

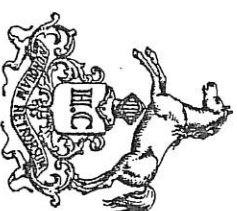
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**THÉORIES ET DÉBATS ESTHÉTIQUES
AU DIX-HUITIÈME SIÈCLE**
Éléments d'une enquête
**DEBATES ON AESTHETICS
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**
Questions of Theory and Practice

Textes édités
par

Élisabeth DÉCULTOT et Mark LEDBURY



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SOMMAIRE

Avant-propos, par <i>Jochen Schlobach</i> et <i>Jean Mondot</i>	9
Introduction, par <i>Elisabeth Décultot</i> et <i>Mark Leburly</i>	11

L'ESTHÉTIQUE DANS SES CONFINS PHILOSOPHIQUES

<i>James Kirwan</i> «The Claim to a Nobler Motive»: Morality, Reason and the Sublime in Kant	17
<i>Tanehisa Otake</i> How was «the Aesthetic» justified by Modern Aesthetics? .	43
<i>Florence Boulerie</i> La vérité palpable de Diderot contre les généralisations théoriques d'Helvétius	59

ESTHÉTIQUE ET POÉTIQUE

<i>Thierry Belleguic</i> <i>Les Bijoux indiscrets</i> ou la tentation du savoir	83
<i>Mladen Kozul</i> L'éloquence sadienne: de la propagande philosophique à la rhétorique de la fiction	109
<i>Dancho Gospodinov</i> From the Saint's Life to the Novel	123
<i>Jim Lu</i> En vers ou en prose? Les débats sur la tragédie à l'âge des Lumières	139

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<i>Susanne Winter</i>	
La polémique déguisée en conte de fées dramatisé.	
<i>L'amore delle tre melarance</i> et <i>L'angelino beherde</i>	
de Carlo Gozzi	155

THÉORIE ET CRITIQUE DES BEAUX-ARTS

<i>Mark Ledbury</i>	
The Hierarchy of Genre in the Theory and Practice	
of Painting in Eighteenth-Century France	187
<i>Katalin Kovacs</i>	
La naissance d'un genre littéraire : la critique d'art	
au XVIII ^e siècle	211
<i>Elisabeth Décultot</i>	
Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Une « esthétique »	
en réponse à la Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes	233
<i>Hans Georg von Arburg</i>	
Essais de physiognomonie. La mise en scène critique	
d'une science précaire dans les écrits	
de Georg Christoph Lichtenberg	253
<i>Franca Sinopoli</i>	
La représentation de la douleur. Contradictions	
du classicisme chez Lessing et chez Schiller	281
L'ESTHÉTIQUE DANS SES DÉCALAGES CULTURELS	
<i>Huachuan Li</i>	
Rousseau déformé dans la fiction en Chine (1900-1911)	291
<i>Natalia Filatova</i>	
The Aesthetics of Russian Salon Culture in the first Decades	
of Nineteenth-Century	301
<i>Csaba Fazekas</i>	
Enlightenment and Neo-Protestant Movements	
in Eighteenth-Century Hungary	317

AVANT-PROPOS

Le séminaire Est-Ouest, lancé par notre collègue et ami Robert Darnton avec l'aide de la fondation Mellon sous le patronage direct de la Société Internationale d'Etude du XVIII^e siècle – soutenue par les Sociétés française et allemande d'étude du XVIII^e siècle –, était accueilli du 19 au 25 juillet 1998 à Bordeaux, après avoir été organisé à Paris (1996), Berlin (1997) et avant de l'être à Sarrebruck (1999). L'intitulé du thème proposé à la discussion était le suivant : « Débats théoriques et mise en forme esthétique au XVIII^e siècle ». Les directeurs de la publication, Elisabeth Décultot et Marc Ledbury, diront ce qu'on attendait de cette thématique et comment elle fut abordée au cours du séminaire. Les organisateurs se contenteront, pour leur part, d'apporter dans cette brève préface leur témoignage d'observateurs sur cette rencontre. Nous commencerons par dire la satisfaction profonde que nous avons éprouvée à suivre les travaux de ce séminaire, à voir ces collègues dix-huitiémistes venus de tous les points cardinaux triompher sans effort de l'obstacle des langues et créer dès la première matinée un groupe cohérent, dynamique et sympathique. Nous avons assisté – et pour Jean Mondot qui y participait pour la première fois, ce fut une sorte de révélation – à l'essor rapide et ordonné de la discussion dans une atmosphère remarquable d'écoute et d'attention. Une « dynamique de groupe » s'est immédiatement manifestée. On jugera sur pièces de l'intérêt scientifique des contributions. Nous avons été, quant à nous, frappés par la qualité des échanges et des débats.

Ce séminaire a atteint, nous semble-t-il, pleinement ses objectifs : faire se rencontrer et débattre des jeunes dix-huitiémistes du monde entier sur quelques thèmes scientifiques d'un intérêt reconnu, mais aussi créer entre jeunes chercheurs, par-delà les distances géographiques ou intellectuelles, des liens qui pourront aider à faire progresser la recherche et la compréhension entre pays. Pour le chercheur dix-huitiémiste, la « globalisation » n'est pas une idée neuve. Le XVIII^e siècle, on le sait, a été largement universaliste. Les dix-huitiémistes n'ont donc aucune peine à se retrouver dans cette perspective. Mais la mondialisation, si elle ne veut pas se transformer en une abstraction stérile et désincarnée, une caricature d'utopie universaliste, doit passer par le stade irremplaçable de la rencontre entre individus bien « réels », de chair et

In spite of the fact that Karamzinism as a trend of literature did not have a long history, the major aesthetic principles popularised by the Karamzinists determined the character of Russian salon culture for decades to come. Due to the «feminization» of culture, the nourishing of dilettantism and play, literature, which previously had been the domain of «learned pedantry», became an organic part of life of educated society. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was «saturated with literature through and through»⁵⁴.

As S.S. Uvarov, member of *Arzamas* and Russian minister of education in 1833-1849, maintained in his memoirs, evaluating Russian salon culture, «The private, so to say domestic gatherings, consisting of people united by free vocation and personal talents, who observe the development of literature, had and still have... appreciable, though somehow invisible influence on contemporaries»⁵⁵.

