Ganea Sabina-Maria

RECEPTION OF THE PLAGUE IN TRANSYLVANIA: OFFICIAL DISCOURSES FROM THE 16th- 17th CENTURIES

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

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by

Ganea Sabina-Maria

(Romania)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Thesis Supervisor

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Examiner

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I, the undersigned, **Ganea Sabina-Maria**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 24 June 2016

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Abstract

In Transylvania, as in other parts of Europe, the plague received a variety of discursive approaches. Physicians and laymen wrote treatises about the causes and the treatment of the plague, relying on the tradition of the medical treatises and subjecting their discourse to their religious affiliation. At the same time, preachers were writing sermons about the proper Christian way of confronting death and the plague. The religious and the medical discourses have similar approaches as a result of an ideological collaboration between them, which was ultimately reflected to a certain degree in the administrative measures applied to the plague-stricken Transylvanian towns. The present thesis represents an analysis of a selection of medical treatises and plague or funeral sermons collected from all the religious denominations officially recognised in sixteenth-seventeenth century Transylvania – Lutheranism, Calvinism and Orthodoxy. Additionally, the thesis will also contain an analysis of the few Jesuit letters which mention the plague, as well as a recollection of the main administrative measures taken against the epidemics. These will hopefully result in a comprehensive image of the reception of the plague in Transylvania and the main discourses elaborated when facing it.

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I would like to thank my supervisors, Gerhard Jaritz and Marcell Sebők, for all their support and advice in elaborating this thesis. I would also like to give special thanks to the academic writing instructors Zsuzsa Reed and Thomas Rooney, whose skills ensured my work is reader-friendly, and to the Department professors which showed understanding and aid throughout this year. And last but not least I would like to thank my family and my precious friends and colleagues who supported me in writing this thesis.

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Introduction

The second plague pandemic (1346-1844) has been long debated and extensively discussed in Western European historiography.[1] No other disease in human history has had such a huge impact on the European mentality and societies or has generated so many historical controversies concerning its identity and its effects. Historians have argued that the consequences of the plague went far beyond the demographic ones, influencing also the development of economy, medicine and culture.[2] To which extent the plague was indeed a turning point in history is still being debated; it is certain that it was more than a disease – it is an integrating part of European culture, as it was continuously present on the continent until the nineteenth century.

[1] The second plague epidemic began with the first generalised outburst known by the name of "the Black Death"; although it receded by 1353, the plague had already established itself as endemic in the European and Muslim world. The pattern of the plague outbursts is not easy to distinguish, but epidemics recurred until the nineteenth century on the European continent. The second pandemic ended in different places at different times, therefore this matter is not completely settled in historiography. While 1722 was its last appearance in Western Europe, the disease persisted in Eastern Europe and Muslim regions. In Central Europe, plague seems to have been moving in a cycle – from Switzerland to Brandenburg and from Rhineland to Hungary and back – never failing to appear in at least one area. Due to these factors, I believe the accurate temporal definition of the medieval plague pandemic should follow J. N. Hays' scheme in *Epidemics and Pandemics: Their Impacts on Human History* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 41–47. See also Edward Eckert's Edward *The Structure of Plagues and Pestilences in Early Modern Europe: Central Europe, 1560–1640.* Basel: Karger, 1996.

[2] For further readings on economic, demographic and religious changes in the European society under the siege of the plague epidemics, see: Meiss, Millard, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death: The Arts, Religion, and Society in the Mid-Fourteenth Century,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951; Williman, Daniel ed., *The Black Death: The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague*, Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982; Horrox, Rosemary ed., *The Black Death,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994; Bolton, James L. "The World Upside Down: Plague as an Agent of Economic and Social Change" in *The Black Death in England*, edited by W. M. Ormrod and P. G. Lindley, pp. 17–77. Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1996; Herlihy, David. *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*, edited by Samuel K. Cohn Jr. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997; Boeckl, Christine, *Images of Plague and Pestilence: Iconography and Iconology*, Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2000; Cohn Jr., Samuel K., *The Black Death Transformed: Disease and Culture in Early Renaissance Europe*, New York: Arnold and Oxford University Press, 2002; Byrne, Joseph P., *The Black Death,* Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004; Christakos, George, et al. Interdisciplinary Public Health Reasoning and Epistemic Modeling: The Case of the Black Death. New York: Springer, 2005; Byrne, Joseph P., *Encyclopedia of Pestilence, Pandemics, and Plagues*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008.

The cultural content of the plague demands great care from the historian; it is crucial to understand that the modern conception of any past disease is laboratory-developed and it cannot, therefore, be compared to the way it was identified or understood by people centuries ago. As such, the "present" plague provoked by the *Yersinia pestis* bacterium is not the same as the "past" plague which appeared either as a divine punishment for sins or as a consequence of the corrupted air. Historians such as Jo N. Hays, Andrew Cunningham or Jon Arrizabalaga avoid such a task altogether, brilliantly arguing the futility of the present day medical definition of the plague for recovering aspects of its past impact on the European mentality.[3]

The impact that the epidemics had on the contemporaries led to the production of a large number of sources, especially in the Western region of Europe. The situation is different in the East-Central and Southern part of the continent, where sources are to be found mostly on the late epidemics and not on the Black Death. In the West, the last plague's last appearance was in 1722, while in the East it has been for at least another century.[4]

One of the most important effects of the plague on European society was the shift of attitudes towards authority. During epidemics, the authorities came from three different levels: medical, ecclesiastical, and political. While following the same general tendencies, the measures taken and discourses adopted by the governors, doctors, and priests depended greatly on the geographical region and all its particular economic, political, social, and religious traits.

The most authoritative voices were the medical ones, as a huge part of the official administrative approach to eradicating the epidemics relied on the prescriptions offered by the doctors. In the beginning, physicians found themselves overwhelmed when applying the

[3] Jo N. Hays, "Historians and Epidemics," in *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750*, ed. Lester K. Little (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 45; Jon Arrizabalaga, "Facing the Black Death: Perceptions and Reactions of University Medical Practitioners," in *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death*, ed. Garía Ballester et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 239.
[4] Hays, *Epidemics and Pandemics*, 46.

traditional Galenic understanding of the plague (mainly the humoral theory) was not efficient.[5] The most effective measure prescribed was isolation; however, this suggestion was also quite problematic without the proper aiding of official authorities, as people practiced it in a frequently disorganized manner. In her classic work, Anna M. Campbell pointed out another problematic aspect of the medical sphere: about a third of the learned European intellectuals had perished in the first century of the epidemic outbursts. The medieval universities suddenly found themselves paralysed; in a huge effort to re-establish learning and to gather a new body of students well-equipped to face the plague, old mental barriers were pushed aside and surgery slowly became an important part of the medical practice.[6]

Attitude shifts occurred also in relation to the Church and to God. Due to the lack of a proper remedy which could stop the advance of the epidemics, plague was initially defined as the divine wrath for the sins of mankind. However, the continuous outbursts of this disease throughout the centuries led to a certain familiarization with it, in the sense that it became taken for granted and it no longer caused such strong religious responses as was the case of the flagellant movement in the fourteenth century West. God's primacy was never denied, but it was also not dwelt on as much, at least from what can be seen in medical plague tracts. Therefore, it is quite difficult to establish if the medieval Church had lost its authority or not. It is more likely that religious responses were more pronounced in times of epidemics with unusually high mortality rates. Concerning the state of the clerics, a large proportion of them also perished in the first outbursts of the plague; this led in many cases to the quick ordainment of a replacement who lacked a calling or proper training. Moreover, the obvious powerlessness of the priests warding off the wrath of God led to a certain questioning of their authority.[7] However, regional differences and denominations are particularly relevant in this sphere, as clerics and pastors had a different approach based on the specific dogmatic of their

[5] Ibid., 56.
[6] See *The Black Death and Men of Learning*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931)
[7] Hays, *Epidemics and Pandemics*, 49.

faith. Some of them collaborated more closely with the political, administrative authorities, while others disregarded them in acts of solidarity with the lay, untrained people. In the same manner, some priests and preachers sought to include medical knowledge in their plague sermons, while others avoided such theories which seemed for them contradictory to the Church teachings.[8]

In the West, much of political authority rested upon land-owners; the large number of deaths meant a crisis in working labour and in turn a decline in the social and economic position of landowners and employers. Consequently, peasants obtained more political rights and freedom of movement.[9] The governments tried to counter the pressure of wages and the fall in prices and rents, intervening on behalf of landowners and employers by restricting the movement of peasants or labourers in search for better working places or attempting to freeze wages. Such decisions led to popular revolts which shook the political authorities, especially in Florence, France and England in the fourteenth century.[10] In East-Central Europe the situation was different, as plague mortality led to the accentuation and even spread of serfdom, except for the regions where strong urban centres existed – such as Transylvania or some areas of Poland.[11]

In the later centuries of the epidemics, governments had a better understanding of how to control disorder and dissent, as well as a more confident approach in fighting the plague, due to a closer collaboration with medical authorities. In the first two centuries of the Black Death, public health issues were generally handled by local, municipal officials. The head of

[8] Ottó Gecser, "Doctors and Preachers against the Plague. Attitudes to Disaster in Late Medieval Plague Tracts and Plague Sermons," in *The Sacred and the Secular in Medieval Healing*, ed. Barbara S. Bowers and Linda M. Keyser (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming), 94.
[9] Margaret Peters, "Labor Markets After the Black Death: Landlord Collusion and the Imposition of Serfdom in Eastern Europe and the Middle East" (Stanford Comparative Politics Workshop, California, n.d.), 1–2.
[10] Hays, *Epidemics and Pandemics*, 56, 58.
[11] Peters, "Labor Markets After the Black Death," 37.

the state, the monarchs, started taking measures only later, beginning with the sixteenth centuries.[12]

For any effective result, the establishment of the quarantines had to be based on this collaboration; along with the isolation of the diseased in specially designated pest-houses, full cities were sometimes shut down. In late fourteenth-century Dutchy of Milan, movement and merchandise trafficking were monitored even along the roads. Popular reactions to such plague restrictions depended on the manner in which they were enforced. Sometimes, people resisted the alteration of cultural, traditional customs such as festivals, processions, burials or weddings. As previously mentioned, reactions depended greatly on regional-specific contexts.

1.1. Research question, sources and methodology

Starting with the last decades of the twentieth century, scholars have been publishing a significant amount of works on cultural or mental consequences of the Black Death, especially for the Mediterranean region (mainly Italy) and North-Western Europe (including countries found on the Baltic and North Sea Shores). Historians as Joseph Byrne, Ole Benedictow, John Hatcher or Samuel Cohn have brought important contributions for a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the plague. In comparison, fewer studies have been elaborated in international languages for Central-Eastern and Southern Europe. Marie-Hélène Congourdeau and Birsen Bulmuș wrote on the Byzantine and Ottoman reception of the plague, while John Alexander also provided the only English work on the Moscow epidemic of 1770-1772. For Central Europe, Edward Eckert, Gunther Rothenberg and Erna

[12] Joseph Patrick Byrne, *Encyclopedia of Pestilence, Pandemics, and Plagues*, vol. 1 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 484.

Lesky brought important contributions, although concerning mostly administrative aspects of sanitation and hygiene organization under the pressure of the plague epidemics. A significant study which deals with the effects of the Protestant religion in the specific measures taken by the local governors against the plague was published by Ronald Rittigers in *Piety and Plague. From Byzantium to the Baroque* (2007).

Hungary and Transylvania have a rich corpus of studies on the plague and its consequences; however, due to the use of local, non-international languages – meaning Hungarian and Romanian – these studies are isolated.[13] Recently however, more historians such as Ottó Gecser or Irina Cristescu published the results of their research on the plague in Transylvania in English.

The aim of the present thesis is to offer a further contribution to the scholarship on the reception of plague in Transylvania. This will consist of elaborating a more comprehensive study by consulting sources from all relevant textual media present in Transylvania – namely Hungarian, German (Saxon) and Romanian – thus bringing together the materials in a way which has not been done in previous studies.

Another contribution of this work is illustrating the connections which existed between the clerics, physicians and town administrators. In Transylvania, as in other parts of Europe, the plague received a variety of discursive approaches. Clerics and laymen wrote treatises about the causes and the treatment of the plague, relying on the tradition of the medical treatises (Classical and post-Classical) and subjecting their discourse to their

[13] A few notable Hungarian and Romanian works which focus on social, religious and mental aspects of the epidemics come from: Levente Pakot, "Házas ságköté spestis idején. Magyarigen 1738-1739" ["Marriages during the plague. Magyarigen 1738-1739"] and Tamás Faragó, "Humanitárius katasztrófák Máramaros vármegyében a középkortól az első világháborúig I." ["Humanitarian catastrophes in county Maramureş (Máramaros) from Medieval times to the Great War"] in *A KSH NKI 2005. Történeti Demográfiai Évkönyve, KSH NKI*, Budapest; Paul Cernovodeanu and Paul Binder, *Cavalerii apocalipsului: Calamităţile naturale din trecutul României (până la 1800*) [The Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Natural Calamities from Romania's past (until 1800)], Bucharest: Silex, 1993. A particular rise of interest on death-related topics has also developed beginning with the twentieth century, through the works of historians such as Mihaela Grancea, Ana Dumitran, DumitruVanca, Emöke Csapo; other relevant works are elaborated also on social assistance and late medieval medical practice, by Edit Szeged, Katalin Szende, Teodora Daniela Sechel, and Enikő Rüsz-Fogarasi.

religious affiliation. At the same time, preachers were writing sermons about the proper Christian way of confronting death and the plague. Following the consultation of these sources, I argue that the religious and the medical discourses have similar approaches and beliefs as a result of an ideological collaboration between them, which was ultimately reflected to a certain degree in the administrative measures applied to the plague-stricken Transylvanian towns.

