

The History of the Roman Catholic Clergy in the Diocese of Alba Iulia

Sándor Ferenci

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Keywords:

Middle Ages, diocese, bishop, chapter, prebend, deacony, parish, patronate, election of priests, testament, pilgrimage, principality, diet, aristocracy, lack of priests, vicar, papal college, canonical visitation, mission, priestly obligations, licenciate, Gubernium, absolutism, Josephinism, formation of priests, synod, Catholic Status, dualism, denominational school, church tribute, mixed marriage, immigration officers, foundation, world war, military priest, flight, internment, communist dictatorship, secularization, purification, circular letter, peace, Securitate, intimidation, pastoral care, lawsuit.

Abstract

The millennial history of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia sums up the pastoral activity of around 5000 to 6000 priests, who are mentioned in certain already available documents.

During this time span, the number of priests varies, according to regions and historical periods. Thus, at the beginning of the 14th century 500 priests are mentioned, two centuries later, in Transylvania, their number doubles, so that at the end of the 16th century there were priests only in the Sekler's regions in Transylvania.

It is worth mentioning, that both the numbers of priests as well of believers was growing continuously, owing the growth to the period of Recatholicisation. Such engagement on behalf of the clergy as well as of the believers determined at large extent the historical and geographical data, being the result of some converging multifactorial relations, which are of importance even nowadays for the Roman Catholic population in Transylvania.

During the various historical eras, the depths and heights of the clerical experience have maintained the number of the believers in the Church, as the priests, while pastoring, have taken into consideration both the clerical hierarchy as well the individual or collective needs of lay members of the Church. We have however, on this clerical category very few preserved historical data and on the large, even less.

The main motivation in writing our PhD thesis represented our own book – FERENCZI Sándor: *A gyulafehérvári (erdélyi) főegyházmegye történeti papi névtára*. Budapest –, published on the occasion of the centennial jubilee of the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia. The names and more or less existing historical information on the 5189 diocesan priests are not sufficient, so that we could fully comprehend the historical eras, in which they lived, even more, to have a picture on their everyday life of each and every single priest we mentioned, so that we understand the mechanisms which triggered certain historical events. Not lastly, it is essential we know not only the pastoral activity of the clergy, but also their lifestyle, which encompasses social, cultural and even political aspects.

Such considerations have prompted our writing of a survey on the clergy, pertaining to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia, which based on the historical conventions enlists four major chapters : Middle Ages, the Principates Era, the Habsburgic Period, the era of socio-political transformations (1867-1964).

This above mentioned division belongs however to an artifice of the human mind, being prompted by the major historical challenges which the clergy faced, in order for us to we have a clearer perspective on the events in a certain period, allowing the approach of even less important themes in detail, namely of the themes and problems which involved the diocesan priests either in this periods or outside them.

The first chapter deals with the historical era when the State Institutions and the Church were in a close symbiosis, we could even say depended on each other. Research shows that in the first half of the 16th century, the management of the ecclesiastical problems was no longer a matter pertaining to the bishop's seat.

Towns had their own Council and in smaller cities and villages, land owners and patrons had right to administrate the temple's material goods, which were given to whomever they pleased. The primary consequence to such disposals amounted to the fact that the pastoral clergy became subordinated to these patrons, leading sometimes to a loosening of the church discipline, in that the priests were serving the needs of patrons, rather than those of whom they represented.

The above mentioned section aims at offering a thorough image on the diocesan clergy in the Middle Ages. The scope of this particular thesis envisages the period from 1009 –King Steven the Great introducing the Church property –to 1556 the period of the secularization of the Church's possessions.

Although some historians take the Battle of Mohács (1526) as marking the end of the Middle Ages in Hungary, in Transylvania, this meant the dissolving of the Catholic hierarchy and the secularization of the Church properties, however at a slightly later stage than in Hungary.

We tried to approach these events separately for the clergy in Hungary, although Transylvania, with its separate cultural identity was a constitutive part of the Hungarian kingdom, which meant that, for example, the Hungarian kings strived for the affirmation of their rights of patronage. When referring to the problems directly involving the diocesan clergy, taking into consideration only the historical events from Transylvania, which shaped history to such an extent that even nowadays can be seen, the mentioning of two important events is mandatory: the settlement of the Saxons and the period after the Tatar invasion of 1241. Both these events have contributed significantly to the later development of ethnicity as well as the demography of the diocesan clergy.

Due to the fact that the prepositure of Sibiu and the Saxon priests of the Decanate of Brasov belonged administratively to the Archbishopric of Esztergom, these are not included into the scope of my current research. All these considered, I will however deal at large with the Saxon priests, who were under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Alba- Iulia, at times, even at a larger extent than with the Sekler and Hungarian priests. This is mainly because the antagonistic views of the Sekler and Saxon priests as well of the Chapter –the assembly of the canons of a collegiate or cathedral church –were a constant subject during the whole Middle Ages period, the papal documents, which attest such struggles have been till this day preserved, dealing with the administrative organization and the division of influential spheres.

Regarding what was mentioned earlier, we have however not so numerous historical data available in the Archives, and due to the papal tithes, we learn of the great number of priests activating in the Sekler regions. Another explanation for the lack of historical evidence constitutes the destruction of the Charts, which referred to them, or simply being careless about data, by not registering them.

We have started the overview on the medieval diocesan clergy by presenting the Transylvanian diocesan Chapter clergy, those high prelates and dignitaries, the official representatives to whom the bishop summoned to assist him to pastorate the diocese.