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ENLIGHTENMENT AND NEO-PROTESTANT MOVEMENTS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY HUNGARY

Elek Jakab, a leading nineteenth-century historian of the Protestant Church, summarised the controversies surrounding those religious congregations that did not belong to the traditional Protestant Churches (Presbyterian, Lutheran) as follows:

A society must be very weak if it feels threatened by 10-20 persons who have their own religious views or even by an independent congregation and feels it has to be protected by means of brute force. Any kind of religious teaching can only be preserved by the truth and by the ideas they involve. It cannot be preserved by the persecution and the oppression of those whose teachings and religion is different. The most wonderful aspect of truth is that it wants and it is able to spread.

When dealing with eighteenth-century Hungary and, as a rule, with the countries of the Habsburg empire, most researches concentrated on the Catholic counter-reformation and on the struggles of the Protestant Churches on political grounds. My impression is that we are still not familiar enough with the religion of the masses that did not take part, as such, in the debates of Church-politics. We do not know how religion entered their everyday life; to what extent the dogmas of the traditional Churches entered their way of thinking, etc. It can be said that if in the provinces, mainly in the rural areas, we met communities whose religious practices differed from those of the traditional Churches' these differences took two forms:

Either it was a kind of 'folk religion' – mainly based on superstitions – that did not know, or misunderstood, the dogmas of the Catholic, Presbyterian or Lutheran Church, but remained in the framework of the given traditional Church. Those who fell into this category claimed themselves to be active members of their Church.

Or we could examine those religious movements whose followers deliberately opposed the traditional Churches, criticised some of their

⁵⁴ M. Aronson, S. Reiser, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁵⁵ [S.S. Uvarov] *Literaturnye vospominaniia*, In: *Sovremennik*, XXVII, № 6 (1851), p. 41.

dogmas and way of life, and formed their own communities based on theological principles that differed from those of the traditional Churches. These communities were called «sects» by the traditional Churches and this derogatory term came into use by the authorities and penetrated popular consciousness.

Folk religion mainly appeared among the theologically uneducated rural population. It combined mystical elements typical of the eighteenth century. Among Roman Catholics there were emphases on intense emotional states, and mystical religious practices. These were observable not only among the highest ranks of the Roman Church but also in the lives of lay Catholics. Most of them interpreted the dogmas and mixed them with their own superstitious traditions, which were continually but unsuccessfully opposed by Church leaders. According to a pontifical complaint sent to Rome, dated 1758, the lay Catholic masses could not differentiate between the transubstantiation and simple quackery. Many practised both, and leaders of the Church turned a blind eye to the spread of superstition. Sometimes, Catholic religious practices were taken to the extreme of self-harm. To popularise the counter-reformation in the first half of the eighteenth century the Jesuit and, later, the Mynori societies engaged in reviving medieval services. One astonishing example was the widespread practice of self-flagellating processions and similar non-public events, which took place even against the wishes of some priests. Self-flagellation, which originated in popular superstition, was initially supported, then opposed by the hierarchy of the Church. However, after the spread of the Lutheran and Calvinist teachings, the counter-reformation again revived the practice in order to neutralise reformation, demonstrating how powerfully the Catholic Church's policy was motivated by its own political interests.

Similar superstitious phenomena were noted in the areas inhabited by Lutherans and Calvinists in the eighteenth century. Vulgarity and adultery were punished by the Church during the first half of the century but punishments became less severe or non-existent by the 1800s. Further among the Protestants, superstitious forms of folk religion were on the increase and there are many records of sorcery. (For example in 1778 a woman stole the key of the Calvinist Church in order to perform quackery.) The sign of the growing influence of folk religion is that the literature of the baroque era reached the masses mainly in the form of religious pulp fiction.

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* *

In other cases we are not dealing with spontaneous forms of folk religion but with people who formed their own religious principles (or obtained them from other sources) and organised worship meetings, thus turning themselves into congregations. From now on these will be called «non-traditional Churches», and they will be the subject of the detailed study which follows.

In this essay we would like to find answers to a rarely-researched aspect of eighteenth-century history through the analysis of a particular religious movement. First though, a few general points should be made about how the problem of sects was viewed at the time. Both the state authorities and the historic Churches took notice of the existence of the so called Neo-Protestant communities, which represented views different from the official ones, and felt obliged to take up a position against them.

In Hungary in the eighteenth century (as in other European countries) the Lutheran and the Calvinist churches no longer put the emphasis on the «sola fide, sola gratia, sola scriptura» Lutheran principles, but on the defence of their Church organisation and hierarchy, even by political means. Side by side with the traditional Churches, more and more new (Neo-Protestant) religious movements appeared which strove to restore the original Biblical roots of Protestantism and preached the importance of earnest repentance and of loyalty to God. They stood up for personal religion as opposed to official religion, and for spiritual unity against Church hierarchy. They also were characterised by looking for new ways of making contact with God.

In the second half of the eighteenth century Catholic theology changed its attitude towards Protestant Churches. The concept of «heresy» and «sect» split into two, although the Protestant Church was forcefully kept within boundaries, the Roman Church understood that eighteenth-century Hungary could no longer be made into a homogeneous state. On the other hand, the Neo-Protestant groupings were still thought of as dangerous heretics, and all necessary means were acceptable in order to get rid of them or convert them to Catholicism.

The largest of such communities, an Anabaptist community, was established in Transylvania in North Hungary. The Anabaptists preached the principle of adult baptism and lived a well organised, peaceful and moral life. Most earned their living as skilled craftsmen. Their conversion to Catholicism was decided on by the Queen Maria Theresa (1740-1780) at the end of the 1750s; she entrusted the Jesuits to carry out this task. A royal decree was issued in 1762 that made it compulsory for local authorities to «force the Anabaptists to visit Catholic Churches and to take part in the services». Following that decree, those

Anabaptists who were reluctant to convert were expelled from the country. Families were torn apart, children were taken away from their parents and were given over to Catholic families, and men were committed to forced labour, etc. (In the other Habsburg provinces, for example in Moravia, Maria Theresa drove out the Lutheran communities just as forcefully.)