The time frame chosen, which corresponds roughly to the Age of the Principality of Transylvania, is significant for the clear observance of the plague reception in the three different media of authority – the medical, ecclesiastical and administrative one. One may clearly see not only the relationships between these levels, but also the slow change of mentality, and the emerging of a new ideological framework in fighting contagious diseases, especially in medical thought. The main methodology used throughout will be the comparative analysis of the primary sources, with a slightly greater emphasis placed on the medical and religious discourses which were delivered to the people. I will demonstrate that the administrative medium does not necessarily have a discourse of its own, since it mostly echoed the prescriptions offered either by physicians or by priests or pastors. A careful attention has been attributed to the religious sphere, which consisted of several denominations: Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, and Orthodox. Each of the sources coming from these Churches has been placed in its proper historical and social context, for a interpretation and understanding of its position in facing the plague.

Certain limits of the present work must be mentioned as well. The sources chosen constitute the most representative ones from each medium, and they offer an image of the past interpretations and discourses of physicians and clerics on the plague in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Regional aspects have always played an important part and generalities may only be applied with caution, even when referring to the same polity of Transylvania.

Another factor is the lack or limited number of sources for some regions compared to others – as it is the case for the historical Transylvania compared to the region of Partium. The present thesis should be considered primarily as a resource for future studies on the topic, specifically in that it brings together sources from different linguistic, institutional and social contexts.

The initial chapter (structured in two subchapters) constitutes a first insight in the complex ethnic and context of in this region, as well as in the general medical background in which Transylvania was included ideologically and institutionally. Each of the following two chapters deals with the main sources and recovers both the basic beliefs and viewpoints of a few Transylvanian medical authorities, and the advice provided by the representatives from Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Churches. The last chapter is an overview of the main administrative measures and impositions throughout the existence of the principality for eradicating the plague epidemics. This discussion allows for a clear illustration of the manner in which recommendations from the doctors or preachers were reflected in the official measures.

Chapter 1 – Background and contexts

The primary sources related to the plague come from two different media: religious and medical. Before a proper analysis of the documents however, a short overview and contextualization are required, both for a comprehensive picture for the reader, and for the presentation the social structure of the territory. After this two-fold contextualisation, I analyse the main sources of my thesis.

1.2. Political and ecclesiastical context

Historiography has often regarded Hungary as a boundary or transitional territory between Eastern and Western Europe.[14] Since it came into existence, the Hungarian kingdom was always a crossroad for a wide ethnical range of populations, such as the early medieval Slavs, Romanians, Cumans, Pecenegs, Avars, Iazyges, Germans and Jews. The confession they bore were just as diverse.[15] While the latter changed in the time of the Angevin Dynasty, when the population was subjected to an intense process of Catholicization, the adoption of the Western branch of Christianity as the official religion still did not lead to the confessional uniformity.[16] The Hungarian kingdom continued to be a meeting point between Western and

[14] As Nora Berend noted, Hungary is not the only country faced with defining its identity; this issue is characteristic to the entire region of East-Central Europe, based on a rich history of religious and denominational pluralism. Nora Berend, "How Many Medieval Europes? The 'Pagans' of Hungary and Regional Diversity in Christendom," in *The Medieval World*, ed. Janet L. Nelson and Peter Linehan (London: Routledge, 2001), 77.

[15] Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Din mâinile valahilor schismatici ...: Românii şi puterea în Regatul Ungariei medievale (secolele XIII - XIV)* ['From the hands of the schismatic Walachians': Romanians and power in the Hungarian kingdom (13-14 centuries)] (Bucharest: Litera, 2011), 46–52.

[16] Ioan-Aurel Pop, "The Religious Situation of the Hungarian Kingdom in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *Religious Quest and National Identity in the Balkans*, ed. Celia Hawkesworth, Muriel Heppell, and Harry Norris (New York: Palgrave, in association with School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College, London, 2001), 82–83.

Eastern Christianity, with large Orthodox communities residing especially in the eastern parts. The sixteenth-century Reformation brought about similar denominational issues as in the previous centuries regarding the existence of a particular religious pluralism, raising once again questions about confessional co-existence and tolerance, as it is shown throughout this thesis. However, the political situation was very different for Transylvania in the later Middle Ages.

After the annihilating defeat of the Hungarians at Mohács in 1526, the Ottomans did not occupy the territory immediately, but preferred to let the internal events settle for themselves and only intervened at certain points. After the instant power vacuum provoked by the death of King Louis II, two figures disputed the throne: Ferdinand von Habsburg and John Szapolyai, the voivode of Transylvania. In the end, Transylvania and parts of Eastern Hungary were obtained by the latter due to the support gained from the nobility and from the Turks. According to the treaty signed in 1538 at Oradea (Nagyvárad, Großwardein)[17], after Szapolyai's death, his territory was supposed to pass into Ferdinand's possession, but Suleiman prevented this fact by conquering Buda and the central part of the kingdom in 1541. Ferdinand possessed the western and northern parts of Hungary, while the constitution of the semi-independent Principality of Transylvania in the mid-1550s completed the tripartition of the kingdom.[18] After this moment, the political interests of the Habsburgs, dominating Hungary, and of Transylvania, vassal to the Ottomans, naturally diverged. The common cultural, religious, economic and even dynastic relationships were now disregarded and soon

[17] The usage of geographical names, both historical and modern, poses some difficulties for Transylvania due to the shifting political domination over this territory and multiple ethnicities living in this space. For a uniform and accurate representation of the Transylvanian realities, this paper will render all of the place name variations – Romanian, Hungarian and German.

[18] István Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe: Ethnic Diversity, Denominational Plurality, and Corporative Politics in the Principality of Transylvania (1526-1691)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 40–41. See also Mihály Balázs, "Tolerant Country – Misunderstood Laws. Interpreting Sixteenth-Century Transylvanian Legislation Concerning Religion," *The Hungarian Historical Review : New Series of Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, no. 1 (2013): 86.

enough a chain of fortresses was elected along the border while new, specific regulations emerged in the kingdom and in the principality.[19]

It is due to this new political circumstance that the religious development took a particular course. Above all, Roman Catholicism diminished greatly in favour of the Protestant Reformation movement. After the fall of Buda to the Ottomans in 1541, the royal family fled to Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár, Karlsburg) and moved into the bishop's residence, which was subsequently transformed into the princely palace. The secular power took the incomes, which belonged to the bishop. All facts weakened the state of the Catholic Church.[20] The Ottomans, who had a personal preference for Protestantism, considering that Catholicism was the mark of the rival Habsburgs, also sustained this context.[21]

The various ethnic groups felt differently the impact of the Reformation, based on their own experience and history accumulated in the previous centuries.[22] This fact is closely linked to the social organization and status of the inhabitants of Transylvania, who were Saxons, Hungarians, Szeklers and Romanians. The Transylvanian society was organized in estates or *nationes*, which did not necessarily have an ethnic character. Essentially, the peasants were left outside this scheme since they were not landowners and did not detain any privileges. This category included all ethnicities, but the Romanians composed the bulk of it. The main ruling *natio Hungarica,* in essence the "noble nation", could encompass any ethnic member other than Hungarians, as long as they were landowners and willingly took on the Hungarian language and culture. The Saxons and Szeklers were also land-owners, but based

[19] Géza Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century*, East European Monographs 735 (Wayne: Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, 2009), 102–3.
[20] Balázs, "Tolerant Country – Misunderstood Laws," 93.
[21] Apparently, the Ottomans had a problem with the far too many Catholic feast days, which meant that the subjects were not producing enough for the empire. See in Alexander Sándor Unghváry, *The Hungarian Protestant Reformation in the Sixteenth Century under the Ottoman Impact: Essays and Profiles*, Texts and Studies in Religion, v. 48 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 114.
[22] Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe,* 269.

on granted privileges; from these two estates, the later was no longer regarded as a separate ethnic group by the early modern period.[23]

The social and political organization of the Transylvanian Principality is significant for understanding how, why and to what degree the Reformation movement settled. Most likely, the first ideas made their way through the Saxons, which traditionally kept a close connection to the Western German territories.[24] Accordingly, they opted for the Lutheran version of Protestantism. This option responded to regional-specific concerns, which for the Saxons went beyond the issue of education and was more concerned with the German identity awareness. The Saxon communities already had a highly developed educational system subjected to ecclesiastical control; every small village had a primary school since the fourteenth century.[25] Rather, Lutheranism was an extra community cohesion factor for the Saxons in a region neighbouring Eastern Christian countries; according to the leading Protestant figure Johannes Honterus in the foreword of the *Reformations büchlein* (1543), the Reformation was a matter of "conscience", since the *natio Saxonica* was constantly being engaged into theological debates and inquiries by Greek, Bulgarian, Moldavian or Wallachian Orthodox merchants.[26]

On the other hand, the Hungarians o mostly preferred the Helvetic – Calvinist version of the Reformation;[27] the reasons for this option vary, from theological or dogmatic to social and ethnic ones. One might conclude that the Calvinist principle of discipline had a great bearing in the after-war context of Transylvania. The Genevan Ecclesiastical Ordinances

[23]Ibid., 30–32.
[24]Faced with the competition from Hungarian craftsmen and merchants, the Saxons tried to protect their economy by forbidding Hungarian settlements inside their district, while keeping a close connection with the Germans from Hungary and German Empire.Gábor Barta, "The First Period of the Principality of Transylvania (1526-1606)," in *History of Transylvania. From the Beginnings to 1606*, ed. András Mócsy and László Makkai, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 664–66.
[25]Paul Philippi, "The Lutheran Church in Romania in the Aftermath of Communism," *Religion, State and Society* 22, no. 3 (1994): 346.
[26]Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe*, 66–67.
[27]The Transylvanian Reformed or Calvinist Church separated officially separated from the Lutheran Church and became *religio recepta* in 1564, after the synod of Aiud. Ibid., 104.

from 1541 specified the separation of the Church bodies from state authorities, but during the Principality's existence this was not the case. In fact, the secular and the ecclesiastical power were never really separated, but functioned rather in a complementary manner.[28] The new rulers guided themselves by the principle "The Church is responsible for community life and discipline".[29] Formalising the religion instruction was done through the production of standard texts and, therefore, a number of catechisms and sermons were published not only for the priests but also for general use; according to Géza Pálffy, during the sixteenth century a greater proportion of the Hungarian population had acquired reading skills, as books also became cheaper and therefore more accessible.[30]

Religion, regarded mostly as a public matter, was discussed during the Diets; these forums represented the political and constitutional body of the Principality and they gathered the representatives of the three recognized nations and the ruling prince.[31] Even though in the sixteenth century the ruling princes were still almost exclusively of Catholic denomination, after 1570 the Calvinist nobility was slowly but surely increasing in size. Faced with the Habsburg threat, the Catholic princes were in no position to stop the expansion of the Reformation in Transylvania. Like in Poland, Calvinism was closely linked with aristocratic self-assertion and it had an important anti-Habsburg political meaning to it.[32] This political factor brought the Ottomans and the Protestants closer together; the Turks were indeed aware that Roman Catholicism could be used as an argument for Habsburg territorial claims.[33] Consequently, the Protestant, anti-Habsburg princes dominated the seventeenth century until

[28] Réka Kiss, "'The Women Do Not Want to go to Church.' Church Discipline and the Control of the Public Practice of Religion in the Calvinist Diocese of Küküllő in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Hungarian Historical Review* 2, no. 1 (2013): 114.
[29] Unghváry, *The Hungarian Protestant Reformation in the Sixteenth Century under the Ottoman Impact*, 262.
[30] Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century*, 144–49.
[31] Balázs, "Tolerant Country – Misunderstood Laws," 86.
[32] Márta Fata, "The Kingdom of Hungary and Principality of Transylvania," in *A Companion to the Reformation in Central Europe*, ed. Howard Louthan and Graeme Murdock (Leiden: BRILL, 2015), 113; Regina Pörtner, *The Counter-Reformation in Central Europe: Styria 1580-1630*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 14.
[33] Unghváry, *The Hungarian Protestant Reformation in the Sixteenth Century under the Ottoman Impact*, 117.

its last decade. Then, the Habsburgs incorporated Transylvania into the imperial federation and the entire ethnic-denominational situation of the region drastically changed, as the recovering Catholic Church became once again a significant political force.[34]

Based on this complex political situation, all the Transylvanian princes, no matter the individual religious affiliation, displayed a general tolerance towards other denominations, respecting the wishes and needs of the towns' religious majority.[35] In this context there was also a constant dialogue unfolding between the Churches. The common battle against Rome led to a natural collaboration between the Protestant Churches, but it also included the marginalised Orthodox Church.[36] This latter contact due both to the fact that the Eastern believers had a long history of tensions and discord with the Catholic Church and to the belief of the Reformed Churches that the Word of God must be revealed to the entire world. As far as the pragmatic Lutherans and Calvinists were concerned, Reformation seemed particularly necessary for the Orthodox Church, as the typical Eastern ritual, mysticism and ceremony were regarded as mere superstitions.[37] Another issue was that the Eastern Christians did not have a proper institutional organization; throughout the Middle Ages, the Orthodox cult relied on Slavonic writings and services, while most of the priests came from the other side of the Carpathian Mountains, from Wallachia and Moldavia.[38] The Transylvanian priests did not have access to a proper theological education and the religious services were performed in Old Slavonic, which was unintelligible not only to the lay people, but often also to the priests themselves. Generally, the services were learned by heart and the rituals must have seemed

[34] Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe*, 238.
[35] Ibid., 206.
[36] Such friendly approaches did not exclude, however, dogmatic conflicts and a clear self-awareness among the representatives of a church or another. Graeme Murdock, *Calvinism on the Frontier, 1600-1660: International Calvinism and the Reformed Church in Hungary and Transylvania*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 134.
[37] Unghváry, *The Hungarian Protestant Reformation in the Sixteenth Century under the Ottoman Impact*, 186.
[38] The strong ties between the Romanians from both sides of the mountains were acknowledged by contemporaries, as it is shown in the letter exchanges from the seventeenth century between Gábor Bethlen and Cyril Lucaris. Ioan T. Lupaş, *Istoria bisericească a românilor ardeleni* [Church history of the Transylvanian Romanians] (Sibiu: Editura şi Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1918), 59.

