

Orthodox Church of Maramureş between Martyrdom and Religious Tolerance.¹

PhD. student Dumitrița Daniela FILIP²

Abstract:

This study analyses the history of the Orthodox Church from the region of Maramureş in different political and confessional backgrounds and the martyrdom of its hierarchy, as well as the struggle for the preservation of orthodox faith in periods of religious (in)tolerance.

Keywords:

martyrdom, orthodox church of Maramureş, bishops, orthodox diocese, religious tolerance..

Introduction

It is almost impossible for postmodern mentality to understand or imagine martyrdom, considering that nowadays the religious freedom is one of the fundamental human rights. Looking throughout history, this concept had different meanings if we think on the martyrs of the primarily Church or if we think about the Desert Fathers whose discipline and ascetic exercises were often considered a “bloodless martyrdom”. The first martyrs of the Church expressed their Christianity assuming suffering and the risk of death. They were, maybe, the first who fought for religious freedom, even if this was not their primary goal, but rather to confess the truth.

Why Christians did not have the freedom to express their faith? Why they were not tolerated like others? The answer for these questions can be found in the

¹ Article written as a part of doctoral programme, under the advice of Jun. Prof. Daniel BUDA who also gave his approval for publishing;

² **Drd. Dumitrița Daniela FILIP** studied Orthodox Theology, Section of Didactic Orthodox Theology- Preservation and Restoration at Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca, Romania and is presently the coordinator of the museum of the Romanian-Orthodox Dioceze of Maramures and Satmar. She writes a doctoral dissertation on theology and iconographic art in the region of Maramures.

Orthodox Church of Maramureș between Martyrdom and Religious Tolerance

concept of Christianity: it came to shake and overturn the entire philosophy of the Greek-Roman world. Looking throughout history, we can observe that the tyrannies did not forbid the confessions of truth, but they have forbidden the confession of the inconvenient truth for them³. Christianity was inconvenient and still is.

The desire of some political rulers to impose their religious belief among the others could often be seen in history, even among Christian groups. The Protestant Reformation had as consequence a weave of aggression between the papacy and the new religious movements. It ended with martyrdom from both sides: we have the example of the Dutch Catholics from Utrecht.⁴ In the region of Maramureș, this kind of religious intolerance, social pressure and even persecution could also be found. But here, the Romanian orthodox bishops suffered because of their religious beliefs, both from the catholic and from the reformed churches, depending on the religious orientation of the political rulers. Up to 17th Century, the orthodox Romanians from the region of Maramureș had to confessionally survive under the reformed churches proselytism made by the Hungarian Transylvanian princes and by the reformed rulers of the Comitatus of Maramureș. When Maramureș came under the administration of the Habsburg Monarchy, the catholic proselytism became more and more aggressive. In this hostile confessional background, both the Orthodox Diocese of Maramureș and its bishops had the fate of martyrs. They had to survive from a confessional point of view between two limits: the martyrdom and religious tolerance.

In this article I intend to research the situation of the Romanian Orthodox Church from Maramureș, the abolishment and the revival of the Orthodox Diocese of Maramureș and the struggle of its bishops and laity in order to preserve the Orthodox faith, and this under the pressure of martyrdom and religious tolerance, according to the political background. From the beginning of the institutionalisation of religious life in the area we speak about up to present, the orthodox diocese was abolished and re-established numerous times by different political regimes that ruled over this region. It became a kind of “phoenix bird” that revived miraculously from its own ashes.

³ Gustave Thibon, *L'Ignorance étoilée*, Romanian version *Ignoranța înstelată*, trans. Ion Nastasia and Maria Nastasia, Humanitas, București, 2003, p. 130.

⁴ Casper Staal, “Aspect of Iconoclasm in Utrecht- today and in the past”, in: Willem van Asselt (ed.), *Iconoclasm and Iconoclash, Struggle for Religious Identity*, Second Conference of Church Historians, Utrecht, University of Tilburg, Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2007, p. 313-329.

1. Under the Hungarian crown (1391- 1538)

The organised religious life in the region of Maramureș began in 1391, when the local Voivodes Balç and Drag dedicated the Monastery Saint Michael from Peri- "an ancient heritage from their parents"⁵, to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Diploma of the Ecumenical Patriarch Anthony IV issued at 13 August 1391⁶ gave the abbot of the mentioned monastery, Pachomios, and to his successors some quasi-episcopal rights, such as the possibility to consecrate churches and religious authority upon Maramureș and the neighbour regions: Ugocea, Bereg, Sălaj, Arva, Bistra, Ciceu, Unguraș, Almaș. This historic moment was considered to be the "birth" of the Orthodox Diocese in the county of Maramureș⁷.

