transylvanian state in the shadow of past Islam control. In fact, confessional tolerance was a guarantee for the co-existence of Protestant fractions and Catholicism, these having to choose between a silent acceptance of the equilibrium or a dissolution of the confessional disputes. In this analysis one must not exclude theological principles from the political substratum of the religious tolerance because these are useful in contemporary ecumenical debates<sup>7</sup>. From the point of view in dealing with confrontations which preceded and followed the birth of the Reformation, can it be confirmed that, “*we cannot talk about tolerance in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, but only about fanaticism*”?<sup>8</sup> But is it exclusively fanaticism?

In lacking the heuristic euphoria of discovering the truth of religious tolerance,<sup>9</sup> which represented protection for the religious Reformed society on the continent, the question thus rises: how and to what extent can the tolerance of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Transylvania be considered as a model? It is a question seeking an answer even today.

Count Miklos Bethlen expressed reference points extremely close to the pre-Enlightenment perception, in his idea of the Transylvanian idea of tolerance, “*All religions, confessions, superstitions, sects, thoughts, schisms, heresies and all those that can be otherwise called and will be given by God and each that has God as its goal, will praise Him and as consequence will find happiness. The goal, as well as the end is good but this is where everybody errs and those who hold the Holy Book in their hands, naming some Romans, Augustans, Helvetic, Greeks and in our Hungarian language Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists and of Greek religion (in Transylvania we can also mention the Unitarians), when in fact everyone is a Christian because there is no other religion but the Christian one which Christ had taught us when he was flesh and blood and when he rose to Heaven, through the Holy Spirit and the Apostles*”.<sup>10</sup> Surely, few were the voices which made such statements regarding this delicate matter in 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Transylvania. The fact that these thoughts were uttered by a Transylvanian in an epoch in which Calvinistic heirarchical absolutism was living its last glorious moments in various parts of the world, is a note of interest in observing the noble classes and confessional diversity of the principality.

Miklos Bethlen's neutral and universal attitude towards Christianity did not differ entirely from the Transylvanian legislative view on the matter, as seen in various documents such as: "*Faith is the gift of God*"<sup>11</sup> or "*Christian religion is one, there are differences within the liturgy and sacraments only*"<sup>12</sup> This, however, was a long way, from the transformation of the Autonomous Transylvanian Principality incorporating the religious Reformation to the the idea of Transylvanian tolerance in the Bethlenean view. This road of development took into account geo-political circumstances and the peculiarity of the Transylvanian reform and its evolution. It attempted to reach social finalities which were meant to serve the definition of state-identity under the Turkish domination and political pressure from Austro-Hungary.

This difficult road also relied on Protestant ethic, in which a special place was maintained by confessional tolerance amongst Protestant-Christian virtues. These are personified as "*the seven golden apples*" of Christian virtues (kindness, erudition, temperance, tolerance, piety, brotherly love, charity) which the Reverend Bishop Miklós Hodászi († 1650) presented in 1646 on the catafalque of Péter Bethlen of Iktár (1609-1646), the last important personality from Prince Gabriel Bethlen's family (1580-1629): "*the fourth golden apple is tolerance, so it is patience with which we can bear all the hardships given by God, but especially all injuries with which the liberty of our true religion is attacked in order to praise God. And when, because of our sins we begin to complain, we must come to our senses and say as Iov 39: I have once uttered it, but I will do so no more, as I regret it*".<sup>13</sup>

The ethical aspects expressed by Roman-Catholic historiography, regarding the idea of tolerance, were sustained by the idea: "*the level of tolerance is always suggested by the way in which the majority behaves with the confessional minority*".<sup>14</sup> In this light, it is worth mentioning the account with apologetic flair of Péter Pázmány (1570-1637) that he gave in a brief description of ethical theological disputes. This exemplified his anti-Protestant view against the theological ideas of Jean Calvin<sup>15</sup>. These views should be taken into consideration, (excepting his counter reformative and proselyte goals), as debates on similar discussions used various ecumenical movements of today. In his volume Kalauz (The Guide) he discussed the "*way one must talk profitably about faith*".<sup>16</sup> We can consider those precepts as a manual on ethics and religious tolerance<sup>17</sup> similar to Protestant ones, even though the reality proved something else. The ethical parameters for tolerance were set as patience, bearing the injuries of others, silence<sup>18</sup> and positive behaviour towards the religious minority. This leads us to the causes of intolerance as being accusations of false religion and attacks against confessional order established by law.

The methods and intentions of regenerating old confessional solidarities, however, have repeatedly brought about the danger of intolerance. This was caused

by the impossibility to submit to new religion, politics and the desire for stability in a context of deep uncertainty. Intolerance arose from the difficulty to adapt to various changing social, political and religious subjects. The removal of radicalization of intolerance was a well performed attribute to Transylvanian politics, which preferred the idea of a new construction, namely that of tolerance. Major aspects of this Transylvanian tolerance can be regarded as unique in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe, which could have clearly defined the two models of confessional politics: Austrian Hungary and Autonomous Transylvanian Principality, admittedly being in favour of the Principality. Due to this latter idea, the alteration was accepted and assimilated within political systems capable of diminishing the radicalism of social conflict in order to moderate and channel those forces which moved around the idea of denomination and politics.

The numerical superiority of a Protestant denomination, even though it meant political power, did not necessarily mean uniformity as well. For this reason, the historio-graphical statement from the 19<sup>th</sup> century: “*Tolerance and religious liberty are often mentioned [...] always by the oppressed minority, which once in power promoted the same oppression towards everyone else*”<sup>19</sup> cannot be accepted without reservation. Within the Principality, the majority was the one encoding their own reception and offered freedom to others even against their own excesses. The idea of tolerance in Transylvania meant the assembling of a new state and group identity as well, through which the tempestuous evolution of European Protestantism could only have been maintained under control in several regions. Mediated by diets and synods, it signaled the attempt to create a new solidarity, new formulas for the Principality (the ruler), and the denominations in a dynamic development that was difficult to follow.

The stages of the evolution of tolerance meant, in fact, the realization of a new *status quo* of free cohabitation between different Protestant denominations. While from the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century confessional tolerance was maintained by the necessity of finding a new inter-confessional equilibrium, the journey towards defining confessional identity and alteration followed the classical stage: *dispute, diet, synod*. This is where the decisions were debated in order to maintain tranquility and social peace. From this point of view, it can be stated about this period of the Reformation that it did not bring socio-political peace, but rather created fear and restlessness in the confessional segments that had become secondary. In the name of tolerance or against it, more or less victorious wars broke out, which were disguised under the idea of “*religious freedom*”.

In 17<sup>th</sup> century Transylvania the idea of religious tolerance became synonymous with religious peace of aristocratic categories influenced by the change of confessional conviction. The pacification of the aristocracy was done by accept-

ing the confessional dissidences with the purpose of constitutional integration of the differences which had appeared, and by attenuating the various political conflicts. That is why tolerance did not only aim at the acceptance or re-acceptance of Catholicism on the verge of disappearance, but as an internal peace between the Protestant fractions that were in a state of staggering dynamic evolution. Catholicism was becoming a secondary issue of the debate and of the interest of aristocracy.

In this debate, the Habsburgs were cautious with their involvement, but aptly noticed the confessional changes which had occurred. Basically, the dissolution of Catholic properties, the territorial reorganization of Episcopal offices, the disputes among monk orders and the Catholic Episcopal chair were the factors which created opportunities for the Habsburgs to become involved in the Transylvanian Reformation disputes. This implication was meant to protect Roman-Catholicism, a possible ally in the political aims of Austrian Hungary. From 1556 the maneuvering capacities of the Austrians and the Roman Catholic Church were compromised by the secularization of Catholic earnings and the foundation of the autonomous Principality of Transylvania. The radical separation from an economical point of view, as well as the problem of Roman Catholic revenues, represented an advantage for Protestantism. The Principality built itself constitutional models which guaranteed the end of belligerence of existent confessions in the Principality at that time. However, the deliverance from the Habsburgs and Roman Catholic wardship brought about disturbance along with misguided zeal in liturgical areas by eliminating the altars and Catholic clergy from Alba Iulia and Cluj.

The height of success in the politics of the newly transformed Protestant nobility coincided with the period when intolerance towards Roman Catholicism reached its highest peak. Surely the anti-Catholic feelings were enhanced by powerful anti-Habsburg sentiments. In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but mainly in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, religious tolerance changed its confessional interpretation. The idea of religious tolerance became similar to the struggle for religious freedom before the rivalry between Protestant identities was diminished by three things: the idea of confessional tolerance, the appearance of the first signs of Protestant debasement and Roman Catholic revival. The victory of the Counter Reformation in the regions under Habsburg wardship politically isolated the Principality of Transylvania. Religious freedom thus became the leitmotif for the untainted maintenance of a constitutional and confessional system promoted by the Principality. The idea of saving religious freedom was used for the purpose of maintaining the confessional situation stated by the Transylvanian Diet, regardless of the present conflicts between the expansive Habsburgs and their Counter Reformation. Later on, religious freedom devel-

oped into the desire for Protestants and Roman Catholics to co-exist, as expressed in the idea of *irenicism* and *mutua tolerantia*. From the point of view of the linking religious tolerance and religious freedom in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the confessional issue came to the forefront in Europe. This was done regardless of the state's reasoning by keeping the confessional equilibrium coded in the Diet. Transylvania appears in European politics as a small regional Protestant power, in order to maintain its state identity.

