

CERTIFICATE

I, the undersigned Dr. Marius Eppel, Lecturer at the Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, hereby attest that the study authored by Dr. Tamasi Zsolt entitled “The Archpriests from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Alba-Iulia Seen through the Lens of Synodal Documents (1848-1913)” has been accepted for publication in the collection of studies edited by Marius Eppel, *Connecting Faiths and Nationalities: A Social History of the Clerical Profession in Transylvania (1848-1918)*, Peter Lang Publishing House, 2019, ISBN 978-3-631-80746-0.

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Dr. Marius Eppel, Lecturer
Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca



ADEVERINTA

Subsemnatul Marius Eppel, lector univ. dr. la Facultatea de Istorie si Filosofie, Universitatea Babes-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca, prin prezenta atest faptul ca studiul Domnului Dr. Tamasi Zsolt intitulat *The Archpriests from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Alba-Iulia Seen through the Lens of Synodal Documents (1848-1913)* a fost acceptat spre publicare si va aparea in volumul Marius Eppel (ed.), *Connecting Faiths and Nationalities: A Social History of the Clerical Profession In Transylvania (1848-1918)*, Peter Lang Publishing House, 2019, ISBN 978-3-631-80746-0.

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Lect. univ. dr. Marius Eppel



The Archpriests from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Alba-Iulia Seen through the Lens of Synodal Decrees (1848-1913)¹

Introduction

In the aftermath of the Revolution and the Independence War of 1848-1849, the problems of the diocesan clergy and their proposals for reform were debated most intensely. Underlying those reform proposals were objectives that had been set earlier, in the first half of the nineteenth century, and that would remain on the agenda well into the first decades of the twentieth century. 1848 created an opportunity for unrelentingly pressing those demands in an uncensored environment. In this study, not only will we provide a historical analysis of that century-old struggle for reforms, but we will also make a detailed presentation of the demands issued in 1848. During that revolutionary year, which capped a period of significant change for the church, the Hungarian Catholic episcopal body began preparations for the national synod that was to be held in Esztergom. Its aims were to safeguard church autonomy and to defend ecclesiastical institutions.² In the nineteenth century, the papacy did not endorse the organisation of national synods,³ as they posed the threat of those churches becoming alienated from Rome. Still, while the pope's permission was not compulsory, the consent of the apostolic king sufficed for convening national synods. It is clear then why the papacy would not endorse synods that gave little room for the expression of its own points of view, although it should be noted that a national synod could not modify the ecclesiastical resolutions adopted by the universal synods [councils].⁴

Under the laws adopted by the Bratislava legislature in 1848, the Catholic religion ceased to be a state religion. Many of the apostolic king's rights deriving from his role as supreme protector of the church were taken over by the revolutionary government and, within it, by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction.⁵ The newly arisen situation forced the church to make a firm stand, without further delay. Wanting to defend the autonomy of the church against encroachments by the state, the bishops believed that the best way forward would be to organise a national synod. Following an initiative of the archdiocesan chapter of Esztergom,⁶ the bishops of Hungary were to start organising the synod alongside the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction. Given the Ministry's endorsement of the bishops' initiative, Rome could not prevent the synod from convening, but was closely following those events. A papal patent authorised Hám János, Bishop of Satu Mare, to be president of the

¹ Supported by the UNKP-19-4 New National Excellence Program of the Ministry of Human Capacities.

² The plan for the organisation of the synod was first drafted by the archdiocesan chapter of Esztergom. Gyulafehérvári Főegyházmegeyei és Székeskáptalani Levéltár [The Archdiocesan and Capitulary Archive of Alba Iulia] (GYÉFKL), Fund: Püspöki Iratok [Episcopal Documents] (PI) 687/1848 – *Az esztergomi székeskáptalan határozata* [The resolution of the archdiocesan chapter of Esztergom], Esztergom, 2 May 1848.

³ Forster János, *A püspökmegyei zsinat* [Diocesan Synod], (Gyulafehérvár: Papp György, 1907) (Forster 1907), 3.

⁴ Szeredy József, *Egyházjog. Különös tekintettel a Magyar Szent Korona területének egyházi viszonyaira, valamint a keleti és protestáns egyházakra*. I., [Canon law. With particular reference to ecclesiastical relations on the lands of the Holy Hungarian Crown, as well as to the Oriental and the Protestant Churches] (Pécs: Ifj. Madarász E., 1883), 258, § 645–647.

⁵ Török Jenő, *A katolikus autonómia-mozgalom 1848–1871. Adalékok a magyar liberális katolicizmus történetéhez*, [The Catholic Autonomy Movement 1848-1871. Contributions to the History of Hungarian Liberal Catholicism] (Budapest: Stephaneum, 1941), 17.

⁶ GYÉFKL PI 687/1848 – *Az esztergomi székeskáptalan határozata* [The resolution of the archdiocesan chapter of Esztergom], Esztergom, 2 May 1848.

national synod.⁷ János had been appointed Archbishop and Primate of Esztergom by the revolutionary government, but had not yet received the pope's assent to occupy that position.⁸ Nonetheless, the decree issued by the pope empowered him to serve as legate of the Holy See and to preside over the synod.⁹ This special delegation proves that although Rome did not look kindly on the organisation of the synod, in view of Hungary's pressing circumstances, the Holy See had to approve convening it. For this study it is of lesser importance that revolutionary events would eventually thwart plans for a national synod. Of far greater importance are the projects the diocesan clergy proposed during preparations for the synod.

Taking advantage of those times of upheaval and change, the diocesan clergy assembled a package of radical reforms. Although the radicalism of their demands had led the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction to agree with the episcopal council that only limited priestly assemblies should be held instead of the preparatory diocesan synods, in Transylvania preparations for the national synod started with the convocation of the diocesan synod. Thus, the demands the diocesan clergy put forward in the meetings they held at deanery level in anticipation of the diocesan synod relied on an analysis of specific cases. Previously it had been impossible to address the grievances of the diocesan clergy. Included in the demands formulated at this time, they were to remain very pressing even after the defeat of the revolution. These reform proposals concentrated on the most important claims submitted since the beginning of the century. The core problems faced by the Transylvanian diocese had first been outlined in the early nineteenth century, during the diocesan synod of 1822. It is interesting to note that the solution of a self-standing, autonomous Transylvanian diocese was proposed both in 1822 and in 1848. In both cases, a diocesan synod was convened in anticipation of the national synod.¹⁰ Also in both cases, in addition to preparing the national synod, the diocesan bishops – Szepessy Ignác, in 1822, and Csíktusnádi Kovács Miklós, in 1848 – opted for holding synodal assemblies of a strictly diocesan, local nature. In fact, according to canon law, the role of diocesan synods should have been primarily that of implementing the decisions reached by national synods.¹¹ Without going into an in-depth analysis of canon law, it is important to point out that both in 1822 and in 1848 the topics for debate were decided by the central authorities. The committee in charge with preparations for the national synod sent a list of the topics that were to be debated at diocesan level. However, in both cases we may note that in addition to the topics suggested from the centre, proposals of local interest were made as well. In 1822, such topics were outlined by the diocesan bishop himself, but in 1848 it was the diocesan clergy who first introduced their particular demands in the minutes of the preparatory meetings held at deanery level. The decisions taken in 1822 on the subjects thus raised were put into force by personal decision of

⁷ Adriányi Gábor, "Püspökök kinevezése és elmozdítása 1848–1849-ben" ["The appointment and removal from office of bishops in 1848-1849], *Új Ember Kalendárium [The New Man's Calendar]* (Budapest: Új Ember, 1999), 49.

⁸ Tomcsányi Lajos S. J., *A főkegyúr szerepe a püspökök kinevezésénél [The Role of the Supreme Patron in Appointing the Bishops]* (Budapest: Apostol, 1922), 53.

⁹ "Hám János Emlékiratai" ["The Memoirs of Hám János]," In *A haza, az egyház és a trón érdekében. A magyar katolikus egyház 1848–1849-ben [In the Name of Country, Church and Throne. The Hungarian Catholic Church in 1848-1849]*, ed. Elmer István (Budapest: Szent István, 1999), 146.

¹⁰ Prince-primate Rudnay Sándor envisaged the need for far-reaching reforms in the church. After his appointment, in 1819, as Archbishop of Esztergom, he had the opportunity to launch those reforms. Szántó Konrád, *A katolikus egyház története [The History of the Catholic Church]* vol. II (Budapest: Ecclesia, 1988), 400-401.

¹¹ Conc. Trid. Sess. XXV. c. 4. de ref.

Bishop Szepessy Ignác, who published his Diocesan Statute.¹² In 1848, Bishop Csíktusnádi Kovács Miklós sent the proposals to the commission preparing the national synod.¹³ Despite all criticisms, the diocesan 1822 Statute remained decisive for the daily life of the diocesan clergy. It not only echoed the reforms delineated in 1848,¹⁴ but also heralded the diocesan synod of 1913.

Even if the demands of the diocesan clergy, who expressed themselves more freely in the revolutionary atmosphere, sounded more radical as a result of liberal changes, it cannot be denied that these demands had been voiced as early as the first half of the nineteenth century and that they would continue to be made well into the early twentieth century. That is why we cannot consider these claims to have been the result of some fleeting revolutionary enthusiasm. In reality, the diocesan clergy simply took advantage of conjunctural opportunities to advance a more radical version of their grievances. Since no statute was issued by the diocesan synod of 1848 – as was customary after each diocesan synod – historians are reluctant to associate the epithet “synodal” to the works carried out in 1848. However, the preparatory documents provide us with priceless information. In 1849 Minister of Religious Affairs Horváth Mihály, recently appointed Bishop of Cenad, had a failed attempt to reform the Hungarian Catholic Church by organising a new national synod. The prospect of schisma was by no means excluded from its agenda. Considering all this, Pope Pius IX stated that synods should no longer be convened in the future.¹⁵ As a result, in 1869 diocesan Bishop Fogarasy Mihály convened only a summary assembly of the priests in the Transylvanian diocese. Even if the bishop held discussions under control until the very end, several core issues that had been radically formulated in 1848 were raised once again. An effective analysis of the claims submitted by the diocesan clergy can be made on the basis of the preparatory documents of the diocesan synod of 1913. As part of the preparations, the diocesan committee sought to downplay the role of the diocesan clergy. Their main desiderata may nonetheless be clearly identified.