From the 11th Century, the region of Maramureș was under the administration of the Kingdom of Hungary. The Romanians were allowed to preserve their native political organization, i.e. the "Voivode" and their confession- orthodox faith up to 16th Century. Even if the region of Maramureș had autonomy in that period, the Hungarian King have had the right to confirm or reject the decisions of the local Romanians Voivodes, as they lost independence in political and financial matters.

Taking into consideration that all Hungarian Kings acted as protectors of the Hungarian Catholic Church, and some of them used in their royal title the expression "Apostolic King of Hungary..."⁸ (beginning with the 18th Century), they took the responsibility of making mission for the Catholic Church. Therefore, they would never confirm an elected orthodox bishop for Maramureș. Having the power of a patriarch and the right to rule over the church, such an abuse of the Hungarian King was tolerated by the pope⁹ who was afraid of losing the Hungarians to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, King Louis (Ludovic) imposed the Catholic confession to all nobles from his kingdom, under the punishment of losing their nobility (noble titles) and their fortune. The Voivodes from Maramureș were absolved from this because, on one hand, they were courageous

⁵ Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa, *Diplome maramureșene din secolele XIV și XV*, 62, Dragoș Vodă, Cluj Napoca, 2009, p. 145-147.

⁶ Mihail Kogălniceanu, "Hrisov a lui Antonie, Patriarhul Țarigradului 1389", *Arhiva Românească*, 2nd ed., Iași, 1860, p. 10-13.

⁷ Pr. Dr. Alexandru Cziple, "Documente privitoare la Episcopia din Maramureș", *Analele Academiei Române* 38 (1916), p. 11.

⁸ This title was first bestowed to King Saint Stephan in a letter of Pope Silvestre II. Dr. O. Ghibu, *Catolicismul unghuresc în Transilvania și politica religioasă a Statului Român*, Institutul de Arte grafice "Ardealul", Cluj, 1924, p. 30.

⁹ King Matia even wrote a letter to the pope to express that intention if the pope would interfere with his policies, cf. Dr. O. Ghibu, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

Orthodox Church of Maramureș between Martyrdom and Religious Tolerance

in battles and loyal to the king, and, on the other hand, the king needed them as allies because their territory, i.e. Maramureș had a strategic position at the borders of the kingdom. That is why the king tolerated Orthodoxy, the confession of the Romanians. Taking this situation into consideration, the local Voivodes found this compromise solution for their Orthodox Church of Maramureș – the stavropegic monastery and not establishing a real diocese. The document issued by the Patriarch of Constantinople was reconfirmed by the Hungarian King Vladislav II in 1494 and translated into Latin¹⁰.

The Hungarian kings were not the only ones who claimed the territory from a confessional or political point of view. The tremendous jurisdiction (about 7 territories) of the Peri Monastery, as well as the status of its abbot were always desired by the abbots and then by the bishops of Muncach.¹¹ That is why they always tried, in many ways, to persuade the Hungarian Kings to give them plenary jurisdiction upon Maramureș and in many situations they were the ones who drew the sword against the orthodox bishops, mostly after Rusyns' union with the Church of Rome. In 1494, the Rusyn bishop from Muncach, John, even deliberately falsified documents¹² to obtain jurisdiction upon Maramureș and the territories mentioned in the stavropegic diploma. However, Ilarie, the abbot from Peri came with authentic documents in front of the Hungarian king Vladislav, to prove that he was the real successor of Pachomios and therefore had the right to rule over the Orthodox Church of Maramureș. The king disposed that the bishop from Muncach had primacy over the abbot from Peri¹³ and this set a precedent for bishops of Muncach in having jurisdiction upon the Orthodox Church from the region we spoke about.

Beginning with the 16th Century, the bishops from Muncach adopted the union with the Catholic Church and began an aggressive Catholic mission in Maramureș. They had the support of the Hungarian kings. In the name of the "Apostolic" responsibility, all Hungarian kings, through their religious policies, wanted to convert to Catholicism the other ethnic groups they had in their kingdom and so to change also their ethnic identity. For the Hungarian Kingdom, Catholicism became an element of ethnic identity, more political than a religious

¹⁰ Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa, *op. cit.*, no. 352, p. 865-866.