Religious tolerance subordinated itself as a good, worth fighting for under the flag of the State, for maintaining confessional freedom. The freedom had been already earned, but was endangered by the Habsburgs and the Counter Reformation. The wars led by the Principality of Transylvania outside its territory mainly sustain the cause of confessional freedom and offered an outstanding model. According to some views, the Principality had a far greater role than it ought to have in Europe, if we consider its real strength.<sup>20</sup> This view, however, might be too minimal without understanding the geopolitical role that the Principality fulfilled in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries when the divergences between Christians and Muslims met in this part of Europe. Hence, the Principality's diplomacy tried to "export" some coded precedents as ideas of religious tolerance in international peace treaties in its own jurisdiction. This happened in a Europe which had been deeply frightened by the confessional disturbances and the restlessness that surrounded it.

Intolerance and Catholic measures generated excesses from the Protestants as well. These very Protestants, who were led by the desire to apply these new theological precepts, radically alienated themselves from whatever stood in their way and from the old and outdated world of Catholicism. Priests, monks, the laity and nobles who followed the lines of Lutheranism, and later on Calvinism, Unitarianism and finally Sabbatarianism, remodeled their representation of liturgical and theological space, which had long lasting socio-political effects in Transylvania. The repeated banishment of Jesuits from the Principality and the lack of firmness of the Catholic princes (Stephen Báthori, Sigismund Báthory) in the promotion of the Counter Reformation can be seen as consequences of the limitations which were made by the Diet in religious matters. State identity and constitutional definition were favorable to the religious diversity and not to confessional exclusivism even if princely absolutism tainted this construction.

The evolution of the idea of tolerance is related to the fact that the Hungarians, already on the Protestant side, felt extremely deceived because they could not identify themselves with expanding Islam. On the other hand, the Hungarians felt unprotected by the promises of the Christian West.<sup>21</sup> A confessional adjustment to the geo-political realities of the time was necessary. This correlation of the state's interest with religious life resulted in a realization of religious toler-



ance models specific for Transylvania. With the birth of the Transylvanian Principality, its evolution was connected to Reformation process of religion in that region. The importance of the prince became imperative in the creation of new ecclesiastical institutions, as well as in the molding of the new aristocracy who had become wealthy by having confiscated Catholic lands.

In the evolution of Protestantism, Muslim power had an important role as the main political leader which had previously occupied its place. The geographical, ethnic and confessional state of the Principality was a special one. Because of its geographical position, ethnical convergences found within its boundaries, and the multitude of confessional references derived from Protestant confessional stratification; these all demanded universally acknowledged principles. These principles were later required for an assurance of their co-existence, development and stability. Religious tolerance, apart from general excesses of denomination and politics remained an emblematic realization of the Transylvanian Principality even with its drawbacks. It had typically developed within its own limits, expressing a dim principle from 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe, namely that of accepting confessional diversity and peace. There was a specific religious tolerance that resulted from the multitude of confessional and political references in a region that was considered peripheral to Europe, and also from its convergences and divergences with the Muslim world. In order to know the stages and methods of the development of this precocious type of religious tolerance, an attempt will be made to explain its evolution.

During the Reformation, intolerance and tolerance had either been sustained or were constantly in conflict. In 1517 restlessness took over Transylvania as well, *“There has never been a country whose sons did not have conflicts of one kind or another [...]. These conflicts brought about the formation of different parties whose members formed sects. The Greek called them schismatics (heretics) [...] The sect gained audience and propagated itself. It was called Evangelical because its members did not think of any other law to be worthy to follow, but the one that was given to the Apostles by Christ. That year they made their first historical mark by stating that Christ would remove them from the Church leaders’ corruption and He would reunite them separately. This statement caused a great debate and many changes within the Church”*.<sup>22</sup>

Imre Vegedi, Roman Catholic Archpriest of Turda, a former member of the Chapter of Alba Iulia was the only one who, being disoriented by the confessional evolution of Transylvania, asked the question: Do these changes overcome the boundaries of one’s right?<sup>23</sup> It was a natural question if one takes into account the fact that religious tolerance and the need for stability were the factors influencing the flexibility and the limits the right upon which Vegedi reflected. Transylvania soon becoming a real battlefield of theological ideologies as restlessness, emotion and confessional tolerance were soon to be felt. The Reverend

Damassus Dürr (1553-1585), a Saxon, stated the presence of theological chaos and the need to compromise, “*Within the Church there are many inadvertences among priests. The first does not want to know about the three persons of the Holy Trinity, the second denies the Holy Spirit and makes Christ a mortal, the third does not recognize the children’s baptism, the fourth errs in explaining the importance of the Holy Eucharist, the fifth is perplexed by the eternal care of the Lord towards humanity*”.<sup>24</sup>

The new forms of piety were present in the Hungarian royal court along with the incipient crisis. This piety, however, developed its first forms of self preservation in the evolution of Catholicism. The conflict between the old system and the new one caused irreversible breaks and manifestations of intolerance. Thus, there were two models: intolerance towards the old religion and Catholic intolerance towards new models of piety. The self-preserving reaction of Roman Catholicism imposed punitive measures. The models and methods of annihilating Protestantism, considered to be heretical, were slow in coming to motion. This was due to the aristocracy which had grown to sympathize with this new spirituality. The medieval rigidity of anti-Protestant prescriptions produced their first victims, but they motivated the propagation and standardization of the Reformation at the same time. European politics of that time was rapacious when demanding the Royal Court of Buda to issue punitive, intolerant and destructive laws against the Lutheran “heresy”. This request signaled the dimensions of the crisis produced by the Reformation in the centre of the continent.<sup>25</sup> The Royal Court manifested a negative attitude towards the new denomination. The law of 1523 which punished the Protestant “heretics” proved to be insufficient and intolerant towards the Lutheran alteration. The stalemate created by the conflict between the Papacy and German Reformation had a double effect: a condemnation of the Reformation in the remaining states that were faithful to Catholicism, and religious condemnation, accepted in Hungary by all Episcopal centres.<sup>26</sup>

This latter was followed by the rapid and silent propagation of the new doctrine in the German cities of Upper Hungary, Austrian Hungary<sup>27</sup> and from Transylvania.<sup>28</sup> The other effect was naturally the mirroring of this event in the activity of the Diet which transposed Counter Reformation demands into the law.<sup>29</sup> The application of these intolerant laws in Transylvania was a difficult process due to Saxon cities (in Transylvania) which had come under the influence of Wittenberg. This resulted in an order of the Hungarian King Louis II (1526+), on 9 March 1524, that every Lutheran writings in the city of Sibiu, which were present in almost every household, be burnt.<sup>30</sup> This expression of intolerance showed that Catholicism still had available methods, energy and ways of destroying these new teachings<sup>31</sup> prior the battle of Mohács (1526).

As a consequence, Catholic successes in annihilating Protestantism had been measurable, but after the battle of Mohács, intolerance and Catholic zeal remained



uninforced. Between 1527 and 1540 the success of anti-Lutheranism of King John I († 1540) was decreased by the Reformation in the developed cities of the Hungarian Kingdom and within the present aristocracy. Catholicism had lost its allies one by one in the Principality, while resolution of the conflicts between religions failed.<sup>32</sup> Due to the fact that the King was exiled by the Papal administration and by Pope Clement VII (1478-1534) during the Peace of Barcelona (June 1529), his lack of confidence in papal institutions became obvious, even though the King remained faithful to Roman-Catholicism.

This lack of confidence is a likely explanation for the King's tolerance towards the evolution of the Reformation, even though he occasionally showed support for Roman Catholicism by imprisoning some reformators such as Mátyás Bíró Dévai († 1545). A method, efficient enough to channel and open confessional intolerance, was cleverly understood by the King, who, in the dispute of Sighisoara 1538, gave hope to the Catholic party represented by the bishops János Statileo († 1542), György Fráter Martinuzzi (1492-1551) and Ferenc Frangepán († 1543). The King also sly gave hope to victorious Protestant Lutherans in disputes. The Lutherans thought that the King would join the new denomination since his political supporters had become mostly Protestant. The important Catholic members of the above mentioned theological dispute, Adorján Wolphard († 1544) and Márton Sánta Kálmáncsehi († 1557) later became the most fervent supporters of Transylvanian Protestantism.<sup>33</sup>

The city of Alba Iulia became the crucible in this conflict, providing the Catholic world of Transylvania with orientation from a confessional point of view. After György Fráter Martinuzzi's death († 1551) and the return of Prince John Zsigmond (1540-1571) to Transylvania between 1551 and 1556, the Franciscan convents of Transylvania and Partium were dissolved.<sup>34</sup> The reason behind it was that important members of the order became loyal to the new theology and the monasteries were generally depopulated. The intolerance of the new denomination towards the remains of Roman Catholicism also contributed to the dissolution of Franciscan monasteries.