Maria Theresa, whose general way of thinking was enlightened, was a zealous Catholic and remained a great friend of the Jesuits, but the Enlightenment left her Church-politics untouched. Her son and successor Joseph II (1780-1790) thought differently. He issued his famous *Ratio Tolerantionis* in 1781, which finally secured religious freedom for the Calvinists and the Lutherans. He also dissolved the religious orders. Joseph's alternative of Enlightened Absolutism looked at the questions of Church-politics in a pragmatic way from the point of view of the state. His religious tolerance was not practised on the basis of theology but on the basis of politics. He solely strove to realise this tolerance towards those Protestant Churches with sufficient influence on society.

His views were based on Samuel Pufendorf's *De habitu religionis*. The Lutheran Pufendorf thought, (as did His Highness), that the teachings of all «sects» were harmful to the state and they could not expect tolerance. In taking this view, Joseph II only considered the eighteenth-century status of religious groups, forgetting that, like the Neo-Protestant trends of his time, the reformation in the 16th century started as a minor sect (as did Christianity in the Roman Empire). This inconsistent Josephinism only changed the legal status of the Protestant Churches with a strong base. (This was, in itself though, an immense change to the previous *status quo*.) But it did not allow anyone to leave the Historic Churches or to form their own congregation on the basis of different religious beliefs. This practice was thus still persecuted by the law, as it had been under the medieval inquisition.

The *Edictum Tolerantiale* followed a different course from that of the Church Politics of Marie Theresa, nevertheless the king acted against the small Protestant communities in the same vein. Apart from the Anabaptists, mentioned above, there are records from 1783 concerning a Neo-Protestant group of Czech origin whose members were exiled and condemned to forced labour «because of the stubbornness of their actions».

This can also be proved through the terminological analysis of the official papers. During that era the Latin expression *sectarius* was most often used as a derogatory term for the Calvinists and Lutherans. However, already in several cases a difference was made between the members of Historic Protestant Churches and the members of «sects».

Earlier this expression implied all non Catholic Christians. (In 1791 Szily János, the bishop of Szombathely complained in Rome about the state of the Catholic Church, as a result he was ordered to «try to stifle the new (!) sects» with the help of royal authority.)

*
*

As an illustration we are going to review the life of a small eighteenth-century community in a village, Tiszadob, in the county of Szabolcs. Here we can see a Neo-Protestant «revival movement» in which the social and financial environment, which some modern sociological research regards as the reason for the existence of these communities) did not play a significant role since it was almost entirely triggered by the individuals' turning towards God.

The writers of Protestant Church-history used the terms «fanatics» and «believers» for those who stood out in the eighteenth century even from the Calvinists, for their faith was very active, their morals were exceptional and they were very sensitive towards Biblical truths and the presence of the Holy Spirit. In the 19th-20th century the same term was used for the members of small Neo-Protestant Churches (Baptists, Methodists and Pentecostals). Historic churches considered that the «ecstasy» deeply disturbs the «normal» practice of faith. Therefore the Calvinists looked upon the 17th century Quaker and eighteenth century French Camisards movements as condemnable sectist ecstasy. The Camisard movement put the emphasis on an intense relationship with the Holy Spirit, manifestations of supernatural powers and on miraculous healing.

During the winter of 1740 the moral and zealous Calvinists of the village formed their own congregation. A hitherto unknown woman arrived to Tiszadob, and was put up by a local nobleman, István Porkoláb. He must have been very sensitive to Biblical truths because on hearing the testimony of the woman he soon started to organise meetings in his house. The little group was on the increase and the news about the «new sect» travelled fast. In 1741 a rather intolerant Roman Catholic bishop, Gábor Erdődy, reported them to the local authorities, which ordered the county to take a firm stand against and quell this movement that was dangerous for the state. The local authorities thought that beneath a religious disguise there lay the threat of riot. Thus to prevent the *exoritur tumultus* the army from nearby camps were ordered to the scene.

The basis of actions against the congregation was a theology, attributed to them, consisting of eight clauses which also served as a bill of

indictment. It contained strange religious ideas (the prohibition of work at the week-ends, refusal of medical help to the sick etc.) but not even a covert call for uprising nor any ideology that would create a social disturbance. The simple fact is that those who were in power were not concerned by the principles of their faith, but by the mere existence of the «heretics». They thought that all religious activities outside the Historic Churches should be persecuted. The above-mentioned bishop Gábor Erdődy, whose name is linked to a «severer than usual hatred of the Protestants», published the *Opusculum Theologicum* in 1721, a work which discussed the persecution of the heretics, and even their physical annihilation, as the duty of the catholic ruler. His brother, György Erdődy, (who was an important state dignitary), also believed in forced Catholicization. For example, on the basis of his feudal rights, he imprisoned those Lutherans who lived on his land and had those who were reluctant to convert brutally beaten up; furthermore he forcefully separated married couples who lived in mixed marriages. The angry reactions of the state to the Tiszadob revival were further increased by the war of succession with Protestant Prussia in the first few years of Marie Theresa's reign. This led to the reanimation of the counter-reformation by both peaceful and violent means.

The governing authorities ordered the county to start investigations into the case immediately, to arrest the «guilty ones», to stop this «great scandal» («*enormus scandalum*») and to report every connected event without delay. They enclosed the copy of the above mentioned eight clauses and the names of the members of the congregation. It is worth having a look at those names: three were the members of the noble Porkoláb family, three were serfs and there was a gypsy man who was regarded as an outcast of society. Next to all those names except for the last was written «*cum tota domo*», that is, their whole household belonged to the community. So the number of the community can be put at somewhere between 15 and 20. All in all, a great percentage of the whole population (350) of this small town were the followers of the «new teachings» or at least sympathised with the cause. It can also prove instructive to examine the social composition of the congregation: the three noble men got on well with the three serfs and with the outcast gypsy man. Of course, we cannot draw far-fetched conclusions from this, but it supports our opinion that the birth of small Protestant communities was not necessarily linked to social situation and status, as has often been supposed.