quite empty.[39] Conditions gradually started improving for the Orthodox clerics during the short reign of the Wallachian prince Mihai the Brave and that of Gábor Báthori, who released the priests from the previous duties of serfdom in 1609, giving them a larger mobility.[40] The Protestants offered material help to reform-minded Orthodox priests and the Psalter as well as sections from the Bible were translated into Romanian. These initiatives were not well-regarded by all of the Orthodox priests; what seemed as superstitions for the Protestants – the cult of the saints, Virgin Mary, and the veneration of icons – were a crucial part of the Eastern Christian rite. In sixteenth-century Braşov for example, some believed that the Protestant-Catholic conflict could generate recognition of the true Easter Orthodox belief, and Romanian priests were ready to help the Protestants integrate, should they renounce the law of the "Martin the Heretic".[41] This same belief stood behind the stubborn refusal of some of the more uneducated priests to accept the Romanian language into the cult; Slavonic or Greek languages represented a guarantee against any possible Western heresies which could be introduced through the language change.[42] Other priests however cherished these books precisely for the fact that they were printed in the Romanian language.[43]

It is clear that each ethnic group received and understood differently the sixteenth-century religious movement. While for the Saxons the reception of Lutheranism came close to a "national" awareness, the Hungarian Calvinism had a clear political stimulus incorporated in itself. For the Romanians, who were mostly peasants and unlearned, the first Protestant printed books had a moderate result. While generally the Western Reformation did not have a strong echo in Orthodox communities, the movement set up the basis for a more

[39] Unghváry, *The Hungarian Protestant Reformation in the Sixteenth Century under the Ottoman Impact*, 189; Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe*, 232.
[40] Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century*, 134.
[41] Ana Dumitran, "Românii din Transilvania între provocările Reformei protestante şi necesitatea reformării ortodoxiei," [The Romanians from Transylvania between the challenges of the Protestant Reform and the necessity of the Orthodox Reform], *Annales Universitatis Apulensis*, Historica, 2, no. 6 (2002): 45.
[42] Dumitru Vanca, "Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe din Transilvania la sfârşitul sec. XVII, reflectat în Molitfelnicul de la Bălgrad, 1689" [The liturgical service of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania, at the end of 17th century, reflected into the Euchologion of Bălgrad, 1689],*Altarul Reîntregirii*, no. 3 (2009): 132.
[43] Lupaş, *Istoria bisericească a românilor ardeleni*, 80–81.

controlled future Church teaching, which relied more on written rather than oral culture. How much the people understood, assimilated and discerned the different teachings and denominations is too extensive a question to be treated within the limits of this thesis.

1.2. The medical situation in Transylvania

The Church was the only institution able to provide medical and social assistance for the needy since the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. Disease was regarded as a divine punishment for sin, caring for the sick and the poor being at the same time an opportunity to practice Christian charity – both by spiritual and empirical means.[44] Throughout the Middle Ages, educated monks collaborated at times with lay doctors such as bonesetters or barbers when treating more difficult diseases, altering prayers and spiritual aid with healing herbs or even small surgical interventions.[45] A gradual division between medical practice and spiritual assistance started emerging in the second half of the twelfth century, with the Council of Tours (1163). The Church banned monks from disreputable practices such as bloodletting as an attempt to preserve the dignity of the higher clergy who were supposed to tend mostly to matters of the soul rather than the body.[46] As monks slowly began to pull back from empirical assistance, lay surgeons began to organize themselves as a specialized category.[47] However, specializing either on the treatment of the body or of the soul did not mean building an insurmountable gap between the secular and the religious; monastic communities still relied on the help of lay infirmaries and the first patrons of academic medicine also

[44] Guenter B Risse, *Mending Bodies, Saving Souls: A History of Hospitals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 94–97.
[45] Michael R. McVaugh, "Medicine in the Latin Middle Ages," in *Western Medicine: An Illustrated History*, ed. Irvine Loudon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 54.
[46] Vivian Nutton, "Medicine in Medieval Western Europe, 1000-1500," in *The Western Medical Tradition: 800 B.C-1800 A.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 147.
[47] David Le Breton, *Antropologia corpului și modernitatea* [Anthropology of the Body and Modernity], trans. Doina Lica (Timișoara: Amarcord, 2002), 36.

included clerics. In the late Middle Ages, the main concern for the Church was rather to make sure that the health of the soul was valued higher than that of the flesh and not to completely separate itself from the secular.[48]

The Renaissance did not bring fundamental changes in terms of medical conceptions; most of all, it refined techniques, ideas and institutions already known from previous centuries. A significant contribution of this period was the defining of institutional, legal, and social frameworks of medicine through emerging hospitals, universities, and also public-health regulations.[49] The body of theory taught to university students was still mostly composed of Galen's and Hippocrates' texts, which were inherited from the classical period, but now with the addition of writings from Avicenna and Albucasis.[50] The emergence of Universities which acted as reservoirs of classical knowledge and disseminated this knowledge only within closed circles of students led to the acquirement of prestige in the eyes of their contemporaries. Practitioners such as midwives, lay surgeons, barbers and apothecaries became more and more subordinated to the control of the theoretical tradition.[51] The fact that they operated beyond the blood taboo could place them in the same category with butchers and executioners, this leading in turn to a contemptuous attitude from the learned doctors.[52]

Despite the existing preconceptions, which were linked mostly to matters of image and social status, the religious and secular views were not sharply divided in people's minds until at least the eighteenth century, when the frameworks of medical study and practice would also change.[53] It is to no surprise that so many of the main figures of this emerging

[48] McVaugh, "Medicine in the Latin Middle Ages," 64.
[49] Katharine Park, "Medicine and the Renaissance," in *Western Medicine: An Illustrated History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 67–68.
[50] McVaugh, "Medicine in the Latin Middle Ages," 62–63.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Le Breton, *Antropologia Corpului Și Modernitatea*, 36.
[53] Hays, *Epidemics and Pandemics*, 55; Park, "Medicine and the Renaissance," 67.

change were physicians.[54] With anatomists such as Vesalius, the body started to receive more attention than ever before and the problem now was to work out a proper ideological balance between medical realism and religiosity. The shifting perspective from the spiritual to the anatomical and the rupture between the concept of the body and that of the person had serious implications for the interpretation of death, which also started to be reduced to a biological problem.[55] These questions were brought into the immediate attention of the physicians fighting contagious diseases and epidemics such as smallpox, plague, leprosy, syphilis (*morbus gallicus*), dysentery, and scarlet fever, which were often exacerbated by famine and crowded, unhealthy environments – especially in the cities. Those affected by the plague or leprosy were not allowed in ordinary hospitals, but were confined to specialized ones such as the leper houses or the pest houses as to avoid cross-infection.[56] The spread of these institutions depended heavily on the local administration, public health practices and the number and experience of the physicians available.

The quarantine practice during plague epidemics originated on the Dalmatian coast in 1377 and the first *lazaretto* was founded in Venice in 1423; from this region, the practice slowly spread first to other Italian city-states and then to other regions of Western Europe. However, not every country had the means to build a new pest house and therefore other institutions (especially leper houses) were sometimes converted, as the Marseille example from 1476 shows.[57] This was the most logical and accessible measure – first of all, because the leper houses existed since the early Middle Ages, second of all, because this disease

[54] Hiro Hirai, *Medical Humanism and Natural Philosophy: Renaissance Debates on Matter, Life and the Soul* (Brill, 2011), 3.
[55] Le Breton, *Antropologia corpului și modernitatea*, 44.
[56] Nutton, "Medicine in Medieval Western Europe, 1000-1500," 153.
[57] Eugenia Tognotti, "Lessons from the History of Quarantine, from Plague to Influenza A," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 19, no. 2 (2013): 255.

seems to have lost its momentum by the second half of the fourteenth century compared to the quick spread and persistence of the plague.[58]

In the Hungarian kingdom, the existing hospitals, as well as the medical theories and conceptions had their origins in the Western medical framework and institutions. However, things progressed at a slightly slower pace in this region; when the first hospitals and the core of the social assistance system was established in Western Europe, the Hungarian kingdom was just emerging as a Christian state under the rule of St Stephen.[59] Another factor which one should consider is the limited historical sources available for Hungary, since most of the documents surviving refer to administrative or economic issues and reports by missionaries.[60] Archaeological finds confirm the existence of monasteries with infirmaries attached (ex. Budapest – Margitsziget, Lövöld), and also of a sixteenth-seventeenth century Calvinist alms-house (Sárospatak).[61]

Regarding Transylvania, hospitals and leper houses which provided assistance for the ill or needy existed in a much smaller number compared to those from Western Europe: instead of having an establishment for every 1000 people, Hungary only had one for every 4000.[62] The first hospitals were founded since the thirteenth century and the promoters for charity work were Catholic confraternities, mainly the ones of Saint Anthony and the Holy Spirit.[63] The end of the fifteenth century meant the secularization and municipalisation of life, including the social and medical assistance. The role of the Church was diminished in favour of local administration by guilds or neighbourhoods. The presence of pharmacies, doctors,

[58] Risse, *Mending Bodies, Saving Souls*, 176.
[59] Katalin Szende and Judit Majorossy, "Hospitals in Medieval and Early Modern Hungary," in *Europäisches Spitalwesen: institutionelle Fürsorge in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit/ Hospitals and institutional care in medieval and early modern Europe*, ed. Karl G. Scheutz (Wien: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2008), 275.
[60] Ibid., 278.
[61] Ibid., 280.
[62] Enikő Rüsz-Fogarasi, "Asistenţa socială şi oraşele în Transilvania epocii Principatului," [Social assistance and cities in Transylvania in the Age of the Principality], *Historia Urbana*, no. XVIII (2010): 7.
[63] Ibid., 6; Enikő Rüsz-Fogarasi, "Transylvanian Hospitals in the Early Modern Age," *Mitteilungen Des Instituts Für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 115, no. 1–4 (2007): 290.

and specialized guilds such as barbers or physicians is now historically recorded.[64] The medical profession in Transylvania had some particular contradictions to it; for example, while Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg) still lacked a town doctor in 1581, other Transylvanian doctors were building their careers in the West. Situations like this are due to the general backwardness of this region in terms of medical development.[65]

The secularization of medical institutions and assistance picked up speed during the religious Reformation and the decline of the Catholic Church's position in Transylvania but the process itself had begun earlier, as the lay city members already held prerogatives to manage social assistance issues.[66] After the Transylvanian Catholic congregations had lost their financial means of support, they practiced mostly the spiritual counseling of the people, while social care was provided by local administrators, guilds and neighbourhoods.[67] Even after the secularization process the Transylvanian hospitals did not function in the modern sense of health care centers but rather as social institutions.[68] As such, hospitals were not meant for confining patients, but for the treatment or at least the ease of the pain. Confinement was effected only for lepers or plague sufferers, when isolation was prescribed, sometimes even forcefully.[69]

Compared to Western Europe, the plague epidemics affected Transylvania differently. While the Black Death barely hit the Hungarian territory, the plague took its toll in the following centuries. According to the historian István Szabó, the number of plague outbursts recorded for the fifteenth century is at least triple compared to the previous century.[70] The

[64] Rüsz-Fogarasi, "Asistenţa socială şi oraşele în Transilvania epocii Principatului," 8–9.
[65] Ferenc Pápai Páriz, "Pax Corporis," in *Discursuri despre moarte în Transilvania secolelor XVI-XX: volum de studii*, ed. Mihaela Grancea and Ana Dumitran, trans. Edit Szegedi (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, 2006), 313.
[66] Rüsz-Fogarasi, "Asistenţa socială şi oraşele în Transilvania epocii Principatului," 7.
[67] More accurate data on the role of hospital priests is only accessible beginning with the seventeenth century. Rüsz-Fogarasi, "Transylvanian Hospitals in the Early Modern Age," 311.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Park, "Medicine and the Renaissance," 69.
[70] Erik Fügedi, "A középkori Magyarország történeti demográfiája [The medieval historical demography of Hungary]," *Történeti Demográfiai Füzetek 10*, no. 10 (1992): 31.

epidemics became even more deadly and widespread in the next decades, until they were finally eradicated in the eighteenth century by the Habsburg administration and their efforts to establish a proper sanitary administrative structure which was able to fight the plague.[71] Until that point however, the plague reaped relentlessly: accordingly, just the city of Segesvár had 2,000 dead in 1603, while for 1678-1679 70,000 victims are recorded over a period of six months across Transylvania and Hungary.[72] Such numbers were most of all the consequence of the Fifteen Years War (1592-1606), which along the general destruction associated with military action, brought also famine and epidemics; Transylvania was the hardest hit.Over the seventeenth century, the plague appeared once every decade and generally lasted several years.[73]

Specialized plague hospitals began emerging towards the end of the sixteenth century; the first phase was organizing regional quarantines or banishing from the city the suspects who refused to be hospitalized.[74] Based on fragmentary data, it is almost imposible to trace the certain location of the hospitals – either specialized or basic. Probably the Hungarians initially built temporary structures outside the cities, as was practiced in some regions of Europe, but such traces are impossible to find. Another possibility is that leper houses or other hospitals already existing were used for isolating the diseased during a ravaging epidemic.[75] Sometimes the hospitals changed their functions, other times they would be demolished and therefore they would cease to exist even in the common memory of the

[71] Teodora Daniela Sechel, "The Emergence of the Medical Profession in Transylvania (1770–1848)," in *Cultural Dimensions of Elite Formation in Transylvania (1770–1950),* ed. Borbála Zsuzsanna Török and Victor Karady, (Cluj-Napoca: EDRC Foundation, 2008), 99.
[72] Anton Cservény, *Cronica calamităţilor şi epidemiilor din Ardeal, Banat şi teritoriile mărginaşe de la 1007-1872* [The chronicle of the calamities and epidemics from Transylvania, Banat and the peripheral regions from 1007-1872], (Cluj: Tipografia Gloria, 1934), 12–13.
[73] Katalin Péter, "The Later Ottoman Period and Royal Hungary, 1606-1711" in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Péter Hanák, Tibor Frank, and Peter F. Sugar (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 100.
[74] For example, the quarantine instated by the physician Hans Saltzmann von Steir in Nagyszeben (Sibiu) in 1510, as well as the banishment of whoever refused to enter a hospital in Cluj. Szende and Majorossy, "Hospitals in Medieval and Early Modern Hungary," 315; ibid., 299–300.
[75] Szende and Majorossy, "Hospitals in Medieval and Early Modern Hungary," 286.

community they served; this could especially be the case for the pest or leper houses, which were almost willingly forgotten due to the grim times they evoked.[76]

[76]Ibid., 309.

