

Summary

Title of the PhD Thesis:

Interdenominational Politics and Catholic Church under Bishop Miklós Kovács (1833-1847)

PhD Candidate: István Nemes

Scientific conductor: Prof. Dr. József Marton

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Documentary Sources

Archives of the Archbishopric of Alba Iulia

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Books, Monographs, Sourcebooks

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General historical cadre: The PhD thesis entitled *Interdenominational Politics and Catholic Church under Bishop Miklós Kovács (1833-1847)* presents our researches regarding the reform era in Transylvania. The main subject of the thesis is the debate on the state of interdenominational relationships in this period. The controversy had a polemic character due to its participants: the Transylvanian Hungarian liberals on one hand and the Catholic Church supported by Conservatives and Vienna on the other. The subject of our thesis falls under the general cadre of Hungarian reformism. In the reform era the Hungarian national liberal elites conducted a bitter political fight in order to turn the Hungarian society from feudalism into modernism. One of the most important liberal goals was the attainment of religious equality and liberty of consciousness. The Viennese Court, together with its Conservative Transylvanian allies, tried to hold back the processes of modernization.

In order to clarify the historical cadre of our topic, we have to mention, that Transylvanian Liberalism has its origins mainly in Hungarian Liberalism. Due to this fact we can identify a large number of similarities between the nature and circumstances of political processes in Transylvania and Hungary of the time. But there are also essential particularities caused by the different way of development of the provinces. We must consider that they had belong to the spheres of two different Empires since 1541. The religious laws in the Great Duchy of Transylvania acknowledged four denominations with mostly equal status, though with minor cases of negative discrimination, while in Hungary the Catholic Church was the „dominant” denomination. We also have to make another essential observation on the nature of Transylvanian religious disputations. In the reform era the debate on the equality of religions was no more one of dogmatic nature. It has become a political battle connected to the enlightened values of liberty and equality. The Transylvanian and Hungarian liberalism absorbed in its political program the religious questions and transformed them in a topic of public discussion affiliated to the liberal project of a new, equality-based society.

The historiographical importance of our researches: The topic of debates on the state of denominations represents an almost unknown subject of Transylvanian modern history. We have at hand only a few chapters written on it, whilst no exhaustive monographic work is available. Studies and articles dedicated to the object had been issued in the first decades of the past century, so the contemporary historiography suffers from a lack of recent, modernistic account of the subject. What’s more, the available works are based on the diaries and records of the Transylvanian Diets of the time. Such they ignore a huge documentary material, which has been lying unread up till now in the Archives of Roman Catholic Archbishopric of Alba Iulia. We have to observe also, that these works concentrated mainly

on different topics of Catholic church-history, which had only a loose connection to the hard fought battle between the new and old political systems of liberalism and absolutism. The main topics of the historiographical bibliography we have just been talking about, the autonomy of Church and the Catholic Status of Transylvania, are of great interest for the Church of the first two-three decades of past century. Our main subject was subordinated to them. Such the archival material we discovered brings important novelties which contribute with new data to the cognition of the church-history of this period.

Our approach is an interdisciplinary one. It can be placed somewhere next to the common border of Catholic and Protestant denominational church-histories, but as well on the limit that divides church history and general history of Transylvania.

Archive researches: During our explorations in the archives we found and analyzed a wide range of documents that have been lying mostly undiscovered in the ecclesiastical and national archives of Romania and Hungary. Our most important findings were performed in the Archives of Roman Catholic Archbishopric of Alba Iulia. We reviewed several different archival groups, such as episcopal documents, statistics concerning mobility of population, canonic visitations and encyclicals. These researches were then completed by our findings in the National Archives of Romania, Subdivision of Cluj County. We explored here the recordings of general assemblies of Transylvanian shires of our researched period, especially the ones from 1832-33, respectively 1840-41, directly connected to the interdenominational question. We also reviewed the collection of documents of Transylvanian Government kept in the National Archives of Hungary in Budapest. We followed here mainly the goal to rebuild the process of birth of Transylvanian parliamentary documents related to our subject.