In the Middle Ages, the Chapter was assigned extensively civic attributions. As such, it is important that one defines and confirms accordingly the functionality of the Chapter. Based on historical sources, the existence of the Chapter of Transylvania can stretch back to 1213, and in 1199, the first name mentioned on the list of priests, was name of Archdeacon of Cojocna Henrik, also a well-known dean of the Chapter in Alba Iulia. Even before these historical attestations, it is undoubtful that the Chapter existed before 1184, as in the same year, the Archbishop of Transylvania paid the one of Kalocsa 2,000 Marks, a double amount, when compared to the one which the Archbishopric of Oradea had to pay.

In administering the diocese deans and archdeacons were of great importance. The districts in which Saxons lived, named deaconates, were administered by deans, and the ones in which a non-Saxon population was majoritarian were called archdeaconates, administered by archdeacons.

In the diocesan life, an important role played the leaders of the administrative districts, as they were the leaders, the direct leaders of the clergy. To lay people we

have granted attention in the part of the thesis, which deals with the number as well as type of the pastoral activities.

The growth in number of priests was directly triggered by the demographic boom, as well as by their role in various social strata. One should not disconsider the fact that in the Middle Ages, people had a greater propensity for the religious life as a whole. The real origins of the instructions, concerning the introduction in the priestly life were provided by the Chapter and the monastic schools. The latter category was being attended by formators, and in the schools owned by the Chapter, besides seminarians, studied young men, who would later be active in the civil domain. Up to the point, when universities were founded, the Chapter School remained the highest academic institution for the ones preparing to becoming priests. Based on the available data, we searched into the sources of the contemporary ecclesiastical academic standard, and were contended to learn, that these were of no less academic proficiency than the corresponding ones in the West. The best example, which is more or less known, represents the scientific contributions made by some of the members of the Chapter of Alba Iulia.

Along the history of the Roman Catholic Church, taken as whole, a constant battle was fought so that occupying church offices remain independent from the civil state. The Diocese of Transylvania was not an exception. In an unfortunate manner, the patrons of the Church Assemblies did not consent that Churches built on their private property should be however, not considered as such, but they wished –based on the example offered by the Western world –that the priest be chosen at their will. Even if the divergences in this regard between the church and the landowners prompted the ratification of quite severe legislation aiming at the administrative separation of the Church from the Landowners, the latter did not want to give up this right in the 16th century, claiming this right to originate from the time of King Stephen the Great. Such divergences even led to bloody consequences. There were cases, in which, –as the example presented by us in the current research –the landowners in Reghin could not decide clearly, who of them had the right to choose the priest. From the documents pertaining to the 14th century, it is revealed that the medieval latifundiaris were preoccupied with consolidating their own status within a community. Therefore, they deemed the local bishop's support as insufficient and via papal documents, they chose to donate some of their personal gains to the local parish priests, and implicitly the communities, motivating their actions with the fact that,

such actions would cater to the spiritual needs of the parishioners. Subsequently, they imposed on the priests in the urban areas, the celebration of one Holy Mass on a daily basis, as well as, for liturgical feasts, one Mass with songs and an evening prayer. A document of 1350 renders that a priest in the parish Our Lady in Besztercebánya would be asked to celebrate on the occasion of liturgical feasts, annually six processions around the church.

In fulfilling certain pastoral and administrative obligations, the parishioners were also involved. At times, it was imperious that the parish priests prepare some documents and not the parishioners.

It is already a well established fact that the religiosity of the medieval man had deeper roots. For this reasons, priests were required to assist the members of a community in practicing even deeper their religiosity. For example, priests were required to participate in certain processions, to offer their support in constructing religious buildings, participating in pilgrimages, and even offering help in writing up the wills on deathbeds.

One important religious assembly of the Middle Ages represents the religious congregations. Such gatherings were extremely important in the social life of a community as they were in charge with organizing processions, official funeral of community members, as well as participating in liturgical services. Other examples of such an assembly met for worship and religious instruction were the confraternities, also called "fratres calendarum". In 1467, four cardinals have granted plenary indulgence to the monastic orders in Bistrita, such dispositions being preserved in bishop's documents. All these indicate that in almost every important city a confraternity activated with a religious scope. The historical attestations in Hungary do not extend on this topic, especially in the documents referring to one or two important pilgrimages, as most of the important data are if not else, then vague. An exception constitutes the writing of the archdeacon of Telegd, Lászlai János, which are worth noting.

Caring for the socially disadvantaged at a macro level in society in the Middle Ages was entrusted to the Church, namely to the religious orders, while families cared individually, at a micro level, for their ones in need. At least from the perspective of caring for the ones in need, civil society and Church seem to have conlucrated.

In our thesis, we then mention the Maecenas, i.e. those sponsors and the latifundiars, who out of their devotions built churches for the priests, who offered them in return, spiritual support. Sometimes, even the priests were the ones offering

material support for edifying religious constructions. An example is offered in the church of Gerend, which has the name of a priest, Istvan –sculpted on the stone in the arch over the door of sacristy – as one of the founders of that particular church.

Priests had the freedom to administer their own material possessions through wills as they pleased. However, the clergy aimed towards a modification of such a legislation, into one, which would favour them, namely that some of these goods be attributed to the Church, as it is support by the historical data available in the archives.

Of course, at times, priests were involved in some issues regarding the discipline, which resulted into losing some of the believers. As a result, in Transylvania, during the time of Bishop Martenus, the Disciplinary Rule for the Clergy was compiled by the parish priest of Biertan, Ferenc, as well as by the dean of Medias. Such data also testify that, on certain occasions during the liturgical year and in certain areas, the clergy assembled not only out of religious motifs –to pray for the living and for the dead members of the Church –but also to discuss, after the liturgical offices, on the actual problems of situations, which could be of interest for the Church as whole.