Although the county official did not speed up the investigations, he immediately imprisoned the non-noble members of the congregation. It was not until the April of 1741, at the general assembly («*generalis*

congregatio»), that the culprits were questioned about their teachings. The surviving documents are very interesting from the point of view of analysis of the aesthetics of the «theology» of such a Neo-Protestant movement. First of all we can clearly see that the group was heterogeneous not only from the aspect of social standing but also from the aspect of age. Out of the five persons interrogated, three were in their twenties, István Porkoláb was getting on forty and the oldest person was 78 years old. (This is particularly interesting, because, according to the Historiography of the Protestant Church, only the younger generation was prone to be «ecstatic»). We learn about one of them, who happens to be one of the noble family, Márton Porkoláb, that he was «*illiteratus*» (illiterate). At the same time the congregation regularly used books of literature and of religion; this shows that they were also heterogeneous in respect of culture since there were both literate and illiterate people amongst them.

The counts of the indictment at the inquiries arose, to be sure, from the prejudices known from the history of medieval heretic movements and also from the history of religious and ethnic minorities of modern times. Those accused did not accept any of the counts and not only denied them but also explained their religious teachings on the different subjects. So we can conclude that they had a very clear Christian way of thinking; no confused religious fanaticism can be deduced from their words, they had an outstanding knowledge of the Bible and they correctly quoted the appropriate verses. They were primarily charged with being conceited and considering themselves as exclusive, as the only true faith, a charge often made of small religions by Catholics and Protestants. György Panyiti, one of the bonded («*invinclatus*») serfs refused the charge of being conceited, yet said he felt the necessity that all Christians should pray more for the presence of the Holy Spirit. This was obviously also a criticism of the Calvinists of his age. The defendants also denied considering themselves prophets and being always able to see the future, as their judges had accused. István Porkoláb clearly stated that God was the fount of all knowledge and the only way to get to know the world was through Him.

Another charge said their conceit caused them to claim that no sin was possible after being born again (after repentance). To answer this, they positively explained that, (in full accordance with the New Testament), all men were the descendants of the first man, thus everybody had participated in Adam's sin and was capable of sinning even after his conversion to God. This young serf of Tiszadob was aware of the Biblical distinction between mortal and other types of sin. The community did accept the teachings of healing through faith and were prob-

ably falsely charged by those ill-disposed to them that their faith had prohibited them from seeing a doctor. Indeed, they said the possibility was desirable, which did not contradict the fact that they regarded some diseases as the results of sin. Their teachings concerning weekend work and meals were not excessive either, despite their having been labelled 'pharisaic'. (All they said was it was desirable that every man finish their affairs early so they could safely take part in the Sunday congregation.) Paryiti again retorted by quoting passages of the gospels by heart.

Apart from their principles of faith, the records also give a hint of their religious activities and church services. First, they gathered at private homes where the worship seems to have consisted of three parts:

- the reading and interpretation of the Scriptures (a sermon; however, because of the familial atmosphere, it is possible that some issues were simply discussed);
- singing praises from the Psalms of David;
- common prayer.

Both their confessions of Biblical inspiration and the description of their service lead us to conclude that this was clearly a movement of Puritan awakening or reform. The members saw the essence of a religious life not merely in the outward appearance of keeping some of the Church's laws or a morality-based transformation of their lifestyles, but a serious and sincere turn toward God, a repentance, involving a complete change in the value system of their life, submitting it to the Scriptures. Yet instead of an introverted, exclusive religion, this meant a positive approach to everyday life and one's fellow men. It was György Panyiti, for instance, who told the story of his own conversion, his confession confirmed by the others. He had been addressed in the fields by István Porkoláb, who then gave evidence of his faith and called him to turn to God from the path of sin. Our data suggest that they did attend Protestant church services although what really mattered to them was the exercise of lay piety.

The description of the home meetings of the Tiszadob group also shows that their religious practice did include one of the greatest spiritual reforms of Puritanism; the common singing of Psalms and common prayer were able to lift the congregation out of the state of passive contemplation and make it an active participant in the gatherings. The reforms of early Calvinism did not really affect change the earlier approach, regarding the congregation as mere listeners to the sermon. Puritans, however, thought that those who attended a service should be active in their relationship to God.

All this leads to the question of which factors might prove that the Tiszadob initiative was a movement of awakening or reform. It is obvious that their activity focused on turning away from sin and toward God and on the cultivation of a regular, positive relationship with him. Nothing in the records suggests that they were leading a life of refusal, or that they cut themselves off from the world; quite the contrary, in fact. This was a spontaneous Neo-Protestant movement condemned by other Churches of its time out of mistrust or jealousy. These churches had now learnt to turn a blind eye to Catholics and Protestants living immoral and unscriptural lives, provided they did not contest the authority of the Church. Thus they reacted rather sensitively to the appearance of this peaceful Neo-Protestant group consisting only of a few people, and proceeded to deploy the instruments of state power against them. István Porkoláb, one of the interrogated, made an almost poetic confession on the subject:

Leaving the church on Sundays, I had no mind to vanity. I read the Bible and other books, prayed and sang Psalms and other praises. I warned others of nothing else but the sincere worship of God while I also reproached the swearing and the idle. If I am under charges, I cannot help it. Yet I know that had I been revelling in public houses or swearing or living in immorality, I would not have been brought before the court.»

One of the possible theories concerning the Tiszadob congregation arises from the characteristics of peasant culture. Many opine that the reason for the start of these kinds of movements is the fact that official religion was insufficient to satisfy the spiritual needs of the simple people who sought a substitute that was beyond the power of the official Church. It has mainly been ethnographic studies that have claimed that this feeling of spiritual want, due to the banning of superstitions, led to the cropping up of numerous false witches, peasant prophets and «Biblical clairvoyants» whose teachings fell on good soil in peasant communities.

Apart from this kind of spiritual need, the activity of the Tiszadob community shows signs of the influence of more recent Protestant pietic movements and missions. There are two points of interest in the interrogation record quoted above. One is the question of their relationship with Puritanism, as all the confessors mentioned the fact that they had been reading and holding common prayers from popular Puritan books. One of these was the famous work entitled *Praxis Pietatis* by Lewis Bayly, in the Hungarian translation of Pál Medgyesi. Bayly was probably the single most influential person in English Puritanism. This book, rendered in a plain and accessible language, provides advice on ways of

putting piety and the genuine Christian ideals into practice. The 1636, rather independent, translation by Medgyesi, created a stir in Hungary comparable to that following the publication of the original in England. The book was published in numerous editions and revisions, some published as late as the eighteenth century. Another book mentioned by the Tiszadob community contained popular prayers for every occasion of everyday life (getting up, going to bed, leaving home, getting home, meals, mourning, joy, etc.) in an accessible style. Stressing the importance of individual prayer, the *Puritan Book of Prayers* by Mihály Szatmárnémeti no doubt had a strong influence on the spiritual life of its readers. (It is interesting to note that almost exactly the same thing happened again in 19th century Hungary, with another Puritan book making a similarly important influence on Baptist awakening).