On the one hand, the Catholic-Lutheran cohabitation generated an acute necessity for renovating Catholicism, which had been weakened by the German Reformation events beyond the punitive damages suggested by the John Szapolyai/Zápolya. On the other hand, it emphasized the need to build a new model of coexistence. This mainly political model was not meant to aim at the enhancement of tensions at the superior level of management of the Principality. The year 1541 becomes symbolic because of the birth of the autonomous Transylvanian Principality,<sup>35</sup> and secondly because it represented the year when Protestantism, through its Wittembergian branch and personalities such as: Kis István Szegedi (1505-1572), András Batizi (1510-1552), Mátyás Bíró Dévai,

all reached remarkable successes. These successes instantly meant the weakening of the Roman Catholic position in the Principality and the need for repositioning by the finding of a *modus vivendi* between impaired Catholicism and triumphant Protestantism. The case of Dévai is impressive; he was imprisoned for Lutheran “heresy” upon King John Szapolyai’s command. After he had converted his cell mate, they were not burnt after all “*despite of the free denomination of them both*”, but were set free.<sup>36</sup>

The triumph of Protestantism, however, did not mean an instant release of an impeccable model of religious freedom and reciprocal tolerance. This did not coincide with the Reformation, even though it promoted a relative conciliatory attitude towards confessional variety. Under the pressure of Reformation, weakened continental Catholicism, reorganized its positions by initializing the Counter Reformation in this part of Europe (1546-1563) coinciding with the Synod of Trento. As a consequence of the Reformation and Counter Reformation, Ferdinand I of the Habsburgs, who then had been a relatively tolerant King towards the Protestantism in Hungary and Transylvania, engaged full-force into the restoration of Catholicism in this part of Europe.<sup>37</sup> His religious intolerance showed severe repercussions upon the definitions of the political personality of the autonomous Principality of Transylvania.

Transylvanian religious tolerance, influenced by European politics, confessional changes and the need for political stability can be defined as a non-aggressive pact between existent denominations within the Principality. This was necessary in order to maintain “*religious inner and outer liberties*”<sup>38</sup> as granted by the law. Within tolerant politics, the aim was a certain context within which Habsburg ecclesiastic politics would have an unlimited access in the life of the Principality. The decline and later on transforming Catholicism and reordering of Protestant denominations, as well as the codifying of religious freedom, led to limitations by which the Tridentine spirituality could be applied in silence only, under the pretext of alienation from the Turkish power. The distortion of the concept of tolerance is especially visible when a denomination becomes the most dominant, in terms of demographics or socio-politics. Its theological discourse, therefore, invokes its right for confessional exclusiveness to the detriment of other religions.<sup>39</sup>

The confessional incompatibilities, however, were manifested mainly in the interminable disputes within Protestantism. There were two major theological themes that were debated upon: *the issue of the Eucharist* and that of the *Holy Trinity*. The debate upon the theological ideas from this perspective could be considered as a sign of tolerance. This being because the arguments and counter arguments of a debate, even though they produced verbal intolerance, were meant to end the physical manifestations of intolerance, therefore replacing them

with intellectual confrontation. The intolerance towards liturgical representation was extended into a theological debate. The conflict regarding dogmatic differences, the one referring to the arrangement of the liturgical space and the language used within the church service, forced the Saxons to take sides in the Mediaș<sup>40</sup> Synod of August 1559<sup>41</sup>.

Hence, the attempt to reconcile the Protestant fractions failed. Calvinism reached its first official series of success in Transylvania starting from 1561.<sup>42</sup> Intolerance and the difference in options amongst the Saxons and Hungarians became obvious and needed conciliation. The Diet of Sighisoara in January of 1564, in a last attempt to reconcile, convoked the Saxons and the Hungarians to a Synod in Aiud,<sup>43</sup> having the conviction though that this would lead to a permanent break.<sup>44</sup> The Protestant Synod of Aiud of 1564 decided to definitively separate the Protestant denominations, thus projecting a historical road for Lutheran, Reformed and Unitarian denominations.

Lutheran and Calvinistic Protestantism decided to coexist both from both a confessional and an ethnic point of view. In this transition, the idea of intolerance of theological discourse can be expanded. With its demonstrative arguments it used the power of the language to invoke piety. The radicalism and intolerance of the discourse deepened when anti-Trinitarianism transformed the debate within Protestantism in a real Transylvanian trial where theological arguments created obscurity. This, however, was not sufficient enough to annihilate confessional intolerance.

Confessional tension and verbal intolerance moved within Calvinist circles of Transylvania and Bihor, and confronted the appearance of anti-Trinitarian ideas. Opposed to the newly professed dogma (Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Unitarianism), the administrative structure of the areas which had been conquered by the Reformation, remained mainly Roman Catholic in the first part of this evolution.<sup>45</sup> Avoiding direct confrontation meant that there was strong emotion among the Transylvanians who were waiting for a resolution from the side of politics for the problems created by this new schism.<sup>46</sup> Intolerance and confessional competition demanded a higher hierarchical forum in order to be controlled. This political role proved to be fulfilled by the Diet and the Prince, who started to play the role of a mediator in confessional disputes. It was this political obstruction in front of permanent changes to theological teachings which superseded the situation, or rather attempted a stabilization and normalization of the situation.

We can thus state that the intense rapports of Protestantism may be considered as being extremely complicated prior to the definition of distinct identities. The Lutherans and Calvinists detested and suppressed Unitarians and Anabaptists, but also failed to show tolerance towards each other<sup>47</sup>. This was also

true for Upper Hungary and Hungary under Turkish domination and less for the Transylvanian Principality. Here, the Principality, even if maintaining some aspects of inter-Protestant relational intolerance, played a role worth mentioning. The solutions found by the Diet and the Prince lessened the tension in the political and theological discourse. The conflicts and intolerance which had risen from interminable theological disputes were to be resolved by synodal and dietal resolutions.

This breach of Protestantism contributed to the success of Catholicism of the Tridentine type. The series of successes of Catholicism are contributed to Rudolf of Habsburg (1572-1608), who imposed both absolutism and confessional intolerance of a Spanish origin. In 1572, from the moment of his election as Hungarian King, this signified symptomatically the relationship of the King with Protestantism. It was announced that taking the oath was possible only by the invocation of Mary and the Catholic Saints; the Arians, disciples of Zwingli, "Sacramentarians" (Calvinists) had to be burnt on the stake.<sup>48</sup> In opposition to this type of intolerance practised by the Habsburgs, the decisions concerning religious tolerance and freedom of conscience acknowledged by the Diet from Turda of 1568 represented the tools of achieving a consolidated autonomous state. The moment of the Protestant denominations also created their demands to become state religions: first the Lutheran and Helvetic-Calvinist confessions, then the Unitarians.

According to a general vision, the concept of religious tolerance was influenced and vitiated by the application of the formula: *cuius regio, eius religio*. Whereas in Western Europe mass conversions adhered to nobiliary religious options, in Transylvania the choice of confession could be among nobles and their serfs, as well as among different regions or cities.<sup>49</sup> In using the European concept, the conflict and debate on tolerance could have been solely left within the nobility. Later on however, this conflict was present among the serfdom and nobility or the city and nobility, as being present in the majority of the regions where the Reformation was implemented. The Reformation in Transylvania evolved though with the appearance of some diverse Protestant denominations, and the religious intolerance and tolerance that followed them resulted in the application of some specific concepts for solving the disputes: *pars maior* and *confessional freedom*. These concepts led the European formula, which had been dedicated to the promotion of the Reformation, by suffering substantial modifications.

Protestantism exhibited different reactions to the idea of tolerance. Old Protestantism, represented from the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the German reformer Martin Luther and the French Jean Calvin was loyal to its values which had been inherited from the Middle Ages and assimilated into the early Baroque vision. From the point of view of this type Protestantism, only the confession itself could have

a providential justification. As a consequence, it became intolerant with any other type of piety.<sup>50</sup> The early confessional type in Transylvania wished to be dominant over the other denominations and by being true to this idea, it decreed a partial alienation of the Catholic clergy from the Principality.<sup>51</sup> This anti-Catholicism was based on the teachings of the Holy Scripture which was capable in assuring its primordially as being considerably above the restoration success of the Roman Catholic hierarchical mechanism. Its intolerance which suppressed any Protestant radicalism was no different from Medieval confessional intolerance.