Taking into account the history of the demands submitted by the diocesan clergy, we believe that in order to get an accurate picture of the archbishops’ situation, we should first consider the claims that were initially defined in the documents of 1822, that were more radically expressed in 1848 and that were also brought up at the priests’ conference of 1869 and at the diocesan synod of 1913. It can be seen that from among the topics mentioned in 1822, 1848 and 1869, the ones that were largely present only in the 1822 Statute were the Josephinist decrees

¹² GYÉFKL, Fund: Egyházmegyei Zsinatok [Diocesan Synods] (EZs). *Statuta Alma Diocesis Transilvanicae Anno 1822. die 17-ma Aprilis in Synodo Diocesana publicata, et Concordibus votis approbata* (Claudiopoli: Typ. Lycei Regii, 1822). (Statuta 1822)

¹³ GYÉFKL EZS 1085/1848 – *Kovács Miklós püspök átirata az egri érsekhez, a veszprémi, pécsi, besztercebányai, kassai püspökökhöz, ill. Nádasdy Ferenc kalocsai érsekhez* [The transcript sent by Bishop Kovács Miklós to the Archbishop of Eger, the Bishops of Veszprém, Pécs, Besztercebánya and Kassa, and to the Archbishop of Kalocsa Nádasdy Ferenc], Kolozsvár on 06 September 1848.

¹⁴ During preparations for the 1848 synod, it was proposed that only the usable decisions adopted in 1822 should be preserved. GYÉFKL PI 994/1848 – *Hám János levele Kovács Miklós erdélyi püspökhöz a zsinati pontokról* [The Letter of Hám János to the Transylvanian Bishop Kovács Miklós regarding the synodal points], Pest, 20 July 1848. GYÉFKL EZS 1085/1848 – *Az erdélyi egyházmegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyve* [The Minutes of the Transylvanian Diocesan Synod]; GYÉFKL EZS no registration number – *Vélemény azon zsinati tárgyakról, melyekről készítendő megyezsinati munkálat kassai nagyméltóságú püspök Úrnak leszen beküldendő* [Review of the synodal topics, in conjunction with which the resolutions of the diocesan synod will be sent to His Excellency the Bishop of Kassa].

¹⁵ Pécsi Püspöki és Káptalani Levéltár [Archive of the Diocese and the Chapter of Pécs]. *Protocollum 1849, 1277/1849*.

that Szepesy Ignác subsequently had to give up or that were not eventually put into force.¹⁶ Some of those discussed both in 1822 and in 1848, but only at diocesan level, were proposals that deviated from universal church practice. Szepesy Ignác had imposed those proposals as laws and in the revolutionary atmosphere of 1848 they seemed to be achievable, despite the bishops' reservations.¹⁷ The topics addressed only in 1848 and 1869 were driven by a revolutionary yearning for reforms. Fogarasy actively participated in drafting them in his capacity as elected bishop. Moreover, as diocesan bishop, he facilitated their enactment. The topics that kept coming back were the most important Transylvanian concerns. Even later, during preparations for the synod of 1913, they would retain their urgency.

Analysing to what extent it was possible for the diocesan clergy to voice their concerns, we can see that in 1822 it was Bishop Szepesy Ignác himself who proposed, alongside the topics recommended for the national synod,¹⁸ reforms that would meet the particular needs of the Transylvanian clergy. In 1848, besides the topics proposed for the national synod,¹⁹ there was a substantial number of demands submitted by the diocesan clergy in the deanery-level meetings organised with a view to preparing the diocesan synod.²⁰ In 1869, it was Bishop Fogarasy Mihály who proposed the topics for discussion,²¹ and in 1913 it was the committee responsible for preparing the synod that limited the diocesan clergy's opportunity to press their claims. In the case of the topics proposed for the diocesan synod of 1913, it should be noted that as early as 6 December 1907, Count Majláth Gusztáv Károly, Bishop of the Transylvanian diocese, declared that he intended to convene this synod. He called on the clergy to send their topic proposals to

¹⁶ For example, concelebration, the sacrament of the Eucharist in the form of the twofold Transubstantiation [bread and wine], the parliamentary character of synods. Marton József, "Egyháztörténeti adalékok a gyulafehérvári egyházmegye történetéhez" ["Notes towards an Ecclesiastical History of the Diocese of Alba Iulia"], *Magyar Egyháztörténeti Vázlatok [Sketches of Hungarian Ecclesiastical History]* No. 1-4 (2009). (Marton 2009) 176-178.

¹⁷ It is also important to note that a vast majority of these proposals are in use today, with the exception of the parliamentary system.

¹⁸ In 1822, eight themes were established with the assent of the apostolic king: the clergy, improving the virtues of the monks and the youth, developing a unitary education plan for episcopal seminaries, settling the disagreements between the Bible teachers in Pest, the monastic reform, the creation of a fund for financing the education of ten Hungarian priests at the Augustineum Institute in Vienna, a new translation of the Bible into Hungarian, amassing the funds of the dismantled monastic orders in a stipendium fund and setting a unitary procedure to be followed by the Hungarian ecclesiastical courts: Nagy Konstantin OFM: *A magyar katolikus egyház nemzeti zsinatai* [The National Synods of the Hungarian Catholic Church] (Gyöngyös: Kapisztrán, 1943), 101. Szántó 1988. 400.

¹⁹ A list of twenty-five topics was drafted, structured into five groups. GYÉFKL PI 994/1848 – *Hám János levele Kovács Miklós erdélyi püspökhöz a zsinati pontokról.* [The letter of Hám János to the Transylvanian Bishop Kovács Miklós concerning the synodal topics], Pest, 20 July 1848. GYÉFKL PI 850/1848 – *Fogarasy Mihály választott skodári püspök válaszelevele Kovács Miklós erdélyi püspökhöz* [The answer of the elected Bishop of Skodár to the letter received from the Transylvanian Bishop Kovács Miklós], Pest, 13 June 1848.

²⁰ Before the diocesan bishop's circular announcing the convocation of the synod, several petitions from the deaneries had called for convening it and proposed the most important points to be discussed. Among these were the petitions sent from the deaneries of Gheorgheni and Kézdi-Orba. GYÉFKL PI 823/1848 – *Mészáros Antal gyergyói esperes beadványa az erdélyi Consistoriumhoz* [The request addressed to the Transylvanian consistory by the archpriest of Gheorgheni, Mészáros Antal], Gyergyószentmiklós, 27 May 1848. GYÉFKL PI 688/1848 – *Kádár Antal esperes és Elekes István jegyző által aláírt esperesi tanácskozási jegyzőkönyv, átküldve Kovács Miklós püspöknek* [The minutes of the deanery meeting, signed by archpriest Kádár Antal and by the notary Elekes István, sent to Bishop Kovács Miklós], Gelence, 17 May 1848.

²¹ In this case, the invitation to participate in the priests' conference did not require them to have prior training. It merely drew a list of participants, informing them that they must participate in the assembly. It was not by chance that many archpriests found different pretexts, primarily health problems, in order to evade the obligation of attending it. GYÉFKL PI 2383/1869 – *A papi gyűléssel kapcsolatos levelezés (felterjesztések és válaszok) gyűjteménye* [An anthology of the correspondence relating to the priests' conference (requests and answers)].

the deanery centres. The committee organising the synod was tasked with centralising the proposals finalised in the deanery meetings. However, in drawing up the agenda, the committee appointed by the bishop consulted the clergy in the territory only on a few points of interest. The topic proposals regarding the chapter and the training of priests were drafted by the archdiocesan chapter and the seminary director. The book for the evening service was drafted by a special commission and most of the ordinances were drawn up by Canon Forster János. Since episcopal decrees with legal value were also taken into account for the upcoming synod, it should go without saying that the diocesan bishop added universal ecclesiastical rules and directives related to his sphere of authority in the synodal register, as annexes to the decrees passed by the synod. Therefore, in our examination of the topics of the diocesan synod of 1913, we will focus not only on the paragraphs of the Synodal Statute,²² but also on the circulars and directives included in its annexes.²³ In order to identify the most important issues, starting from the regulations of the 1913 Statute, we will analyse their nineteenth-century antecedents. For reasons explained above, we will discuss only topics that were consistently brought up throughout the nineteenth century and that were eventually resolved under the regulations of the synodal Statute of 1913.²⁴ As the topic is very vast, we will emphasise only the most important aspects that proved decisive for the daily life of the diocesan clergy. Thus, after the problem of the seminary where priests received their theological education, we will address the following aspects: the synodal exam necessary for appointment to the office of parish priest, the contest for the office of parish priest and the possibility of democratic leadership in the church. Then we shall refer to problems revolving around the financial aspects of everyday life, including ecclesiastical revenues, the endowment of parishes, the priests' pension and their right to draft their own last will and testament.

The training of priests, their appointment to office and hierarchical relations in the church

From among the proposed topics, we shall first analyse the proposals on the training of future priests in seminaries. The decision of the diocesan synod of 1913 sounds as follows: "Students should be aware of their great mission. The time spent together in this institution cannot stand in the way of their learning the science of theology, or of developing a gentle behaviour; [the seminary] must turn into an exercise arena in which the holy soldiers of Christ are to be trained... Let them arm themselves with spiritual science and acquire such virtues that in today's world they may become the guardians of true faith."²⁵

Compared to this, nineteenth-century proposals had considerably different overtones. The 1822 Statute strictly regulated the life of seminarians, from their having to wake up at 5 in the morning to going to bed at 9 in the evening. Even if the three annual spiritual exercises were prescribed, the Josephine principles were nonetheless more firmly enshrined in this enactment.²⁶

²² GYÉFKL EZS – *Acta et Decreta Synodi Diocesanae Transilvaniensis diebus 7-10 mensis Julii anni MCMXIII. in Gyulafehérvár (Albae-Juliae) habitae*, Gyulafehérvár: 1913 (Synodal book 1913).

²³ Synodal Book 1913. Appendix ad Statuta Synodi Diocesanae Transilvaniensis anno Salutis MCMXIII in Gyulafehérvár (Albae-Juliae) habitae (App)

²⁴ It should be noted that this Statute remained in force in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Transylvania throughout the twentieth century, as the next diocesan synod took place only in 2000. In order to solve the problems that had been raised, episcopal circulars were issued, but the contribution of the diocesan clergy to drafting them could only have been minimal.

²⁵ Synodal Book 1913, 90.