¹¹ Tit Bud, *Disertațiune despre Episcopii și Vicarii români din Maramureș*, Ed. Tipografiei Diecesane, Gherla, 1891, p. 9-15; according to Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa, *op. cit.*, p. 159, Teodor Koriatovici received in 1354, from king Louis I of Hungary, the domain Muncach and in 1360 Koriatovici founded the monastery St. Nicolas in Muncach.

¹² Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa, *op. cit.*, no. 352, p. 865-866; prof. G. G. Rafiroiu, *Mănăstirea din Peri*, Chiriașii Tipografiei românești, Oradea, 1954, p. 28-29.

¹³ Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa, *op. cit.*, no. 352, p. 865.

matter.¹⁴ To achieving this goal, he have sent to Maramureș Catholic missionaries, the so called “royal quests” and the Teutons.¹⁵ The Teutons built catholic churches and monasteries: the church St. Stephan from Cuhea, monastery St. Mary from Remeți and the stone church St. Emeric from Sighet,¹⁶ considering that, the century before, in 1279, the Council from Buda had forbidden Romanians from Maramureș the building of stone churches.¹⁷

In this period, we can speak about a reciprocal religious tolerance, because people from Maramureș were not suspicions about the presence of the Teutons and the Catholic missionaries were not hostile. Even if in this period the Orthodox Romanians were called “heretics” (schismatics) in official documents, there was a peaceful coexistence between the two confessions.

After the stavropegic document was issued in 1391, for about 165 years no documents offered us information about the names of the orthodox bishops from Maramureș. In 1479 was mentioned metropolitan Ioanichie from Belgrade, who had jurisdiction upon Maramureș. He asked king Mathias to exempt from taxes the priests from that area.¹⁸

2. Under the rule of the Transylvanian Princes (1538- 1688)

After the disaster from Mohacs, in 1526, and the hostilities that followed, ended with the Peace from Oradea, in 1538, Maramureș together with the neighbouring territories known as “Partes Regni Hungarie” or “Partium” came under the administration of the semi-independent Ottoman Principality of Transylvania.¹⁹ After the Peace from Speyer, 10 August 1570, when the incorporation of Maramureș to The Principality of Transylvania was reconfirmed, the Orthodox Church of Maramureș came under the jurisdiction of the

¹⁴ Dr. O. Ghibu, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁵ Alexandru Filipașcu, *Istoria Maramureșului*, Tipografia ziarului “Universul”, București, 1940, p. 28.

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*, p. 31, see also Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa, *op. cit.*, no. 2, p. 4-6: In 1300 king Andrea III issued a document to exempt from taxes the royal guests from Maramureș. Diploma no. 4, p. 10: in the 26th of April 1329 the Hungarian king Carol gave social rights to the guests.

¹⁷ Prof. Dr. Nuțu Roșca, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române din Maramureș*, Ed. Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române a Maramureșului și Sătmărilor, Baia Mare, 2015, p. 168.

¹⁸ Prof. Dr. S. Reli, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română din Maramureș în vremurile trecute*, Ed. Mitropoliei Bucovinei, Cernăuți, 1938, p. 70.

¹⁹ Alexandru Filipașcu, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

Orthodox Church of Maramureș between Martyrdom and Religious Tolerance

Metropolitan from Belgrad.²⁰ The bishop of Maramureș and Muncaci was a subordinate of the Belgrad metropolitan.²¹

In this period Calvinism was spread in Maramureș by missionaries like Matei Ramasy, Toma Huszty and John Surdaster, due to the new confession adopted by the political governance. As a consequence of their intense mission, in 1556 all catholic churches from the region of Maramureș were already in the possession of the Reformed Church²². Taking example from the Transylvanian princes, many Romanian noble families adopted the Hungarian culture, language and confession due to the social pressure. It appeared the so-called process of “magyarization”²³, the acculturation among local noblemen who wanted to preserve their nobility, social position and political influence. Those who refused to assimilate the Hungarian culture, language and confession became free peasants, also called, in Hungarian, “nemesh”.²⁴

For its geographical strategic position of a great importance, the governance of the Comitatus was given only to Hungarian political personalities who started an aggressive magyarization implementing the new confessional framework: the Helvetic confession. Part of the “offensive Calvinist intolerance” plan²⁵ was the financial support for printing liturgical books in Romanian: the New Testament from Belgrad, 1648 was printed with the financial contribution of Geoge Rakoczy I, together with the letter sent to Patriarch Kiril Lukaris by Gabriel Bethen, with the request for the patriarch to convince the Orthodox Romanians to adopt *Confessio Helvetica*. They hoped that a change of the liturgical language (from Slavonic to Romanian) will make the Calvinist renewal and the Calvinist creed will be inserted unnoticed into the orthodox sermons. We know from the inventory of the old Romanian religious book from Maramureș that in this period the

²⁰ Belgrad is the old name of Alba Iulia city.