In addition to these findings (totally 213 documents, most of them unknown till now) we used also materials published in different anthologies and sourcebooks. We reviewed the contemporary political media too.

Bibliography: In matter of searching an appropriate bibliography we tried first of all to gather contemporary books and studies of primary documentary value. We also picked and processed bibliographical pieces compiled directly from the material of debates on interreligious matters. We considered also the impulse of Hungarian liberalism, and we analyzed and built in the most recent results of modern Hungarian historiography written on the margins of the clash between liberalism and absolutism.

Results: The first chapter of our thesis represents a general introduction to the wider political and juridical environment of our subject. First of all we sketched the historical development of the juridical framework of interdenominational question starting from the

times of the Protestant Principality (1541-1690) respectively ending with the period of late josephinism (the 1811 Diet of Transylvania). The first subsection analyzes the evolution of interdenominational relationships starting with the 1568 bill on religious tolerance, traces the juridical development till 1653, the year of apparition of the civil code *Approbatæ Constitutiones*, a law-book, which represents the an essential part of “constitution” of Transylvanian Principality till 1848. In this phase we described the fundamental laws on religion, which constituted the basis of reference for the debates in the 1833-1848 period. Our second step was to describe the erosion of the rights accorded in the era of Protestant princes due to the trial of Habsburgs to restore the power and the predomination of Catholicism in the 18th century. In the first period of their reign the Habsburgs tried to create a favorable juridical environment in order to legitimate the counter-reformation. Then, in a second phase, after their domination had been already consolidated, they started the restoration of Catholicism. We described the measures taken by Leopold I, Charles III, and of course Maria Theresa. In the period of the Empress, Transylvanian Catholicism got up to the apogee of its power. The reign of Emperor Joseph II, in spite of his politics of tolerance, attenuated only a bit the tensions arisen between Catholics and Protestants under Maria Theresa. So, at the end of his 10 years long notorious rule, Vienna had to accept the 53/1791 law on the complete equality of the four accepted denominations, respectively another 8 articles attached to this fundamental law, serving as specification of its content. Once with the 1791-92 Diet of Transylvania we reached our main subject, as we got up to the period of Emperor Francis I. The Emperor tried to preserve the josephinist structure of interreligious relationships as well as Church-State relation. In the last period of his administration the Hungarian movement of national liberalism has born.

At the end of the first chapter we included a short subsection about the outburst and runoff of debates on interdenominational ruling in the Reign of Hungary. We followed mainly to present the disputations on the question of aversions from Catholicism and that one of intermarriages. These were the leading conflict zones between liberalism and Catholicism in both countries. We analyzed the ideas and visions of Hungarian liberal elites related to the question of denominations. We presented the perspectives exposed by Ferenc Deák, count István Széchenyi, baron József Eötvös, count Lajos Batthyány, baron Miklós Wesselényi and finally those of Lajos Kossuth, whose political action exerted a direct influence on the course of events in Transylvania. Our shoot of a glance on Hungarian events also contains a brief reference to the birth of modern conservative political Catholicism under the direction of a

great Transylvanian personality, Bishop Mihály Fogarasy. Though living in Hungary at that time, Fogarasy had somewhat influence on the Transylvanian events.

The exposition of our genuine results starts with the II main chapter of the thesis. This part of our work presents the first phase of the clash between Catholicism and national liberalism enclosed in the 1833-1840 period. The beginning of this period can be characterized by only a general interest for religious inequalities. Just one special issue can be remarked as one of primordial weight: the question of aversions and that of the six week long religious education. In the second part of this period (1838-40) we can assist to the shift of the political interest towards the question of separation of the Church from the State around the controversy on the legitimacy of governmental office of the Transylvanian Catholic bishop.