Chapter 2 – Medical perspectives: Transylvanian plague-writings

The measures taken against the plague and its propagation had to be preceded by a certain medical theoretical framework, which can be detected quite late in Hungary and Transylvania. Knowledge amongst the educated physicians was expressed in written works on certain diseases which contained the diagnostic process and detailed descriptions of symptoms, according to the inherited Classical textual tradition.[77] As theories and explanations were circumscribed to the ancient medicine scheme, even the unusual or new diseases and symptoms were interpreted in light of the same tradition. Not having an answer was not an option; advice and recipes could only be prescribed if the disease was properly identified and understood.

When confronted with the Black Death for the first time, the medical writers had no choice but to stretch existing types of diseases and explanations; usually, the plague was identified either with a type of fever or with earlier epidemics such as the one from Athens, described by Thucydides and Galen. Other physicians however openly admitted that this type of pestilence was unknown to the medical authorities.[78] Nonetheless, there was clearly no unanimous response to the first outbursts of this deadly disease. The recurrence of the epidemics over the centuries led to the appearance of a genre of scientific literature centred on the plague. This could be best described in fact as a cluster of specific writings, including

[77] Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 123–24.
[78] Arrizabalaga, "Facing the Black Death: Perceptions and Reactions of University Medical Practitioners," 128.

the *tractatus, consilia, quaestiones and regimina*.[79] The recipients of the texts also varied from medical practitioners to town councilors, health officials or lay people; accordingly, the language used is connected with the scope of the writing. Latin was of course not used when addressing a lay audience, since it was meant to offer assistance and not to instruct in case of an epidemic outburst. Vernacular was used, especially from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, when a certain conscious program of divulgating medical ideas to the wider public seems to have taken place.[80]

By the Early Modern period, the writings concerned with the plague often represented compilations of different origins.[81] Usually, every new major epidemic stimulated new copies and compilations of older treatises, even more so after the spread of the printing press. In France for example, 48 plague tracts in vernacular were printed for the general public use between 1510 and 1600.[82] Hungary and Transylvania also followed thesetendencies from the fifteenth century onwards, as one can see the appearance of several medical treaties "translated" into vernacular, with the clear intention of aiding the lower, uneducated strata of society.

The oldest surviving plague treatise from Hungary comes from a 1473 manuscript written by János Gellértfi of Aranyas, a little known cleric from Spiš (Szepes), located in today's Slovakia. Written in Latin, this treatise represented, according to its introduction, the compiled information of several other works produced by more learned physicians.[83] The structure, the absence of any reference to the plague as divine punishment and its naturalistic

[79] Ottó Gecser suggested for this type of literature the term *Pestschrift* as a more fitting one than any other English term. Otto p. 79

[80] Gecser, "Doctors and Preachers against the Plague. Attitudes to Disaster in Late Medieval Plague Tracts and Plague Sermons," 79.

[81] Annemarie Kinzelbach, "Infection, Contagion, and Public Health in Late Medieval and Early Modern German Imperial Towns," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 61, no. 3 (2006): 381.

[82] Joseph Patrick Byrne, *Daily Life during the Black Death* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), 213.

[83] Ottó Gecser, "Understanding Pestilence in the Times of King Matthias. The Plague Tract in the Manuscript of János Gellértfi of Aranyas," in *Matthias Rex (1458-1490): Hungary at the Dawn of the Renaissance*, ed. István Draskóczy (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Humanities, Centre des hautes études de la Renaissance, 2013), 1.

approach clearly show that this treatise still belongs to the intellectual medium and was not necessarily intended for the wider public, since it was in any case a product of earlier decades. János Gellértfi, a town preacher and hospital rector, was most probably not a medical expert and felt compelled to copy this plague treatise either for the sake of having it in his personal collection or because of a specific plague outburst which occurred in those years.[84] A few decades later in 1510 Johann Saltzmann, the town physician of Sibiu (Nagyszeben, Hermannstadt), printed in Vienna another Latin work. *De praeservatione a pestilentia* was written around the time of a terrible plague epidemic which fortunately spared Sibiu thanks to the measures imposed by Saltzman, who completely locked down the city.[85] Other medical treatises from medieval Transylvania, which I will discuss in detail in the following section, come only from subsequent centuries. The selection of the plague writings was based on their particular significance for either a particular ethnic medium or for illustrating a set of medical beliefs. There was not one predominant discourse of this epidemic, and therefore the examples are meant to cover the variety of discussions and discourses present in the Transylvanian medical circles.

Chronologically, the German-speaking doctor Sebastian Pauschner wrote the first one in the first half of the sixteenth century. The original title of his medical writing was *Eine kleine Unterrichtunge: wie mann sich halten Soll in der Zeidt der ungütigen Pestilentz* and it was published at Sibiu in 1530; today, this work is to be found only in a handwritten copy from the seventeenth century, preserved in the Sibiu State Archives. Pauschner originated from Šips, studied in Krakow and functioned as a town doctor in Braşov (Brassó, Kronstadt) between 1524 and 1528, after which he became head physician in Sibiu until his death in

[84] Ibid., 11.
[85] Szende and Majorossy, "Hospitals in Medieval and Early Modern Hungary," 315; Irina Cristescu, "The Medical Discourse and the Plague Epidemics in the Late Middle Ages. A Case Study: Sebastian Pauschner's 'Kleine Unterrichtung Über Die Pest' (Sibiu, 1530)," *Xenopoliana* XV (2008 2007): 39.

1538. However, he dedicated his work to the town of Brașov.[86] The text has a scientific appearance and content; the language used, however, is a simplified version of German, which clearly indicates the author's intention of reaching a large public.[87] As Pauschner himself states in the introduction, the booklet was written at the request of the Brașov town council and the city magistrate Johannes Schirmer and it was intended as a knowledge source for the unlearned town folk in preventing the plague from appearing rather than fighting it.[88] While the medical value of Pauschner's work is quite limited, it is significant for the medical history of Transylvania because it represents the very first medical work written in a vernacular language printed in this region.[89]

Eine kleine Unterrichtunge belongs to the *regimina sanitatis* typology, which developed especially in the late medieval and early modern period. The premise of this genre lies in the conception that health is a public value, and it developed from the late thirteenth century onwards. Accordingly, the first concern of some physicians became to preserve the people from plague epidemics and not only spreading knowledge among their colleagues.[90]

Eine kleine Unterrichtunge is structured in four parts: the causes of the plague, the signs, the prevention and practical help which one can provide for the plague stricken. According to Pauschner, the disease can occur due to several causes, including bad planet conjunctions and foul air. From these, he chooses to focus upon the poisonous air, perhaps because it was the only cause which allowed for people to take some preventive measures against the plague. Pauschner expounds that the air becomes corrupted from unburied bodies,

[86] Cristescu, "The Medical Discourse and the Plague Epidemics in the Late Middle Ages. A Case Study: Sebastian Pauschner's 'Kleine Unterrichtung Über Die Pest' (Sibiu, 1530)," 39.
[87] Gheorghe Brătescu, I. F. Georgescu-Vişte, and P. Penciu, eds., *Povăţuitorii Sănătăţii : Crestomaţia Educaţiei Sanitare În România* [Health advisers: Chrestomathy of sanitary education in Romania], (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1976), 29.
[88] Sebastian Pauschner, "O mică îndrumare despre cum să se poarte fiecare la vremea neprielnicei molime a ciumei," [A small guidance about how should everybody behave in the times of the troublesome plague] in *Povăţuitorii sănătăţii : Crestomaţia educaţiei sanitare în România*, ed. Gheorghe Brătescu, I. F. Georgescu-Vişte, and P. Penciu, trans. C. T. Jiga (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1976), 22.
[89] Cristescu, "The Medical Discourse and the Plague Epidemics in the Late Middle Ages. A Case Study: Sebastian Pauschner's 'Kleine Unterrichtung Über Die Pest' (Sibiu, 1530)," 43.
[90] Arrizabalaga, "Facing the Black Death: Perceptions and Reactions of University Medical Practitioners," 270.

cemeteries, spoiled waters or lakes, from infected people, poisoned worms, poisoned food, from consumed mushrooms found on rusty iron, from great famines and generally from filth.[91]

The next section of the booklet consists of a collection of some the most common signs of the natural world associated with the plague in medieval texts – such as bloody comets, the occurrence of poisonous animals or insects and strange meteorological phenomena such as rapid and inexplicable weather changes.[92] Pauschner himself is a subject of these beliefs, as he states in the introduction his concern about a forthcoming plague outburst "as even the sky shows".[93]

The first preventive recommendation Pauschner makes is fleeing, quoting the famous dictum "fugere cito, longe, et tarde reverti" and also urging people to stay away from the diseased, the dead and all of their belongings. After this, he goes on to suggest a well-balanced lifestyle concerning the six non-naturals: air and environment, eating and drinking, exercise and rest, sleep and wake, inanition and repletion and accidents of the soul.[94] This last section referred to the Galenic doctrine which stated that sometimes the body may fall ill due to "accidents of the soul"; the remedy for this was, of course, preserving a general good mood and optimism towards life. According to Aristotle, Galen and Avicenna, much of one's health depended on *ymaginatio* or autosuggestion, therefore fear of pestilence or death was definitely to be avoided.[95]

The last part of the booklet represents practical advice for the plague stricken; these include a variety of herbs (allegedly easier to procure even for the lay people) and recipes, theriac and even bloodletting (although he does admit that not all doctors agree with this

[91] Pauschner, "O mică îndrumare despre cum să se poarte fiecare la vremea neprielnicei molime a ciumei," 22.
[92] Ibid., 23.
[93] Ibid., 22.
[94] Ibid., 25–27.
[95] Arrizabalaga, "Facing the Black Death: Perceptions and Reactions of University Medical Practitioners," 279–80.

practice).[96] All throughout the text, Pauschner backs up his recommendations with well-established medical authorities such as Galen, Hippocrates, Avicenna and Gentile.

The last element which one should adress is the relationship between the medical and religious discourse. In his booklet, Pauschner refers to God two times: in the very beginning and in the end. The positioning alone suggests that this issue was a formulaic program more than anything else. Interesting is the special ending prayer, laid in the form of an hourglass – a common *memento mori* motif. It is impossible to determine the presence of this prayer in the original text, as today only the hand-copied version exists. Irina Cristescu hypothesised that it is not likely that the treatise ended with the final "amen" of the prayer, as seen in other works of the same genre.[97] At any rate, the hourglass prayer may suggest that this was part of a conventional structure and it does not illustrate a strong, religious feeling. The same is the case for the verse that he quotes in the introduction, which comes from Ecclesiasticus (38: 1-15) and was commonly used by some physicians to justify their profession.

The need for justification was a result of the medieval debate about the proper response during a plague epidemic and the more general conflict between the value of the body and that of the soul. What were the physicians expected to do if God himself allowed for a certain epidemic to happen? Was the search for a cure going against his will? Responses varied; some doctors such as Jacme d'Agramont believed that "if corruption or putrefaction of the air is due to our sins or faults the remedies of the medical art are useless, since only He who tied can untie".[98] In such cases the best remedy was, of course, repenting, confession of sins and penance. However, other physicians had a slightly ambiguous response. A clear statement of this response comes from the Paris masters and their *Compendium de epidemia* (1348): "there is no more advice than to humbly praise Him, although even in such a case

[96] Pauschner, "O mică îndrumare despre cum să se poarte fiecare la vremea neprielnicei molime a ciumei," 27–29.
[97] Cristescu, "The Medical Discourse and the Plague Epidemics in the Late Middle Ages. A Case Study: Sebastian Pauschner's 'Kleine Unterrichtung Über Die Pest' (Sibiu, 1530)," 51.
[98] Arrizabalaga, "Facing the Black Death: Perceptions and Reactions of University Medical Practitioners," 272.

medical advice must not be absolutely ignored".[99] This meant that, while being respectful to God, physicians were not willing to renounce the practice of preserving human physical health. As such, they aimed to eliminate the conflict by referring to the word of God himself: he created medicine, he is indeed the only one able to cure, but he also did not forget to teach to the God-fearing people the true art of curing.[100] This "art" could have also been easily associated with the Christian concept of charity, as doctors were encouraged not to give up on patients and, indeed, many of them died during epidemics looking for a cure. At the same time some doctors, including Pauschner, did not encourage the practice of charity during an epidemic, but rather urged people to avoid each other and to shelter themselves from human contact for fear of contagion.

György Lencsés, who wrote *Ars medica* just a few decades after Pauschner's booklet, cautions against running away from the plague: one may run away from the disease or the poisoned environment, but one cannot run away from one's own death. At the same time, he advises against refusing to flee due to a lack of faith, which clearly would not be an attitude fit for a Christian. Much like d'Agramont, he suggested first of all prayer and only after that other preventive measures. Lencsés asserts that doctors should never abandon their patients but they should also never forget their limits in front of the will of God.[101] These two sixteenth-century examples demonstrate that there was not one predominant discourse regarding the proper Christian attitude in times of epidemics.