²¹ Up to 1544, the bishops from Vad oversaw the diocese of Maramureș, then Mihai the Brave settled bishops in Muncach to oversee diocese of Maramureș: for example Serghie, subordinate to metropolitan from Belgrad; Alexandru Filipașcu, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

²² Dr. O. Ghibu, *op. cit.*, p. 104, 200. Alexandru Filipașcu, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

²³ Alexandru Filipașcu, “Înstrăinarea unor familii și averi maramureșene prin înscrisura cu străinii”, *Transilvania* 73 (1942), no. 10, p. 742- 756.

²⁴ In the Confessional registers from the parishes from Maramureș, dated 18- 19th Century, at the heading – origin of parents we can find the expression “noble paysants”, to remember us the nobility they had once; e.i. National Archives Maramureș, Fond no. 19, Confessional Registers, seria Confessional Registers Rozavlea, doc. no. 1381, 1382, 1383.

²⁵ Stelian Tofană, “Mitropolitul Simion Ștefan și opera sa între “toleranța” și intoleranța religioasă, politică și culturală în Transilvania secolului al XVII-lea”, in: Ioan Vasile Leb (ed.) *Toleranță și conviețuire în Transilvania secolelor XVII-XIX*, Limes, Presa Universitară Clujană, Cluj Napoca, 2001, p. 125.

Orthodox Romanians bought only that liturgical books that were printed in Moldavia and Walachia (orthodox countries) on one hand, and, on the other hand, they used for sermons only Transylvanian books for which an orthodox bishop or voivode from Moldavia or Walachia guaranteed for.²⁶

The Exarchate from Peri was abolished so that the Orthodox Church from Maramures could be officially exposed to an aggressive process of calvinization. Beginning with 1579, Orthodox bishops had to accept humiliating conditions in order to be elected and confirmed by Transylvanian Diet: to become the promoters of Calvinism, to accept the *Confessio Helvetica* under the reformed catechism, to give primacy and to be obedient to the Calvinist superintendent, to send the priests to him from examination, not to worship icons, the cross or to use the orthodox prayers (molitva). The Congregation of the Comitatus established the rights and the obligations of orthodox bishops. It had the power to control their activity, to elect, to confirm, to dismiss them and even to send them to prison.²⁷ The orthodox bishop had to be, on one hand, obedient to the superintendent and, on the other hand to the governance of the Comitatus. Many bishops ruled over the church of Maramureș, some of them no more than one year. Many of them were dismissed, sent to prison or suffered martyrdom, took unfair immorality records against them, because they did not apply the Calvinist provisions. Others left themselves their ecclesiastic hierarchical positions not to compromise their church by accepting the reformed conditions. Those conditions were never applied even the bishops signed for. This truth was confirmed by the chronicler (historian) George Hanner (+ 1777), who said: “the Romanians, although they promised to be obedient to the superintendent and to give him primacy, they never left their faith and culture, nor adopted the Calvinist renewals, but they always had a repulse for them.”²⁸

Vasile Tarascovici, elected as a bishop in 1634, was confirmed only in 1639 by the general assembly of the noblemen of the Comitatus, although he had a letter of confirmation from the Transylvanian Prince. Suspected of Catholicism, he was charged unfair for different abuses and immorality and sent to prison by the reformed prince George Rakoczy I.²⁹ Released from prison in 1641, he was re-elected bishop of Maramureș and Muncaci by the Hungarian King, but he never

²⁶ An example is the large usage of “Cazania Varlaam” the book of preach printed by metropolitan Varlaam of Moldavia in 1643 instead of the two books of preach printed by deacon Coresi in Brașov, in 1564 and 1581. In the printing of the books from Brașov were involved Forro Miclăuș and Luca Hrăgilă, suspected of Calvinism, cf. Florea Mureșan, *Cazania lui Varlaam*, Cluj, 1944, introduction by Nicolae Colan.