Puritan ideas had been first disseminated in Hungary by students who had studied in the Netherlands and England. On their return, these people had to fight their battles with the representatives of Protestant orthodoxy. They were obviously unable to make a real breakthrough in Hungarian Protestantism and in the radical changing of the spiritual life of their respective churches. Puritanism was in fact a spiritual reformation movement started by intellectuals, becoming popular from the 1630s, especially in the Upper Tisza region, east of the Tisza and in Transylvania. Its great moment was over by the late seventeenth century. As the example of the Tiszadob community demonstrates, however, Puritan ideas were not restricted to the intellectual classes. They had also spread to ordinary people, surviving the changed conditions of the eighteenth-century, not simply among students who had seen the world, but also in the religious life of peasants and the lower gentry who may never have left their villages. Puritanism had a considerable effect on seventeenth century Protestant preaching, whose direction completely changed from the early eighteenth century. Puritan sermons representing a spiritual renewal (with special regard to their social content) were no longer audible from the pulpits, with the groups branded 'sects' even by Protestants themselves having to fill the need for the survival of the Biblical principles represented by Puritanism in their sermons as well as everyday life.

Whereas Puritanism in Western Europe was able to preserve its spiritual independence against conservative Protestantism, intellectual Puritanical initiatives in Hungary simply disappeared, or were dissolved into Calvinism. The reason for this can be seen in the fact that the Hungarian Puritans (in contrast to their English brothers in faith) were just as intolerant towards the Catholics and the smaller congregations as the leaders of the «official» Calvinist Church. When examining this

question of tolerance it is worth looking at this eighteenth-century group from the point of view of that system of interpretation formulated by some Church historians (e.g. Imre Révész and Gyula Szekfi). They explained that the reformation can be divided into two periods as regards tolerance: a sixteenth and seventeenth-century «reforming» Protestantism and a «non reforming» Protestantism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The main difference between these two was that the former could be characterised by denominational intolerance. The latter form came into power in Western-Europe in the eighteenth century and the «sects» (Anabaptists, Quakers etc.) became its main representatives. Their existence created the possibility of an enlightened, tolerant atmosphere in Church politics. In Hungary the «non-reformist» principle could not gain ground since the puritans would have been its main mass base. There are no extant records of the influential spiritual revivals that were represented by «ecstatic» masses, like those in the West like the Quaker movement lead by Charles Fox or the Camisard movement lead by Jean Cavalier. What we can observe at the beginning of the 1740s in Tiszadob is a small Eastern-European version of these movements (we must not forget that in Hungary the question of sects was viewed differently than in the West.)

It is also possible that the roots of the Tiszadob congregation cannot only be found in Puritanism but also in the English Quaker revival. One of the members of the local authority, baron József Fischer, wrote in his letter to another aristocrat that according to his information the Tiszadob congregation is a «secta *Ovackeriana*» whose teachings were brought to Hungary by a student who had visited England. Fischer thought that Mrs. Liskai's repentance was also his doing. If this information is correct, we can draw the conclusion that the Western-European revival movements did not bypass Hungary and its representatives were found in Eastern Europe even though their influence could only prove superficial. From the quoted record of the interrogation we can clearly see that there are common grounds between the Society of Friends, that grew out of the revival lead by Charles Fox, and the movement in Tiszadob. Such was for example the teaching of healing by faith the practice of which, even in the Western European communities, initially only played a central role among the Quakers. The attitude of the Friends towards money and financial matters was remarkably similar to that of those in Tiszadob. But the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a most distinctive feature of the Quakers, at the time had not yet been recorded about the Tiszadob congregation. According to eye-witnesses, the Quakers, under the power of the Holy Spirit (often transmitted by the laying of the hands) acted strangely – falling on the

floor, dancing and «quaking». Despite the similarities, the Tiszadob group was not a Hungarian Quaker congregation, however, it was a revival movement influenced by it.

There is one more important factor that has to be mentioned in connection with the Tiszadob congregation and the similar eighteenth-century Neo-Protestant movements. Between 1737 and 1743 the last great plague epidemic swept through Hungary in many waves. Many supposed that this affected and reanimated religious activity. Undoubtedly during the time of plague the number of visions of the end of the world and of the last judgement increased. However we cannot consider the puritan-based revivals as the direct consequence of the epidemic. Almost a quarter million people fell victim to the plague in Hungary. Szabolcs county and Tiszadob were numbered among the places where the epidemic struck.

While the members of the Tiszadob congregation did not even mention an apocalyptic vision during the interrogations, other groups took the vision of the last judgement as a distinctive motive of their religious movement. (We should note that in fact, numerous such prophecies, visions, etc. were created during this period. A great number of hand-written sermons discussed, among other things, the subject of «the Lord setting free the Angel of Destruction to devastate the world», etc.). The Tiszadob cultprits, György Panyít and István Porkoláb, give the impression of being optimistic, failing to mention the typical call to repentance with a view to the incurable plague. Furthermore, the movements of 'repentance', cropping up at the times of pestilence, cholera, etc., soon finished their activities after the danger of infection was over. Porkoláb's group, however, carried on for several decades.

The steps taken by the powerful local landlord Sándor Károlyi were typical of the state's approach to Neo-Protestant movements. Károlyi was instructed by the said council of the Governor-general to command his troops into Tiszadob (As we have seen, the fear of rebellion or riot was completely unfounded). In his reply, however, Károlyi forthwith labelled members of the «sect» public enemies, demanding measures even more severe than those first envisaged by the authorities. Sándor Károlyi, along with his son, Ferenc (the owner of Tiszadob in the 1740's), were among the few early eighteenth century landlords to show, despite their Roman Catholic faith, a striking tolerance toward Protestants, even towards Jews. Never failing to put their economic interests before religious aspects, they defended their Protestant serfs against Catholic abuses within this chiefly Protestant territory. Although Sándor Károlyi disapproved of the violent methods of disseminating the faith, he was going to apply these same methods against

the Tiszadob community. There are two main explanations for this. On the one hand, his tolerance was directed toward denominations rather than religions; also, it was primarily restricted to the soke. Toward the court in Vienna, however, the Károlyi were striving to keep up the appearance of being good Catholic landlords, for which the persecution of Neo-Protestant congregations offered an excellent opportunity.