This meant that sometimes sponsors and parishioners altogether would sometimes disconsider the individual opinion of the parish priests. In some cases accusations were brought forward, which sometimes led to assaults, examples of these being also mentioned.

In the second chapter, we dealt with the problems concerning the clergy in the Principate of Transylvania, while focusing on the events, which influenced significantly the status of the Catholic clergy as a whole in Transylvania.

The 16th century brought about significant changes in the entire European continent at a societal level, which triggered also changes in the religions' map of Europe, namely the Reformation, which shattered the Roman Catholic faith to its grounds. The spreading of Protestant doctrine took place historically, at the same time with the formation of an independent Principate, in which Protestantism became the state official religion. As a result, up until 5th of April 1565, the Protestants have removed the altars, and the organs, together with the religious statues from the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Alba-Iulia. They have also forbidden the liturgical services, up to the point, in which the canonic priests held the liturgy, only by gracious permission and approval of the King. The atrocities committed against the Catholic faith culminated in the Diet of Turda in March 1566, when the members of the Chapter

were being required to choose between leaving the country or taking up the Protestant faith. During the first decades of the Reformation, the hatred against Catholicism turned into actions. The most appropriate example is the case in Odorheiu Secuiesc in 1592, when based on the written testimonies of witnesses, the Roman-Catholic population, who march along the streets of the city with flags and crosses were shot dead. Under such circumstances, the pastoral attributions of the priests –who were lesser and lesser –became more difficult to fulfill. Lakatos István, priest of Cosmeni, writes in *Siculia*, that priests during the Ottoman occupation had a safer life, than they were having at that moment, under the Princes of Transylvania.

The Princes' dispositions against Catholicism have remained valid all along the historical period of the Principates, although, at times they were not fully applied. Despite the fact that at the time of the Diet, certain concessions were made to the Catholics, eventually within a Protestant Principate, Catholics remained highly defavoured. During the time when Protestantism was being spread, a worth-noting-situation was recorded historically in the Sekler's regions, namely in spite of the fact, that certain communities of Catholic believers remained without a parish priest, they did not concede to Protestantism, but rather accepted married Catholic priests. The Protestants attempted even via these married priests to absorb and transform the communities into Protestant ones, however without success.

All things considered, one can mention, that indeed there were Catholic priests, who during the Reformation period embraced Protestantism. An important role in spreading the Lutheran faith had the former Franciscan Observant Friars, as well as some important members of the Chapter, such as Kálmáncsehi Sánta Márton, or Csáky Mihály. Csáky was a bishopal vicar, and later pedagogue and Chancellor of the Prince János Zsigmond.

Such a drastic change on the map of Catholicism in Transylvania had lead to a dramatic drop in numbers of the Catholic believers. To get a fuller picture of those times, we mention some statistical data. Antonio Possevino, a Jesuit diplomat and historian records a number of 50.000 Catholics in Transylvania (out of which 40.000 were only in the Sekler's regions), to which 24 priests were actively pastorating. From the written correspondence of the cardinal Báthory Endre with Rome, among others we learn of 17 (parish) churches in Csíkszék, with a total of 13 parish priests, each thus having around 300 families to pastorate to. The very few Catholics, who

remained truthful to the Catholic Faith, were facing serious difficulties in exerting their pastoral attributions.

Among the Catholics in Transylvania, the lack of priests was becoming more and more pregnant, and it was expected that priests from outside would be brought in order to make up for the loss, since Transylvania did not have a Seminary of their own. The Protestant attitude towards the coming of foreigner Jesuits to Transylvania was oscillating, as they perceived the Jesuits as a threatening force. The character of the Jesuits turned out to be as expected: some of them came to the territory of the Principate as diocesan priests. The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith considered Transylvania as a territory targeted for Catholic mission, this is why they strived to send missionary priests and the theologians, who took up the spreading of the Gospel in Transylvania were promised and given scholarships in Papal Universities. In the current research we try to elaborate more on the lives of those Transylvanian young people, who studied in the Universities of Rome, *Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum* and *Collegium Urbanum de Propaganda Fide*, Viena, *Collegium Pontificium Viennense*, or in Olmütz, Grác, Braunsberg, Vilnó, and not lastly, Nagyszombat. In the latter university, from its founding onwards, the alumni of Transylvania benefited from 12 scholarships, sponsored by different foundations, subsequently, the number of students being constantly raised by the bishops ordained by the kings of Hungary.

In the period between 1556 and 1690, 184 priests have activated in our diocese –we managed to mention only their names and the place, where they pastored –out of which, concerning 69 priests, there are more historical data as to where and what exactly they studied. We have to clarify, that we are mentioning only diocesan priests. However, at times, we may refer by extension to a monk as priest, and the other way around. Such incidences are quite often in the 17th century, as the diocesan priest was also called *pater*.

The high rank prelates from the royal Hungary have sustained consistently young men from Transylvania in pursuing their academic preparation to become priests. As such, Oláh Miklós, Bishop of Esztergom donated 1000 guldens (Vienna, Dec. 7, 1569) to the foundation, and from the interest two young men would have all the study expenses at the University of Vienna covered. On the other hand, Pázmány Péter founded in the autumn of 1623 the Faculty of Theology in Vienna, named after him to which seminarians from Transylvania were also admitted. In the last decade of

the Principate era, Nagy Mózes attempted to found a Seminary at Esztelnic, out of incentive to cover for the loss of priests.