²⁷ Alexandru Filipașcu, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

²⁸ Ștefan Meteș, *Istoria Bisericii și a vieții religioase a românilor din Transilvania și Ungaria*, 1st vol., 2nd ed., Ed. Librăriei, Sibiu, 1935, p. 203-204.

²⁹ Alexandru Filipașcu, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

had the chance to perform his duties. In the confirmation document issued by the Congregation of the Comitatus were specified the conditions he should accept and the consequences of disobedience: “if he won’t respect the conditions, we shall protest and inform our prince”³⁰, and they did.

The successors of bishop Tarascovici: *Ilie Iorest, Popa Savu, Mihail Molodeț* were also forced to accept the Calvinist conditions. *Popa Savu*, elected bishop at 12 April 1650, refused to accept the conditions and left the diocese chair after one year of serving the church as a hierarch.³¹ *Mihail Molodeț* was confirmed as bishop of Maramureș at 7 July 1651 by prince George Rakoczy II. According to the professor Simeon Reli³², he was dismissed in 1659 for not applying the Calvinist conditions he sign for at his election. He was charged unfair for immorality. A document preserved at the National Archives from Baia Mare³³, dated 28 January 1659, presented him as the head of an official delegation of the Comitatus to participate at the talks with Acațiu Barcsai, the new prince of Transylvania who deposed George Rakoczy II with the help of the Ottomans. Mihai Georgiță who studied documents³⁴ about Mihail Molodeț concluded that the bishop had authority and influence over the governance of the Comitatus. In spite of this, the reformed governance of Maramureș did not absolve him from the obligation of applying the Calvinist conditions. Other Romanian orthodox bishops suffered martyrdom because of this: *Ilie Iorest and Sava Brancovici* (metropolitans of Transylvania with a large jurisdiction, over Maramureș too) and Iosif Stoica (he was bishop only for the region of Maramureș). They were canonised by Romanian Orthodox Church. We have documentary references about Sava Brancovici that he consecrated the church of monastery Moisei. He was also mentioned on an old liturgical book called Antologhion, dated 1638, belonging to the community of Borșa, as well as on the diptych of Moisei Monastery: “remember, our Lord, the founders of this monastery: 1680, bishop Sava Brancovici...”³⁵ In 1680 he was dismissed, sent to prison and ended like a martyr for the Orthodox Church.

³⁰ Pr. Alexandru Cziple, *op. cit.*, p. 44-45, document published in the Protocol of the Comitatus Congregation, Sighet, 19 July 1639.

³¹ Prof. Dr. S. Reli, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 94-96.

³³ National Archives Maramureș, Fond of the Mayery of Baia Mare, Administrative documents, Fasciculus 1, no. 7.

³⁴ Drd. Mihai Georgiță, “Considerații cu privire la o nouă mărturie despre Episcopia Ortodoxă de Maramureș (mijlocul secolului al XVII-lea)”, *Revista Arhivei maramureșene* 3 (2010), no. 3, p. 101-108.

³⁵ Ioan Bârlea, *Însemnări din bisericile Maramureșului*, publicate cu cheltuiala Ministerului de Instrucție publică, București, 1909, p. 135.

This period was characterised by proselytism associated with persecutions and religious intolerance³⁶ for the Romanian Orthodox Church. The “Act of Religious Tolerance and Freedom of Conscience” issued by the Diet in Torda, 1568, did not include the orthodox confession among the four *religio receptae*, i.e. the Reformed, Lutheran, Unitarian and Catholic confessions. This situation forced the Orthodox Church to find different resources to survive and to consolidate its creed.

3. Under the Habsburg Empire (1683- 1867)

After 1683, both Hungary and Transylvania became parts of the Habsburg Empire³⁷. During the Habsburg Monarchy, the region of Maramureș was first part of the Habsburg Principality of Transylvania and in 1732, the region of Maramureș was incorporated into the Habsburg Kingdom of Hungary. In this period the Orthodox Church had to face both the Reformed and Catholic proselytism. The Habsburg Monarchs had the consciousness of their apostolic mission and tried in many ways to convert the Orthodox to Catholicism by imposing a union with the Church of Rome.

In 1727 the governance of the Comitatus received an order from royal council that the orthodox liturgical books had to be destroyed.³⁸ Although in 18th Century were issued some royal decrees regarding the prohibition of importing religious books from Moldavia and Walachia, according to an inventory made by Aurel Socolan in the parishes in the region of Maramureș were brought 596 Romanian books³⁹.