Another consequence of the «Tiszadob sect affair» was the extension of the investigation to the neighbouring counties, extending the pre-trial arrest of those under «incaptrivatio» (imprisonment). In their reasons, the court stated that although nothing illegal had been found in the activities of the Puritans, the main duty of the authorities involved the radical extermination of heresy all the same. Following a lengthy period of procrastination, however, the people under arrest were released and were able to continue their (secret) religious gatherings.

This means that here we did not see a completely medieval approach to 'heresy'. Although members of the community were charged on the basis of unfounded preconceptions and prejudices, and although they were persecuted, they were nevertheless eventually released, instead of being punished by execution or long imprisonment. In our opinion, the members of the Tiszadob community were 'lucky' insofar as their sensible answers were considered harmless instead of subversive, the judgement of 'dangerous' religious practice still being based on rather subjective points of view. The use of the various legal terms suggests that this was an age of transition as the medieval term *haeresis* appears side by side with the more recent *secta* in the documents. This latter was soon adapted and widely used by the authorities and the traditional churches as the definition of denominations outside 'legal' religion. The steps taken against the group also reflect the completely ungrounded fear of the authorities, only to be seen at times when the state was intertwined with the traditional Churches (mainly the Roman Catholic Church) both organisationally and ideologically. The quick and firm measures of the authorities in Tiszadob were also the result of the fact that the Calvinist Church was equally unhappy about the appearance of the 'revival movement', urging its repression with the same zeal as did the Catholics. Interestingly, this resulted in the fact that the Protestant Churches, so hard-pressed during the first half of the eighteenth century, took the same measures against the extremes they regarded as 'heresy' as the Roman Catholic Church employed against them.

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The literary and aesthetic aspects of the teachings and sermons of the Neo-Protestant movements can mostly be judged through texts of sermons and visions that were circulated in manuscript form. These were widespread in Hungary in the 1740s. (See documents in Illustration II. a-c.) The Tiszadob group can be considered typical in that respect that its life and development, as all contemporary and later Neo-Protestant movement's, went through two well separable periods.

- a pious-puritan period, when the believers only differed from the traditional Churches in their outstanding morals and the practice of their active Biblical faith.

- later on this was completed by a marked interest in the supernatural world, visions, prophecies and in the relationship with the Holy Spirit etc.

The local Calvinist pastor and the principal men of the village reported the Tiszadob congregation to the higher authorities again in the 1750s. They were accused of exactly the same things as in 1741 but one count was fundamentally new compared to the previous ones. It said: «the believers at Tiszadob exceedingly like anything new, so much so, that when a button maker boy had some vision in his dream they all wanted to hear him.» This button maker boy, György Schultz, was one of the most well-known Hungarian Neo-Protestant «ecstatic». His visions and prophecies were spread in many manuscripts under the title of *The Seventh Trumpet*. He spoke in a rustic baroque style using many rhetorical flourishes and Biblical verses. The main motives of his speech were the Book of Revelation, the judgement of God and the necessity of repentance and the visions that appeared to him during his raptures that happened while he was praying to God. Schultz in *The Seventh Trumpet* told the story of his repentance. He was cured at the age of eighteen of a dreadful, deadly disease. After this he started to travel and preach and he had many visions during his trip. In these visions he applied the Book of Revelation to the events of his era using a popular lively style. He often referred to the traditional Protestant Churches as the: «deviants who deny the light of the Gospel, also he talked about the intolerant decrees of Maria Theresa as the: «wrath of the Devil against the Church of God».

The visions and raptures like Schultz's were not at all rare in the eighteenth century. Most of these preachers did not have visions just for the sake of having them but as a means to an end: their visions served as a part of a movement preaching repentance. Often these visions only had religious content, but sometimes they bore strong social messages

as well. Another prophet, András Óráis, started a movement at the end of the seventeenth century. He went through many raptures and he conveyed supernatural messages gathering many believers around him until the authorities pounced on him. But his arrest did not mean the end of his movement and later on he appeared again as a Protestant preacher who preached the Gospel bravely and very effectively. The puritan writers greatly influenced the forming of his views, at least he often read the book of the puritan Medgyesi Pál, called *Dece nos orare, quinnet praedicare*. All this implies, as we can see in the Tiszadob group, that the puritan spirituality did not leave even the simple people unaffected, and that it inspired revival movements.

In the visions of another eighteenth-century prophet, Christ the King was fighting on judgement day a dragon who wore a shield with the picture of the two-headed eagle (the animal in the coat of arms of the Habsburgs). The masses swarmed to listen to the teachings of another village preacher who later was arrested in 1741. He not only called upon his followers to repent but also taught, with power, about king Nabukadnezar who broke away from God and as a result he went mad and ate grass like an ox. It was not difficult to apply this story to Marie Theresa who carried out the Catholic counter-reformation. At other times prophecies quoted the warnings of John the Baptist. These hints could not have been misunderstood but, to make them even clearer for the Hungarian Protestant audience, the Biblical Pharisees often spoke in German and worshipped Catholic idols.

Often these visions interpreted the coming judgement of God, on the measures of Church-politics, on the imminent social problems and the poverty of the peasants, to the simple language of the general public; and they often had to them some anti-Catholic sting. However it is important to establish that despite the fact that they also dealt with social problems their main motive was the call to turn to God, to repent. Through these visions they tried to better Protestantism and they often wrapped their message in a literary disguise as was expected at the time of enlightenment.

* * *

In conclusion, I think we can talk – within limits, of course – about a peculiar «rural» Enlightenment, or the rise of Enlightenment ideas among peasant communities. The idea of religious tolerance was born not only in intellectual and bourgeois circles, but it was very significant among peasant communities, too. The importance and substance of religious tolerance was recognised by the Neo-Protestants, and not the tra-

ditional Calvinist and Lutheran Churches in Hungary. In other words: there was another level of the Enlightenment, and on this («rural») level we can recognise the elements of eighteenth century «intellectual» ideas. It had an own literature and aesthetics, which was predominantly oral though sometimes written but very wide-spread. The reactions of the eighteenth century state and the traditional Church leaderships for the Neo-Protestant movements at the same time indicate the limits of tolerance.