In the Principality the suppression of any opportunity by leading personalities to succeed was the consequence of intolerance. The manifestation of confessional intolerance represented that wall which annulled the attempts of the Catholic world; these were represented by the Jesuites and Franciscans, and especially the Habsburg power to reconvert and politically dominate Transylvania. These efforts became more and more powerful after 1608, and coincided with the outstanding successes regarding the reconversion of Protestant nobility from Upper and Western Hungary.<sup>52</sup>

The spirituality of the missionary Jesuite was very contrite; it developed a whole range of reconversion methods, which resulted in several conflictual situations and confessional intolerance from all sides of who were involved in the discussion.<sup>53</sup> The acceptance of confessional diversity represented a perfect cover for all those who saw an example in the solutions offered by the Autonomous Principality. With the help of this cover, Transylvanian Protestants defended themselves from the increasingly powerful assault of the Counter-Reformation and post-Tridentine edification of spirituality. When the confessional situation was consolidated and religion identified with the Transylvanian ethnic groups, religious tolerance diversified its content. A goal of this was the balancing of the ethnic-confessional situation, especially between the Lutheran Saxons and the Hungarians who were mainly Calvinists. The manifestations of intolerance were also rooted in this specific ethnic-confessional aspect.

Religious tolerance approached the idea of a new statehood and the necessity of preserving a balance among the Protestant denominations. But this "*holy agreement for the persistence of the country*" was far from being flawless.<sup>54</sup> The conservative Lutheranism of Saxon cities and villages promoted an increasingly thorough examination of the events of the German Principalities. One of the major preoccupations of 17<sup>th</sup> century Lutheranism was that the "*Calvinist poison*" should not enter their cities. On the other hand, the Hungarians were not allowed<sup>55</sup> to build Reformed churches or to purchase houses in the Saxon cities. Nevertheless, the socio-confessional dispute generated the susceptibility of the political ruler who meanwhile became Calvinist.

Calvinism became dependent on the manifestations of princely absolutism and behaved so as to maintain dietal supremacy, as a defence in the religious debate. Its reflexes aimed at the Unitarians and Sabbatarians and signalled the wish and practice of what today is known as “state religion”. A mutual solidarity of Transylvanian Protestants against the Sabbatarians was preserved throughout the century, as well as the anti-Unitarian manifestations promoted at the “recuperation” of believers from their own denomination. Nonetheless, this latter was the merit of Prince Gabriel Bethlen (1580-1629) whose permissive politics towards Anabaptist Habans and Sephardic Jews was a positive example for the temperate intolerance of the Protestant majority, or post-Tridentine Catholicism.

The issue of intolerance in the Catholic liturgical area is recorded as being the most expressive way of intolerance, manifested in the elimination of objects, such as frescoes and representations related to the old religion. Whereas the Lutherans limited themselves to removing some lateral altars and mural paintings, but preserving the main altar; the Reformed, and especially the Unitarians relinquished almost entirely all of the altars and paintings, leaving the churches simple and plain, according to their own liturgical needs. The communion table occupied the place of the main altar signalling a liturgical point of view which was dogmatically promoted, namely the importance of the Word. The pulpit was an area dedicated to the sermon, and the central place for communion, thus the communion table replaced the importance of the main altar. Even the organ disappeared for a while from Unitarian and Reformed churches, but was reinstalled in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the second part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century confessional conflict manifested itself much more frequently in this part of Europe. The confessional life of the Principality seemed to be impatient and intolerant towards crypto-Calvinism, Sabbatarianism or any other form of distortion of acknowledged denominations.<sup>56</sup> Tridentine Roman-Catholicism, as practised by Cardinal Péter Pázmány (1570-1637), achieved notable success of reconversions, by refining the anti-Protestant spirit into an acceptable structure for the subjects at which it aimed.<sup>57</sup> The Counter-Reformation was much more aggressive in its political manifestation, a fact to which Pázmány subscribed, after becoming Archbishop of Esztergom on 28 September 1616. Transylvania attempted to solve the theological issues by specific political approaches which were worthy of praise in Europe in the period of the Reformation and Counter Reformation. Religious politics were influenced mostly by the States and the Diet.

At the beginning of the Reformation, the nobility did not clearly accept Protestantism, for they were still practising Catholicism, even though they were attempting a reconciliation between Catholicism and the Reformation.<sup>58</sup> This attitude, which was similar to that of *Janus bifrons*, was interrupted by the



presentation of the *Augustan Confession* at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 and the statement of the position of Rome towards the Reformation at the Tridentine Council (1545-1564).<sup>59</sup> Thus, with the hope of a collaboration between the two denominations being nullified, conflicts both within Protestantism and Catholicism were open for discussion. The role of the nobility and Diet was that of offering support for the Prince to fulfill the laws of the *modus vivendi*, which were necessary for the socio-political and economic development of the Principality. Thus, they would attenuate the vulnerability of the state as far as foreign politics were concerned.

Confessional regulations also brought about some degree of stability, thus the role of confessional tolerance became even more so important. Religious tolerance was decreed by the Diet whenever religion interfered with politics.<sup>60</sup> The Dietal legislation can be synthesized in twelve phases of approaching religion:

(I) *Defending the old order*, decided on 24 April, 1545: “[...] *after these nobody shall dare to change any issue of religion*”, and reaffirmed by the Diet that gathered in Turda in May, 1545: “*As far as religion is concerned nobody is allowed to innovate*”,<sup>61</sup> thus containing the interdiction of removing the Protestant pastors. The important role of cities in the spread of the Reformation was also recorded. Thus, Catholicism attempted to localize the Protestant centres of power and to isolate them, as well as to preserve the changes which appeared in the hope of a religious re-establishment of Catholicism.

As the restrictions were not successful, the Diet was obliged to decide (II) *the enactment of equality in 1550*.<sup>62</sup> According to this, neither denomination can detriment the interests of the other and cannot use force.<sup>63</sup> Still, if this happened, the royal substitute (George Martinuzzi) would have the right for judgement. The decision was made repeatedly after the death of Martinuzzi,<sup>64</sup> “*Each to remain in one’s belief, in the way God gave it and allowed it to him/her*”. Thus, the diet reflected the appearance of confessional diversity, within Catholic-Protestant boundaries and defined the rapport between denomination and belief by a well known phrase: “*Christian belief is one only, for the inhabitants of the country act differently in ceremonies and administration of the sacrament [...]*”.<sup>65</sup>

With confessional equilibrium re-assured, however, the right for involvement of Catholicism was assured through Bishop Martinuzzi, who was in favour of the immovability of Catholicism. The Diet should have taken notice of the fact though, that religious changes involved a radical re-evaluation of Catholic dogma as well. A definitive fracture from Catholicism and clarification of options between Lutherans and Calvinists was manifested by the appearance of the dispute on the forma of the Eucharist. The sacramentary dimension of the Reformation became noticeable in political discourse. As a result of the dogmatic polarization of the Reformation, the clarification of Protestant options led to the attestation of

confessional plurality and freedom: “[...] *permittentes in negotio fidei eorum arbitrio id fieri quod ipsis liberet, citra tamen injuriam quorumlibet*”.<sup>66</sup> The separation from Catholicism along with the administrative reorganization of Protestantism involved a hierarchical clarification of the ministers, and the formation of a new hierarchy, which would be capable of consecrating the renewed clergy.

(III) *Freeing Lutheran pastors from the authority of the Catholic bishop*<sup>67</sup> which was subdued to the above mentioned necessity. Given the juridical premises, which were achieved by the dissolution of previous hierarchical rapports, the internal crisis of Protestantism passed from the level of confessional life towards that of the political ruler.

(IV) The *Discussion of internal issues on Protestantism in 1557* reflected this fact<sup>68</sup>. Still, the Catholics and Lutherans opposed themselves to the Calvinists at the *Diet from Turda, on 27 March – 3 April, 1558*.<sup>69</sup> A wish for Lutheranism to be decreed, and acknowledgement of its equality with Catholicism, were expressed as priorities in the *Diet from Alba Iulia from June, 1558*. All of these manifestations signalled the still existing power of Catholicism, but also the existence of demographical, confessional and political success of Lutheranism ahead of the other denominations in the Principality.<sup>70</sup> The encoding of the Lutheran denomination did not automatically mean the preservation of alterations from Protestantism. This can be seen by the Calvinist success within the Hungarian environment, which was increasingly obvious. By 1560, these inadvertencies disputed within Protestantism were seeking a solution. They were attempting to find the most acceptable and peaceful solution in order to clarify the phenomenon of Reformation.<sup>71</sup> There was temporary solution of the conflict between the Calvinists and Lutherans at the Diet of 1560 (which proposed a new dispute in Mediaş) and in Sighișoara in 1564.