The last example is *Pax corporis*, written by Ferenc Pápai Páriz, published for the first time in 1690, and reprinted eleven times until 1774. His work belongs to a different age than the previous examples discussed; the Ottoman domination was being pushed aside and, as the Habsburgs were slowly imposing their rule, the communication channels with the

[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Edit Szegedi, "Boală, moarte și medicină în secolul al XVII-lea," [Disease, death and medicine in the 17th century] in *Discursuri despre moarte în Transilvania secolelor XVI-XX: volum de studii*, ed. Mihaela Grancea and Ana Dumitran (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, 2006), 317.

Western medical world became even more open. According to Edit Szegedi, the medical books which were found in the personal library of Pápai Páriz faithfully reflect the seventeenth century medical conceptions across Europe. The doctors and physicians of this age rarely reflected on the philosophical or theological meaning of death;the philosophical opinion which formed the backdrop for their work - practical and theoretical - was formulated by certain philosophers (such as Descartes and Leibniz) who held that man is composed of two substances – material and immaterial. The mind is spiritual, but the body represents a machine which, although created by God, could suffer "malfunctions" and this is where the doctors had their role.[102] These views are easily distinguishable in Pápai Páriz's work, illustrating his up-to-date European knowledge.

Pax corporis constitutes the second part of the cycle *Pax* (which consisted of four books in total) and it is important because it is the only book which is neither a copy nor just a compilation, although it was of course preceded by other medical works.[103] The book has eight long chapters, each focusing on a different area of the human body: the first two chapters discussthe diseases of the head and its components, the third one focuses on the chest area, the fourth on stomach and intestines, the fifth one on the liver, spleen and kidneys, the sixth one on women's diseases, the seventh on fevers, and the eight one on exterior diseases (including paediatric diseases).[104] As expected, the plague is discussed in the seventh chapter.

From the cited examples, Pápai Páriz's medical conceptions are perhaps the most strongly intertwined with religious ones, owing much not only to the specific formation (theologian and physician) but also to the concepts and mentality of the century itself. The theological tradition and the laws of nature did not exclude one another but instead provided

[102] Ibid., 310.
[103] While the language used is also a vernacular, this was not the first medical work written in Hungarian. Two older works precede the *Pax* cycle – namely the *Herbarium* written by Melius Juhász Péter and *Ars medica* written by György Lencsés – both composed in the 1500s. Ibid., 319.
[104] This particular structure clearly points to Pápai's Cartesian formation and background. Ibid.

arguments for legitimating each other.[105] Thus, the medical profession is sanctioned through Biblical examples from both the Old and the New Testament; however, due to Pápai Páriz's Reformed background, his perspectives were suffused with a rationalizing interpretation of God's word, which was not to be taken in a literal way.[106] Pápai Páriz suggests that the diseased person should turn both to God and to the doctor; medical knowledge is revealed by the divinity, therefore it would be a sin to completely discard it, testing God. The doctors have to know their limits as well, as they are not dealing with the spiritual healing but with the physical one. In other words, the doctor's duty is to try to heal, even without a guaranteed success, as the power to heal belongs only to God: "...as much as it is possible, let us not give in to illness, for we are not the masters, but the guardians held accountable for the earthly life".[107] The explanation for disease is attributed to the original sin and to the general corrupted state of the people, who have strayed from the word of God and subjected their souls or minds to their bodies. The subjection of the soul to the body results in disease and ultimately in death; in this case, health is the restored equilibrium. However, two types of treatments are necessary – medical and spiritual (reconciliation of the soul with God).[108] Death, as a possible occurrence, is treated by Pápai Páriz not so much as a physiological, medical concern (*how*) but rather as a *why*, and this must be linked to his formation as a theologian.[109]

These introductory ideas are even clearer in Pápai Páriz's chapter about the plague. In the first lines, he admits the great limitations of the medical assistance of the diseased: "however experienced the Doctor in Medicine might be, he cannot foretell easily if the disease will lead to the death of the man or if he will be spared, if it will end sooner or later, for some have deadly signs but survive and get well, others on the contrary, although the

[105]Ibid., 311.
[106]Pápai Páriz, "Pax Corporis," 338–39.
[107]Ibid., 341.
[108]Ibid., 336–38.
[109]Szegedi, "Boală, moarte şi medicină în secolul al XVII-lea," 328–29.

signs are good, die suddenly". While cautioning the practitioner in this manner, he also spares the patient of unnecessary anguish by deliberately not describing the "deadly signs".[110]

For Pápai Páriz, the origin of the pestilence is primarily the will and judgement of God for the human sins, which manifests itself through natural, observable means: corruption of the air from dead bodies, earthquakes which cracked open long-buried rancid putridity, bad water or specific waste and filth produced in the towns.[111] The explanations such as "bad planet conjunctions" are completely missing; what remains are the causes which people are either directly responsible for or which people can at least control to some point. Therefore, plague can be prevented and avoided in a more precise manner. Before anything else however, Pápai Páriz is categorical on the importance of praying, fasting, and penitence. The only empirical measure recommended is lighting up purifying fires especially in the closed, congested towns; the author immediately associates these fires with the Apocalyptic one which will purge the wicked ones at the end of time.[112]

Regarding fleeing and practicing Christian charity, Pápai Páriz advises for a balanced, rational approach. He only judges for fleeing those who have administrative duties; running away from the disease should never be selfish, at the expense of other people's well being. Doctors especially should not abandon their patients since they hold a specific responsibility for their health, and possibly even their life. He distinguishes between ethnicities, giving a different advice to the Hungarians who should not run away, compared to the Germans who may run away, since they have "good habits and practices".[113]

Ferenc Pápai Páriz's *Pax corporis* is the product of his age; intellectuals, educated figures typically had an open attitude towards knowledge and their spirit was not a conflictual but rather a conciliatory one. Religious fatalism or resignation was pushed away in favour of

[110] Pápai Páriz, "Pax Corporis," 324.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., 343.
[113] Ibid., 342–43.

medical development, while the fear of death was being replaced by the fear of a wasted life. This sort of attitude and mentality are in accordance with the rest of seventeenth century Western Europe, but they also reflect the Transylvanian specific diversity and general tolerance.[114]

The examples chosen for this chapter illustrate first of all that Transylvania was clearly integrated into the Western medical conceptual framework, not only by theories and beliefs, but also by the general tendency of medical dissemination among the uneducated. According to Ottó Gecser, the role of inserting religious references and perspectives into medical works concerning the plague is also part of this process of adapting medicine from the private learned circles to the public and from the theoretical to the practical. If the physicians believed that there was more than one could do other than praying and penance, the mainstream religious view was still that plague is God's punishment for the sins of the humans.[115] This is why, when addressing the public, doctors such as Pauschner were constrained to a certain degree to use the symbols and discourse to which the lay people could relate. This is not to say that the physicians were completely indifferent to the religious interpretation of the plague; some of the educated doctors may have truly had a more mystical explanation concerning the origins and cure of the plague. However, the continuous outbreaks raised some serious questions: can the plague still be interpreted as an apocalyptic sign if it ends and then resumes the next year? Continuous outbreaks definitely contributed to the weakening of the plague's significance throughout the centuries as compared to the fourteenth century Black Death.[116]

In Transylvania, the discourse adopted in the plague treatises and medical works discussed here depended heavily on the education of the authors and the scope of the writing;

[114] Szegedi, "Boală, moarte și medicină în secolul al XVII-lea," 334.
[115] Gecser, "Doctors and Preachers against the Plague. Attitudes to Disaster in Late Medieval Plague Tracts and Plague Sermons," 82.
[116] Ibid., 92–93.

Gellérti for example was a cleric, but probably did not intend to share his copy with a wider public, so religious references are scarce. Pauschner was an educated Catholic physician who had a clear medical goal and therefore mentioned divine intervention as a conventionality, as he was addressing a wider public. Lencsés never had a medical education – hence the strong religious tone of his text. The last work investigated and belonging to Pápai Páriz was not a typical medieval treatise, but a much lengthier, complex medical piece of writing; despite this, it is still worth placing it in the same context with the previous plague tracts, as it clearly shows the slow changes which occurred in the medical tradition beginning with the Humanists. The double profession of Ferenc Pápai Páriz– Reformed theologian and physician – allowed him to have a unique perspective of both of these spheres and to comprise in his writings the main ideas circulating in this epoch. The development of anatomy showed that the human body can be considered separately from the man and his soul and that it is worth studying for its own sake and not just as constitutive part of the human existence.[117] In this manner, religion and medical perspectives were not so much separated as they were each specializing on their own area of authority. As soon as the practice of quarantine was adopted in the eighteenth century in Transylvania, the plague began to be regarded as just another disease which could be avoided; the only writings referring to it after this point are centred on administrative measures and issues. Its power was mostly reduced to a symbol and it lived on in the collective imaginary of the people, being resurrected only when similar threats, such as the cholera epidemic, arose.

[117] Le Breton, *Antropologia corpului și modernitatea*, 44.

Chapter 3 – Religious voices on the plague

When studying the official discourses regarding death and the plague, the religious basis is particularly relevant since there is not one "Church" with an official discourse, but several, each with their individual belief and attitude towards death. While this may be true regarding the dogmas, the demarcation lines were in fact quite blurred. Mutual influences and borrowed practices have always been a common feature between groups living in close proximity.[118]

The question of death and dealing with it was always the same, regardless of the centuries. The one thing that changed is the perspective, the discourse – that is to say the different coping mechanisms that people use to make sense of this perpetual frightening phenomenon. In the words of Norbert Elias, "death is a problem of the living. Dead people have no problems".[119] The fact is that one could never be sure (as we are not even today) of another's fate after death. However, since the love for the dearly departed does not fade away along with death, the living had always felt the need to organize a certain ceremonial, follow a set of well-established customs, which were designed first and foremost to help and encourage the living overcome the pain.

According to Philippe Ariès' interpretation of the attitudes maintained towards death over the centuries, by the late Middle Ages death had become extremely ritualized; excessive mourning was prevented by the social dimension of loss. The grieved family was to go through a series of customary visits from neighbours, friends and relatives, as to replace in some way the empty space left behind by the deceased and also to observe and control the

[118] Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe*, 23.
[119] Norbert Elias and Edmund Jephcott, *The loneliness of the dying* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 10.

expression of sorrow.[120] This sort of reaction seeks to promote and reinforce group solidarity, as a tragedy was generally felt by the entire community, especially the smaller ones, and threatened its very unity.[121] However, life itself does go on and mourning cannot be more than a transition. In such times, ritual acts as a collective reaction to the unworldly attack of death and it represents a way for grieving people to "maintain integrity of self while taking on a new social identity".[122]

The Greek word *homilia* originally also had this social dimension encompassed in its meaning, understood as reunion, gathering, and family relationships. From this, the homily caught on the meaning of family dialogue, discussion or exhortation and finally that of the religious discourse.[123] In this sense, it can be said that this particular type of sermons contributed to the cohesion of the community suffering a loss of its dear members. This would have been all the more necessary during virulent epidemics, which threatened not only the social cohesion and order but also the mental state of the community. While preaching during epidemics is unquestionable, there are surprisingly few plague sermon texts preserved. Jussi Hanska identified this problem with sermons concerning not only epidemics, but also other natural disasters; the explanation he proposes is that these types of sermons would have been quite difficult to insert in the liturgical order of typical collections and are therefore seldom retained. Most probably sermons already existing were adapted in case of need – such as the ones for the Rogation Days which included some scenarios recounting the origins of minor and major litany.[124] As a matter of fact, the traditional interpretation of the plague as God's retribution and the general connection between sin and disease allowed for a reference

[120] Philippe Ariés, *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, Open Forum Series (London: Marion Boyars, 1976), 66–67.
[121] Robert Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 78.
[122] Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive: A Critique of Civilization* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1974), 198.
[123] Nicolae Jan, "Ars Moriendi în lumea românească din Transilvania secolelor XVII-XVIII. O micro-istorie a predicii funebre" [Ars Moriendi in the Romanian World of 17th-18th century Transylvania. A Micro-History of the Funerary Sermon], introductive study in *Poarta Ceriului*, by Ana Dumitran (Alba Iulia: Altip, 2007), IX.
[124] Jussi Hanska, *Strategies of Sanity and Survival: Religious Responses to Natural Disasters in the Middle Ages*, 2 (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2002), 67-81.

to the plague at almost every occasion, but this type of *ad-hoc* compositions are even less likely to be recovered.[125] In theory, plague related sermons could also be found in association with certain protective saints such as St. Sebastian or St. Roch. However, according to Otto Gecser's studies, there was not a visible connection between these cults and preaching specifically about the plague on the feast days. Difficulties arose also because of the strong regional aspect of these cults; local traditions sometimes had specific saints assigned for protection during epidemics.[126]

In the Transylvanian case, specific plague sermons have been preserved only from the Saxon-Lutheran environment; for the other ethnicities and denominations the sources available depended heavily on the social and political circumstances. Due to the specificity of each case, the Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist, as well as the Orthodox sources will be discussed separately in this chapter, beginning with the Western Churches and ending with the Eastern Christian Church.