Csaba FAZEKAS

NOTES

First, I would like to thank Julianna Montvai for her help in the translation of this study into English.

This paper is fundamentally the first treatment of this theme, so I have not used footnotes and annotations. My work was based on primarily on the following Latin and Old Hungarian archival sources:.

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APPENDIX: DOCUMENTS

I. Police record of Protestant believers of Tiszadob, 1741. (Selections)

(...)
Counts of the indictment:

1. It is true what you do is always induced by the Holy Spirit?
2. After singing psalms, do you know everything in the past and the future, can you predict what will happen to you, for good or ill?
3. Is your creed that you cannot sin after Baptism and you will never be able to so sin?
4. Was there a rule among you, that nobody is allowed to use medicine, that you must not call upon a doctor's help, because if the Holy Spirit permitted the illness, he would heal it, too?
5. Is it true that you are not allowed to work on Sundays, not allowed to do charitable work, that you must fast every Sunday, that you are not allowed to make fire or cook meals and not allowed to eat foods made from flour?

6. You are opposed to the preacher's salary, are you not? because he gets his talent from God, so he must give it for nothing.
7. Are you always where the Holy Spirit wants you to be?
8. Can anyone be saved, if he does not keep the laws? Are you able to suffer or die for your teachings?

Answers of the prisoners:

Chained György Panyiti (taxpayer, married, approx. 25 years old) denied, that he would act always for the impression of Holy Spirit. He believed that they do not do other than that which they were taught by preachers: everybody has to pray for the help and grace of Holy Spirit.

On the 2nd point: He denied everything, he never heard a teaching of that sort.

On the 3rd point: He did not believe that everybody who was baptised would be innocent, and nobody among them declared a dogma of this sort. Quite to the contrary, he asserted that everyone born of woman is liable to sin. The reborn man can sin, too.

On the 4th point: He had never heard it. He believed that the ill need doctors to heal. But it was written: Lord gave illnesses to come upon us because of our sins, but the same Lord repealed our sins and the consequences of sin, e.g. illnesses. If we converted to the Lord, he could heal us.

On the 5th point: He denied it outright, as the Bible says: it is permitted to take out the cow which falls into a hole on the day of Sabbath. Once István Porkoláb mentioned to us just as a piece of advice, that we should do all important tasks (e.g. cooking meals etc.) on Saturday, so we can take part more peacefully in the Sunday religious service.

On the 6th point: He believes the opposite of this, he always pays for the preachers.

On the 7th point: He believes the opposite of this. He believes just the words of Bible: there is always singing and praising to the Lord somewhere, He would be there among them, who were collected by the name of Jesus.

On the 8th point: He had never heard that these points are needed to take salvation, and he does not believe this.

(...)

The court of justice of the county asked them, if they do not believe these points, why had they come together in István Porkoláb's house, and what they did do there? Did anybody suggest passing a creed of this sort?

First György Panyiti answered: Once I ploughed in my tillage, and the oxen did not want to do my will, strayed here and there, so I started to swear. When my neighbour, István Porkoláb heard it, he told me, I had to stop it. He reminded me: Come to me and I will show you from the Holy Bible, that you should not swear, because it is a very big sin. If you swear, you would not make yourself better. I went to his house on Sunday, and we did not do other than listen to a reading from the Bible, sing a few psalms, pray from a book 'The

Key of Heavenly Storehouse' and finally we went home. We prefer to do these holy things on Sunday than to do useless things. (...)

(...)

The nobleman István Porkoláb and his brother, Márton came to the court of their own free will. We listened to them talk about the suspected sect. First István Porkoláb (approx. 39 years old, noble, living in Tiszadob) gave evidence:

On the 1st point: He denied everything.

On the 2nd point: He denied it similarly, and he said that the knowledge of the secrets is a law of heavenly Lord.

On the 3rd point: It would be silliness to believe it. On their Sunday meetings there were no other activities than reading the Bible and the book 'Praxis Pietatis', praying and singing psalms.

On the 4th point: He had not believe and never heard it. But he believes the opposite: we have to cure wounds by medicine.

On the 5th point: He believes and declares that it is a Christian thing to do acts of charity, and every Christian always has to do it. Quite to the contrary, on Sundays it is allowed to make fire, cook meals and eat them.

On the 6th point: He denied this entirely, and he pays.

On the 7th point: Related to this point his creed is the same as the whole of Christianity.

On the 8th point: As he had never heard the points above, he do not believe this thing without piety.

They were collected for praying to Lord, make good things before His face in this time afflicted with plague. (...)

Finally István Porkoláb mentioned: Leaving the church on Sundays, I had no mind to vanity. I read the Bible and other books, prayed and sang Psalms and other praises. I warned others of nothing else but the sincere worship of God while I also reproached the swearing and the idle. If I am under charges, I cannot help it. Yet I know that I had been revelling in public houses or swearing or living in immorality, I would not have been brought before the court. (...)

II. From documents the apostasy-trial of a Protestant visionary's (called József Gál), 1750.

a) *Police record of József Gál's questioning. Written in Simonotornya (Tolna county), 4th March 1750.*

Question Response

What is your name? Josephus Gál.

How old are you? About 40.

What is your religion? I am Calvinist.

Where were you born to this world? In the town of Eger, Hungary.

Were you formerly Papist? Yes, I was.

You were born and educated into that religion, were you not? I was born and educated in that.

How long were you in the Papist faith? For 27 years.

At that time, did you always make your confession or not? I made my confession every year from the age of 14.