At this point there was a request for a Synod in Aiud for dogmatic clarifications between the Calvinists and Lutherans, which were supported by the new hierarchy. This showed that pacification was impossible and the evolution of confessional life headed towards a new fracture. For this, however, politics were not yet prepared.<sup>72</sup> The wish of solving the issue with princely intervention at the Sighișoara Diet of 1564 emphasized the desire of political personalities for stability and serenity in this confessional situation.<sup>73</sup> However, the separation of Lutheranism from Calvinism was rendered official at the Synod of Aiud in 1564. The acceptance and regulation of Helvetic Protestantism, as a result of the Synod of Aiud, and at the Diet of Turda from 1564 proved that the political life acknowledged its own failure concerning pacification, and attempted integration of the new denomination in order to obtain state stability.<sup>74</sup>

The royal conformation of Protestant absolutism led to (V) *the abolishment of Catholicism and promotion of Unitarianism*.<sup>75</sup> Two main themes emerged at

this time which led to the dissolution of the Articles of Alba Iulia: manifestations of Protestant supremacy, and the necessity of halting the Counter Reformation. This meant the dispossession of the economic substratus of the Catholic world which was necessary for a revigoration of its own faith. Catholics were also required to gain permission for further development without any interruption of Protestantism.

The development of the last branch of Transylvanian Protestantism led to the regulation of the Unitarian confession in Turda in January, 1568. Solving religious issues by tolerance was decreed for the very first time in Europe at this Synod. It confirmed and developed the following statement, "*Preachers are to teach the Gospel everywhere, each according to one's beliefs, and if the townfolk accept him, that is fine, if not, nobody shall oblige or try and harm the preachers. Nobody shall be blamed for their religion by anybody. (...) Nobody is allowed to threaten anybody with teachings as far as freedom or function are concerned, because faith is God's gift, which comes from following the hearing, and hearing comes through the Word of God*".<sup>76</sup>

Eventhough religious tolerance was enacted and preached, there was a strong self-preservation idea present. Actions of the new "heretics" were prohibited, particularly that of those who had spread the chiliastic-Unitarian teachings, for example that of the Romanian Gheorghe Crăciun. While acting around Debrecen, the political world recorded its fear of new radical changes which were socially beyond its control. At the same time, it reflected the wish of maintaining a *status quo* of the Transylvanian denominations.<sup>77</sup> As a counterweight for the restrictions of new religious changes, the freedom of preachers and communities, *ius reformari* was enacted in Târgu-Mureş<sup>78</sup> (VI) in January 1571. The wish to preserve the confessional order led to the *consolidation of the existent confessional order*, by the interdiction of religious innovations,<sup>79</sup> and the creating of a commission of two Protestant Bishops who were to verify the disobedience towards this.<sup>80</sup> The repetition of this interdiction in Turda<sup>81</sup> again in May 1573 and then its resumption by Stephen Báthory, in Mediaş, in January 1576, indicated the wish for confessional stability. This constancy was necessary in order to strengthen Calvinism against the return of Roman Catholicism under royal Roman Catholic protection. Some jurisdictional rights, such as the right of *vizitatio canonica* and the verification of obeying confessional immovability were granted to the Reformed bishops, Alesius Dénes and András Tordai.<sup>82</sup>

(VII) *Defining of the church government of the Reformed and Unitarians; rights concerning issues of visitatio* in October 1577 communicated the necessity of territorial delimitation between the Transylvanian denominations.<sup>83</sup> (VIII) Inevitably, the reign of Stephen Báthory led to the *invitation of the Jesuites and the wish for consolidating the old system*, in May 1581.<sup>84</sup> The Transylvanian higher political class were against the counter-reformation attempts. This was proven by a common

defence against the confessional-political situation prior the arrival of the Jesuites<sup>85</sup>. The same expression of the Protestants against the Jesuite peril was manifested again in October-December 1588, through the voices of the Calvinist Bishop Máté Toronyi and the Unitarian Bishop Demeter Hunyadi.<sup>86</sup>

(IX.) *Setting the pars maior in the case of determining the dominant religion of a city or village* was an extremely important moment. Thus, the right for a dominant religion was given to the community which was in majority.<sup>87</sup> This political solution played an extremely important role in the context of solving disputes around property, like that of a number of central churches as well as former Roman Catholic buildings. The courts of Odorhei and Șimleu Silvaniei, where the issues of the property of churches seemed to be the most severe ones, was addressed to the Diet in September 1615<sup>88</sup> in an attempt to mend these problems. (X) In the context of strenghtening absolutism, *the prince was obliged by the imposed conditions at his election to preserve the religious order of the principality as unaltered.*<sup>89</sup> The decree of the princely conditions which had been imposed at their election were connected to obedience towards the four acknowledged confessions<sup>90</sup> – all these were meant to consolidate princely absolutism, but also to restrict any deviation from the confessional principles which had previously been decreed. (XI) The appearance of *radical Calvinism led to the prohibition of Sabbatarianism*,<sup>91</sup> this being achieved in the time of György Rákóczi I when Unitarianism was placed second from the confessional point of view. (XII) *Protection in confronting the Counter-Reformation* represented one of the themes by which the Diet prepared the Principality for the encounter with Habsburg Counter-Reformation.<sup>92</sup>

The view of the state on religious freedom and tolerance towards all denominations resulted in the acceptance of the most numerous denominations at the moment of codification. This benefit was achieved from the freedom which had been offered. However, many did not wish to share this freedom with the new denominations. On the contrary, they were prohibiting movability and the interdiction of change, and even allocated punishments for those who would show resistance.

When the debate around the dispute ended, the victors held a triumphant speech and transmitted it to the Diet. Alongside with the Synod from Trident (Trento), the Transylvanian Diet debated: fasting, mass, representations of saints were freely conducted in front of Queen Isabella and the young Prince John Sigismund,<sup>93</sup> even if the interdiction of religious changes in that period of the Reformation, signalled the defensivity towards Catholicism. The Diet exhibited an approach which was rather restrictive than punitive, as this was manifested in other parts of Europe as well. In 1552, the Franciscans and Dominicans were banished from Cluj, which raised moments of excess and intolerance from the part of Reformation towards the old confessional system. These manifesta-

tions were condemned by the Diet, and the reinstatement of those who were banished. General Gianbattista Castaldo (a General of Ferdinand von Habsburg) was involved in a severe conflict dealing with an issue of the inhabitants from Cluj. The seriousness of the conflict generated the conviction that Habsburg involvement would reach a precarious balance in Cluj. General Castaldo's intolerance towards the city resulted in one of the first manifestations of confessional tolerance at a dietal level in Turda, in May 1552. *“All those helping the Evangelists nothing should be to carry out activities against the Catholics, and the latter in their turn, not to disturb or offend the first, and each part to be respectful and kind”*.<sup>94</sup> The importance of the Diet of Turda from 1568 is illustrative from the perspective of specifying tolerance, as well as of the idea of *ius reformandi* and of the decree of the state sovereignty in confessional issues.

One of the most unique elements in the history of religious tolerance in Europe was the concept of *pars maior*,<sup>95</sup> by which the interpretation of the so often invoked concept – *cuius regio, eius religio* – was modified. According to this concept, the most important religious building from the community was received by the representatives of the majority of the inhabitants from this settlement in question. Thus, it was not the religion of the nobility, but the denomination of the population which decided the possession of the religious building. Thus in Odorhei, in 1615 for example, the old church was given to the Catholics, and the Reformed built a new church<sup>96</sup>. According to the decision of the Diet of Cluj during 27 September – 13 October, 1615, four churches were returned to the Roman-Catholics because: *“where there is a more numerous part of people, we allow the church to come back to them. Thus, in Șimleu and Odorhei, the churches come to those who predominate in that belief, but not to occupy them, until both of these and equal expenses to those who belong to these two religions will build together auditoriums in Odorhei and Șimleu [...] afterwards, churches together with parishes and quarters to come back to those who form pars maior. We allowed also the churches from Teiuș and Cluj Mănăștur, but only those who share a different belief shall not be disturbed by dominus terrestris anywhere”*.<sup>97</sup>

The life of the Transylvanian Diet was closely connected to the activity of the elected prince and the options which he promoted. From this point of view, it is important to discuss the princely tolerance and intolerance. Princely tolerance and intolerance in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was functioning under the interest of the state. Princely absolutism itself became subordinated to the purposes of the government. A relevant example of this type is represented by the diplomacy of Gabriel Bethlen, who in Venice did not exemplify the necessity of wars by defending the constitutional freedom of Protestantism – and implicitly tolerance was encoded for the Catholics as well – but spoke about *“ragione di stato”*<sup>98</sup>.

The high extent of the prince's involvement in the religious life of the Principality was represented by the great influence he exerted to protect his own confes-



sion. The Prince of Transylvania was behind the dynamics of these changes and validations of tolerance, as well in the resolving of religious disputes. The fact that the Prince's religion contributed indirectly to the strengthening of his own power within the political and confessional life of the Principality is widely known.<sup>99</sup> The consequences of the Prince's confessional politics led to the formulation of a confessional superiority, represented by those faithful to that denomination. However, the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as among the Protestant fractions did not lead to bloodshed. The appearance of a new Protestant denomination was regarded by both the Prince and the Diet as a source of political weakness, owed to the confessional division of the inhabitants. The Prince, who had been enjoying the support of the nobility, urged a new discussion of the confessional situation whenever he failed to find himself in bounds of the old confession. In order to mediate the conflicts occurring in confessional life, a new court was composed. Its members were responsible for making decisions in cases which were in accordance with their own confession.<sup>100</sup> The role of the prince was thus that of a guarantor of the Transylvanian Constitution and mediator of the religious conflicts, in conformity with the conferred values of tolerance and religious freedom in Transylvania.