²⁶ In addition to theological disciplines and the teaching of Latin and German, the regulation also referred to recreation (music is allowed and so is smoking, provided it is prescribed by the doctor). It also provided for the

By comparison with this statute, described as “rigid,”²⁷ in 1848, when this issue enjoyed the “special attention of the Synod,” the use of *exaggerated strictness* was rejected, as it could only create a sense of *strained superficiality*.²⁸ Greater freedom was thought to give superiors a better opportunity to understand if the seminarians’ call to the priesthood was genuine.²⁹ In 1848 it was considered that strictness and rigidity should be lessened in several areas (the time of strolls, a shortened period of silentium, longer sleeping time, giving up meditations that were deemed unnecessary).³⁰ Besides tackling the subject of discipline, the minutes of 1848 also reveal reservations about the two-year philosophy course introduced by the 1822 Statute. Thus, it was stipulated that the course should either become available to lay students, or be given up completely.³¹ Regarding the theology subjects, the reforms envisaged in 1848 show that the Josephine decrees of the 1822 Statute had only partially been implemented in Transylvania. In 1848, in the spirit of introducing the mother tongue as a language of instruction, only dogma would have been allowed to be taught in Latin. The intention was for all other subjects to be taught in Hungarian.³² It was also proposed that dogma should be significantly abridged and taught for only one year. The idea was that the educational system needed to be modernised. Proposals to that end included the teaching of state laws,³³ expanding the teaching of pedagogy, catechesis

appointment of a hygiene officer among the seminarians, who would also report on the quality of food and drink. Statuta 1822, 55-68. Hermann Egyed, *Az 1822-i erdélyi egyházmegyei zsinat. Különlenyomat a bécsi gróf Klebenschberg Kunó Magyar Történetkutató Intézet ötödik Évkönyvéből* [*The Transylvanian Diocesan Synod of 1822. Special extract from the 5th Yearbook of the Institute of Hungarian History, Count Kuno Klebenschberg from Vienna*], No. 5 (1936). (Hermann 1936), 11.

²⁷ Forster 1907, 11.

²⁸ The principle of education based on love was formulated by the clergy of several deaneries during preparations for the synod. Among them, the most eloquent were the minutes submitted by the clergy of Alba Iulia, demanding that education should be based not on terrorism, but on evangelical gentleness. GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Gyulafehérvári papság beadványa* [*Report of the clergy from Alba Iulia*], Gyulafehérvár, 31 July 1848.

²⁹ The minutes of the organising committee had a rather harsh tone, but this text was eventually not included in the final protocols of the synod: “Instead of the internal rules we have now, new ones must be created in the spirit of those presented above (in accordance with the requirements of our times), and the closed private system, which is not educational, but coercive, must be removed”. GYÉFKL EZS no registration number – *Vélemény azon zsinati tárgyakról, melyekről készítendő megyezsinati munkálat pécsi nagyméltóságú püspök Úrnak leszen beküldendő* [*Opinion on the synodal topics featuring in the proceedings of the diocesan synod to be forwarded to His Excellency the Bishop of Pécs*].

³⁰ For example: “especially in summer, strolls were to be permitted at hours when the young men were not exposed to harmful heat.” Because of this need for recreation, requested were made to shorten the “exhausting length of meditations” or to organise morning and evening prayer hours in such a way as to avoid “the young man getting tired of them ... but impel him to look forward to them.” This last claim was later included in the minutes of the commission, instead of a text that had been deleted. In this first variant we can read the following passage: “on school days the wake time should be set at 6; meditations during the morning and evening prayers, which are in use but serve no purpose, according to public opinion, must be eliminated.” The same minutes of the commission also contained an addendum according to which “reading during lunch and dinner must be eliminated.”

³¹ The course was not abolished. A fund for financing it was established by Bishop Kovács Miklós in 1837 and was expanded in keeping with the bishop’s last will and testament. Marton József, “A gyulafehérvári papnevelde 250 éve [250 years since the foundation of the Theological Seminary in Alba Iulia]” In *Emlékkönyv a 250 éve alapított Gyulafehérvári Papnevelde Jubileuma alkalmából* [*Album compiled upon the jubilee of the Theological Seminary in Alba Iulia, set up 250 years ago*], ed. Marton József (Gyulafehérvár: Stúdium, 2003). (Marton 2003), 17.

³² In preparing the synod, the deaneries did not formulate such radical reforms. Only the Deanery of Turda-Arieș emphasised that pastoral theology and morals should be taught in Hungarian, but they did not refer to other subjects. GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Torda–Aranyos kerület beadványa* [*Project of the Deanery of Turda-Arieș*], Felvinc, 31 July 1848.

³³ Szepesy himself had intended to send the graduating seminarians to the Law Academy in Cluj. Marton 2009, 175.

and methodology, insisting more on the practical aspects of these disciplines, and introducing patristics in the curriculum. It was suggested that German or another European language should be taught, and that Hungarian grammar, rhetoric and debate skills should be honed through intense practice. Disagreement was expressed regarding course books handwritten by teachers.³⁴ In 1869, one of the above-mentioned proposals returned: the requirement to increase the quality of ecclesiastical rhetoric and catechesis courses and to introduce the history of the diocese as a subject of study.³⁵ However, diocesan Bishop Fogarasy Mihály decided not to consult his priests on discipline issues and preferred to exert his discretionary powers by issuing a special circular.³⁶ Also, while in 1848 it was required that seminarians should not be expected to disclose personal information,³⁷ in 1869 Fogarasy decided that in order to prevent career dropout, parish priests should be obliged to submit half-yearly reports to the archpriests regarding chaplains and teachers who were graduates of theology.³⁸ In 1913, the clergy were aware that their initiatives on this issue were limited, so during preparations for the synod, in the founding meeting, the organising committee had a rather cautious stance on this subject, noting in the minutes that the bishop should be asked beforehand “how the issue of the priests’ instruction should be addressed.”³⁹ The diocesan synod of 1913 essentially claimed that future priests should be true apostles of sincerity, modesty and obedience. That is why the intention was for seminaries to take into account the fact that there was no longer a need just for “priests in the sacristy,” but also for parish priests who toiled and moiled in the midst of the people, who lived their lives for the nation.⁴⁰

Regarding the exam for becoming a parish priest, there were numerous proposals, formulated in the context of concerns that had been voiced throughout the century about how the common clergy should exercise their right to manage the parish income. In 1913 a comprehensive regulation was drafted. Tackling a diverse array of issues, from the priests’ installation in office⁴¹ to the detailing of their tasks,⁴² this regulation perfectly illustrated that one main purpose of the diocesan synod of 1913 was to transform priests into true apostles of faith in a changing society. The decisions of the 1913 diocesan synod regarding the priestly/synodal examination were recorded in paragraph 22. Clarifications were necessary because conflicting views and opinions on this issue had been expressed throughout the nineteenth century. The

³⁴ As regards the final exam, in 1848 there was a call for a return to tradition: prior to the episcopacy of Bajtai József Antal (1760-1772), the school year ended not with an exam, but with a debate. It was Bishop Bajtai who, while maintaining the debate, also demanded that there should be an exam for some subjects. A desire to return to sensational disputations can be sensed in the synodal minutes of 1848. Marton 2003, 18.

³⁵ GYÉFKL, Fund: Gyulafehérvári Plébániai Irattár. Püspöki körlevelek 1866-1869 [The parish archive of Alba Iulia]. Episcopal circulars 1866-1869 (GyFPI-Pk) – *Az 1869-es papi közgyűlés jegyzőkönyve [Minutes of the priestly assembly of 1869]*. 3300/1870 – *Fogarasy Mihály megyéspüspök körlevele [Circular of diocesan Bishop Fogarasy Mihály]*, Gyulafehérvár, 28 December 1870.

³⁶ GYÉFKL PI 2330/1870 – *Fogarasy Mihály megyéspüspök körlevele [Circular of diocesan Bishop Fogarasy Mihály]*.

³⁷ This desire expressed by the clergy of Alba Iulia was recorded in the minutes of the conference held in preparation of the synod. GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Gyulafehérvári papság beadványa [Project of the clergy from Alba Iulia]*, Gyulafehérvár, 31 July 1848.

³⁸ GYÉFKL GyFPI-Pk 3300/1870 – *Az 1869-es papi közgyűlés jegyzőkönyve [Minutes of the clergy’s general assembly of 1869]*.

³⁹ Annex II.2, 20 February 1908.

⁴⁰ Marton József: *Papnevelés az erdélyi egyházmegyében 1753-tól 1918-ig [The education of the priests in the Diocese of Transylvania, from 1753 to 1918]*, (Budapest: Márton Áron, 1993), 178-180.

⁴¹ For an exact description, see the paragraph 25. Synodal Book 1913.

⁴² Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 17-39.

1822 Statute was more lenient, in the sense that the exam could also be taken by candidates within two months of receiving the first priestly stipends (*beneficium*), but it also provided that priests who were under 50 years of age should resume this exam every time they came into possession of new benefices. Diocesan Bishop Szepesy Ignác later amended this regulation, stating that there was no need for repeating the examination, which, however, had to take place before the priest took possession of parochial benefices (the right to administer parochial revenues).⁴³ In 1848, utter confusion led to conflicting formulations. Regarding the “organisation of the contest for the position of parish priest,”⁴⁴ most of the participants expressed their disagreement with the procedure. Since the Council of Trent⁴⁵ had quite clearly decreed that such “contests” had to be held, some supported the idea, but wished to reduce their number and to have priests sit such exams only once. Still, because of the unclear wording, they were often confused either with the parish priest exam or with the graduation exam, marking the completion of theology studies.⁴⁶ The minutes of the commission that was drafting the synod’s resolutions show that those who had worked for three years as chaplains could enrol in the exam for becoming parish priests and, should they pass it, they could receive a parish and priestly benefices after their appointment by the bishop, of course.⁴⁷ So far, this provision was identical to the decree subsequently issued by Szepesy. The commission, however, reconsidered the 1822 Statute, instructing that a more serious examination should be passed for higher benefices,⁴⁸ with the possibility of repeatedly sitting it. At the priests’ conference of 1869, Bishop Fogarasy

⁴³ Statuta 1822, 23. Hermann 1936, 10.

⁴⁴ An exam that certified one’s entitlement to acquire by contest the right to manage a vacant parish.

⁴⁵ *Conc. Trid.* Sess. XXIV. C.28. reform.

⁴⁶ The final minutes offered a strange solution: “after the completion of theological studies, young people who want to start their priestly activity must be examined before the episcopal see by professors of theology and by so-called synodal examiners appointed for this purpose.” However, an examination of this kind would only have made it possible to verify the candidates’ theoretical knowledge, whereas the parish examination was also meant to verify the candidates’ practical skills. Forster 1907, 112-121.

⁴⁷ This was in keeping with the bishop’s full right to make appointments to various ecclesiastical institutions on the territory of his diocese. It also complied with the regulations of the Council of Trent, which stipulated that “the office of priest is to be occupied by a member of the clergy who, following the examination and prior investigation, has proved to be an apt candidate for the job.” – Szeredy József, *Egyházjog. Különös tekintettel a Magyar Szent Korona területének egyházi viszonyaira, valamint a keleti és protestáns egyházakra* [*Canon law. With particular regard to ecclesiastical relations on the territory of the Holy Hungarian Crown, as well as to the Eastern and Protestant Churches*] vol. II (Pécs: Ifj. Madarász E., 1974), 702-704.