Maria Teresa (1740- 1780) was convinced that the Catholic Church was the only one that could bring the salvation of mankind. She considered that all non-Catholic believers were lost spiritually. In her opinion, her royalty and political power were gifts from God to save the others by converting them to Catholicism and she would be asked whether she accomplished this.⁴⁰ This mentality was not

³⁶ Ana Dumitran, *Religie ortodoxă- religie reformată. Ipostaze ale identității confesionale a românilor din Transilvania în secolele XVI- XVII*, Ratio et Revelatio, Oradea, 2015, p. 154.

³⁷ Ioan-Aurel Pop, Thomas Nægler, Magyari András (coord.), *Istoria Transilvaniei*, 2nd vol., 2nd ed., Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Cluj Napoca, 2016, p. 95.

³⁸ Pr. Alexandru Cziple, *op. cit.*, p. 116: Protocolul Congregației comitatense, Sighet, 26 August, 1727.

³⁹ Aurel Socolan, *Circulația cărții românești până la 1800 în județul Maramureș*, Maria Montessori, Baia Mare, 2005, p. 104.

⁴⁰ Gotthold Dorschell, *Maria Theresias Staas und Lebensanschouung*, Gotha, 1908, p. 30, *apud*. Mihai Săsăujan, “Problematica toleranței confesionale în Imperiul Habsburgic

Orthodox Church of Maramureș between Martyrdom and Religious Tolerance

compatible with religious tolerance, freedom of conscience and religious diversity. She considered that political strength and unity of the Empire related to religious unity: one state, one religion, one nation. So, the Habsburg Monarchy used Catholicism to consolidate its political power. As a consequence, the Romanian orthodox hierarchy was slowly abolished. The Metropolis of Transylvania ended its activity when metropolitan Atanasie Anghel signed the Union with the Church of Rome in 1701 and the Diocese of Maramureș was abusively abolished in 1740. It was in 1761 when the Orthodox Romanians were allowed to have again their own ecclesiastic hierarchy, when Dionisie Novacovici was elected bishop with his residence in Sibiu.⁴¹ The region of Maramureș, being incorporated to Hungary, was officially declared as being uniate,⁴² came under the jurisdiction of Rusyn Uniate Diocese of Muncach and no orthodox bishop was allowed to have residence here or to administrate the church.

Political and ecclesiastic elite from Wien and Transylvania considered that all Romanians adopted union with the Church of Rome in 1701.⁴³ False reports were sent by Transylvanian authorities, so the Habsburg authorities did not verify them until 1714.⁴⁴ The Romanian majority remained in fact orthodox. This reality was confirmed by the rebellion from 1744- 1746 of the monk Visarion Sarai and that of Sophrony from Cioara in 1759- 1761.⁴⁵ The two orthodox monks who fought for the preservation of orthodox faith ended as martyrs, being canonized by the Orthodox Romanian Church. This confessional movement and rebellion of orthodox people for religious liberty had devastating consequences for orthodoxy: general Bukow destroyed all Romanian orthodox monastery from Transylvania and some from the region of Chioar, Lăpuș- now part of Maramureș county, and the orthodox churches were burned or confiscated.

în a doua jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea”, in: *Toleranță și conviețuire în Transilvania secolelor XVII-XIX*, in Ioan Vasile Leb (ed.), Limes, Presa Universitară Clujană, Cluj Napoca, 2001, p. 91.

⁴¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (secolele XVII-XVIII)*, 2nd vol., EIBMBOR, București, 1994, p. 501.

⁴² Silviu Dragomir, *Istoria dezrobirii religioase a românilor din Ardeal în secolul XVIII*, 2nd vol., Dacia, Cluj Napoca, 2002, p. 193, used the expression ”all Orthodox were declared as converted” i. e. to uniatism.

⁴³ Ioan-Aurel Pop, Thomas Năgler, Magyari András (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁴⁴ Mihai Săsăujan, ”Problematika toleranței confesionale în Imperiul Habsburgic în a doua jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea”, in: Ioan Vasile Leb (ed.) *Toleranță și conviețuire în Transilvania secolelor XVII-XIX*, Limes, Presa Universitară Clujană, Cluj Napoca, 2001, p. 98.

⁴⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Uniația în Transilvania în trecut și azi*, Andreiana, Sibiu, 2010, p. 41.