Out of all the Protestant princes of Transylvania, Bethlen Gábor was the most tolerant towards the Catholics. At the Holy Masses of the Jesuits on Pentecost, he used to send his own court musicians to play, and he sponsored the Jesuit Father Szini István, by offering him food from the Royal Court of Alba-Iulia, when, at times, he had to rely on the parishioners to be fed. He even financially supported the printing of the Bible, translated by Káldi György. In 1614 he stood for the Catholics in Beclean, as in the Catholic village, the Protestants forbade the celebration of Catholic Church offices and the Franciscan monk, who was pastoring there as parish priest had to solemnly promise he would not preach again. Thus, the Prince has allowed the villagers to freely practice their faith.

After the Reformation, a *status quo* of religions was being adopted, which led to delineating exactly the pastoral attributions of each religion individually. Among these decrees, one would name the Diet decisions and those of the Princes, as well as those regarding the remuneration of priests. Here proper attention was given to the correct attribution of salary for priests and master -teachers. Gathering the tax, so that to have the priest's wages was a serious issue, especially for the rural and town mayors and the Church council, who even threatened with levying a distraint upon the material goods, up until the correspondent payment was being honoured.

Once the Church hierarchy was abolished, it had heavy disciplinary consequences on the few priests who remained within the Church.

On such issues we have written documents belonging to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the majority of which is already published. Such documents encompass an array of problems, ranging from establishing the fulfillment of the residential attributions up to the ones regarding celibacy. The Roman Catholic Church has made serious attempts in controlling and consolidating the discipline in the Church, which was extremely difficult to achieve in the context in which the Diet was in a continuous struggle with them to limit their powers as well as attributions. For example, after electing the archdeacon Győrffy János of Treiscaune, in 1649, it was discovered he was not ordained as a priest, but only got his licentiate. Because the vicar Szalainai wanted to suspend the fraudulent newly elected archdeacon, the latter denounced the vicar to the Transylvanian Prince. The consequence of the above mentioned denounce resulted in a serious warning coming from the Prince to the

Vicar. Despite the fact, that the majority of the priests pastoring in the Sekler's regions disregarded the official document favouring the Protestants, only one priest was officially accused. It is the parish priest in Baraolt, who during the pastoral visit of vicar Szalinai, pastored the Roman-Catholic community as a married priest, choosing to confess his sins only to the Lutherans.

Due to the low numbers of Roman Catholic priests, who even were at times without bishops, there were nevertheless, men of high status, who one way or the other defended their cause and interests in some forums, as well as guarded the maintenance of the selection of seminarians, as well in matters of internal discipline. Among such people activated the elected bishops of Transylvania, vicars, archdeacons, as well as Catholic aristocracy.

Despite the fact that on Transylvanian territory no bishop was officially allowed to function, the Transylvanian Catholics together with the King of Hungary delegated bishops, with the sole purpose of solving the internal problems of the diocese. These appointed bishops were however not agreed upon by the Holy Seat. Their justification was that, the Hungarian Kings had no right to appoint bishop in a territory, which *de jure* is not situated under their government, refusing thus to concede to approving the official installation of these bishops. Even if those bishops, appointed by the Hungarian kings did not belong to Transylvania, they tried to support the Catholic community in this territory in solving their internal problems.

Out of well established state interest, Bethlen Gábor wanted to prevent spreading of multiple sects in the Principate, therefore conceded to naming a bishopal vicar, for the Catholic hierarchy to be somehow preserved. The vicars of Transylvania benefited from their investitures in a reformative manner, which up until that moment was not possible either by the Catholic, or by the Protestant Church laws. However, this vicars had the jurisdiction of a vicar general (lat. vicarius generalis), who in turn were subordinated to the bishop of Esztergom. Even if their appointing was doubted by the Roman Church, they were still perceived by the believers as hierarchical representatives of the clergy. On the occasion of their pastoral visits, internal problematic issues were being solved, such as those concerning the disputes between parishioners and their priests, the latter disciplinary problems, as well as the clerical attributions at the macro level of the Church. An important role in representing and defending the interests of the Catholicism had the Catholic aristocracy, not only within the Diets, but also certain civil laws guaranteed their rights.

In the era of the Gubernium (1690-1867), which constitutes the major theme of our third chapter, the diocesan clergy continued their pastoral activity against the general background of social and political turmoil. Despite the continuing protests of the Protestants, the attitude towards the Catholic clergy became unbearable now, that the political organizational changes occurred. Such a change determined the consolidation of the Roman-Catholic Church, as up until that moment, the decisions and decrees of the Diet as well as those of Prince have limited the pastoral attribution of the clergy. The latter, together with the believers were confronted with a new challenge, which did not by any means signify that the life of the Catholic clergy during the time of the Protestants' separation with the Habsburg power was without any problems.

In our thesis we attempt to correct the erroneous perception that during the Habsburgic government, the Roman Catholic clergy in Transylvania could exert without any problems their pastoral attributions. Stating something like this would be similar to claiming that, during the time of the Principate the freedom of religion was guaranteed.

Due to the fact that the Roman Catholic Church in Transylvania has supported the interests of the imperial power, it benefited from a privileged status. However, this was not uncostly. In exchange for the privileged status in society, the Roman Church was asked for loyalty. And when loyalty was not offered, severe punishments were issued.

Based on the dynamics between the State and the Church, one can rightfully claim that the latter did not completely give in to the former. In some cases, people opposed this type of relation, as they did not want the Church to become an instrument by which the state power would be exerted. In this period, one could notice the sympathy with the one who were largely disfavoured by the State in the previous era. The main aim of the Church in that particular historical period was to represent not only the ecclesiastic interests, but also the civil ones.

The first part of the chapter deals with the role the Roman clergy had in the pastoral activity of reinstating Catholicism in its rightful power. We go on to analyzing the dynamics of the relation with the Power, culture/education, financial and disciplinary issues. If our premise is that the Roman Catholic Church is first and foremost hierarchic, it is justified that the first part of this chapter deals with the Church functionaries, i.e. priests, who were activating in the Court Chancelleries.