⁴⁸ Two examination venues were established: Alba Iulia and Miercurea Ciuc. Regarding the topic for the examination of parish priests, testing knowledge of spiritual duties and canon law was considered to be a priority. The commission was to exempt from this examination the priests who had accumulated at least six years of experience in providing spiritual care to their congregations, priests who had worked as professors of theology and philosophy, and middle-school teachers who had worked as priests for at least three years before they started teaching. The examination was to be a written, not an oral one. The next principles listed by the commission contradicted, to some extent, those set out above. Up to this point, the focus was on passing the exam for appointment to the office of parish priest. Afterwards, proposals referred to announcing in the diocese that applications could be submitted for a vacant parish post and to the need for publishing three questions, the answers to which should be sent to the diocese. The one who achieved the best result – provided, of course, that there were no objections to his moral conduct – was to be appointed by the bishop to the vacant parish. In other words, every appointment to an office was to be made following a contest, *concursum*. While accepting that this might shed light on the candidates’ competence, the Franciscan provincial leader Keresztes József nevertheless insisted in the pre-synod project he drafted that if the post was won by someone who was not liked by the community, then that person would have a difficult life. GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Keresztes József ferences tartományfőnök beadványa* [*Report drafted by Keresztes József, Franciscan provincial leader*], 16 August 1848.

Mihály proclaimed that, in the spirit of the Tridentine Council,⁴⁹ one synodal examination was necessary for obtaining benefices. He was resuming thus the terms of Szepesy Ignác's aforementioned decree.

Citing the decrees of the Council of Trent, the diocesan synod of 1913⁵⁰ provided that this examination would be compulsory for all diocesan priests after three years of clerical activity. The exam was to be both written and oral. The subject of the written examination was drawn up on the basis of pre-set topics, addressing catechism and biblical exegesis. The oral examination included topics from six specialised theological subjects: *fundamental theology* (Divine revelation. The Church. Papal primacy and infallibility); *dogmatic theology* (On the Triune God. On original sin. On the resurrection of the body. On the need for divine grace. On just deeds. On the sacraments. On innovations); *moral theology* (On the freedom of will. On laws. On conscience. On virtues. On the Ten Commandments. On damaging equity. On restoring equity. On the church commands); *pastoral theology* (On the Holy Eucharist. On the forgiveness of sins. On the holy unction. On church blessings); *canon law* (Civil marriage. Spiritual guidance and civil marriage. Impediments to marriage and grounds for its annulment. Dispensation⁵¹); *biblical* (interpreting the Sunday evangelical pericopes). This synodal examination was mandatory not only for priests, but also for the ecclesiastical administrators of parishes.⁵² Passing the synodal exam was a prerequisite for obtaining parochial benefices.⁵³

In addition to the matter of parochial benefices, particular importance was given to the administration of parishes and of the diocese. The synod of 1913 developed detailed regulations on the administrative duties of the bishop, the vicar, the archpriests and the parish priests. Ordinances regarding ecclesiastical hierarchy and hierarchical relationships occupied an important place in the decisions taken by the synod. Both in 1822 and in 1848 there was a tendency of decentralisation, of "parliamentarising" the system. Targeting the upcoming diocesan synod, the 1822 Statute provided that the majority vote should outweigh the bishop's decision. This idea was reinforced by the fact that in order to remove any possibility of influencing the other synod participants, the bishop's vote was to be given last.⁵⁴ Although this solution infringed the canon law regulations, one participant⁵⁵ asked the following question in the synodal assembly of 1848: "is this assembly just a simple consultative assembly, or one that can reach valid decisions by majority agreement? After debating the issue, the presiding bishop says that this synod will have the power that the Council of Trent granted it."⁵⁶ The bishop's diplomatic response was not enough to prevent the Archbishop of Kalocsa, Nádasdy Ferenc, from expressing his doubts about the legitimacy of the Transylvanian Diocesan Synod of 1848.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ The minutes of the priests' conference also mention that only priests who passed the episcopal examination could be elected in the Szekler villages that benefit from this right. GYÉFKL, Fund: Gyulafehérvári Plébániai Irattár. Püspöki körlevelek 1866-1869 [The Alba Iulia Archives]. Episcopal circulars 1866-1869] 3300/1870 – *Az 1869-es papi közgyűlés jegyzőkönyve* [Minutes of the clergy's general assembly of 1869].

⁵⁰ Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 22.

⁵¹ Dispensation (from a legal provision) granting the right to marriage without wedding notices.

⁵² Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 26.

⁵³ Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 21.

⁵⁴ Statuta 1822, 184-185. Hermann 1936, 14.

⁵⁵ His name was not recorded in the minutes.

⁵⁶ GYÉFKL EZS 1085/1848 – *Az erdélyi egyházmegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyve*. Első ülés, 4. pont. [Minutes of the Transylvanian Diocesan Synod. The first session, Point 4.]

⁵⁷ GYÉFKL PI 1357/1848 – *Nádasdy Ferencz kalocsai érsek levele Kovács Miklós erdélyi püspökhöz*. [Letter of Nádasdy Ferencz, the Archbishop of Kalocsa, to the Transylvanian Bishop Kovács Miklós. Kalocsa, the 25th day of St. Michael's month 1848], Kalocsa, 25 September 1848.

Moreover, under the 1822 Statute the bishop was bound to draw up a report on the state of the diocese before the annual synod took place.⁵⁸ In 1848 the participants were not so bold as to request this episcopal report, but they wished that at least the administrator of the priestly pension fund would submit a report to the synod.⁵⁹ At the same time, envisioning decentralisation, the 1822 Statute provided for the archpriests to have their own courts of law, with notaries, assessors, defence lawyers and prosecutors (in matrimonial matters). The bishop's sole prerogative would have been to confirm their decisions.⁶⁰ In 1848, on the third day of session, the plan was once again tabled for discussion. It was proposed that deanery courts should be restored to the status of courts of first instance. Those present voted in favour of the proposal, somewhat embellished by the prospect that the delegates nominated for the national synod would soon demand a solution to the problem.⁶¹

In the context of the revolutionary changes of 1848, the demands of the diocesan clergy exceeded, in substance, the provisions of the canon law in force and evinced a very strong drive towards democratisation. In the Transylvanian diocese, there were protests against the civil government's right to appoint candidates for the episcopacy. In 1848 it was proposed that the Roman Catholic Status⁶² should nominate three candidates. The chapter was to elect the new bishop from among these. Attempts were made to limit the bishop's right to freely appoint archpriests. If a position of archpriest became vacant, the priests in that deanery were to nominate by vote three candidates, one of whom was to be appointed by the bishop to that office. The Deanery of Gheorgheni proposed that an archpriest could remain in office only as long as he

⁵⁸ Statuta 1822, 7. Hermann 1936, 9.

⁵⁹ In a letter addressed to the episcopal consistory, the priests from Gheorgheni showed that they wanted to know details about the budget, but a letter they sent to the archpriests reveals that they were not only curious about the budget, but wanted to receive reports from those who administered it. GYÉFKL PI 823/1848 – *Mészáros Antal gyergyói esperes beadványa az erdélyi Consistoriumhoz* [Request submitted by Mészáros Antal, the Archpriest of Gheorgheni, to the Transylvanian Consistory], Gyergyószentmiklós, 27 May 1848. *Gyergyói esperesi kerület papságának gyűlési jegyzőkönyve. 1814–1862. Rendkívüli gyűlés jegyzőkönyve. [Minutes of the assembly of priests from the Deanery of Gheorgheni. 1814–1862. Minutes of the extraordinary assembly]*, Gyergyóújfalu, 22 May 1848. GYÉFKL Gyergyói Gyűjtőlevéltára, Gyergyószentmiklósi Plébánia iratai. Helyi egyházi archontológia. 1276–1861. [The Gheorgheni Archives. Documents of Gheorgheni Parish. Local ecclesiastical archontology. 1276–1861]

⁶⁰ Statuta 1822, 15. Hermann 1936, 9.

⁶¹ GYÉFKL EZS 1085/1848 – *Az erdélyi egyházmegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyve* [Minutes of the Transylvanian Diocesan Synod].

⁶² This also had secular members. Following the religious Reformation, steps were taken to expel the bishop, the monastic orders and the clergy from Transylvania. That is why the secular representatives of Catholicism spoke out in the legislative assemblies (the Diet), fighting for strengthening the church. They oversaw religious education and religious foundations. Thus, the laymen, together with the few remaining priests, managed to “run” the diocese even in the absence of a bishop. This community of interests, born in the context of specific historical events, was originally called “Status Catholicorum Dominorum” (Roman Catholic Status), in the meeting of the Transylvanian Diet that was held in Cluj in September-October 1615. The Catholic Status in Transylvania did not cease to function even after the bishop's return in 1716. Despite the absolutist measures of Empress Maria Theresa, who resorted to *ius supremæ patronatus* in order to restrict the activity of the Status in 1767, it continued to address the needs of the Church in Transylvania. The Status outlived absolutism, and during the period of dualism, in 1873, it managed to reorganise itself and resume its historical activities. The Catholic Status, comprised of laymen and clergy members, maintained its decision-making powers, especially on matters of property and education. Within the Catholic Status, chaired by the bishop, members made decisions by vote. Thus, the Status had internal autonomy in Transylvania, a unique situation in the Catholic Church. Holló László, “Az erdélyi katolikus autonómia, ill. az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus tegnap és ma [Catholic autonomy in Transylvania and the Roman Catholic Status in the past and today]”, In *Katolikus autonómia. Fejezetek az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus történetéből* [Catholic autonomy. Chapters in the history of the Roman Catholic Status in Transylvania], ed. László Holló (Miercurea Ciuc: Státus, 2007), 15-34.

was able to fulfil his duties. According to the synodal minutes of 1848, the final assent rested with the bishop.⁶³ In 1848 a consensus could not be reached on the appointment of the episcopal vicar. The issue was mentioned only in the document submitted by the Deanery of Abrud,⁶⁴ as it was not debated in the synod. However, this diocese, isolated from the bishop who had remained in the besieged fortress of Alba Iulia, felt the lack of a central leadership and was reluctant to accept the appointment of Kedves István, the Abbot of Cluj, as vicar.⁶⁵ Because of isolation and of the pressing issue of internal autonomy, repeatedly brought up at the synod, and considering the problems faced by the church leaders, the appointment of the episcopal vicar was side-lined and the problem of the deaneries' internal autonomy took centre stage. It was hoped that this shift of focus would be in line with the bishop's will. On 11 June 1849, the priests from the Deanery of Odorhei showed their endorsement for the statement "filed by the clergy of Gheorgheni," motivating their position as follows: "this appointment goes against the decisions of the previous year's synod."⁶⁶ Here it becomes clear that having set on their own path, the diocesan clergy arbitrarily interpreted the reform proposals drafted by the diocesan synod in 1848 and tried to have their own say on how those regulations should come into effect. Looking for individual solutions, the clergy dared to push things as far as not accepting archpriests who did not support the revolution to be their legitimate superiors. Instead, they wished to replace them with notaries or archpriests from the neighbouring deaneries and to request the bishop's consent only afterwards. For example, after the defeat of the revolution and the civil war, the priests from Ciucu de Jos asked the bishop that Fr. Ferenczi József from Plăieșii de Jos, who was in prison and "who, in line with last year's synodal decisions, was elected by a majority of votes as notary of the Plăieșii de Jos and Ciucu de Jos ecclesiastical district at the beginning of last November, should be confirmed in office and be allowed to take over the archpriest's position until our very own archpriest regains his much desired freedom."⁶⁷ This was an essentially radical solution but not an isolated case. Even before the diocesan synod of 1848, a petition had been submitted by the clergy from Mureș, who demanded that archpriests should be freely elected by priests in the deanery. In addition, they stated that "we welcome the removal from

⁶³ The minutes of the preparatory deanery meetings did not always leave this matter to the bishop's discretion. The Deanery of Gheorgheni decided that the archpriest could be dismissed if he neglected his duties, abused his power or lost the confidence of the majority. GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Gyergyói kerület beadványa* [Report of the Deanery of Gheorgheni], Gyergyócsomafalva, 1 August 1848.