The *Josephine period* had a religious tolerance side regarding the ecclesial policy of Joseph II (1764- 1790). In 1781 he issued a tolerance edict, therefore Orthodoxy was considered a tolerated confession. Unfortunately, the edict was not applied neither in Transylvania, nor in Maramureș where the Romanian were officially declared uniats. Another article of the edict annulated the edicts issued in 1727 and 1763 that forbidden the building of orthodox churches without the permission of the Monarch and stipulated that a Romanian orthodox community was allowed to build a church and a school if it had more than 100 members.⁴⁶

The laws issued between 1791- 1792 admitted religious liberty for orthodox confession in Hungary, equalized the social and political status of orthodox inhabitants with that of the other confessions. Although Maramureș was part of Hungary at that time, because in the official reports was registered as uniate, the laws were never applied. Joseph II issued another edict to transfer in the property of the orthodox communities the churches and material possessions taken abusively by Catholics before the leopodine diploma.⁴⁷ Again, in Maramureș this was never applied because the orthodox diocese was abolished by the Habsburg authorities.

The religious tolerance pursued by Emperor Joseph II was part of a plan that had to put an end to the unstable political situation in Transylvania and Hungary caused by fights for religious liberty.

From the list of the Romanian Orthodox bishops that ruled over the church in this period we should mention Iosif Stoica, Iov Țirca, Seraphim Petrovay, Popa Andrei, Dosoftei II Teodorovici and Gavriil Ștefanca from Bârsana, who ended their lives as martyrs for the Orthodox Church or suffered different unfair charges because of their religious belief.

Bishop *Iosif Stoica* (1690- 1711), now a saint of the Romanian Orthodox Church known as Saint Iosif the Confessor, was the most remarkable figure of all hierarchs from Maramureș. He was supported by the reformed noblemen members of the governance of the Comitatus and confirmed as bishop of Maramureș by prince Mihail Apaffy I. He fought against the union with the Church of Rome. He remained the only orthodox bishop in Transylvania after metropolitan Atanasie Anghel signed the union with Rome. In spite of this, the same reformed governance of the Comitatus, that few years ago elected him as bishop for Maramureș, charged him for being philo-Catholic. The catholic Habsburg

⁴⁶ Ioan Chirilă, "Problema toleranței în Trasilvania în Perioada Iosefină", in: Ioan Vasile Leb (ed.) *Toleranță și conviețuire în Transilvania secolelor XVII-XIX*, Limes, Presa Universitară Clujană, Cluj Napoca, 2001, p. 133.

⁴⁷ Ioan-Aurel Pop, Thomas Năgler, Magyari András (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 108.

authorities accused him of philo-Calvinism. He was the bishop that ruled the longest over the orthodox church of Maramureș – about 20 years of intense ecclesiastic activity, under the governance of reformed princes of Transylvania and under the catholic Habsburg monarchy. He remained in the memory of the orthodox communities from Maramureș as a saint and a martyr. Nicoale Iorga, Tit Bud or Alexandru Cziplu wrote impressive articles about him.⁴⁸ Only historian Alexandru Filipașcu used negative terms when describing him as: "simoniac, alcoholic and adulterous".⁴⁹ He was unfairly charged for immorality and sent to prison in 1711 but he was released because his subjects loved him and protested against his imprisonment⁵⁰. He died under suspect and unknown circumstances.

Iov Țirca was the successor of Saint Iosif. Firstly, he was accused of union with the reformed church and then he was accused of being uniate with the church of Rome, depending on the religious orientation of the political rulers. He was given a sentence to death but he managed to escape in Moldavia.⁵¹

Seraphim Petrovai, the successor of Iov Țirca, was ordained bishop in 1711 by the Moldavian metropolitan Ghedeon II. He was a councillor of Saint Josef the Confessor. In 1714 he was arrested, released from prison and arrested again in 1717.⁵² He also died under suspect and unknown circumstances.

Popa Andrei, a priest from Ieraș Cosău, was elected bishop of Maramureș in 1715, but never confirmed in that position. Because of the intrigues of the bishop from Muncach, the documents sent for confirmation were never received by the Emperor.⁵³

Dosoștei II Teodorovici (1715- 1735), also ordained bishop by the Moldavian metropolitan Ghedeon II, was the last officially confirmed bishop of Maramureș. He had a martyric end of his life according to professor Nuțu Roșca⁵⁴. In 1720, emperor Carol VI (1711- 1740) forbidden Dosoștei to carry on his ecclesiastic

⁴⁸ Nicole Iorga, "Ceva despre Episcopul maramurășan Iosif Stoica", *Analele Academiei Române* 36 (1913), p. 151-156. Tit Bud, *Disertațiune despre Episcopii...*, p. 19, 23, 56-61. Pr. Dr. Alexandru Cziplu, *op. cit.*, p. 266-271, 311-326.