The main event of the first period was the 1834-35 Diet preceded by a massive movement of discontent and civil disobedience of the counties and chairs that included political measures about interdenominational questions too. The main goal of the peerage was to restore Transylvanian patrician constitution, as a first step just before a complete program of modernization had to be started. The main question of this movement of discontent that conducted pretty near to violence and civil war was the question about the legitimacy in the explanation of Transylvanian laws and the repeated refusal of Vienna to open a Diet of the Principality. Both sides claimed the exclusive right to explain the laws, of course in conformity with their own diverging interests. The clash between the parties contained a denominational moment too. The shires abolished arbitrarily the six week long education considering it contrary to Transylvanian constitution. We found rich documentary material illustrating this process. We described the effort of the peerage to restore the original liberty of conversions as it had been regulated in the times before the Habsburgs came to power in Transylvania. Our description is based on the assembly-records of the counties. We determined the place of the question of denominational gravamina among the other problems of the period. We observed that the question of religious equality and liberty of conscience can be perfectly correlated with the question of legitimacy in matter of law-explanation. We discovered and presented a large number of ecclesiastical documents, especially episcopal and vicarial encyclicals connected to the events. These documents reflect the effort of ecclesiastical leaders to stabilize the situation. We found statistics reflecting the amount of interdenominational mobility between Catholic and non-Catholic churches. The main results of our analysis performed over these statistics are the following: 1. The aversions from Catholicism to non-Catholic denominations grew especially in periods of crisis of the power (1832-1834 respectively 1848-1849), and it depended on the balance of forces between

Vienna and the inland opposition. 2. Even in these years of resistance or revolution the Catholic Church gained more followers from other denominations than the number of worshippers she lost. Generally speaking, the number of apostates never exceeded that one of converted people. 3. The main cause of aversions, as reflected in documents, were the intermarriages.

We dealt also with the 1834-35 Diet of Transylvania. This parliament included religious inequality in its agenda, but it never has come to an open discussion during the sessions of the assembly. At the end of the Diet appeared the period's second great issue, the problem of counsellorship of the Transylvanian Bishop in the Government of the country. The violent prorogation of the Diet delayed an open debate over this topic. We found also a question of main importance, that the raising of this subject caused an internal conflict between Catholic peerage and Bishop Miklós Kovács over the very loosely related issue of concurrence between Catholic Status of Transylvania and the Vienna-founded Catholic Commission, an internal governmental office, which expropriated the management of educational funds held originally by the previous. That shows a certain amount of tensions between the clerical and laical catholic elites.

The second segment of this chapter presents the debate over the topic of episcopal counsellorship in the Government of the province with the occasion of the 1837-1838 Diet. Elections held for governmental positions served as political background for this conflict. Unfortunately we encountered at this point a basic problem of research. The documents of the Archbishopric of Alba Iulia regarding the 1837-1838 period, especially the political ones are almost completely missing from the archives. We have found only a small amount of personal correspondence of Bishop Miklós Kovács with poor reference to the topic. We had to rely almost exclusively on parliamentary diaries and records. We have found that Roman-Catholics together with the Greek-Catholic Church developed a concentrated effort to withhold the storm on the Catholic Bishop's position, but the relative documentation wasn't preserved neither in Alba Iulia, nor in Budapest. What we indubitably discovered was, that at this point the contrary parties were organized on political basis. We found both Catholics and Protestants among the conservatives and liberal opposition as well. This process shows us an obvious analogy with the way the things went on in Hungary. The battle was already fought between the conservatives lead by baron Sámuel Jósika on behalf of the Church and liberal opposition. We recorded also an exceptional conservative-Catholic literary performance, the book of Mihály Fogarasy on the counsellorship of the Transylvanian bishop. This book marked the starting-line of a great political and ecclesiastical career and it played an essential

role in building up a common conservative argumentation in the open debates during the Diet's sessions.

At the end of the Diet the Protestant Churches of Transylvania submitted their gravamina to the peerage. We dedicated a separate subsection to these documents, because they constituted the starting point of the second great collision between the opposition and Catholicism in the following segment of our period.

The last chapter of our thesis deals with a special topic of the conflict about the interdenominational question: the issue of interreligious marriages. This subject caused the most embittered and complicated controversies between the opposed sides and led to the weakening of Catholic positions within the Transylvanian system.