⁶⁴ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Bányavidéki kerület beadványa*. [Report of the deanery from the mining area], Abrudbánya, 1. August 1848.

⁶⁵ This did not mean that the vicar's pro-revolution circulars were not distributed. The introductory section of the minutes of the priests' conference held in Odorhei on 11 July 1849 reveals that the circular of 29 May issued by the episcopal vicar "has already been circulated." GYÉFKL PI 633/1849 – *Az udvarhelyszéki esperesi kerület papság közgyűlésének jegyzőkönyve*. [Minutes of the clergy's general assembly in the Deanery of Odorhei], Udvarhely, 11 June 1849. Facing the consequences, the arrested archpriests claimed that they had been following the vicar's instructions: "Under the threat of sin, we were bound to do those deeds by the decrees here annexed, issued by Canon and Abbot Kedves István, appointed episcopal vicar by Your Excellency." GYÉFKL PI 338/1849 – *Tankó Albert csíkszentgyörgyi plébános és Mászáros Antal gyergyói esperes leve Kovács Miklós püspöknek*. [Letter sent by Tankó Albert, the priest from Ciucsângeorgiu, and Archpriest Mészáros Antal to Bishop Kovács Miklós], Nagyszeben, 18 September 1849.

⁶⁶ GYÉFKL PI 633/1849 – *Az udvarhelyszéki esperesi kerület papság közgyűlésének jegyzőkönyve*. [Minutes of the general assembly of the clergy from the deanery in the seat of Odorhei], Udvarhely, 11 June 1849.

⁶⁷ GYÉFKL PI 414/1849 – *Miklósi Gergely levele az alcsíki papság nevében Kovács Miklós püspökhöz*. [Letter sent by Miklósi Gergely on behalf of the clergy in Ciucu de Jos to Bishop Kovács Miklós], Csíkszenkirály, 4 October 1849.

office of the Archpriest of Odorhei.⁶⁸ We want the Archpriest of Sibiu to be removed from office in the same way, as he is a sworn enemy of the Hungarian nation.’⁶⁹ The diocesan bishop did not comment on the case in 1848. While he agreed that the Archpriest of Odorhei should be deposed by the priests, he did not consent to the dismissal of other archpriests. He took into account “the desire of the priests in the deanery, which had reached him in the form of an answer to the discussion topics set for the synod” in September 1848. Abiding by the principles promoted in the synod of 1848, he agreed that the protopresbyteral notary should be appointed from among the candidates nominated by the archpriests.⁷⁰ No wonder the diocesan clergy felt that the diocesan bishop was encouraging their efforts. Later that became a compelling motivation for them to voice their opinions.

Seen in this light, the autonomy of the deanery districts explains why in May 1849, when the issue of marriages was still unresolved,⁷¹ Gheorgheni District proposed that “until Alba Iulia is liberated, our honourable local leader [the archpriest] should be assigned the position of episcopal vicar; the other districts should also be urged to entrust their archpriests with this prerogative so as to avoid divorce trials and other hearings suffering delays during the siege.”⁷² They believed that the bishop had applied the principles of the synod in the protopresbyteral notaries’ case and assumed that he would also give his consent to assigning vicarial duties to archpriests.

However, after the defeat of the revolution and the independence war of 1848-1849, such approaches were neglected. This does not mean that there was no longer an interest in decentralisation. The synodal regulations of 1913 made this interest very clear. On the issue of hierarchical principles, the church leadership rules stipulated that: “A bishop, whom the Holy Spirit has placed at the head of the church, shall lead the diocese entrusted to him by virtue of his personal and natural right, according to the church canons and decrees. Since the bishop’s duty is to lead his flock with righteousness, setting an example of virtue and emulating the love and the severity of Christ’s own righteousness, he shall relentlessly watch that the decisions of the pope and of the councils are respected and that the Church’s provisions are enforced in this most gracious diocese. The bishop shall ensure that the local laws – whether they have been issued by the bishop or have been in use in the diocese as well-entrenched customs – are adhered to. If he

⁶⁸ Archpriest Rajmund János was dismissed in 1848 by the local clergy, disgruntled with his work. After this dismissal, Antalfi Ferenc, notary of the deanery, temporarily took over the archpriest’s duties. In the conscription drafted in the diocese in the spring of 1849 at the request of Berde Mózes, Antalfi Ferenc was mentioned as “vicar protopresbyter.” GYÉFKL PI 92/1849 – *Pakó János püspöki titkár felterjesztése Berde Mózes kormánybiztoshoz.* [*Episcopal secretary Pakó János’s report to government commissioner Berde Mózes*], Kolozsvár, 13 April 1849.

⁶⁹ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Marosi kerület beadványa.* [*Report of the Mureş Deanery*], Marosvásárhely, 12 August 1848.

⁷⁰ The priest from Ocna Sibiu, Gábor János, was appointed to the Deanery of Făgăraş, the priest from Tiur, Matskási János, to the Deanery of Alba, the priest from Dumbrăveni, Bögözi Lajos, to the Deanery of Dumbrăveni, the priest from Turda, András Ferenc, to the Deanery of Arieş, and the priest from Reghin, Györfi Lajos, to the Deanery of Mureş. GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Kovács Miklós esperesi kerületei jegyzőket kinevező körlevele* [*Circular letter issued by Kovács Miklós, on the appointment of protopresbyteral notaries*], Kolozsvár, 13 September 1848.

⁷¹ This is very important also because the settlement of marriage cases pertained to the authority of the episcopal court. Hence, the plan was to empower archpriests as vicars and to entrust deanery courts with the authority of an episcopal see.

⁷² GYÉFKL Gyergyói Gyűjtőlevéltár, Gyergyószentmiklósi Plébánia iratai. Helyi egyházi archontológia. 1276-1861. Gyergyói esperesi kerület papságának gyűlési jkt. 1814-1862. [The Gheorgheni Archive. Documents of the Gheorgheni Parish. Local ecclesiastical archontology. 1276-1861. Minutes of the priests’ conferences from the Deanery of Gheorgheni 1814-1862.] 03 May 1849. Gyergyószárhegy. Espereskerületi gyűlési jegyzőkönyv. [3 May 1849. Lăzarea. Minutes of the archpriests’ assembly.]

should find that either the general laws or the local ones are broken, he may punish the culprits according to the holy canons.”⁷³ In relation to the vicar it was stated that “Together with the bishop, the vicar general forms a single court of justice. Therefore, the vicar’s decrees are on a par with the bishop’s decrees. One cannot appeal to the bishop against the vicar’s decision. The vicar general shall act in that capacity by virtue of the decision whereby he has been appointed to office by the bishop.”⁷⁴

As for archpriests, in 1913 the opinions were clearly in favour of their appointment by the bishop. There was no mention of any nominations or elections.⁷⁵ The office of archpriest was not an endowment in itself, but a function. His sole role was to lead the church district and, thus, to support the bishop in leading the diocese. His duty was, therefore, “to duly transmit the decrees, appointments, orders and other decisions taken by the bishop and to watch over their observance by priests and believers.”⁷⁶ The synodal resolution listed the following tasks: regularly conducting visits in the district, installing parish priests in office, overseeing financial affairs, finding substitute priests for vacant parishes, and presiding over district assemblies.⁷⁷ Not a word was said about the deanery courts clamoured for in the nineteenth century.

Everyday life and financial problems

Besides participating in the leadership of the church, the diocesan clergy were particularly concerned about the problems they faced in their daily life. As regards the priests’ income, the diocesan synod of 1913 regulated the issue of property in case of transfers,⁷⁸ stipulating how wealth was to be divided between the priest who was leaving a parish and the one who had been appointed in his place. Regulations also applied to the income of confessional school teachers and of chaplains, as opposed to the nineteenth century, when only the income of chaplains had been the focus of diocesan proceedings and projects. In a Josephinist spirit, the 1822 Statute had already regulated the salary of chaplains, making it mandatory to employ them in the larger religious communities.⁷⁹ At the diocesan synod of 1848, a common plan was drafted for the salaries of priests⁸⁰ and chaplains. The amount of these wages differed, but essentially the

⁷³ Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 1.

⁷⁴ Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 4.

⁷⁵ Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 6.: “*A püspök, hogy az egyházmegyét a lehető legüdvösebben tudja irányítani és kormányozni, minden egyes kerület élére vidéki főesperest állít a neki alárendelt papságból*” [“*In order to lead and steer the diocese to the best of his abilities, the bishop shall appoint an archpriest at the head of each district, choosing that prelate from among the clergy subordinated to him.*”]

⁷⁶ Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 7.

⁷⁷ Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 8-16.

⁷⁸ Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 17-20. Parish priests or parish administrators, parish community presidents and parish school principals. Parish priests and parish administrators are appointed by episcopal letter and must take care of all the movable and immovable property, the foundations and the capital belonging to the church, the school, the rectory under the supervision of the archdeacon, according to the Statute mentioned below.; § 18. Every parish shall be informed of the income generated by of its endowments. The income shall be carefully accounted for and approved together with the archpriest and the deanery representatives. §19. From the first day of his installation in office, the parish priest or the parish administrator must submit reports on all of the assets of the church, and he has usufruct rights over the revenue and the income obtained from the endowments of the parish. §20. The division of income obtained from parochial assets shall be divided equally and according to the law between the predecessor or the inheritance of the deceased predecessor and the successor, respecting the principle of continuity.

⁷⁹ Statuta 1822, 26. Hermann 1936, 10.