Since only by 1715 the State took some actual steps into the retrocession of Church goods, the Cathedral of Alba Iulia, the restoration of the Cathedral Chapter, we deem justifiable to deal first with the academic formation of the person having priestly vocation. They would make up for the loss at priests in the former period. However, the change in the political regime has not altered this disastrous situation in any way.

More than a half of a century passed until the criteria for founding an autonomous Theological Institute were met for this institution to prepare academically their own candidates. In this period, the founding of the Jesuit Academy in Cluj as well as of the different university centres have contributed significantly in the formation of future priests. One has to mention the fact that the State power intervened in the academic formation of the pastoral clergy led to the fact that the activity of Seminary in Alba-Iulia was temporary stopped.

The work and organization with the sole purpose of reinstating the Bishopric and the clergy in the Cathedral Chapter has directly led to the restoration of the diocese as a whole. In presenting the so-called priest-functionaries, we mentioned only the canonic members as they were the ones who, by virtue of their political roles have contributed financially to the functional restoration of the Diocese. Although, some of them were buried in the Cathedral in Alba –Iulia, we could not find their tombstones.

Even if the renewal of the Catholic clergy was having a strong connection with the pastoral activity, we opted to discuss them separately from one another, because we considered that the implication of the clergy in the Restoration of Catholicism is of priority. To this context, it is sufficient to mention that the missionary activity in the Diocese of Transylvania was entrusted primarily the Religious Orders, and implicitly the retrocession of churches belonged to their abilities rather than to those of the diocesan priests. It is noteworthy that during the time of religious proselytism with violent nuances, as it was named by certain historians –based on the documents found in the Archives of the Archbishopric in Alba Iulia – in certain years, the number of people, who renounced the Catholic faith, was significantly bigger than that of people, who took up this religion.

While activating as missionaries, supported by the State, the members of the Roman Church realized that the Protestant religion spread mostly orally, therefore the systematization and perfecting of the homiletics by the Catholic Church was of priority and the Protestant dogmas needed to be replied with dogmas of the Tridentine

Church Council. Such a missionary activity would aim at proclaiming the traditional teachings of the Church, explaining the human and divine laws and not lastly the spiritual education of the believers into receiving the Sacraments and engaging into an active profession of the Faith in everyday life. We looked more closely into the pastoral activity of the clergy, mainly because there is plenty material in the archives to report on the circumstances and methods they priests employed, as well as the attitudes of people and priests, to which, the harsh fulfillment of the state laws was added.

The civil power was meddling in the spiritual affairs, for example in the spiritual lives of the priests. This justifies the attitude of rejection that the priests held against the State, while the latter tried to regulate more and more the lines of the spiritual life...It is true, however that not all the priests were rebellious against the official Power. The role of bishop Bajtay in the revolt of Siculeni is highly controversial. However, one should keep in mind that after the massacre Bajtay tried to protect to his best knowledge the priests involved in this matter. Zöld Péter was brought to Alba Iulia in order to be trialed, from where he could have easily escaped twice. The clergy was having disciplinary problems not only in relation to the State, but also in relation to the representatives of the Church herself. Noteworthy, that during the Princes' times, the disciplinary problems of the clergy revolved around celibacy, whereas in the Habsburgic era, the problems were more connected with pastoration and their relation to the State.

While writing the expose of this period, we dealt in particular with the implication of the clergy in culture and education, in order to highlight the importance of culture in the pastoral activity. That type of clergy tried to cater to all the needs of every population stratum. When compared to Catholics, the Protestants were highly advanced, in what concerns translation and spreading the biblical teaching. The Catholic Hungarian translation of the Bible –Káldi –reached only in 1782 its third edition. The historians, who researched the 18th century, concede that even towards the end of the 18th century Transylvania, people remained significantly uneducated. They had if not otherwise, limited knowledge on the world history, not to mention being able to occupy for themselves any position in the social society. Neither Romanians, nor Hungarians held any newspaper editorial office of their own. The only one minority to do so was the Saxons, who, starting with 1784, had their editorial office, called *Siebenbürger Zeitung*. Indeed, some of the newspapers issued in Vienna

would reach the Transylvanian territory, even the editor chief of one newspaper in Vienna –Szacsvey Sándor –was of Transylvanian descent, but procuring such newspapers pertained only to the most knowledgeable and wealthy and could not thus make up for the lack of information felt in Transylvania, as the popular masses remained largely uneducated. For the lack of education in those times, not only the clergy was to be held responsible, especially if we consider that during this particular historical period the Church was involved in a phase where religious architectural constructions were being edified, leaving the latter as cultural values to their descendants.

Despite the subventions from the State, the clergy had serious material problems, especially in the cases of low budget parishes. Several historical archivist documents show that many parishes have turned to diocesan help in order to be able to financially support their parish priests as well as the school masters. It seems that during the Principate era the problem of the upkeep of the school master's and the priest's was not that crucial, in the sense that only parishes, which could afford would hire a priest, would do it, in other words, only if the parish would pay the priest the monthly amount they previously settled upon. Now, given the circumstances, the rate of the employment of priests was dropping continuously. The smaller and poorer parishes would always solicit a priest, in the hope that his salary would be covered, partially or fully by the Archbishop's authority. If the issue of the priest's unpayment would remain unsolved, both the priest as well as the parishioners would eventually demonstrate again this injustice. The truth is that, in certain parishes, when compared to others, there was a significant discrepancy in what concerns the budget and the remuneration of priests, and this will be shown in different contexts, within the same chapter.