The new political ruler, the Prince, was generally always Protestant, except for the family of Prince Báthory of Șimleu,<sup>101</sup> thus the main reason for the enactment of religious tolerance was represented by the preservation of particular Protestant identities. This, in fact was an act of non-aggression which ensured the controllability of religious changes in Transylvania. Admittedly, the involvement of the political ruler and nobility, which assured him the possibility to get involved in confessional politics, was determined by the desire to enact confessional priorities and supremacies. At the same time, this involvement turned out to be extremely important when the non-aggression pact was infringed upon and a wish for confessional uniformization was expressed. Confessional uniformization, so called "missionary work", assumed that a motivated political ruler is focused upon a process of uniformization as well as a confessional majority. This priority of the ruler assured the promotion of a superiority of his own confession.

Regardless of their confession, the nobility and the Transylvanian Diet preserved the tradition of the princely oath, thus respecting religious plurality and conformity to previously earned<sup>102</sup> rights and liberties. The prince (ruler) was the one who countersigned the decisions regarding confessional tolerance. He also made decisions when accepting a new Protestant denomination and he nonetheless validated the assignment of the superintendents.<sup>103</sup> Despite the prince being subjective in the question of confessional politics, he had become the guarantor of religious tolerance in the Principality. A highly emblematic text for the the prince as guarantor of confessional tolerance is the Transylvanian Constitution,



Approbatae Constitutiones, Part 3, Title 1. About unions, Article 1 of 1613, which contains the oath taken in front of the Diet with the goal of respecting religious tolerance: “*I T. and T. swear to the living God [...] that I will make great endeavours to maintain the four accepted denominations in this country and never will I wish to promote my own religion by oppressing the other ones [...] I will never object with loathing to one’s belief or religion but I will labour for a free practice of each one*”<sup>104</sup>

In accordance with this oath, there was a decrease in the manifestations in favour of the prince’s own confessions. The success of royal politics concerning religious life was still visible, when the religion of the prince coincided with the religious affiliation of the greater majority of the nobility. In case of a Catholic prince, the nobility played the role of an equilibrating body, reducing the effects of royal politics. In this case, the politics of the prince diversified its methods and manner of confessional policy in accordance with the expectations of the nobility. However, the religious absolutism of the prince never managed to overcome the role of the Diet, thus the Reformation and later on the Counter Reformation failed to succeed in the total uniformity of the Principality from a religious point of view.

The model of tolerance offered by the Transylvanian Diet represented a turning point within royal politics. On one hand, its aim was the restriction of the excesses of absolutism of the prince, while imposing a relatively uniform measure towards religious subjects on the other hand. Naturally, these efforts were vitiated by the confessional affiliation of the princes. The Habsburg intervention, whose aim was the rearrangement of the confessional situation, was met with opposition of the Protestant nobility. The options of this nobility were the preservation of religious tolerance within the constitutional system of Transylvania, as well as maintaining confessional freedom.

Although the religious tolerance invoked by the uprising of Bocskay during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century seemed a unique and self preserving action for the Protestant nobility, a part of the Hungarian Lutheran nobility still remained faithful to the Habsburg powers. The Treaty of Vienna signed on 23 September 1606 acknowledged the freedom and inviolability of all Protestant denominations. Thus Transylvanian politics achieved its first important success in the history of its religious issue in Central Europe. Since the autonomous Principality of Transylvania preserved its political influence on the region during this time under the rule of Gabriel Bethlen and György Rákóczi I; religious freedom as granted by the Treaty of Vienna was possible in the Treaties of Nikolsburg (1621) and of Linz (1646)<sup>105</sup> as well.

The documents of these agreements discuss religious freedom, but they also implied the idea of mutual toleration among denominations, “*His Highness would never trouble the orders and the nobility in their religion nor would He allow this*

*within any of the boundaries of Hungary. All orders are allowed to use their confession, without harming the Catholic religion so that churches, parishes, and the Roman-Catholic parishes would remain impalpable and free. And those churches which in these hard times were occupied by both parts shall be retracted by the old owners*".<sup>106</sup> The success of the Treaty of Vienna and of those treaties following it was represented by the modification of the general European rule. The Reformation and Counter Reformation were disseminated in accordance with this rule, namely *cuius regio, eius religio*. Starting with the Treaty of Vienna, serfdom was no longer obliged to practise the religion of the nobility.<sup>107</sup> There were exceptions, however, one being the uprising of Bocskay, which caused great suffering within Roman Catholicism.

Later on, rational politics which were tolerantly carried out by the Reformed Prince Gabriel Bethlen exemplified the perfection of solutions for religious tolerance offered by the Diet. The invitation of Haban-Anabaptist craftsmen in Vințul de Jos, Italians from Murano in Porumbac, Greeks from five different cities and Sephardic Jews in Orașul de Jos (Lower Town) from Alba Iulia at the time of their persecution in Europe can be regarded as an eloquent example of this tolerance. Greeks, Jews, and Anabaptists were given the freedom to practise their own religions, with the condition of acknowledging the Transylvanian Constitution.<sup>108</sup> Even if these colonizations were made especially for economic reasons, the acceptance of religious variety may be considered as exemplary in 17th century Europe.

The problem of the involvement in the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) is parallel with the religious issue expressed by Péter Alvinczi (1570-1634): in *Querela Hungariae*: "*the clerics and the holy orders who are engaged in matters of the soul, shall not interfere with laity issues, but shall mind the souls*".<sup>109</sup> The participation in the war was seen by Bethlen as a way of strengthening Protestantism. When reflecting upon the reasons of involvement in the war, he stated the importance of involving Roman Catholicism and Counter Reformation in the confessional situation from Upper Hungary. There are three instances in which the Principality attempted to implement religious tolerance in the territories under Habsburg influence. These being: 1) Bethlen's attention to Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed liturgies from Nagyszombat (now Trnava, Slovakia), 2) imposing the principle of *maior pars* in Upper Hungaria and 3) the attempt to transpose Transylvanian decisions concerning equality of denominations into the Diet of Besztercebánya (now Banská Bystrica, Slovakia) during 1 June – 25 August 1620.<sup>110</sup> The testament of Gabriel Bethlen also suggests his religious policy, "*If you are united and respect God, by taking care of the small Church of God, love each other truly, you shall not fight over religion, but leave the judgement to the greatest of pastors who lives in the Skies, and who shall repay according to your merits, you shall become pastors, but shall not save anybody by force, let there be freedom accord-*

ing to the constitution of the country, around the four acknowledged denominations, as each shall accept that which one wishes".<sup>111</sup>

After 1660, the nobility from Upper Hungary were converted to Catholicism in great number. Thus the Protestant Transylvanian nobility remained isolated. An intolerant Counter Reformation was instated in the political life of the Habsburg territories. György Berényi, one of the messengers of the Protestants at the Diet of Pozsony (now Bratislava, Slovakia) in 1662 asserted, "*Never before have the Hungarians had a greater persecution as far as religion is concerned*".<sup>112</sup> This inertness and sentiment of crisis was also reflected in the words of Ferenc Wesselényi (1605 – 1667), "*You do not have Bocskay anymore, Bethlen had died, Apafi's weapons are finished, so there is nobody for you to lean on*".<sup>113</sup> The intolerance was manifested outside Transylvania, but had strong echoes in the Principality as well. This was seen especially in Bratislava when between 1673-1674 a great number of Protestant ministers and teachers were condemned and sent to the Venetian galleys. All these events had signalled that the Habsburg powers were rapidly approaching the moment of banishing the Turks to Transylvania.

The moment of alteration of religious tolerance coincided with the moment of the installation of the Habsburgs in the Principality (1690) and the signing of the first Diploma Leopoldinum. The talks conducted by Count Nicholas Bethlen in the *Ministerialkonferenz* suggested an acceptance of the confessional situation in the Principality.<sup>114</sup> However, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the religious life of Transylvania became even more diversified. From the point of view of Transylvanian Protestantism, religious tolerance acknowledged by the Diets and Constitutions of the Principality was profoundly distorted under the weight of Counter Reformation promoted by Habsburg absolutism, especially under the reign of Carl and Maria Theresa von Habsburg. Thus, the notion of Transylvanian confessional tolerance became obsolete for the religious politics of the Empire. □

## Notes

1. See Ludwig Binder, *Grundlagen und Formen der Toleranz in Siebenbürgen bis zur mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Köln-Wienn, 1976).
2. The distinguished Unitarian professor János Erdő, claims that religious tolerance in Transylvania began with Ferenc Dávid and the Unitarian confession. See Erdő János, *Dávid Ferenc és a vallási türelem problematikája*, [http://unitarius.lap.hu/erdo\\_janos\\_-\\_tanulmanyok/11254572](http://unitarius.lap.hu/erdo_janos_-_tanulmanyok/11254572). (accessed in 18 June 2009)
3. See its complexity but also its results in "Az erdélyi egyházak együttélésének kérdései a fogarasi vártartományban" in Juhász István, *Hítvallás és türelem* (Kolozsvár, 1996), 58-59.