3.1. The Catholic Church

The first Church to be discussed here is the Catholic one, which officially came close to extinction during the existence of the Principality. By the second half of the sixteenth century the number of Roman Catholics present in Transylvania was insignificant; they were living either on the estates of few members of the nobility who did not convert yet or in certain Szekler settlements.[127] While mostly tolerated by the Principality's estates, there were

[125] Gecser, "Doctors and Preachers against the Plague. Attitudes to Disaster in Late Medieval Plague Tracts and Plague Sermons," 87.
[126] Ottó Gecser, "Sermons on St. Sebastian after the Black Death (1348–ca. 1500)," in *Promoting the Saints: Cults and Their Contexts from Late Antiquity until the Early Modern Period*, ed. Jozsef Laszlovszky, Balazs Nagy, and Ottó Gecser (Budapest: Central European University, 2011), 6.
[127] Balázs, "Tolerant Country – Misunderstood Laws," 94.

some periods when things became tense between the Protestants and the few Catholics remaining. The diet however guaranteed freedom of conscience for the Catholic minority throughout the sixteenth century. The seventeenth century brought some major setbacks for the Jesuit mission, as they were expulsed from Transylvania in 1588 and their returns were short lived (1603-1605 and 1608-1609).[128] Catholicism slowly regained momentum only from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, in the context of the Habsburg political advance.[129]

As expected, this situation prevented any important written material from being preserved – plague related or otherwise. One notable sermon comes from the very first decade of the sixteenth century and belongs to the Observant Franciscan Pelbart of Temesvár. This sermon has the merit of shedding some light upon the pre-existing cult of St. Sebastian as a common protective saint against the plague; however, despite the fact that he mentions it, Pelbart does not dwell on this subject and does not show particular interest to the figure of St Sebastian.[130]

An important foothold for the Catholic fate was provided during Stephen Báthory's reign, when he settled Jesuits from Poland in Alba-Iulia and Cluj and even started a Catholic university in 1528.[131]Despite the support offered from the Prince, the resentment of the ruling elite against the Jesuits let to the strict limitation of their actions to the territories of Alba Iulia, the outskirts of Cluj and the villages which formerly belonged to the Benedictine abbey of Clujmănăștur (Kolozsmonostor, Abtsdorf).

The Jesuit mission in Transylvania was centred on the preservation and reinforcement of existing traditional, popular Catholic beliefs and practices. While there are traces of Jesuit

[128] Ibid.
[129] Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe*, 238.
[130] It is "common knowledge that the intercession of St. Sebastian is more effective against the plague than anything else,"*Pomerium sermonum de sanctis*, sermon 47 in Gecser, "Sermons on St. Sebastian after the Black Death (1348–ca. 1500)," 267.
[131] Balázs, "Tolerant Country – Misunderstood Laws," 103.

preaching, no sermons have been preserved.[132] In fact, the Jesuits left behind very few written sources – mostly letters and reports. Apart from some narratives about the devastating effects of plague epidemics and mentions of burial rituals, there are no texts which might convey the message which the Jesuits wanted to transmit to the Catholic community. The letters and reports, directed to the Papacy or the general of the Jesuit order, reflect not only the events recorded but also the interpretation and shape which was given to them by the Catholic missionaries. While this would normally constitute a limitation, the scope of this thesis is precisely recovering the reception and personal interpretation of the plague filtered through Christian beliefs and ideas; for this reason, even though the Catholic sources available are not comparable to sermons audience or intention-wise, they still offer a valuable insight of the particular attitudes adopted during epidemics.

One of the narrations of the plague epidemic from 1584-1587 comes from Massimo (Maximus) Milanesi, a Jesuit who had some medical training as well and performed several jobs while in Cluj – from gardening to administrative ones – while also acting as an assistant for the old aged Italian physicist Giorgio Biandrata.[133] While painting a vivid picture of the horror which the people experienced, he seems to be firmly anchored in his faith and in the righteousness of the Jesuit mission. Along with the general optimism which kept him alive during the epidemic, he also noted signs which were interpreted as encouragements from God, who intervened to eradicate obstacles of the Jesuit mission and punish their enemies. Such a sign was the moment when a church was set on fire by three arrows coming from the sky right when a Unitarian disciple was preaching against the Holy Trinity. Accordingly,

[132] Maria Crăciun, "The Jesuits and Traditional Religion in Early Modern Transylvania," in *Jesuitische Frömmigkeits-Kulturen. Konfessionelle Interaktion in Ostmitteleuropa 1570-1700*, ed. Anna Ohlidal and Stephan Samerski (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 46.

[133] Maria Holban, ed., *Călători străini despre ţările române* [Foreign travelers about the Romanian principalities], vol. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1971), 91; Iacob Mârza, "Illustrious Europeans in Medieval Alba Iulia. Italians to the Princely Court (1541-1691)," *European Journal of Science and Theology* 10, no. 4 (2014): 132, 135.

when the arrows hit, the preacher was the first one to run out of the church.[134] Interpretations of the plague acting as a whip of God against the enemies of the Order were quite common among the Transylvanian Jesuits; the death from the plague of three "heretical" dignitaries' children and of Christian Báthory's wife were seen as other signs of divine justice.[135] Perhaps it is this mentality that delayed Ferrante (Ferdinando) Capeci's decision as the Professor and Rector of the Jesuit College from Cluj to close the University during the epidemic. His hesitation, while "restlessly waiting for a better situation", is likely to have contributed to the spread of the disease in Cluj; in the end, Capeci himself died from the plague in 1586.[136]

The fact that Milanesi practiced medicine was also completely subjected to the will of God in his eyes, as he writes about prescribing any medicine: "may God deliver it well".[137] Another Jesuit who offers an elaborate description of the epidemic is Girolamo Fanfonio; according to him, the Catholic missionaries generally confronted the plague by listening to confessions and baptising people afflicted by the plague, which in turn did lead to a number of causalities.[138] According to Andreas Busau, the priests who were listening to confessions and administrating the Eucharistic Sacrament were wandering about from infected people to others without any sort of precaution whatsoever, therefore greatly propagating the plague even beyond Cluj, at Clujmănăștur and even Oradea.[139] The only one who imposed some isolation measures is Massimo Milanesi, who also practiced bloodletting and administered theriac and other *pharmacum* made out of herbs. Nevertheless, any medication administered (which was seen as an expression of charity) could never exceed God's will and power and this is why Milanesi mentions time and again the last thing that was done when the monks thought their lives to be threatened: to confess and take communion, repeatedly if necessary.

[134] Massimo Milanesi's letter to Campani, 29 April 1586 in Holban, *Călători străini*, 1971, 3:124–25.
[135] Maria Holban in the Introduction of Maria Holban, ed., *Călători străini despre ţările române*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura ştuţifică, 1970)., p. XXXIV.
[136] Holban, *Călători străini*, 1971, 3:92-93-134.
[137] Massimo Milanesi's letter to Aquaviva, 15 April 1585, Ibid., 3:127.
[138] Girolamo Fanfonio's letter Aquaviva, June 1586, Ibid., 3:131.
[139] Andreas Busau's letter to Skarga, 21 August 1586, Ibid., 3:134.

Otherwise, the Jesuits who were still alive were "fearfully waiting [to see] what God shall make of us".[140]

It is quite problematic to generalise the perceptions of a few members of the few Jesuits discussed here to the entire collective organisation of the Jesuits. The shaping of the narratives depended heavily on the subjectivity of the writer and, at times, on a certain set of conventions. Despite this, one important characteristic of the Jesuit writings was also what Paul Shore defined as "pious fiction" in the sense that recollections of actual experiences were a self-conscious fabrication as opposed to the "pious fraud" which was comprised of conventional formulae. For the present study, this aspect is quite relevant as it indicates their own goals, motivations and dilemmas while also reflecting the rules which the Jesuits were obliged to follow. One can see these narratives as not just personally experienced, but experiences validated and refined through Jesuit beliefs.[141]

Overall, one can conclude that the Jesuit mission was aimed not only at spreading or reviving Catholicism, but also intended to be a true assistance for the people during epidemics, according to their means and possibilities.[142] As in the rest of Western Europe, meditating on the afterlife, and preparing for "the good death" assiduously were specific focuses of the Jesuit Order.[143]

3.2. The Protestant Churches

The spoken word was the main information vehicle in the oral culture of early modern Europe. While preaching was indeed present before the Reformation (especially among the

[140] Massimo Milanesi's letter to Campani, September 1586, Ibid., 3:137–39.
[141] Paul J. Shore, *Narratives of Adversity: Jesuits in the Eastern Peripheries of the Habsburg Realms (1640-1773)* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012), 3–4.
[142] Holban, *Călători străini*, 1971, 3:145–46.
[143] Jean Delumeau, *Păcatul și frica. Culpabilizarea în Occident (secolele XIII-XVIII)* [Sin and Fear: The Emergence of the Western Guilt Culture (13th-18th centuries)], vol. 2 (Iași: Polirom, 1998), 34.

mendicant friars), it had never been as valued as it was in the sixteenth century. According to Luther, the New Testament was recorded to fight heresy, but scriptural Word should be spoken rather than written. Because the Word is a living word, it must be preached in order to be effective.[144] However, the backup for the Protestant preachers was given also by the written word in the form of "manuals", especially connected to the emergence of the printing press. The Lutheran focus directed was not only the exegesis of scripture, but on doctrine and on the pedagogical aspect of the sermons.[145] One of the principles of this didactic spirit was altering threats with consolation as to frighten the nonbelievers by referring to God's wrath but also to console the worried souls which were burdened with sins by invoking God's grace.[146] Hard times such as plague epidemics conveyed more power to this type of discourse, as priests took upon themselves to offer moral support for the troubled people.

As stated before, the Saxons are the only group in Transylvania to have written specific plague sermons; two works coming from Damasus Dürr and Christianus Schesaeus (Scheser), two contemporary Saxon priests, will be discussed in this sub-chapter. Both of them have a very similar formation: after finishing their initial studies in Braşov, they continued their education at the University of Wittenberg, which was at the time a well-known Lutheran Reformation centre.[147] This fact is reflected also in the typical scheme adopted for their sermons: the teaching or *doctrina*, the admonition or *adhortatio* (followed generally by the *applicatio* or "putting into practice") and the consolation or *consolatio.*[148]

[144]Larissa Taylor, ed., *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), 35–42.
[145]Ibid., 59.
[146]Delumeau, *Păcatul și frica. Culpabilizarea în Occident (secolele XIII-XVIII)*, 2:202–3.
[147]Dana Janetta Dogaru, "Material-Homiletische Ausführung Der Predigten. Damasus Dürrs. Ein Beweis Konfessioneller. Zusammengehörigkeit," *Germanistische Beiträge*, no. 20/21 (2006): 175; Georg Daniel Teutsch, "Christianus Schesaeus," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 31 (Leipzig, 1890), 139–41.
[148]Dogaru, "Material-Homiletische Ausführung Der Predigten. Damasus Dürrs. Ein Beweis Konfessioneller. Zusammengehörigkeit," 175–76.

The humanist Schesaeus published his sermon collection *Enarratio psalmi XC* at Wittenberg in 1580.[149] In this work he refers to the plague epidemic from 1571-1576, offering also a short description of the attitude of the people under the siege of this disease: gambling, drinking, careless attitude displayed towards the loved ones and mass fleeing ruled over most of the Saxons.[150] Schesaeus confesses his disappointment with this sort of behaviour and with the lack of dignity and prudence; as a solution, he tries to establish the causes for calamities and for death through the analysis of Psalm 90. God is regarded as infinite and incomprehensible, but so is his wrath and anger. As nobody may come and question God, the only solutions offered are praying, repenting and a diligent and frequent meditation on death. God prevails over everything, including death and disease and therefore "prayers and tears are the arms of the church".[151] In the *consolatio* part, Schesaeus reassures people that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, for God never deserts his followers not even in the midst of death.[152] Throughout the sermon, his arguments are built upon biblical quotes coming from both the Old and New Testament. Schesaeus' discourse follows the Lutheran view, which differed from the Catholic one in that suffering was no longer atonement for sins but rather a test of faith in God as the creator and source of all things, including salvation.[153] The complete surrender to God's will and mercy and familiarising with the thought of dying both followed as a natural response to the dismissal of the intercessory power of Catholic plague saints.[154]

[149] Paul Binder, "Epidemiile de Ciumă Din Transilvania Secolului Al XVI-Lea (1511-1603)," [The Plague Epidemics in 16th century Transylvania (1511-1603)] in *Momente Din Trecutul Medicinii: Studii, Note Și Documente*, ed. Gheorghe Brătescu (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1983), 103.
[150] Christianus Schesaeus, "Enarratio Psalmi XC. Vitae Humanae Miseriam et Fragilitatem Depigens: Saevissima Pestilenti Lue Grassante per Totam Transilvaniam, Aliquot Piis et Salutaribus Concionibus Explicata," in *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. Ferenc Csonka, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum 4 (Budapest: Akad. K., 1979), 369.
[151] Ibid., 371.
[152] Ibid., 374–78.
[153] Ronald Rittgers, "Protestants and Plague. The Case of the 1562/63 Pest in Nürnberg," in *Piety and Plague. From Byzantium to the Baroque*, ed. Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester (Kirksviulle MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), 137–38.
[154] Ibid., 144.