⁸⁰ Only the diocesan synod of 1848 dealt in detail with the revenues of the parish priests. The 1822 Statute brought this issue into question, but lay more emphasis on episcopal revenues, stipulating in § 26 that if the bishop violated

salary proposed for the chaplains represented about half of the parish priest's salary.⁸¹ Divergent projects failed to be brought to a common denominator in the pre-synod assemblies. A unified solution to the problem was to be reached in the national synod, but this was no longer held. The issue was tabled again for discussion at the priests' conference of 1869, where it was stipulated that if the chaplain's income, together with the 63 forints and other permanent benefices, amounted to less than 120 forints per year, and if that income could not be supplemented from other funds, then the parish priest should provide the missing amount for an annual salary of 120 forints, giving him a third of the sum for religious services [the stole fee], as well as for accommodation and meals.⁸²

In the annexes of the diocesan synodal book of 1913,⁸³ the regulation concerning the parish priests' income⁸⁴ stressed that the church's accounting year began on 1 May and ended on 30 April. The division of any financial income was to be made according to the time spent in office during the previous accounting year. The income in kind was to be divided according to a peaceful agreement between the one leaving the position and the one occupying it. If a parish priest was appointed after the autumn harvest, this was to be enjoyed by his predecessor, on the grounds that whoever sowed should also reap. The priest who left after the autumn sowings could ask his successor to reimburse him for the cost of seeds and sowing. In several paragraphs it was established that the income from arrears on loans and from tax in kind was to be divided according to the above principles. So was the income from liturgical service or from various foundations. If an amicable settlement was not reached, it was up to the bishop's representative, the chief administrator or the church administrator and the eparchial council to decide by a majority of votes.

While it was clear that the priest's income had to be secured primarily by the religious community, bills regarding the sources of priestly income were drawn up in the nineteenth century, most of them in 1848. These statutes were closely aligned with the legislation drafted in Bratislava in 1848, which abolished tithing under Article 13, with serious financial consequences. The Transylvanian Diocesan Synod of 1848 and the Roman Catholic Status tried to find solutions to this problem. According to the notes of the synod's preparatory committee, the discussion of this topic began on the morning of 29 August 1848. What is missing from the minutes of the meeting is the first part of the committee's report, which sought to lay down the principles for ensuring the salaries of Catholic priests. "This consultation outlined two possible outcomes. The Catholic Church could transfer all its revenues to the Status⁸⁵ [meaning the state],

the law regarding the use of income generated by the endowments of the diocese, any canon or archdeacon had the right to rebuke him, either in writing or before the diocesan synod. Statuta 1822, 8. Hermann 1936, 8.

⁸¹ A three-tier wage bill drafted by the theology professor Zerich Tivadar stipulated that if the parish priests had salaries of 1200, 1000, or 800 forints (depending on the endowments), then the chaplains should have salaries of 500, 400, and 300 forints. The clergy of the Gheorgheni Deanery proposed the same amounts for the priests' salaries, suggesting that chaplains' wages should be 400 forints in towns and 300 forints in villages. The Inner Solnoc Deanery proposed salaries of 300-500 forints for chaplains and 600-1200 forints for parish priests. GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Zerich Tivadar teológiai tanár beadványa*. [Report of Theology Professor Zerich Tivadar], Gyulafehérvár, August 1848. *Gyergyói kerület beadványa* [Report of the Gheorgheni Deanery], Gyergyócsomafalva, 1 August 1848. *Belső-Szolnok kerület beadványa* [Report of the Inner Solnoc Deanery], Szamosújvár, 2 August 1848.

⁸² GYÉFKL GyFPI-Pk 3300/1870 – *Az 1869-es papi közgyűlés jegyzőkönyve* [Minutes of the clergy's general assembly of 1869].

⁸³ App. I.

⁸⁴ Rules governing the division of clerical revenues between predecessors and successors.

⁸⁵ Here the reference is not to the Transylvanian Status, but to the state.

in which case the Status [the state] would be responsible for the remuneration of priests, cantors, etc., but also for covering expenses related to religious services and other needs of the church. Alternatively, if the Catholic Status maintained its ecclesiastical foundations and benefices (episcopal, capitulary or of any other nature), it would have to use such revenues to meet the needs of the churches and of its ministers. In the event that its revenues and foundations did not suffice to do that, the difference would have to be obtained either from the Status [state] or from the parishioners. If the [Catholic] Status wanted to take care of the needs of the church and of its ministers, it was proposed that in order to achieve this goal the much too large number of canons, abbots and provosts should be reduced and the partner chapters should be dismantled.⁸⁶ After debates on these issues, conclusions were drawn.⁸⁷ The decisions reached in the commission's meeting were repeated almost word for word in the minutes of the assembly of the Roman Catholic Status.

Compared to other topics, this matter triggered very vehement debates, as suggested by the much more numerous amendments and revisions compared to debates on non-financial subjects. At the meeting of the Roman Catholic Status, prior to the vote on the commission's proposal, Andrási Antal, the parish priest from Joseni, emphasised that the regulation of the priests' salaries was required lest "the clergy should be forced to resort to ploughing and sowing the land. Instead, they should devote that time, as per the job requirement, to personal development and not to securing the bare necessities, which would mean neglecting their mission to provide spiritual guidance to the faithful and of performing their ministering duties, for they would thus cause eternal damage to the people and the state."⁸⁸

Opinions that were at odds with the commission's proposals could also be heard at the assembly. For instance, Keresztes Márton, a teacher and priest in Odorhei, requested that the salaries of priests should be entirely entrusted to the state and that the wealth of the church should to be transferred to the state.⁸⁹ The proposal was unanimously rejected⁹⁰ despite the fact that a whole volley of such proposals had been issued by the pre-synod deanery assemblies. Of course, proposals for the priests' salaries to be entrusted to the state did not come solely from the Deanery of Odorhei.⁹¹ The Deanery of Gheorgheni had a similar proposal, concealing a deeper unresolved issue: predial tithes. This issue will be discussed in more detail below. The project advanced by the Deanery of Gheorgheni is important for our present concerns because it proposed that money payments should be substituted for payments in kind and that the priests' salary should not depend at all on the religious community. Since the state was to pay the priests,

⁸⁶ The first time they used a harsher term: *eradication*, but they subsequently replaced it with *disbandment*.

⁸⁷ Those few lines were not included in the minutes of the assembly of the Roman Catholic Status. They were also erased from the commission's minutes, where we know for certain that they were initially used: "With regard to the personnel, the Transylvanian Catholic Status upholds the principle that the state should be exempted from bearing the maintenance costs of the religious denominations and of their ministers as long as ecclesiastical revenues can support those expenses."

⁸⁸ Sávai János, *Zsinat és forradalom - Erdély, 1848/49* [*Synod and revolution – Transylvania, 1848/49*], (Szeged: Ferences, 1999), 429.

⁸⁹ His proposal was not covered up. It was recorded in the minutes of the assembly of the Roman Catholic Status on 31 August, under no. 37.

⁹⁰ Meszlényi Antal, *A jozefinizmus kora Magyarországon. (1786-1846)* [*The Josephine period in Hungary (1786-1846)*]. (Budapest: Stephaneum, 1934), 98-99.

⁹¹ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Udvarhelyi kerület beadványa* [*Report of the Odorhei Deanery*], Udvarhely, 17 August 1848.

the church had to transfer this prerogative to the state.⁹² Keresztes Márton's opinion, voiced during the preparatory meetings and at the assembly of the Roman Catholic Status, is of interest also because the payment of priests by the state and, in parallel with it, the right to manage the church's wealth were crucial matters whose resolution was equally important for both the state and the church. The problem of church properties being administered by the state had already been addressed in the ecclesiastical legislation issued in Bratislava. The members of the Bratislava Assembly had understood that underlying the debate around Article 20 was the right to administer the church's assets. Therefore, the present assembly stressed that the Catholic Status itself wanted to administer the salaries of the priests and of its lay employees and to provide for the needs of the church.⁹³ If the burden of paying the ecclesiastical staff were to be transferred to the state, then, to cover these expenses, the assets of the Catholic Status were also to be subject to state administration. This would be a "sweet" burden for the state. The Cluj Assembly wanted to solve the problem of church wealth by setting up a national religious fund that would include all ecclesiastical assets and foundations and cover all the financial needs of the church.⁹⁴ The administration of this fund was to be handed over to a joint council, appointed by the national synod. The 1848 Assembly, however, did not draft a detailed plan to that end, leaving this task in the hands of the future assemblies. At the same time, due to the cancellation of the national synod, this solution was not given proper consideration.

The assembly was trying to solve a specifically Transylvanian problem when it decided that predial tithes should be eliminated. On the Szeklerland predial tithes were more burdensome for the poor than personal tithes, hindering, at the same time, the conduct of priestly activities. The diocesan schematism of 1882 characterised the system of taxes in kind on the Szeklerland as follows: "According to the law issued by Saint Stephen, great tithes are to be paid to the bishop, while the priest is entitled to land and servants. (...) The Szeklers did not adopt personal tithes. (...) In the Szekler communes, predial tithes (*capetia*) are the custom (...) 1. He who makes 12-12 hay stacks must give 2 autumn hay stacks and two spring hay stacks to the priest, 1 autumn hay stack and 1 spring hay stack to the cantor. In addition, landowners with traction animals are required to provide a shipment of firewood, which is to be divided between the priest and the cantor. The tax is also paid by the nobles, even though ever since 1492 the Hungarian nobility has been taking steps to be exempted from it. 2. The parishioner may either work for a day or pay up. And this income is to be shared with the cantor. 3. He who has a harvest of only 6 autumn and spring hay stacks must give only half a hay stack."⁹⁵ Speaking about predial tithes, Veszely Károly said that the "so-called wages are neither tithes, nor land-related taxes, but individual taxes based on an old custom that has become law, as well as on state laws and conventions."

⁹² GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Gyergyói kerület beadványa [Report of the Gheorgheni Deanery]*, Gyergyócsomafalva, 1 August 1848.

⁹³ Endes Miklós: *Erdély három nemzete és négy bevett vallása autonómiájának története [A History of the Autonomy of the Three Nations and the Four Official Religions in Transylvania]*, (Budapest: Sylvester, 1935), 387.

⁹⁴ Forster János, councillor of the Transylvanian episcopal see, made some rather caustic statements afterwards about the idea of a religious fund created in this way: "So they want to live off their neighbours. In other words, what's mine is mine, but what's yours is mine as well. They do not even wonder what their neighbours think, for the Transylvanian Status wants to live off what's theirs" – Forster 1907, 30.

⁹⁵ *Az erdélyi egyházmegye. Plébániák és papok. [the Transylvanian Diocese. Parishes and priests]*. Translation of the Latin Schematism of 1882. Translation by Lajos Balázs, parish priest of Misentea. GYÉFKL Fund: Személyi Hagyaték [Personal inheritance] VIII/29, outside the file.