4. Benda Kálmán, “Az 1568. évi tordai országgyűlés és az erdélyi vallásszabadság”, *Erdélyi Múzeum*, vol. 56 (1994), notebooks 3-4 and Dr. Tőkéczi László, *Vallási türelem a magyar történelemben*, lecture, 18 April, 2000 (Budapest), see in [www.church.lutheran.hu/emeik/tokeczki2.htm](http://www.church.lutheran.hu/emeik/tokeczki2.htm) (accessed in 18 June 2009).
5. Owen Chadwick, *A reformáció* (Budapest, 1998), 385.
6. They saw internal peace in religious freedom and tolerance, Szilágyi Sándor, *Monumenta Comititalia Regni Transylvaniae / Erdélyi Országgyűlése Emlékek* (in following: *MCRT*), I, vol. VI (Budapest, 1875), 89.
7. Barcza József, “Peregrináció, vallási türelem” in *Tanulmányok Erdély történetéről* (Debrecen, 1988), 101.
8. Mályusz Elemér, *Magyarország története a felvilágosodás korában* (Budapest, 2000), 69. Cf. Mályusz Elemér, *A Türelmi rendelet, II. József és a magyar protestantizmus*, (Gödöllő, 2006), 11. Where religious politics of Maria Theresa continued the fanaticism and religious intolerance of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century.
9. Transylvania is called the “classical land of confessional freedom”. See in Pokoly József, *Az Erdélyi Református Egyház története*, I. 1556-1604 (Budapest, 1904), 3.
10. Bethlen Miklós, *Élete leírása magától*, in *Kemény János és Bethlen Miklós művei* (Budapest, 1980), 429-430.
11. *MCRT*, vol. II, 343. Cf. According to Stephen Báthory.
12. *Ibid.*, vol. I, 527.
13. Szenci Kertész Ábrahám (ed.), *Temetési pompa* (Oradea, 1647), 119.
14. Bíró Vencel, *Az erdélyi fejedelmi hatalom fejlődése (1542-1690)* (Kolozsvár, 1917), 77.
15. Szabó Ferenc, *A teológus Pázmány* (Budapest, 1998), 296-297.
16. *Ibid.*, 296.
17. Pázmány states the parameters of tolerance within religious dispute as: 1) kindness in language towards the laity, lack of injuries, eliminating misinterpretations; 2) Forcing the Protestant opponent to show arguments for his idea 3) Arguing the relationship between Tradition and Faith saying: “*A difference must be made between avoiding church and the wrong teaching, because this teaching we can hate, but the one who wandered off must be taken care of*”. See *ibid.*, 297.
18. Nánási V. Gábor, a pilgrim student of the Sárospatak College in his paper: *Lelki tudakozás* from 1675 (Inner knowledge) talks about predestination without telling the names of those who opposed Calvinism in order “not to offend the union”, hence not to disturb the coexistence of the different denominations in Transylvania. See Nánási V. Gábor, *Lelki tudakozás* (Kolozsvár, 1675).
19. Szekfű Gyula, *Magyar történet. A tizenhetedik század* (Budapest, f. a.), 266-267.
20. See the opinion of D. Molnár István about the underestimation of the role of Transylvania in Jean Bérenger’s volume: *Tolerancja religijna w Europie w czasach nowozytnych (XV–XVIII wiek)*, (Poznań, 2002), and *Tolérance ou paix de religion en Europe centrale, 1415–1792* (Paris, 1999).
21. Tonhaizer Tibor, “Bocskay és a vallásszabadság”, in *Nincsen nekünk több hazánk ennél... Tanulmányok a Bocskai-felkelés történetéhez* (Budapest, 2004), 149.

22. Somogyi Ambrus, *História Magyar és Erdélyország dolgairól* (Gödöllő, 2007), 8-9.
23. Pokoly, 45.
24. Pukánszky Béla, *Erdélyi szászok és magyarok* (Gödöllő, 2003), 27.
25. See “The Propagation of Lutheranism”, in *Krzysztof Szydłowiecki kancellár naplója* (Budapest, 2004), 304-306.
26. The Diet of Buda from 1523, article 54, calls the Protestants “notorious heretics, the enemies of the Holy Virgin Mary”; *The Diet of 1525 of Rákos*, in art. 4, the permission to burn the Protestants (“lutherani comburantur”), and two months later the Diet of Hatvan agreed to confiscate their land. The most zealous of them was István Werbőczy, the author of *Tripartitum*. Apud Révész I., “Magyar Református Egyháztörténet 1520-1608”, *Református Egyházi Könyvtár*, vol. XX (Debrecen, 1938), 49-52. The legal decree of annihilation of the Reform given by king Louis the second in 1527 “*officii nostri intersit fidem et Religionem nostram christianam ne ab hereticis excommunicatis eadem invadatur et contaminetur, ubique in hoc Regno nostro et partibus eidem subjectis illibatam conservare [...] quatenus flatim praesentimus tam in civitate nostra Cibiensi, quam in aliis locis vobis subditis assertiones, figmenta et libellos prefati Marthini Lutheri, tanquam excommunicatos vicatim et per singulas domos requiri, inventosque publice comburi et deinde publicare palam facere debeatis*”. For the apostasy of Upper Hungary see Apud F. A. Lampe, *Historiae Ecclesiae Reformatae in Hungaria et Transylvania* (Utrecht, 1728), 59.
27. *Reformation, Katholische Reform und Gegenreformation* by Erwin Iserloh, Josef Glazik and Hubert Jedin, *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte IV* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1967), 337.
28. Zoványi Jenő, *A magyarszági protestantizmus története I*, (Máriabesnyő-Gödöllő, 2004), 20-35; F. A. Lampe, *Historiae Ecclesiae Reformatae in Hungaria*, 89-92; Juhász István, *Hitvallás és türelem* (Kolozsvár, 1996), 5-15.
29. Order given by the king John Zápolya in January 25th 1527 to the inhabitants of Sibiu, regarding the interdiction of Lutheranism (apud J H Merle d'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation in The Time of Calvin I*, Hartland publication, (Rapidan-Virginia, 1999), 14 Cf. Budai Ézsaiás, *Magyar Ország Históriaja*, II (Debrecen, 1814), 143).
30. Pokoly, 32.
31. On January 25<sup>th</sup> 1527 John Szapolyai the new king of Hungary sent a new order to stop “Lutheran heresy” which under the political conditions had no effect. See *ibid.*, 33.
32. “*King Carol attempted [...] in many ways to stop the religious conflicts in Augsburg and wanted the restauration of peace but he did not succeed and did not find solutions for it.*” in Somogyi Ambrus, *História Magyar és Erdélyország dolgairól*, 39.
33. Among the promoters of early Reformation 17 of them were Franciscan. See Óze Sándor, “A ferencesek és a reformáció kapcsolata a XVI. századi Magyarországon” in *A ferences lelkiség hatása az újkori Közép-Európa történetére és kultúrájára, Művelődéstörténeti Műhely, Rendtörténeti konferenciák*, vol. I (Budapest, 2005), 169-172.
34. *Ibid.*, 164.