Damasus Dürr collected his sermons in two large volumes, from which only the second one has been preserved; from these sermons, the one for the 1574 Maundy Thursday or *Gründonnerstag* includes another recounting of the epidemic.[155] Just as Schesaeus, Dürr expressed a pained dissatisfaction regarding the behaviour of the people during the plague, lamenting the huge lack of sensibility for one another, as people deserted their beloved ones and the lack of courage of the men who scattered, leaving only a few women to tend to the dead.[156] The ideas invoked by Schesaeaus about meditating on death and its consequences sermon can also be found in one of Dürr's burial sermon: "[…] let nobody be disgusted when facing the grave, let nobody cover their noses when standing upon them […] Let us heed, we shall not reside forever in the wooden chambers as we do now, when our body is healthy […], but we shall be buried in the ground when the time comes in such chambers upon which geese will feed themselves, which will be adorned with worms, frogs and snakes, which will devour us. In such an awful place we will reside more than in our present chambers […] Therefore, all people heed their beginnings, why do we exist, what are we made from, from earth and we should not ever forget this mother of ours".[157] Such images were part of the *contempus mundi* theme and were frequently found in Western Europe sermons also in Catholic, but especially in Protestant writings. Evoking vivid, anatomical death images of rotting corpses were intended not only as means of scolding the wicked or as material for meditation, but also as an antidote: to overcome one's fear of death and dying, one must become familiarized with it.[158]

[155] Binder, "Epidemiile de ciumă din Transilvania secolului al XVI-Lea (1511-1603)," 102.
[156] Ioan Lupaș, "Icoana unui sat din Transilvania veacului al XVI-Lea zugrăvită în cuprinsul câtorva predici rostite La 1569-1585 [The Representation of a Transylvanian Village in the Sixteenth Century in a Few Sermons Preached in 1569-1585]," *Mitropolia Ardealului*, no. 3 (1962): 309–10; Binder, "Epidemiile de ciumă din Transilvania secolului Al XVI-Lea (1511-1603)," 102–3.
[157] A. Amalcher, *Damasus Dürr, einevangelischer Dechant des Unterwälder Kapitelsausdem Jahrhundert der Reformation* (Hermannstadt, 1883), 47 cited in Edit Szegedi, "Moartea, disciplina ecleziastică și socială în mediile protestante din Transilvania (Sec. XVI-XVIII)" [Death, ecclesiastical and social discipline in the Protestant mediums from Transylvania (cent. 16-18)] in *Reprezentări Ale Morții În Transilvania Secolelor XVI-XX*, ed. Mihaela Grancea (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, 2005), 74.
[158] Delumeau, *Păcatul și frica. Culpabilizarea în Occident (secolele XIII-XVIII)*, 2:216–17.

Just as Lutheranism, the Calvinist or Reformed practice was largely centred on the importance of the sermon as a didactical tool for the priests. The Transylvanian Calvinist literature did not preserve any specific sermons about the plague. In this situation, another way of recovering the possible preaching discourse which might have been delivered during an epidemic is by analysing burial sermons, which exist in quite a large number. Burial writings offer a general view of perspectives of death and disease and it most certainly did not require a great deal of effort to convert the existing model sermons into plague-related material, as it was most probably done several times throughout the Middle Ages.[159]

A sample of Calvinist thought and argumentation comes from *Halloti centuria,* published in 1683 by the preacher Mihály Szathmárnémethi at Cluj. Having studied in Sárospatak and the Low Countries, Szathmárnémethi was the most prolific Hungarian writer from the seventeenth century and *Halloti centuria* represented the pinnacle of the Calvinist literature in Transylvania.[160] The success of this book illustrates the particular preoccupation and the demand for religious literature on death only one decade away from the last epidemic outburst from 1671.[161]

The sermons, much like the Calvinist ones from other regions, were primarily the product of the pastor's reflection upon the biblical text; the style of a typical sermon followed models of the early church and the Renaissance, while the basic structure was quite similar to the Lutheran one – exordium, body and concluding prayer.[162] From the 100 burial sermons contained in the book, the six selected have the following themes: the death of young people

[159] Gecser, "Doctors and Preachers against the Plague. Attitudes to Disaster in Late Medieval Plague Tracts and Plague Sermons," 87.
[160]Dumitru Vanca and Ana Dumitran, "Predica funebră în mediul ortodox din Transilvania (mijlocul secolului XVI - sfârsitul secolului XVII) [The Funerary Sermon in the Orthodox Medium from Transylvania (Mid 16th Century-End of Seventeenth Century)]," *Apulum: Arheologie. Istorie. Etnografie* 47, no. 1 (2010): 148; Dávid Csorba, "Szathmárnémethi Mihály (1638–1689) Kolozsvári Esperes Fennmaradt Könyvtára [Michael Szathmárnémethi (1638-1689), Dean of the Preserved Library of Cluj]," *Magyar Könyvszemle* 131, no. 2 (2015): 165.
[161] Cservény, *Cronica calamităţilor şi epidemiilor din Ardeal, Banat şi teritoriile mărginaşe de la 1007-1872*, 12–13.
[162] Taylor, *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, 70, 72.

(XXVI), care for the orphans (XXX), the death of the ones who led a life of hardship (LXXII), the heavenly blessings of the ones who died after many hardships (LXXIII and LXXXVII) and the death which occurred by accident (XC).

In the first two sermons Szathmárnémethi advises against the attachment to the "riches of this world" and scolds those who cherish their body and live in the world as if it was their permanent home. Persecution should not be an issue for the true Christian since life should be regarded as a temporary dwelling.[163] The next three sermons all centre on the concept of misery and suffering; Szathmárnémethi reassures his listeners that sufferings are only signs of God's love, who is scolding his children and therefore hardships should be peacefully tolerated by true believers, just as Job did therefore proving his faith in God. Sufferings may also come as punishment for pride or other sins.[164]

In sermon LXXIII sermon, Szathmárnémethi gives further explanations for misery and about how people should face them. Accordingly, the scolding of God has the only purpose of teaching people obedience and piety so that they do not perish along with this world; death will bring freedom to the believers and eternal life will be the ultimate fruit of suffering. In the next sermon, the preacher insists again and again upon the acceptance of the hardships given from above, for only the blessed ones are worthy of it. Furthermore, he writes that Heaven is only accessible through earthly torments and true believers must follow in the footsteps of Christ.[165]

Szathmárnémethi dismisses the idea of "accident" in the last sermon, acknowledging only the power and will of God acting through people, animals or circumstances. He then goes on to say that death does not always come as a consequence of sin, but also as a test of

[163] Mihály Szathmárnémethi, *Halotti centuria, az az: Száz, halotti praedikációk* [Funeral Centuria or: One hundred funeral sermons], (Kolozsvár: Kolosvaratt, 1683), 159-168-199.
[164] Ibid., 401-416-512.
[165] Ibid., 409-416-512.

faith such as Job's. He then concludes that God's freedom is infinite and that people are like mere clay in His hands.[166]

The language used is a plain one, following the model of Bible eloquence; this is also why images of everyday life are so often used – to animate the discourse and to make the scriptural references more accessible to the lay, untrained listeners.[167] While there is no specific reference to the plague or disease, terms such as "hardship" and ""suffering" could encompass a large variety of situations. Furthermore, the ideas found in these sermons are typical for Protestant literature, which is of course not surprising considering Szathmárnémethi's educational background in the West.

Despite the commonalities, the Hungarian Calvinist sermons seem to have been a bit more troublesome to the contemporary listeners compared to the Saxon material previously discussed. This sort of pessimistic tone which appears at times in the Protestant argumentation of misfortune has been dealt with by several scholars; it is generally argued that the rejection of the saints led to a certain sense of anxiety in facing God. With no intercessors, there was an increase of individual responsibility for personal actions, this in turn resulting in an obsession with moral discipline, a resignation in front of the infinite power and will of an unrestrained God and a sense of collective guilt. Despite all of this, Protestants never doubted the faithfulness and goodness of God.[168] Overall, it is clear that the Transylvanian Protestants had a similar approach and understanding of death and epidemics as their Western counterparts; few differences can be grasped in the sermons preserved, which is of course not surprising considering the Western formation of the Transylvanian preachers.

[166] Ibid., 525–31.
[167] This is visible in the last sermon for example, when a series of possible accidents are enumerated ("when one is eaten by animals such as lions or bears, or falls from a horse, or a building collapses" etc.) – each quite trivial in itself but easily understood by people. Ibid., 528–29.
[168] Rittgers, "Protestants and Plague. The Case of the 1562/63 Pest in Nürnberg," 148–49.

3.3. The Orthodox Church

Compared to the other denominations existing in Transylvania in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Orthodox Church had quite a few peculiarities; first of all, it was the only representative of Eastern Christianity in this territory, second of all it was the only religion never to receive the status of *religio recepta* (official religion) in Transylvania. As in the case of the Calvinist Church, there are no specific plague sermons preserved; the only material available to offer a glimpse of how dying was viewed and understood by the Orthodox priests are burial sermons. Apart from these, an interesting source for the perception of the plague comes from the other side of the mountains, from Wallachia and it represents a collection of church laws; this will be analysed in the last section of this chapter.

Romanian burial sermons developed differently, according to some specific regional aspects. In the Bihor area, where the Calvinist proselytism seems to have been the most successful, the first burial literature consisted of translations and adaptations of Hungarian Protestant writings.[169] The printing house of Debrecen published during the sixteenth and seventeenth six books of "Christian funeral songs" consisting of funeral poems which were clearly connected to the old Hunagrian *siratás* or lament for the dead, which was probably later picked up and regulated by the Calvinists according to specific dogmatic requirements.[170] Due to the fact that this type of traditional lament was common among the Romanians as well under the name of *bocet*, the Calvinist funeral song caught on in the Orthodox circles as well, either through translations, borrowings or just from what

[169] Vanca and Dumitran, "Predica funebra în mediul ortodox din Transilvania," 141–42.

[170] While the typical, traditional lament was a semi-improvised wailing full of regret for the beauty of the world, the Calvinist funeral song had the exact same message as the sermons – death should not be lamented but rather embraced, either as a rightful payment for one's sins or as the happy reunion with God. Life is rather repudiated in the Calvinist version, gaining the sense of *memento mori.* Ana Dumitran, "Lirica funebră Transilvăneană între profan şi sacru," [Transylvanian Funeral Lyrics Between Profane and Sacred] in *Discursuri despre moarte în Transilvania secolelor XVI-XX: volum de studii*, ed. Mihaela Grancea and Ana Dumitran (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, 2006), 274; Iván Balassa and Gyula Ortutay, *Hunagrian Ethnography and Folklore* (Budapest: Corvina Kiado, 1979), 632–36.

Romanians saw in Hungarian cemeteries.[171] In time, the typical Orthodox death discourse came to be composed of three distinct elements: the sermon, the *iertăciuni* (an imagined apology of the deceased to the remaining loved ones) and the funeral songs.[172]

It is significant to note these facts because it clearly indicates the main concerns of the Romanians from those times: from the official Calvinist efforts of converting the Orthodox believers, the funeral customs and ideas seem to have been the first ones to catch on. Facing death and epidemics, no doubt the Romanians were deeply impressed by these discourses as they offered the much needed spiritual consolation in dire times. While initiated in the Bihor region, the Orthodox funeral literature spread afterwards in the rest of Transylvania, where it became extremely popular especially through the work of some key clerics, who collaborated with the Calvinist church authorities, especially during the reign of Gabor Bethlen.[173] This exterior Protestant pressure ended up as an interior revolution of the Orthodox cult, based on the same principles of preaching and translating for the larger lay audience.[174]

The author which will be discussed here is Ioan Zoba from Vinţ, a quite erudite archpriest for his time, who probably studied either in the Calvinist *Collegium Academicum* from Alba Iulia or in a foreign University, based on his large use of theological terms belonging to the Western Christianity.[175] One of his most successful publications is the *Molitvelnic* from 1689, which had attached a funeral homiliary attached at the end. The demand proved to be so great that these sermons for the dead circulated in the Orthodox medium in copied versions until the beginning of the nineteenth century.[176] The three sermons discussed in this chapter (dedicated to the dead, women and children) are composed

[171] Dumitran, "Lirica funebră Transilvăneană între profan şi sacru," 270.
[172] Ana Dumitran, *Poarta ceriului* (Alba Iulia: Altip, 2007), 15.
[173] Vanca and Dumitran, "Predica funebră în mediul ortodox din Transilvania," 141.
[174] Jan, "Ars Moriendi în lumea românească din Transilvania secolelor XVII-XVIII. O micro-istorie a predicii funebre," XVI.
[175] Gábor Bethlen had made Lutheran and Calvinist educational institutions accessible to Romanians in 1624. Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe*, 170; Vanca, "Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe Din Transilvania La Sfârşitul Sec. XVII, Reflectat În Molitfelnicul de La Bălgrad, 1689," 141.
[176] Dumitran, *Poarta ceriului*, 376.

in the same scheme, containing general meditations on death based on biblical quotes, teachings from Church Fathers such as Gregory of Nazianzus or John of Damascus or moralising anecdotes from the ancient world.[177] The human life is compared with the phases of the moon: as the moon is sometimes full, sometimes half or not at all visible, so is life sometimes filled with happiness, sometimes with disease and ends in death. Dying invites people to consider their lives and their sins, as all will be judged by God in the state in which death caught them. The typical *memento mori* discourse blends in with the warning against loving this world as much as to meet death unprepared. Zoba also encourages the people by asking them not to cry for the lost ones as heretics or pagans would do, but rather pray and give alms for their souls which will not only help their fate, but also please God.[178]

In a second homily Zoba uses the motif found previously in a Calvinist sermon, but to a slightly different end: the fact that God is as a potter and man is made from clay means that man must return to the earth from which he came. However, people should not despair, as God will remodel the dead once again from the clay in a new and better shape at His Second Coming. Knowing this, true Christians should not feel sadness while facing death. As an encouraging image for this, Zoba uses agricultural elements, to which people could relate to easily: the way in which the wheat seed has to rot and die before it can sprout and the way trees die in winter but are reborn in spring. Zoba also warns those who live their lives too careless, doubting the coming life promised by Christ; hell will await them, for its fires were already spilled on the earth and this is why life is so troublesome sometimes.[179]

[177] The structure of these sermons are not as complex as the Calvinist ones, although a previous book, *Sicriul de aur* ("The golden coffin") published by Ioan Zoba in 1683 had a much more sophisticated structure. While certifying his erudition, the scholastic style of this work might have made some of the contemporaries a bit suspicious about its dogmatic content and moreover, it proved to be too difficult for the wide majority of the priests. This is why Zoba decided to abandon this type of structure for his next publication. Vanca and Dumitran, "Predica funebră în mediul ortodox din Transilvania," 152.
[178] Ioan Zoba, "Molitvelnic," [Euchologion] in *Poarta Ceriului*, by Ana Dumitran (Alba Iulia: Altip, 2007), 377.
[179] Ibid., 384–87.