The levying of predial tithes gave rise to tensions between the priests and the faithful. Many a time a serious rift developed between them. Those who most firmly demanded the elimination of this tax were the priests from the Deanery of Ciucu de Sus. In the pre-synod project they drafted, they gave a detailed account of the problems related to the predial tithe system.⁹⁶ That is why they proposed eliminating it and offered reimbursement solutions. The compensations provided for in Article 13/1848 were to include payments for the priests who stood to lose part of their income if predial tithes were abolished. This problem was solved neither by the assembly of the Roman Catholic Status nor by the synod itself, but it was expected that the taxes due to the priest – predial tithes on the Szeklerland, for instance – would be collected not by the priest, but by the state authorities. Priests would thus only indirectly benefit from material support.⁹⁷ The resolution adopted by the Deanery of Cluj-Dabâca stated that the village authorities were to collect the priestly taxes from the people and the priests were to receive those payments from the authorities.⁹⁸ The Deanery of Turda-Arieş proposed an even more complicated system: the state was to impose a tax on the faithful and the money thus obtained was to enter the state treasury. It was from this amount and from the money coming from the foundations that the diocesan bishop was to order the payment of salaries to the clergy, as needed.⁹⁹ However, as seen above, neither at the assembly of the Roman Catholic Status nor at the synodal works could these projects dispel a fundamental and justified fear that if the state took over the task of paying the clergy, it would also lay claim on ecclesiastical assets. As we will see, the clergy of the Transylvanian diocese were not willing to give those assets up. Finally, the synod's decision was that the *status quo* would remain in force until the financial complications brought about by the revolutionary changes (tithe compensations) were resolved. In the absence of legislative harmonisation that should have followed the Union, the problem of predial tithes was not settled during the revolution. Its impact was still rather acute in the second part of the nineteenth century. In 1908, the enforcement of civil legislation led to the granting of salary supplements from the state treasury, so as to ensure the minimum wage set by the central authorities. Annex No. 14 of the 1913 synodal book¹⁰⁰ apprised the clergy of this state law.¹⁰¹ In 1912 the diocesan bishop published information about those who would be supported by the state and with what amounts.

Besides the income of priests, another important theme was the endowment of parishes. The decisions of the 1913 diocesan synod called for a very fair procedure and stipulated that the only way a priest could be deprived of his priestly assets was on the basis of the canons.¹⁰² This decision placed equity above abusive procedures, as seen from the legislation on the endowment of parishes. The importance of this pressing problem was indicated by the fact that the 1822 Statute contained provisions regarding the upkeep of parish buildings¹⁰³ and that in 1848 detailed

⁹⁶ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Felcsíki kerület beadványa* [Report of Ciucu de Sus Deanery], Karcfalva, 15 August 1848.

⁹⁷ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Szebeni és fogarasi kerület beadványa* [Report of the Deanery of Sibiu and Făgăraş], Szeben, 10 August 1848.

⁹⁸ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Kolozs-dobokai kerület beadványa* [Report of the Cluj-Dăbâca Deanery], Kolozsvár, 8 August 1848.

⁹⁹ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Torda-Aranyos kerület beadványa* [Report of the Turda-Arieş Deanery], Felvinc, 31 July 1848.

¹⁰⁰ App. XXIV

¹⁰¹ Article XIII of 1909 on the amendment of Article XIV of 1898 on the supplementation of the priests' income.

¹⁰² Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 23.

¹⁰³ Statuta 1822, 106-107. Hermann 1936, 12.

proposals were submitted on the endowment of parishes. The difference was that the 1822 Statute had very strictly regulated the matter of the priests' last wills and testaments, while in 1848, when it was ruled that they should have freedom of expression in recording their last wish, alternative solutions had to be found so that parishes could be available and used in all and every circumstances, as their mission demanded. The truth of the matter is that the deceased priest's relatives often took furniture and household items from the rectory.¹⁰⁴ Eventually, the 1848 synod adopted the principle that interior facilities, the so-called *instructus fundus*, should be as simple as possible and should be included in the inventory of parishes.¹⁰⁵ These common use objects (furniture) should always make it possible for the new parish priest to start his ministry without further ado in case of a transfer or a vacancy.

One of the specific facilities was the parish library. In the nineteenth century demands were made for the establishment and equipment of such libraries, as well as for supporting ecclesiastical publications. The question of ecclesiastical periodicals was not yet a topical theme in 1822, but it was very prominent in 1848 and in the diocesan priests' conference of 1869. We can assume that this was due to the fact that, in 1848, Fogarasy Mihály took steps to that end by drafting the resolution of the Hungarian Episcopal Council. As Bishop of Transylvania, he had the power to enforce its implementation. In 1848 Fogarasy Mihály, the titular bishop, was the interim president of the "Good and Cheap" publishing house. As reported in *Religió és Nevelés* [Religion and Education],¹⁰⁶ the operation approval had been issued by Kopácsi József, Archbishop of Esztergom, but after the latter's death, several obstacles stood in the way of the proper functioning of this publishing house. One of these was censorship, which made it impossible to publish even the bylaws of the editorial body. This impediment disappeared when the freedom of the press was enacted in 1848. In issue no. 11 which came out in May, *Religio és Nevelés* printed the bylaws of the religious publishing house.¹⁰⁷ The clergy of the Transylvanian diocese had a positive attitude towards the publishing house in 1848. Moreover, the minutes of the pre-synod assemblies attest that attempts were made to find financial solutions to support it. The priests from the Deanery of Turda-Arieş thought that finding shareholders was a possible solution,¹⁰⁸ while others were in favour of supporting the press from the parochial fund and from voluntary donations.¹⁰⁹ Of course, there were also some not too enthusiastic statements about the funding of the publishing house. In its assembly, the Mureş Deanery concluded that if the

¹⁰⁴ Before the synod, Franciscan provincial leader Keresztes József stated somewhat ironically: "the abuses involving the clergy's income have multiplied to such an extent that anyone who can snatch some of the deceased priest's assets seems almost convinced they will be treated with indulgence." GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Keresztes József ferences tartományfőnök beadványa* [Report drafted by Keresztes József, Franciscan provincial leader], 16 August 1848.

¹⁰⁵ The extract sent to the Bishop of Pécs lists what was to be included in the *instructus fundus*: a painted bed, four chairs, a table, a book and a clothes rack. In the maid's room there was to be an unpainted bed, a chair and a table. Also, the report suggests that where the *instructus fundus* was more generous than that, everything in excess of the bare minimum was to be sold. The money was to remain in the parish: it was to be passed on from the parish priest to his successor in office. GYÉFKL EZS 1085/1848 – *Az erdélyi egyházmegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyve*. Második ülés, 2. pont. [Minutes of the Transylvanian Diocesan Synod, second sitting, paragraph 2].

¹⁰⁶ *Religio és Nevelés* [Religion and Education] no.35. (4 May 1848), 285.

¹⁰⁷ *Idem*, no. 37 (11 May 1848), 311–312.

¹⁰⁸ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Torda–Aranyos kerület beadványa* [Report of the Turda-Arieş Deanery], Felvinc, 31 July 1848.

¹⁰⁹ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Zerich Tivadar teológiai tanár beadványa* [Report of Theology Professor Zerich Tivadar], Gyulafehérvár, August 1848.

publishing house did well, it would be able to support itself and would not need financial subsidies.¹¹⁰

As for the church newspaper, the verbal report is much more concise than the excerpt sent to the Archbishop of Eger, which summarised the items on the agenda. In the excerpt, the need for the publication of a church sheet was pointed out.¹¹¹ In addition, it was emphasised that the church newspaper would have to be bought everywhere at the expense of local parish treasuries and made available for borrowing by parishioners. It was also considered that the journal *Religio és Nevelés* should be purchased at deanery level. Recommendations were made for a religious-political newspaper to be founded. The idea that the task should be assigned to the “Catholicum Institutum”¹¹² was advanced at the clergy’s pre-synod assembly held in Alba Iulia in 1848. Proposals were made for a broadsheet that would be “on one hand, an impartial mirror of political events, and on the other hand, an ardent champion of the rights and interests of the Catholic religion and Church.”¹¹³ Similar proposals were put forward by the Deaneries of Ciucu de Jos and Casin, which stressed that while being an ecclesiastical publication, the newspaper should also target a lay readership.¹¹⁴ The need for church newspapers and magazines was most strikingly defined in the project of the Franciscans’ provincial leader, Keresztes József, who began his speech thus: “How long will the Catholic Status stay sleep?” He then correctly identified the importance of the press: “sooner than later the press will start acting like a dictator, and if that happens only in political matters, fine; but what if it also gets involved in religious

¹¹⁰ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Marosi kerület beadványa [Report of the Mureş Deanery]*, Marosvásárhely, 12 August 1848.

¹¹¹ Only this brief phrase appears in the minutes.

¹¹² GYÉFKL EZS no registration number – *Az augusztus 27-re összegyűlő erdély megyei zsinat tanácskozási tárgyainak rövid átnézete, – az egri érseknek beküldendő pontok*, 11. c. [*Brief analysis of the topics on the agenda of the Transylvanian Diocesan Synod to meet on 27 August – the points to be transmitted to the Archbishop of Eger*, 11. c.]. The author of an article published in *Religió és Nevelés* [in issue from 9 of April 1848, no. 29, 225-226] considered that the “Catholicum Institutum” was based on the model of the English Catholic “Institute,” validated by the pope under a decree issued on 19 February 1840. The institute was in fact a joint association, consisting of clerics and laymen. Purely ecclesiastical issues would not have been discussed, of course, by this institute, but by the bishop and, according to canon law, by the synod. The Catholicum Institutum was to deal exclusively with problems of a different nature: disseminating Catholic principles, teachings, synodal decisions and books; defending the independence, rights and freedom of the church in the political arena; solving the material problems of the church; settling debates concerning the relationship between Church and State. This solution would have made possible the involvement of laymen in the affairs of the church in such a way as to avoid violating the provisions of canon law: “The subjects of ecclesiastical legislation are only the church hierarchs and not the laymen, because they cannot have spiritual power in the church; therefore, the canons (*c. 1. Dist XCVI; c. 23. 24. XVI. Q. 7. etc.*) state very clearly that the laity cannot make decisions on church affairs and cannot impose laws, but are bound to obey the laws enforced by the church. This is also stated by the Popes of Rome, namely by Pius VI in a letter sent to the bishops of France on 6 March 1791 and in a letter addressed to the archbishops of Germany on 14 November 1780” (Szeredy 1974, 294). This provision did not prohibit the laity and the clergy from seeking mutual counsel and expressing their views. The institute that was to be founded would have created the necessary framework precisely for carrying out such activities. The concrete organisation plan was presented also in *Religio és Nevelés*. Because it was a national institute, anyone could become its member. The institute would have had several branches, consistent with the number of dioceses. Among them was the Transylvanian diocese, given the situation created after the Union. The proposal relating to the composition of the smaller committees was presented and the need for a central committee was underlined. In other words, there were plans to establish a body that, considering the activity of the Transylvanian Roman Catholic Status, had a long history in Transylvania.

¹¹³ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Gyulafehérvári papság beadványa [Report of the clergy from Alba Iulia]*, Gyulafehérvár, 31 July 1848.