By reaching the compromise in 1867, the period of three centuries of independence of Transylvania has ended, as the era of dualism was on the verge of stating. This era was then followed by the First World War, then the Second World War, and subsequently significant territorial loss was noticeable, which resulted in radical changes in the political and social levels of society. Regarding this time interval, relatively short, the Roman-Catholic clergy in Transylvania (1867-1964) intensively felt the effects of such societal changes. Their situation will be looked at in depth in the fourth chapter, paying more attention to the chronological order of the historical events. All these considered, we look into not only the effect the new

historical circumstances had on the diocesan clergy, but also the attitude of the priests to these changes. The problems appeared right after the compromise was being ratified, because the affirmation of the equality of religions in the new state, led to the Roman Church losing its privileged status. The clergy was facing another challenge, namely the liberalism in Europe, having as direct consequences the separation between Church and the State, in which the state interests were of priority. Liberalism interpreted religion and religiosity as a darkening of the mind, as well as blindly submission to sacerdotal power. The clergy in Transylvania tried to stand up to this situation, summoning the believers to send out to Parliament politicians, who held fast to the Christian values. Bishop Majláth, in his pastoral letter of August 28th 1917, had openly declared concerning the parliamentary elections, that the Church be engaged in the politics in order to defend their interests. Taking into consideration that several laws were being promulgated delineating directly or more indirectly the religious life in the society, however their application led to various conflicts between the clergy and the authorities, we will insist more on the content of these laws. The greatest challenge the Church had to face during the period Dualism was to prevent confessional schools from being turned into public ones.

The law of public schooling of 1868 stipulated that every educational institution be under the strict observation of the State. Supporting the confessional schools so that they correspond to the standards imposed by the State was consistently becoming a greater problem for both the communities as well for the priests, assigned *ex officio* school principals. This was, unfortunately, not the only problem. The Parliament debated on several occasions the issue of the remuneration of the lay people activating in the Church (lat. *congrua*), as some of the priests had been living under miserable conditions. Then, another problem was procuring an existence for the elderly people. To this purpose, bishop Fogarassy had requested the priests for an opinion in a circular letter.

The spirituality of the priests during the Dualistic period prompted the creation of foundations, which had as purpose covering the school expenses for very talented young men. While pastoring, they had two face two major challenges: the very tangled situation of mixed marriages, as well as fulfilling the new pastoral attributions brought about by the demographic boom as well by the industrialization. Because of the accelerated economical development, more and more parishes were being founded

as the population of the newly industrialized cities from the Sekler's regions increased significantly.

The First World War and the political change in Transylvania put at great distress the diocesan clergy, as well as on their bishop. Already from the beginning of the war, the military pastoration was deficitary. The authorities hired many priests for such a purpose, which meant that the parish activities would be affected. At the beginning of the war, the priests animated by the patriotic feelings did not hesitate in accepting such mission, but later on, after seeing the atrocities of the war, many of them wanted to return back to their communities they have left. After the war was finished, some of the soldiers, who came back home –under the influence of the communist ideology they encountered on the front –have turned against the diocesan priests, an example of this, was when in Zetea, the parish priest was killed. This case will be dealt in detail at a later point. Priests were being attacked in many ways in various places in the diocese. Of these attacks we learn from the documents available at the Archbishopric Archives in Alba Iulia. The annexation of Transylvania to Romania had taken the clergy by surprise. At the beginning, it was very difficult for them to comprehend they would now live in a new country, speak a new language and have different customs than until that moment. They opposed the new situation, and the authorities had to pursue intimidation measures, arresting some of these priests, in order to keep the new situation under control. After the situation in Transylvania became clearer, the clergy, despite being looked upon in a distrusting manner had managed to find the optimal way in pastoring to their believers. Additional to the classic pastoration, the priests organized and mobilized parishioners into common activities and religious lay communities. The parishes also organized missions and also the adoration of the Sacrament, first introduced by Bishop Hajnald Lajos became a regular practice. Other religious practices were generalized: the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was held on every first Sunday in a month, as well the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the pilgrimage to Sumuleu on the Saturday before the Pentecost has gotten more importance than ever.

The bishop sent put a circular letter in order to ensure the proper and harmonious functioning of the newly formed religious communities, while subordinating them under the jurisdiction of the bishop (501/1930).

Literary talented priests published numerous books and religious reviews, considering the promoting of the Church via media as the first and foremost of their

attributions. The parish priests have strived to make available to the parishioners at least one of the total of 48 ecclesiastical reviews.

Part of the diocesan priests tried to solve the social problems of the believers by getting involved into various political movements. The clergy exerted their rights by founding the Hungarian National Party, not only in front of Authorities but also in the Romanian Parliament.

After the Second Dictate of Vienna, the diocese was split into two. Bishop Márton Áron remained at Alba-Iulia, in Southern Transylvania, a territory which formerly belonged to Romania, decreeing the priests who got a repartition in this part to remain here. He entrusted the spiritual guidance of the priests and believers from Northern Transylvania, now annexed to Hungary, to his vicar in Cluj. Part of the clergy of the dismembered diocese continued their pastoral work with enthusiasm and abnegation, while the other part, i.e. the Southern Transylvania had to survive the continuous threat coming from the State. In our thesis, we will provide at a later point some examples of such threats.

Both at the beginning, as well as the end of the Second World War, the bishop warned his priests not to be swept away by the events, but rather remain committed to their own pastoral duties. He also decreed that priests remained among their parishioners, and not leave. Despite this decree, when the Romanian-Soviet troupes entered Transylvania, 78 of them abandoned their parishes. Based on the information we currently hold, 41 of them immigrated to the territory of today's Hungary. The majority of the ones, who remained behind in southern Transylvania, were arrested and put to prison, either for an longer or shorter period of time. Once the war was ended, and due to the Bishop's summoning as well as the facility of transport, the priests began to return. The bishop then asked them to write a report, in which they would mention the following: the cause and circumstances of their departure, the place where they lived while they were absent, the welcoming offered by their former parishioners at their return, as well as the inventory on the Church's goods.