35. Perjés Géza, “Szulejmán koncepciója és Erdély”, in *Tanulmányok Erdély történetéről* (Debrecen, 1988), 84-91.
36. Skaricza Máté, “Szegedi István élete”, in *Magyarországi humanisták* (Budapest, 1982), 1179.
37. Kónya Péter, “A Bocskai-felkelés és az Evangélikus Egyház a királyi Magyarországon”, in *Nincsen nekünk több hazánk enné ... Tanulmányok a Bocskai-felkelés történetéhez* (Budapest, 2004), 155.
38. Bod Péter, *Az erdélyi oláhok Uniáltatásokról való rövid história*, Biblioteca Central Universitară “Lucian Blaga”, Cluj Napoca (ms, 1745), 2.
39. Pokoly, 3.
40. It took place at Queen Isabella’s order. Botta István, *Mélius Péter iffúsága* (Budapest, 1978), 166. For reasons and discussions see Friedrich Adolf Lampe, *Historia ecclesiae reformatae in Hungaria et Transsylvania* (Traiecti ad Rhenum, 1728), 118.
41. Révész, “Magyar Református Egyháztörténet”, 113.
42. The information belongs to Haner apud Kénosi Tőzsér János, Uzoni Fosztó István, *Az Erdélyi Unitárius Egyház története*, I (Kolozsvár, 2005), 236.
43. “*In the year 1564, after Easter the pastors organised a reunion in Aiud to discuss Christ’s Last Supper, because the Saxon ministers said that the body of Christ through God’s words is changed into bread, hence the bread becomes the body of Christ and in man’s mouth the body of Christ is given. The Hungarian ministers said that the bread does not transform itself into the body of Christ and the body of Christ is not given to man, but it is given in order that his death should be remembered. And his body is eaten by man with his souly mouth not chewed with his teeth ... This could not be corrected as the Saxons would renounce.*” Borsos Sebestyén és Nagy Szabó Ferenc krónikája, chapter “János Zsigmondról és az erdélyi reformációról”, in *Erdély öröksége, Erdélyi emlékirók Erdélyről*, vol. I (Budapest, 1942), 118-119.
44. The letter of John Sigismund was ready and it said exactly what had to be done in the case a deal would not have been arrived at. About the synod, see Lampe, 122-124.
45. Juhász István, *A Székelyföldi Református Egyházmegyéék* (Kolozsvár, 1947), 15-58.
46. Somogyi Ambrus, *História Magyar és Erdélyország dolgairól*, 8.
47. Kónya Péter, “A Bocskai-felkelés és az Evangélikus Egyház a királyi Magyarországon”, 156.
48. *Ibid.*, 155, 157.
49. Óze Sándor, “A ferencesek és a reformáció kapcsolata a XVI. századi Magyarországon”, in *A ferences lelkeség hatása az újkori Közép- Európa történetére és kultúrájára, Művelődéstörténeti Műhely, Rendtörténeti konferenciák*, vol. I, (Budapest, 2005), 157.
50. Mályusz Elemér, *Magyarország története*, 67.
51. The Catholic clergy could stay only in the Székely Land see *MCRT*, vol. II, 302.
52. Gudor Botond, “A jezsuita rend missziója Erdélyben, 1601-1606 között, a missziós jelentések alapján”, in Iacob Mârza and Ana Dumitran eds., *Spiritualitate transilvană și istorie europeană* (Alba-Iulia, 1999), 94-138.



53. Counter Reformation and its precepts in Nagy Géza, *A Református Egyház története 1608-1715* (Gödöllő, 2008), 8-11.
54. Barcza József, "Peregrináció, vallási türelem", in *Tanulmányok Erdély történetéről* (Debrecen, 1988), 101.
55. Pukánszky Béla, *Erdélyi századok és magyarok*, 41.
56. Nagy Géza, *A Református Egyház története 1608-1715*, 15.
57. He drew up a document to King Mathias von Habsburg in which he opposed the 21 motifs of religious tolerance with those 11 motives of intolerance, asking the ruler for the application of the first 21 principles of tolerance. See *ibid.*, 58.
58. Owen Chadwick, *A reformáció*, 136-142.
59. *Ibid.*, 264-271. "A Trienti zsinat", in Szántó K., *A Katolikus Egyház története a Reformációtól napjainkig*, vol. II, (Budapest, 1988), 123-142. Also about the Tridentine Council see Augustin Franzen, *Kis egyháztörténet* (Szeged, 1998), 314-328.
60. A synthesis of the evolution of dietal politics see Kénosi Tőzsér János, Uzoni Fosztó István, *Az Erdélyi Unitárius Egyház története I* (Kolozsvár, 2005), 233- 235.
61. *MCRT*, vol. I, 218.
62. *MCRT*, I, 259, Diet from Turda, 1550.
63. *MCRT*, I, 539.
64. *MCRT*, I, 382-383.
65. *MCRT*, I, 527.
66. Diet from 1-10 June 1557 in Turda, in *MCRT*, II, 78.
67. *MCRT*, I, 540.
68. *MCRT*, II, 82.
69. *MCRT*, II, 93.
70. *MCRT*, II, 98.
71. *MCRT*, II, 187.
72. *MCRT*, II, 187, 227.
73. *MCRT*, II, 227.
74. *MCRT*, II, 231.
75. *MCRT*, II, 302.
76. *MCRT*, II, 343.
77. *MCRT*, II, 368.
78. *MCRT*, II, 368.
79. Turda, May 1572, *MCRT*, II, 528.
80. Chuj, January 1573, *MCRT*, II, 534.
81. *MCRT*, II, 540-541.
82. *MCRT*, III, 108, 122.
83. *MCRT*, III, 108, *MCRT*, III, 122.
84. *MCRT*, III, 157.
85. *MCRT*, III, 203, 213.
86. *MCRT*, III, 235, 238-240, 240-249.
87. May 1581, *MCRT*, III, 157.
88. *MCRT*, VII, 286.

89. *MCRT*, IX., 78.
90. *MCRT*, IX., 78-79; *MCRT*, IX., 152; *MCRT*, VI, 89 (Gabriel Báthory); *MCRT*, VI, 89 (Gabriel Bethlen, 1613).
91. *MCRT*, X., 174-184.
92. *MCRT*, V., 361.
93. Pokoly, 68.
94. *Ibid.*, 77.
95. To define the concept and exemplify the partition phenomenon of confessional assets see Juhász István, *A Székelyföldi Református Egyházmegyék*, 31-47.
96. Sípos Gábor, “Az erdélyi református Egyház Bocskay korában”, in *Nincsen nekünk több hazánk ennél Tanulmányok a Bocskai-felkelés történetéhez* (Budapest, 2004), 169.
97. *MCRT*, vol. VII, 286.
98. Mályusz Elemér, *Magyarország története*, 19.
99. Bíró Vencel, *Az erdélyi fejedelmi hatalom fejlődése*, 44.
100. *Ibid.*, 79.
101. Stephen Báthory, Sigismund Báthory, Andrei Báthory.
102. Election of the Catholic Prince Stephen Báthory was possible only after he took an oath that nobody shall be disturbed and persecuted for one’s religion, having one’s free choice. See Bíró Vencel, *Az erdélyi fejedelmi hatalom fejlődése*, 75. For Gabriel Báthory see *MCRT*, vol. IV, 195 and vol. VI, 89. For Protestant princes see *MCRT*, vol. VI, 358; vol. VIII, 314; vol. IX, 152; vol. X, 323; vol. XI, 321; vol. XII, 94, 473 and vol. XIII, 79.
103. Bíró Vencel, *Az erdélyi fejedelmi hatalom fejlődése*, 79.
104. The text of the oath appears in the *Constituțiile aprobate ale Transilvaniei 1653* (Cluj Napoca, 1997), 98, the typology of the oath being found at 63, with the title *Textul jurământului principelui*, 64, the conditions annexed to the oath of Gabriel Bethlen; 66 conditions of György Rákóczi I; 69 conditions of György Rákóczi II, and 71 conditions of Francisc Rákóczy, Cf. Barcza József, *Peregrináció, vallási türelem*, 102.
105. Tonhaizer Tibor, “Bocskay és a vallásszabadság”, 152.
106. Bitskey István, *Hitviták tüzében* (Budapest, 1978), 202.
107. Tonhaizer Tibor, “Bocskay és a vallásszabadság”, 152.
108. Nagy Géza, *A Református Egyház története 1608-1715*, 79.
109. *Ibid.*, 84.
110. *Ibid.*, 86.
111. *Ibid.*, 102.
112. *Ibid.*, vol. I, 445.
113. *Ibid.*, 447.
114. Religious freedom was promised by the Treaty from Blaj, from 1687; see *ibid.*, 523-526.

### Abstract

#### Confessional Tolerance and Intolerance in 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> Century Transylvania

The idea of religious tolerance represents a widely debated subject in Romanian and Hungarian historiography, especially in the Transylvanian schools of history. It is a luxurious term for those who claim the exclusive paternity of the birth of the idea of tolerance. It is an ambiguous term, a real form without content for historiography which considers a discriminatory application of the idea as important. The genesis and development of Transylvanian tolerance have crossed a difficult historical path. It was created in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in order to realize a socio-political *status quo* and mainly a religious one in order to define the distinct political identity between Muslims and the Counter Reformation. Religious tolerance was built up slowly, influenced by the need of conciliating Transylvanian Catholicism and the Protestant religious fractions, this latter being built in the process of building an identity. All this happened with the intention of achieving pacification and internal equilibrium during the period of religious Reformation. This was done with the help of internal and foreign politics from which the Principality could manifest themselves without much turmoil. The study tries to record the political, ethical and socio-religious side of the evolution of tolerance until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This is attempted by approaching the genesis of the term from the perspective of the tumultuous history of Transylvanian Reformation. Its moment of highest glory was at the Diet of Turda in 1568, that is, the establishment of religious tolerance which remains tributary in the duality of intolerance-tolerance. In accordance with this, the nobility-religious trends allowed the development of a distinct state identity in the shadow of Islam. However, the confession which was politically dominant did not subordinate itself to absolutism and autocracy, thus religious intolerance and social afflictions became visible.

### Keywords

religious tolerance, Reformation, intolerance, diet, David Francisc