¹¹⁴ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Alcsíki és kászonszéki kerület beadványa [Report of the Ciucu de Jos and Casin Deanery]*, Csíkszentmárton, 1 August 1848.

issues and what if it ironically likens our dogmas with certain political events...?” He gave an example of how the principle of papal infallibility had been misinterpreted and mocked by a Protestant journalist. “So let them not find issue with the secrets of our religion, and we will put the Bora Kata revelation to rest.”¹¹⁵ A church newspaper was therefore very important, so “we should subscribe to it even if we have to sell the coats on our backs, and it should circulate not only in Pest, but also in Transylvania.”¹¹⁶

As diocesan bishop, Fogarasy Mihály decided in 1869 that each and every priest in the diocese should subscribe to *Egyházi és Iskolai Hetilap* [The Church and School Weekly], the official broadsheet of the diocese. If a priest of lesser means could not afford to do that, then his subscription was to be made at the expense of the church treasury.¹¹⁷ As seen above, such proposals were also made at the diocesan synod of 1848. Then, having emphasised the need for a church newspaper, the participants suggested that the faithful should have the opportunity to borrow it. That idea was linked to the intention of setting up deanery libraries.¹¹⁸ An extract sent by the diocesan synod to the Bishop of Pécs in 1848 shows that there was a proposal for the books of priests who died intestate to be donated to several deanery libraries that were to be founded.¹¹⁹ The proposal shows that such libraries did not yet exist, but there was a clear demand for their establishment. The need for deanery libraries was raised in 1848, in the context of discussions on improving the clergy’s knowledge and broadening their horizon. Putting this project into practice was fraught with difficulties, so the 1869 priests’ conference had to draft a special decree on the establishment of libraries. Paragraph 38 of the diocesan synod of 1913 stipulated that “every priest or administrator, depending on the custom, should keep a record of all the documents, carefully upholding the praiseworthy precedents set by their predecessors. Every parish, of course, will keep the *domus historia* or the parish diary. Over the next three years, an archive and a library will be created in the parish office, at the patrons’ expenses.” The decree made reference to the fourth annex,¹²⁰ which contained details of the episcopal ordinance on this matter. This decree stated that books in the parish had to be inventoried. It follows that they were the property of the parish. The books of deceased canons and theology teachers ended up in the diocesan library, while the books of the other priests were handed over to the parish in which they had last served.

The priests’ pensions and last wills

The obligation for priests to dispose of their books in their testaments was closely related to the freedom of expression in recording their last wish, which was the very last undertaking of their clerical lives. In parallel with this, it is worth considering the demands related to the priests’ pensions. These two topics will be discussed in the last part of our study. In 1913, the diocese

¹¹⁵ Katharina von Bora (1499-1552), wife of Martin Luther.

¹¹⁶ GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Keresztes József ferences tartományfőnök beadványa* [Report drafted by Keresztes József, Franciscan provincial leader], 16 August 1848.

¹¹⁷ In this case, the subscription was made not in the name of the priest, but in that of the teacher or the archpriest. GYÉFKL GyFPI-Pk 3300/1870 – *Az 1869-es papi közgyűlés jegyzőkönyve* [Minutes of the clergy’s general assembly of 1869].

¹¹⁸ The 1822 Statute mentioned only the parish archive. Statuta 1822, 155.

¹¹⁹ GYÉFKL EZS no registration number – *Választmányi munkálat azon zsinati tárgyakról, melyekről készítendő megyezsinati munkálat a pécsi nagyméltóságú püspök Úrnak leszen beküldendő* [The commission’s conclusions on the synodal topics featuring in the proceedings of the diocesan synod to be forwarded to His Excellency the Bishop of Pécs].

¹²⁰ App. IV.

considered the issue of regulating pensions to be of primary importance. While exempting priests from taxes, the synod recommended that they should pay a contribution to the pension fund.¹²¹ Diocesan lawmakers also attempted to regulate the issue of the priests' pensions and last wills very thoroughly throughout the nineteenth century. The provisions of the 1822 Statute stipulated that priests must leave a quarter of their wealth to the seminary and the pension fund.¹²² In 1848, in connection with Kollonich's contract (which was not binding in Transylvania, in any case), proposals for reform were made at the diocesan synod. It was deemed that priests should have complete freedom in drawing up their last will and testament. This issue was important also because while the priests present at the synod limited themselves to voicing their opinions or desires on various other matters (quite vehemently, at times), on this particular issue they were very determined to reach a decision.¹²³ Amending the decrees of the 1822 Statute,¹²⁴ the demand for complete freedom in expressing one's last wishes was recorded in the minutes of the pre-synod deanery assemblies, but also in the minutes of the synod's organisation committee.¹²⁵ A new rule was drafted regarding the assets left by priests who died intestate. The provisions of the 1822 Statute were revoked. The new rule divided the priest's wealth into two. One part went to the relatives, while the other was further divided into three parts. The first went to the local church, the second to the village poor and the third to priests who were no longer able to work, either because of old age or because they had been incapacitated for other reasons, but not if that was their fault. Since the provisions of the Statute had been repealed, another solution had to be found to support the priests' pension fund.¹²⁶ The synod of 1848 decided on the annual taxation of the active clergy, but did not determine the amount of this tax. Interestingly enough, Bishop

¹²¹ Synodal Book 1913, paragraph 24.

¹²² Statuta 1822.

¹²³ That is suggested by the indicative mood of the verb *stergem* [erase] – but only on one occasion! GYÉFKL EZS 1085/1848. *Az erdélyi egyházmegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyve*. Első ülés, 9. pont. [*Minutes of the Transylvanian Diocesan Synod*, first session, paragraph 9.]

¹²⁴ It is also worth analysing the content of the numerous amendments made in the minutes of the commission. In the first draft of the text they wrote: “we also claim” that the decrees of Szepeszy's Status should be removed. This phrase was deleted and replaced with the phrase “we declare.” This version was deleted as well, so the commission finally came up with the final wording, from which the verb was missing: “Since we have made these observations about Kollonich's contract, then that rule (*Stat. Dioec. Part. II. Sect. XVI. §2.*) according to which a quarter of the fortune of every priest in our diocese must be given to the old and ailing priests or must enrich the seminary's capital.” After this half-finished sentence, the draft continued: “let it be removed, for now we are more entitled to act.” Subsequently this addition was deleted as well, being replaced with the final version: “we hereby delete it, especially since” – and the definitive text of the minutes continued by anticipating the issue of the pension fund for priests, a topic that was to be discussed the following morning. The active clergy was to pay an annual tax, in favour of the retired priests. GYÉFKL EZS no registration number – *Vélemény azon zsinati tárgyról, melyekről készítendő megyezsinati munkálat a beszercebányai nagyméltóságú püspök Úrnak leszen beküldendő* [*Opinion on the synodal topics featuring in the proceedings of the diocesan synod to be transmitted to His Excellency the Bishop of Beszercebánya*].

¹²⁵ GYÉFKL EZS 1085/1848 – *Az erdélyi egyházmegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyve* [*Minutes of the Transylvanian Diocesan Synod*].

¹²⁶ However, the priest's pension was deemed to be insufficient. The preparatory deanery protocols mentioned on several occasions that the pension was too small. Because of this, elderly priests were forced to keep working. If they retired, they had to live their last days in a place where there was also an institution for punishing recalcitrant priests. GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Belső-Szolnok kerület beadványa*. [*Report of the Inner Solnoc Deanery*], Szamosújvár, 2 August 1848. GYÉFKL PI 1010/1848 – *Kézdi-orbai kerület beadványa* [*Report of the Kézdi-Orba Deanery*], Kanta, 9 August 1848.

Kovács Miklós initially fulfilled the wishes of his priests in this respect.¹²⁷ Subsequently, however, the provisions of the 1822 Statute were reintroduced because at the priests' conference of 1869 it was found that the elderly seminarians' and priests' fund was doing well thanks to that very statute. In 1869, the provisions of the 1822 Statute were reinforced. Attention was drawn to the fact that when an inheritance was divided, relatives should not be allowed to take everything.¹²⁸ It was only when the Clerical Pensions Institute was set up in the Transylvanian diocese in 1912¹²⁹ that the provisions of the 1822 Statute were repealed.¹³⁰ This solution had a positive impact until the Communists took over power in the aftermath of the Second World War. Annex no. 18 of the 1913 diocesan synod presented the bylaws of the Pension Institute as a decree with the force of law,¹³¹ stating that the priests could retire after forty years of service or if they were no longer fit for service because of some disability.

Conclusion

During the analysed period (1822-1913), the year 1848 offered the Roman Catholic diocesan clergy in Transylvania the opportunity to express as openly as possible their vision of how they should conduct their everyday lives. In the organising phase of the diocesan synod that prepared the national synod of 1848, the diocesan clergy outlined their reform proposals. Many of their demands echoed the grievances voiced in the diocesan assembly of 1822, held in preparation of another national synod. Those proposals were resumed at the priests' conference of 1869 and at the diocesan synod of 1913. In this study, we have attempted to capture the diocesan clergy's outlook on a broad array of aspects pertaining to ecclesiastical careers: from the education future men of the cloth received in seminaries, to their appointment as parish priests, from the mechanism of promotion in the church hierarchy to financial aspects that had a direct bearing on their everyday lives, or from their retirement to the free expression of their last will and testament.

¹²⁷ In his reply of 9 September 1848 to a request submitted by Sántha Imre, the priest from Chileni, and by Török Antal, the retired cantor from Joseni, for approving the functioning of the guardian institution that oversaw the fate of the widows and orphans of teachers from the Gheorgheni District, Bishop Kovács Miklós gave his assent but rejected a single provision: "article 2, chapter II, stipulating that the curator could demand five *pengő* forints [silver forints] from an estate left in the wake of even the poorest priest." He did not accept that provision because "priests have the right to freely express their last will," and he respected that right. GYÉFKL PI 1114/1848 – *Kovács Miklós püspök válaszeve Sántha Imre kilyénfalvi plébános és Török Antal nyugalmazott gyergyóalfalusi kántor felterjesztésére* [Bishop Kovács Miklós's reply to the request submitted by Sántha Imre, the priest from Chileni, and by Török Antal, the retired cantor from Joseni], 9 September 1848.

¹²⁸ GYÉFKL GyFPI-Pk 3300/1870 – *Az 1869-es papi közgyűlés jegyzőkönyve* [Minutes of the clergy's general assembly of 1869].

¹²⁹ Name of the Pensions Institute: *Erdély-Egyházmegyei Papi Nyugdíjintézet* [Clerical Pensions Institute of the Diocese of Transylvania].

¹³⁰ Episcopal circular no. 70/1912 stipulated that this decree should enter into force on 1 January 1913, but it was delayed by one year. In the synodal book of 1913 the date of entry into force is 1914.

¹³¹ App. XVIII. – The basic regulation of the Clerical Pensions Institute of the Diocese of Transylvania. 10 December 1912.