Bishop Márton Áron convoked a Committee of Justification, which had as main objective the analysis of the reports of the priests, who once left, as well as deciding upon the disciplinary measures to be taken in their case. This Committee analyzed more than 70 reports and we deemed as interesting the presentation of their resolutions. The left Parties, which meanwhile have become politically influential, have repeatedly accused these priests with fascism and nationalism. As a result, many

of these were not allowed to go back to the places, they once pastored to and the intimidation as well as even their arrest was initiated. The Power designated the so-called Committees of Purification, which could look into anyone's past and based on a single remark only, they could even sentence anyone to deportation.

Once the left wing consolidated its way to Power and the anti-ecclesiastical politics of the communist dictatorship, the Calvary of the clergy began. The bishop did everything in his power to protect the priests. Documents from the Bishop's Archives clearly show, how much the bishop would struggle for any priest, of whom he learned that he just got arrested. He even sent a letter of petition to the President Groza, in which he stood for the interests of the Roman Catholic priests. The two decades following the end of the Second World War represented for the diocesan priests a time of continuous harassment and humiliation. Looking closely into the activities of the clergy during this period, we noticed they were pastoring a minority community, who expected of them not only protecting their national rights, but also the other rights, refused to them by the Communist Dictatorship. This amounted however, to an incredibly heavy burden on the clergy, considering the given circumstances, in which a most of the intellectuals in Transylvania were won over by the left wing politics, showing thus an open anti-clerical position, for the main reason they could not establish the new "democratic order".

The governing Power tried to subdue the clergy under the pretext of gatherings for peace. We are in the position to publish a list with all the priests, who took part in such gatherings. Some of the priests, victims of the pacifist propaganda spread by the communists have even turned against their bishop. However they were quite small in number. It is noteworthy that the communist regime could not destroy the resistance of most of the clergy, not even while bishop Marton was arrested. The framed processes or the media denigration to this purpose were not effective. The leadership of the Diocese, which was conjured after bishop Marton was arrested, was not effective in constraining the diocesan priests into collaboration with the communist power. It is however true, that the priests' harassment did not have everywhere the same intensity. The priests in the more numerous Roman-Catholic communities were subjected to a larger number of harassments, and were even more pressurized than the priests, pastoring in smaller communities. Moreover, the intensity of these harassing behaviours was delineated by the Party decrees. These continued to be enforced up until the Decree of Abolition in 1964, based on which,

the political detainees were released from prison. This did not necessarily mark the end of the persecution directed towards the clergy, but only the modification of their *modus operandi*. We did not analyze this period as, it is devoid of historical perspective, as long as the witnesses of these atrocities are still alive.

The length of the chapters in our thesis is not however, directly proportional with the length of the period, which we mentioned. For example, we should have dealt more with the clergy of the Middle Ages, rather than with the diocesan priests during the Habsburgic Period. To estimate such a choice, we were heavily influenced by the quantity of archivist sources. In addition we could not possibly omit that the shorter historical eras following the Middle Ages have brought about profound changes (i.e. Reformation), events of great importance. These had long lasting effects, which even the clergy nowadays still experience. The length of the last chapter is significantly bigger, when compared with the previous chapters, although it covers a time span of only 100 years in the history of the diocesan clergy. Such a fact is justified by the rapid succession of the events in history, because the longer period after the compromise was followed by First, then the Second World War, which brought about changes in the political status of Transylvania, and not lastly by the Communist Dictatorship.

The choosing of the content was prompted by the primary and secondary sources available in the specialized available works in this research domain. The repeated occurrence of certain themes settled at time the orientation in our academic research as well as enabled us in finding the important connections. We also took into consideration the ecclesiastical and lay factors, with which the clergy in Transylvania had to confront along the historical periods. This was needed to fully comprehend some of the attitudes the diocesan clergy had with respect to some of the events in a particular era. We tried to reconstruct historically, in one millennium time-span, the manner in which the priests understood and lived their priestly identity, what were their relations with the power, with civil leaders and lay people, with the parishioners, whom they pastored etc. The themes of the chapter reflect these historical changes, with consideration on the specific factors of each historical era in particular. As a result, in the chapter on the clergy during the Principate, we have highlighted the lack of priests as well as lack of educational institutes specialized in forming priests during the Habsburgic period. We insisted on the relation with the State, which was supporting Catholicism, or in the last chapter, on the influence of liberalism on

clerical pastoration and their attitude during the two World Wars and subsequently during the communist Era. Certain themes, such as priest formation, financial and disciplinary issues are mentioned constantly in each and every chapter separately. In spite of the fact that the major theme of our current research represents the diocesan clergy, we sometimes touched upon issues pertaining to the clerics in monasteries, as monks were a continuous presence along the diocesan clergy, having a very strong connection with the latter. This fact does not exclude some conflicts, provoked by the different spiritual focus and interests. One has to clearly see how important monastic religious organizations had during the Era of the Principates as well as during the Restoration of Catholicism.