We have found a huge amount of coherent ecclesiastical sources referring to this controversy, which made us able to reconstruct for the first time what really happened before the curtains as well as behind them. We considered as starting point a nine months long delay of publishing the Transylvanian encyclical regarding the introduction of warranties in order to obtain the Catholic baptism of children originated from intermarriages, and that of the passive assistance in case of denial. We also observed from the beginning, that the nature of the warranty was different from the Hungarian one, although the Transylvanian bishopric was a part of the Hungarian Catholic Church. The temporal shift and the oral engagement raised the question why? During our work, thanks to an extremely rich correspondence between the Transylvanian bishop and his Hungarian superiors, we restored the very complicated and controversial process of compilation of the document. We described the pressure exerted by Hungarian seniors on their Transylvanian secondary in order to act in the same direction they did, but not the same way. We also identified the source of the difference between the Hungarian and Transylvanian measures. It was the person of Péter Klobusiczky, the archbishop of Kalocsa who advised his Transylvanian colleague to follow the pattern of Prussian Silesia, where oral promise was required. Another yet unknown and very important station of the way to the 1841 encyclical was the opposition of a considerable group from the diocesan Consistory to the will of the Hungarian Church to introduce warranties in case of intermarriages. The resistance and contraindication of consistorial members convinced the bishop to postpone the apparition of the encyclical till a papal decision comes off, or at least to push it till the end of the 1841-43 Diet. In fact the papal resolution was already on the way, as bishop József Lonovics was sent to Rome by Vienna to treat with the Holy See in order to find a solution. But, as luck would have it, the bishop was compelled to edit and publish his measures before the point he would do it normally. We described the international scandal

unleashed by an article appeared in the newspaper of Lajos Kossuth, the *Pesti Hírlap* that suggested that Transylvania had chosen a different way, and Transylvanian Bishop blesses intermarriages without requiring warranties on children's baptism. The scandal intensified when new information appeared in Augsburg, Germany about a presupposed Transylvanian encyclical containing aversive measures from Hungarian resolutions. The loudening rumors coming from Transylvania triggered the intervention of the Apostolic Embassy at Vienna. The nuncio Lodovico Altieri called upon the Transylvanian bishop to publish a document in concordance with the measures of the Hungarian Church. The correspondence lead us even to Rome, where Bishop József Lonovics tried to defend his Transylvanian colleague.

We presented the content of the Transylvanian encyclical, and we performed a critical comparison with its Hungarian pair, the circular letter of Archbishopric Esztergom. As a result of the comparison we found, that the text of Esztergom served as pattern for the Transylvanian document. We have found many identical or only slightly differing passages. Such we can assess, that Bishop Miklós Kovács has conformed to the agreement of his Hungarian colleagues. But in matter of procedure and juridical argumentation the letter shows significant differences, due to the different juridical framework of Transylvanian Principality regarding the subject of marriages.

In addition to that we presented the reaction of county-assemblies to the encyclical. Our effort to summarize the response of the opposite side was helped by the very rich referential material we have found both in ecclesiastical and national archives. We also have described the comments and polemics which appeared in the contemporary Transylvanian and Hungarian press. For the first time Church officials went out, and defended their positions on the columns of newspapers. We synthetized the reports of Transylvanian priesthood regarding the state of question down in the country, based on genuine correspondences between the bishop and clergy. This correspondence made us able to draw the conclusion, that neither the forecasting of riots and disturbance advertised by both press and opposition, nor the fears of prosecution stressed by the bishop became didn't come true.

At the end of the thesis we presented the debate on the whole set of interdenominational problematic in the 1841-43 Diet of Transylvania. First of all we described the work of the committees charged with the job to elaborate the basic documents of the debate. We did this work based on documents found in the National Archives of Hungary. The documents of the Diet show a meltdown of the Catholic camp. Even Conservatives avoided to stand by the Church, and the camp of ecclesiastical defense has been restrained to a small number of individuals (8 persons). In a final subsection we presented the last moment of the conflict. Our

sources show, that after the 1842 debate the conflicts between denominations had been retreated to a secondary level, and continued in the country, but they didn't appear to be a question of national importance anymore. We demonstrated in a last section the interferences between the Hungarian interdenominational lawmaking of 1868, and Transylvanian juridical traditions. The latter probably exerted an essential influence over the former.