⁴⁹ Alexandru Filipașcu, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁵⁰ Pr. Dr. Alexandru Cziplu, *op. cit.*, p. 324: *Protocolul Congregației Comitatense, X, 22 mai 1705, Sighet: "toți frații noștri Români din Maramurăș protestează în mod sărbătoresc, că episcopul de religie cu dumnealor a fost prins fără știrea și fără învoirea lor, împotriva drepturilor țării..."*

⁵¹ Prof. Dr. S. Reli, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁵² Prof. Dr. Nuțu Roșca, *op. cit.*, p. 493.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 120.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 497.

activities, putting the region under the jurisdiction of the Rusyn Uniate Diocese of Muncach.⁵⁵ In this period, the Orthodox Church of Maramureș was out of law.

Gavriil Ștefanca (1735- 1739) was never confirmed as bishop of Maramureș by the authorities. He had his residence at Bârsana monastery⁵⁶. His death remains a mystery. Professor Nuțu Roșca assumed he was murdered.⁵⁷ After his death, the diocese of Maramureș was abolished, the authorities did not allow orthodox Romanians to elect another bishop. The orthodox believers from Maramureș were registered as uniate and came under the jurisdiction of Rusyn Uniate Diocese of Muncaci for about 198 years. Documents dating from this period show that many Romanians from Maramureș remained orthodox and others, who adopted the union under pressure tried in many ways to come back to Orthodoxy. In a letter written by Romanians from Sighet, addressed to Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna dated 19 September 1869⁵⁸, expressed their wish to come back into the chest of the “Greek-Orthodox Church.” In the letter was said that our ancestors were “deceived” with promises to obtain more social rights. Many people tried to come back to the Orthodox faith, but they were not allowed. The act of union with the Church of Rome was perceived like a movement that could break the Rumanian roots. The confessional changes imposed by the Habsburg authorities through different catholic policies were effective only at an official and declaratory level. These policies were imposed, but never assimilated by the people in their daily life, in this period.

The most impressive testimony of preserving the orthodox faith, in spite of the Habsburg decisions that did not allow to have an own orthodox hierarchy, in this period, was the art of the icon. Iconography became a form of mission, an expression of the Orthodox faith, and a source of confessional survival for the Romanian people.

The Orthodox Diocese of Maramureș was re-established in 1937 when Vasile Stan was elected bishop of Maramureș. It was abolished again in 1948 by the

⁵⁵ Pr. Dr. Alexandru Cziple, *op. cit.*, p. 352: Archives of Maramureș Comitatus, no.7, documents from 1720: “Wien, 22nd August 1720, Carol 6th puts Maramurăș under the jurisdiction of bishop Bizanție from Muncach and forbids pe bishop Dosofteiu to carry on his ecclesiastic activities”.

⁵⁶ Ștefan Meteș, *Mănăstirile românești din Transilvania și Ungaria*, Tipografia Arhidiecezană, Sibiu, 1939, p. 158.

⁵⁷ Prof. Dr. Nuțu Roșca, *op. cit.*, p. 497.

⁵⁸ Archives of the Orthodox Metropolis of Transylvania, doc. no. 1226 from 1869: “Ciple Ioanu și Vasile Manu, jude comunal și notari ai comunei besericești gr.cath. din Sighetu Marmației, arată aplecarea poporului întregu de aci de a trece la religiunea noastră gr.răsăriteană”; letter published in *Tribuna*, 8 (1904), nr. 82-83, p. 1-2.

Orthodox Church of Maramureş between Martyrdom and Religious Tolerance

communist authorities. It was reactivated in 1990 having jurisdiction upon Maramureş and Satu Mare counties.

Conclusions

The martyrdom of this diocese and of its bishops had different causes. It was, on one hand, the desire of different political governances to impose their religious orientation, on the other hand the desire of bishops from Muncach for more religious power and larger jurisdiction. The persecutions our church had to do with a strong resistance for not changing Orthodox doctrine and spirituality but strengthen and consolidate them. People from Maramureş and Transylvania developed different methods to preserve the Orthodox faith and national identity. The need to defend their rights, their Orthodox faith, their country and national identity developed the “weapons” needed for this battle: the liturgical books and the iconographic programme from the Orthodox Church which became a visual manifest.