What is your reason for leaving the the Roman faith and becoming Calvinist? When I met a Calvinist student called János Szána in the land of Kecskemét I had discussions with him, and I told him that nobody would find salvation after 12 years old in Calvinist faith. After this dispute I was convinced by him, I could not find a response for his words and I became sad. While night was falling, I started to pray as usual, and I asked the Splendid God, if he would declare which faith is the redeeming. I finished my prayer and suddenly heard these words but did not see anything: «It was written at Prophet Jeremiah, 17th chapter, 5th verse: This is what the Lord says: Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. But the 7th verse says: Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him, I mean now in Jesus Christ. Because whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only son.» He said a lot of words like these. I was terrified and fell to the ground, called the Lord's name to help. But I could hardly speak my words, and I heard other voices from heaven again, but did not see anyone. I was terrified much rather and sank to the ground. From that Thursday night I lay on the ground until Saturday at 10.00 p.m. During that

time I heard other voices from heaven, and saw signs. I heard questions and answers of two Teachers wearing long clothes. Sunday morning I went to that Calvinist student, who I mentioned above, and told him the events happened with me. He was amazed. After I went to the Franciscan Fathers of Kecskemét, I wanted to have a talk with the superior. He had no time listening to me, gave me a week. I could not appear after a week, but after a month I went to Kecskemét again. The superior who I know was removed, and I did not want to meet the new superior. But I got to the Kecskemét Calvinist Preacher, András Ölvédi, who I asked after telling my story to give me the sacrament Lord's Supper. He heard me but did not give sacrament, and send me to somewhere else. I went to Nagykőrös, and there I asked the Calvinist Preacher, István Helveczy to partake the Lord's Supper, and he did it.

Nobody forced me. The events what happened with me, discussions with Calvinists and the explanations of Holy Scriptures made me do this.

How many years passed, since you took the sacrament and become Calvinist? Who forced you to leave the right path of Roman religion and follow Calvinism?

In the year 1746 you obtained passport-letters from Nagykőrös and Kecskemét. But in 1749, last year, you had passports with the same seals. Did you falsify everything?

I got legal passports in 1746. But last year passports were not the work of geniuses, because I made some pilgrim students copy them for me.

Where did you get the seals which you stamped last year's false passports from?

I bought all three of them with my own money in the town of Rimasszombat I did it because I did not want to bother the Senators of Kecskemét and the preachers.

Senators of Kecskemét and the preachers gave

No, they did not. I was very ill, and they gave me a passport so that I could obtain food in every town.

you the first passport-letter to going everywhere in Hungary and proclaim, that you had been Papist and had become Calvinist, did they not?

Why did you preach to the people? I did not preach, I just told my story.

Are you able to read and write? No, I am not.

b) *József Gall's account of his visions before the court of justice. Simontornya, 5th March 1750. (Selections)*

14 years ago I was separated from the Roman Catholic church, and became a follower of the Calvinist religion. (...)

When I had a discussion with a Calvinist student, and I defended the true Roman faith against him. I was convinced by him and went back to my accommodation. I was alone near cows in an earthen hut and my brain meditated strongly on our debates. I breathed my prayer to God, and asked Him to tell me the truth about the right faith, because there are a lot of religions in the world, there are a lot of happy men, but the man who knows God's will is truly happy. I wanted to sleep, but I had a big fear of Catholic priests, because they always asked about when I fall asleep without a Lord's Prayer or an Ave Maria. (...) When I said *Amen*, there was given a heavenly voice to the right in the dark; I could not see anything, and the Lord said: It was written at Prophet Jeremiah, 17th chapter, 5th verse: This is what the Lord says: Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. But the 7th verse says: Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. The true man is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Believers lives forever, Christ lives inside them and they live in the Christ. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already. And I heard other verses, Matthew 15:9, Isaiah 29:13. When I heard these words I swooned in fear, my body fell to the ground. I saw two teachers standing on my right and left hand side, they were dressed in a robe reaching down to their feet. Their clothes were white as snow, and they were the same age. I heard the verses of Isaiah 65:19-22. Both of them had long hair shining like blazing fire. Before the Teacher standing on right hand I saw a table with two signs of sacraments with an opened book. The first sign was the Baptism, the second was the Lord's Supper. The first was a gold chalice full of water. I remembered the words of St. John. (3:5), «no-one

can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit». The second sign was another gold chalice full of red wine, as Isaiah said (27:2), and I saw rising a two inch thick bread as a plate. I heard the verse of St. John 6:26, and then: Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that sustains eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. I saw an open book taking up the main part of the table, as Zechariah taught us (5:2): I looked again a flying book twenty feet long and ten feet wide. This width meant in the Old Testament the Ten Commandments. In the New Testament this number was 120, because of the men took the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Teacher standing on the right hand side asked himself questions, and answered too. (...) Question: How many sacraments were in the Old Testament? Response: Two, the circumcision and the Passover. Question: What did the circumcision mean in the Old Testament. Response: The alliance arising from grace between God and man, the Gospel, His reconciliation with us. (...) (...)

After a lot of questions and answers the Teachers said: Be faithful, do not forget which you have learned and saw, because these could make you wise over your salvation. If anybody lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind, as James said. (1:5-6) The Teacher standing on left hand side blessed me, too. Finally he told me this: Let the consolation of Holy Spirit be with you, be on your life and its many miseries. I saw the Teachers taking the table start to move East. Once the Teacher standing on the right hand side made a sign with his hand for me to go West. I did not move, so he motioned again, but I did not start. When he signalled for a third time, I started to move West and went wearily. I found first a big, ugly and muddy stretch of water, which reached as far as my mouth. I walked through it with great difficulty. Next I found an other muddy river but it was clearer than the first one. The water reached my throat. Then I found an inexpressibly clear streamlet. The surface of the water was beautiful as crystal. I waded across it, stepped on to the shore, and I awoke on Saturday evening. (...)

c) *Judgement in József Gall's process. Simontornya, 7th March 1750.*

The court of justice mercifully interrogated the imprisoned and now arrested man, who made a full confession. József was born and educated in the Roman Catholic faith. The sacrament of confession declared in the Holy Dogmas were made by him every year. By this act he entered the community of believers. After he vilely abandoned the only redeeming truth, and scooped to follow the aberrations of Calvinist Sect, he committed the sin of apostasy.

The vision (which he would see before, according to him, and which made him to commit this sin) were explained by him falsely. His reason for this was first to preach the teachings of his sect and declare better face, second to confirm other sectarians in their aberrations, third to plead for himself.

József could not write his vision, so he was allowed to talk about it.. The court of justice prevailed on him to come back home to the Holy Roman Catholic Church, but he remained obstinate himself in his aberrations.

So we sentence the prisoner to one year's imprisonment and to fasting everyday on bread and water.