We tried to stay truthful to reality in narrating some of the disciplinary problems the clerics encountered by emphasizing particular cases and thus avoiding generalization. Such approach is justified, as some of the historians nowadays refer to certain “clerical defects”, without however, looking closely into the heart of matters. Remaining silent on such issues is tantamount to not acknowledging and not assuming the existence of such defects of clergy, as well as not confronting the existing clichés and prejudices with the reality of the historical facts. We are not supposed to forget at any time, that priests were also men of their ages, their mentality, morality and principles being shaped heavily by the eras in which they lived. Therefore, it is not rightfully done to judge them, from the perspective of today’s society, based on the standards we have today. For this we also have to consider the larger historical framework against which they lived and worked, otherwise we would be torn by misjudgments and oversimplifications. In researching the documents, which contain the exposition of disciplinary problems, one has to sometimes stay back from assigning one source the absolute truth, as some of these reports may not be at all entirely corresponding to reality. Our statement is based on the fact that, while analyzing some of the documents, it turned out that at times, the author(s) of such reports were animated and performed out of personal antipathy or hatred, as well as out of revenge directed towards the ones being reported. In handling such cases, the diocesan authority has given special attention and consideration. In communication on these issues we try to emphasize the challenges that the priests faced in particular historical eras.

The primary and secondary bibliographical list differs, when discussing different periods. In all the presented cases, I was referred to materials concerning the

diocesan clergy in Transylvania. Thus, in the first chapter on the clergy in the Middle Ages we made use of the documentary collections on Transylvania. The collection published so far have facilitated significantly in a satisfactory manner the research on the issues concerning the medieval clergy. In this process, Jakó Zsigmond 's work has been of an inestimable help, as here one can look into the 54444 extracts from the written reports of proceedings of the abbey of Cluj-Manastur, as well as the three volume work contain no less that 2879 of registry entries (lat. regesta) on the Transylvanian charts from the period 1301 to 1359.

The academic writings on these documentary collections have provided help in fully comprehending and accurate explanation of the themes. In the second chapter we present materials on the monastic members of the church (mainly Franciscan and Jesuits) and a significant part of these stem from their reports and letters. The subjective characters of their personal writings denature, at times, the actual realities in the Transylvanian diocese. The justification for this is that the monks expressed, from their own perspective, the importance of their spiritual work. The locations, where available data is found are in the Sekler's regions, as here the Catholic communities were outnumbering those existing in other places in the Transylvanian diocese, for this reason, of the priests belonging to the latter category, there are not many available data. On the territory of the Diocese, only at the nobles' Courts there were Catholic priests, most of them being monks.

In choosing the adequate sources, we tried to maintain equilibrium between the documents in the Archive of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and the documents from the archives of the Jesuits concerning the local situation in the diocese of Transylvania, as well as those already published documents on this topic, stemming from the Archbishopric Archives in Alba Iulia. Regarding the latter documents, the sources on the Transylvanian clergy are few and they are scattered on a large area within the diocese. The Archbishopric Archives barely mention some documents dating back from the Era of the Principate in Transylvania. The documentary library Batthyáneum fosters numerous documents from this epoch, but only few of them refer to the diocesan clergy, irrespective of the cult. In other archives in Transylvania we encounter some documents relevant to the clergy in this period, which in general have already been published. Once the Habsburgic power stepped into government and the restoration of the Archbishopric in Alba Iulia was initiated, the activity of the Bishop Chancellery continued, preserving thus significant

amounts of material originating from these days. Such material is still available for research in the Archbishopric Archives in Alba Iulia. The same archive represents the main source for which, we account the major part of the material utilized in writing the third and fourth chapters of the current thesis. Of all the documents of that particular period, we chose mainly the most important ones, which were intrinsically connected to important historical events, as the thorough research of all the materials is nearly impossible and extends the scope of the current academic pursuit. However, the research based on the major historical events turned out to be closer to the limits of accomplishment. Against our expectations, no document on the affected priests during the Revolt of Horea, Closca and Crisan in 1784 was found.

Once the Habsburgic dominion spread over Transylvania, the dynamics of the relation between Roman-Catholics and Protestants changed radically. To look into this perspective equidistantly, we also researched the matters from a Protestant point of view. For such purpose we used the Archives of the General Reformed Consistory in Cluj-Napoca. Of the documents found here, the ones pertaining to the occupation of the first churches proved to be of historical significance for our thesis.

The selection of documents relevant for the period following the Second World War was extremely challenging due to the multitude and diversity of material on this theme as well as due to the lack of an accurate historical perspective. Many of the personalities of those times are still alive in the collective memory, and some of the priests directly involved with those clashes are still alive today. We do not wish by any mean to disconsider the memory of the ecclesiastical characters who became victims of the communist propaganda, but the academic fairness summons us to research into the material pertaining to them, as well as to refer to them occasionally. It is noteworthy that after 1989, when the political regime in Romania changed, more and more books were published, in which materials from the Archives of the Former Security are made available to the public. We also used some of the documents on the diocesan clergy, which also featured in those books.

The particular selection of material pertaining to any theme we discussed was done after all the available material had been researched. This process was very intense for us, but full of satisfaction, in the sense that it facilitated the creation a more detailed picture on the events of every historical era in particular and the clergy in general, along some of the issues, which do not pertain to the scope of the present research. Taking into consideration our academic endeavour was to present a

synthesis on the diocesan clergy in the millennial Diocese of Transylvania, we had to renounce to the detailed analysis of some documents. Naturally, in some cases the particular choice for a document does not exclude the documentary confrontation with other historical acts.

In the footnotes, we mentioned in short the biographies of some priests, and while presenting them, we referred to their activity, positions they held, or importance of the events in which they were involved. Because of the limited space, it made it impossible for us to render the bibliographies of all priests, mentioned in this research, and here we refer in particular to the different lists of priests in chapter.

The tables in the current research are meant to facilitate the better understanding of our academic endeavour as a whole. The notes at the end of the thesis complete, what was already stated, in dealing with any theme in particular. The photocopies annexed here cast a glimpse on the historical realities of the clergy, contributing to the understanding of certain events.