Upon discussing the death of children, Zoba deplores the state of man, not knowing the time of his end while even the heavenly stars know their course. He goes on to say how even this is a gift from God, who wants to eradicate evil from the human heart, as men would sin their whole lives and repent only before dying if they were to know the hour of their death. Rather than this, Zoba recommends a lifetime of fasting, body purity and following the Church's teachings. Seeing those who just yesterday used to talk and enjoy this life, Zoba advices the remaining people to confess and repent so that death may become a joyful expectation of Heaven.[180]

The differences these sermons show compared to the Protestant ones are obvious: the references to the Church Fathers, the prescriptions for fasting, almsgiving and the belief that prayers can help the dead. Another interesting factor is the lack of morbid imagery of death; while the worms and the decay of the human body are mentioned, there is no anatomical description of the rotten corpse as it appears especially in the Protestant sermons.[181] Overall, the tone of the sermons seems to be quite encouraging, as Zoba does not dwell on ugly or scary imagery but rather leads his discourse into warning the Orthodox Christians to repent, for death could strike at any moment.

The next relevant source for the reception of the plague in the Romanian Orthodox medium is the Wallachian *Pravila lui Mateiu Basarab* ("The Laws of Mateiu Basarab"), printed in 1652, intended not only as a collection of laws but also as a counteraction to the

[180] Ibid., 398–401.

[181] More close resemblances are to be found in different sermons in manuscripts, often with no identifiable author, preserved from the end of the seventeenth centuries, such as the one from the Drăganu Corpus. While somewhat comparable to the typical Western depictions of the corpse, Ana Dumitran also suggests a possible influence from St Cyril of Alexandria. Ana Dumitran, "Constante ale discursului în omiletica funebră a românilor transilvăneni din veacul Al XVII-Lea," [Recurring content of the discourse in funerary homiletics of the Romanians in 17th century Transylvania] in *Reprezentări ale morţii în Transilvania secolelor XVI - XX*, ed. Mihaela Grancea (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, 2005), 95.

Transylvanian Calvinist proselytism and a strengthening of the Orthodox Church cult and tradition.[182]

Among the regulations found in it, there is one explicit prescription regarding the proper attitude which the Christian should assume in case plague strikes:

> ...says God through the mouth of the prophet, run until the wrath of God passes and so we say, hide for a while with self-reproach and contrite heart until surely God's wrath will pass, if we shall pray to him with all our souls, for God's judgement is great and boundless, and we don't know what God will do with us. This we know that everything he does is good and just, and in his hand, the edges of the earth and all living creatures, and how he wants he will do, as a powerful and lord as he is to all, and he ordains all human matters to everybody's benefit.[183]

According to the *Pravila,* this prescription comes from St Anastasius of Antioch and it displays a typical Christian resignation – not necessarily passive but rather active through repenting and prayer. While fleeing is advisable, nothing is mentioned about assisting the others or practicing Christian charity in times of epidemic.

The writings mentioned here speak clearly of the natural preoccupation about death in the Orthodox circles of Transylvania. While Transylvanian clerics were subjected to Calvinist theological education, they generally seem to have developed a filter for the Western teachings which they adopted in the burial practices and the funeral discourse.[184] The independent Orthodox Church from the eastern side of the Carpathian Mountains was clearly

[182]Nicolae Cartojan, *Istoria literaturii române vechi. De la Matei Basarab și Vasile Lupu până la Șerban Cantacuzino și D. Cantemir* [The History of Old Romanian Literature. From Matei Basarab and Vasile Lupu to Șerban Cantacuzino and D. Cantemir], vol. 2 (Bucharest: Fundația Regală Pentru Literatură și Artă, 1942), 92.
[183] The printing of this book reflects an initiative of the Wallachian ruler Matei Basarab to standardise the Orthodox faith in all \ Romanian regions, as it is stated in the introduction of the *Pravila,* which was dedicated to the *Ungrovlahi* and *Moldovlahi.* Ioan M. Bujoreanu, ed., "Pravila Lui Mateiu Basarab" [The Laws of Mateiu Basarab] in *Colecțiune de legiuirile Romaniei vechi și cele noui*,, vol. 3 (Bucharest: Tipografia Academiei Române (Laboratorii Români), 1885), 450.
[184] Vanca and Dumitran, "Predica funebră în mediul ortodox din Transilvania," 142–43.

preoccupied not only about shepherding its local believers, but also the Romanians subsisting in Transylvania, especially in matters regarding death.

Chapter 4 – Town authorities facing the plague

Transylvanian sources regarding administrative dispositions and decisions of fighting the plague are quite scarce and can generally be found for the historical region of Transylvania – mainly the Saxon towns. The scarcity of these sources allows one to reconstitute only a schematic, general picture of the anti-plague official apparatus, which will be provided by this chapter.

What can be said from the very beginning is that the official authorities generally worked hand in hand with the representatives of the medical and ecclesiastical profession in fighting the epidemics. In the Age of the Principality, public health regulations were coordinated by local, municipal officials and physicians generally wrote their treatises at the request of the town magistrates or councils. Even more than this, in extreme situations such physicians were granted full decisional power, as it happened with Saltzman in Sibiu.[185] Although doctors always recommended isolation, avoiding gatherings for any kind of reason and fleeing as means of avoiding the plague, the towns were still overwhelmed by the high number of deaths and fleeing was always done in a disorganised fashion which more than once led to the faster spread of the disease. Attempting to control these collective reactions was not always easy, especially when the disease was extremely virulent; in Sibiu undertakers were appointed to transport the large number of the dead to the common grave in 1552. Despite the efforts, by 1554 even most of the official magistrates were dead and the surroundings of Sibiu were almost completely depopulated.[186] Since it was so hard to ward off the epidemic once it had entered the city, official letters and messengers always circulated

[185] See chapter 1 and Cristescu, "The Medical Discourse and the Plague Epidemics in the Late Middle Ages. A Case Study: Sebastian Pauschner's 'Kleine Unterrichtung über die Pest' (Sibiu, 1530)," 43.
[186]Binder, "Epidemiile de ciumă din Transilvania secolului Al XVI-Lea (1511-1603)," 101.

between towns in hopes of discovering the origins or at least the propagation direction of the plague.

Traditional practices also suffered alterations; Pauschner advised people not to kiss the dead at the funerals and in the town magistrate of Braşov completely forbade children from attending watches and burials in 1571; the plague stricken were required as well to avoid encounters with healthy citizens.[187] Weddings were restricted, no unnecessary panoply was permitted and the number of participants for was limited to only the closest relatives or friends.[188] Other specific local religious festivals were also prohibited, along with any type of gatherings such as dancing, going to taverns or fairs, following the recommendations of *Instruction in pestilentialischen Läufen* (1572).[189] Isolation of entire towns was frequently practiced, but to no sure result as people frequently broke the imposed limits while fleeing for other safe, uninfected areas.[190] In other places, authorities decided the best way to protect the citizens from the plague was to move the whole community to an uninfected area – as was the case with the inhabitants of the town of Zoltan which were colonised in Roadeş (Rádos, Radenthal) in the first decades of the seventeenth century.[191]

An important consequence of the plague epidemics in Transylvania was the necessity of establishing new, separate cemeteries for the plague victims which were generally situated outside the towns. Sibiu had its first cemetery set up in 1554 outside of the eastern wall and other locations soon followed.[192] In 1573, the city council from Cluj decided banning the burials in church cemeteries and after the epidemic outburst of 1585, burials inside the churches and the city limits were prohibited for those who died of the plague. A new location

[187] Pauschner, "O mică îndrumare despre cum să se poarte fiecare la vremea neprielnicei molime a ciumei," 23; Binder, "Epidemiile de ciumă din Transilvania secolului al XVI-Lea (1511-1603)," 102–4.
[188] Binder, "Epidemiile de Ciumă Din Transilvania Secolului Al XVI-Lea (1511-1603)," 104.
[189] The Saxons were forced to annul the "walking trails" which were still customarily done for the feast of St Francis (1572). Ibid., 102–3.
[190] See, for example, the case of John Czementes' daughter and wife who did not carry any official or medical proof of their health condition and therefore sneaked into the closed up city of Cluj. in binder p. 103
[191] Mariana Borcoman, "Characteristics of the Towns in the Upper Seat of Sighişoara in the Middle Ages," *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov*, VII: Social Sciences and Law, 4 (53), no. 1 (2011): 153.
[192] Binder, "Epidemiile de Ciumă Din Transilvania Secolului Al XVI-Lea (1511-1603)," 102, 108.

was established for the plague-cemetery, where the rich and the poor were to be buried alike, with no exceptions; a fence was elected around the new graves and a special caretaker was hired as to prevent animals from walking in the precinct and spreading the disease.[193] Regarding the aspect of the cemeteries, preaching met halfway with the lay, administrative powers; images of macabre death preached by Protestant pastors had also the role of providing motivation to clean or establish new cemeteries.

As mentioned already in a previous chapter, the ugliness of dying and the almost anatomical description of the rotting corpse are to be viewed firstly as typical theological tools for the period – namely the *memento mori* and the *ars moriendi*. Secondly, these types of descriptions may also represent echoes from the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries' medical discourses, the rising awareness of the human body and the growing number of dissections (see chapter 2). The third aspect of this motif stems from the historical context itself – the large number of deaths and the practical necessity of making room for the living while also pushing away the dead for the very first time due to sanitary requirements. Evoking the worm ridden corpse does not only speak about a certain familiarisation with death, but also has the ultimate goal of encouraging people to keep the cemeteries clean, as we can see in Damasus Dürr's sermon:

> Let us honour the graves, let us not act disrespectful in the cemetery, neither with our animals, with our horses, pigs, neither with our chores, surely better places can be used for keeping debris or sacks; but these places must be nice, delightful, embellished like gardens in which beautiful and fruitful trees, roses, lilies and violets

[193] Mihaela Grancea and Emöke Csapo, "Poarta "Marii Treceri" sau Perspective asupra morții reflectate de epitaful maghiar din cimitirul Házsongárd în Clujul secolului Al XIX-Lea" [The gate of the "Great Passage", or perspectives upon death reflected in the Hungarian epitaph from the Házsongárd Cemetery in 19th century Cluj], in *Reprezentări ale morții în Transilvania secolelor XVI-XX* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2005), 149.

are planted. For as the flowers and earth plants bloom in May so will the righteous rise from the graves in the summer of the Final Judgment".[194]

Judging by this discourse, it is quite understandable why Transylvanian authorities allowed the public participation at sermons while prohibiting any other types of gatherings.[195]

Generally speaking, the Saxon lay authorities and the Lutheran priests seem to have been quite involved in the welfare of their people. In 1554 the city of Sibiu was deserted by its population, with the last people standing being the magistrates, most of who died in the end; the same fate was suffered by some preachers also, such as Simon Massa and even Schesaeus.[196] The same dedication can be observed also in the Jesuit communities, as the example of the Hungarian Jesuit Stephen Szántó shows: in 1587, after the epidemic and famine had passed, he took upon himself to help the villagers from Oradea recover by organising some small farms in the villages.[197]

In conclusion, it seems that the epidemics pushed the lay and ecclesiastic authorities towards regulating burial and funeral practices. The establishment of new, specific cemeteries for the plague-stricken outside the city limits, the efforts made by the Protestant Church to encourage the people and support a spirit of solidarity in such dire times had the same result as in the West: the slow urbanisation, in the modern sense, of the city landscape by virtue of sanitary concerns. These are directly connected to the prescriptions and beliefs of the medical representatives of the time, as we have seen in chapter 2. The cemetery continued to be a social, while also quite disorganised and insufficiently supervised place throughout the eighteen century in Western Europe.[198] In Transylvania for example, the medieval custom of

[194] A. Amalcher, *Damasus Dürr, ein evangelischer Dechant des Unterwälder Kapitels aus dem Jahrhundert der Reformation*, [Damasus Dürr, a Protestant dean of the Transylvaniancapitals in the century of the Reformation] Hermannstadt, 1883,p.47 cited in Szegedi, "Moartea, disciplina ecleziastică și socială în mediile protestante din Transilvania (Sec. XVI-XVIII)," 74–75.
[195] Binder, "Epidemiile de Ciumă Din Transilvania Secolului Al XVI-Lea (1511-1603)," 102.
[196] Ibid., 101, 103.
[197] Holban, *Călători străini*, 1971, 3:145–46.
[198] Ariés, *Western Attitudes toward Death*, 69–70.

burying people inside the churches was firmly prohibited only in 1796 by Maria Theresa, and even after this the local baron Samuel von Brukenthal was buried inside the Lutheran Cathedral of Sibiu in 1803.[199] This illustrates how difficult it was for the old mental frameworks to change even among the representatives of the higher social class.

[199] Mihaela Grancea, "Dispariția cimitirelor vechi din Sibiu, efect al modernizării urbane" [The dissapearance of the old cemeteries from Sibiu as an effect of urban modernisation], vol. 2 (Simpozionul Național Monumentul - tradiţie şi viitor X, Iaşi, 2009), 158.

Conclusion

The evolution of the medical and religious discourses in the Kingdom of Hungary followed the same pattern as in the Western world, albeit at a slightly slower pace due to the more unsettled political situation of this region (see, for example, the state of social assistance in medieval Hungary). The political upheavals from the beginning of the sixteenth century led to the separation of Transylvania as a political entity of its own, which in turn led to a massive re-orientation towards the Protestant faith to the detriment of Catholicism. In the context of the church remoteness from the needs of the people and the existence of a lay piety separate from the official theological discourse, the Reformation sought to formalise the faith among the Saxons and Hungarians.[200] The ties formed between the Transylvanian clerics and the Western Protestant Universities from Germany or the Low Lands assured a certain standardisation of the religious discourses in the Protestant sphere, without eliminating regional particularities, as it has been shown.

The same situation can be noticed in the attitude and missions of the Transylvanian Jesuits; ordinarily, their scope was to reform and revive the Catholic Christianity by preaching and teaching the Word of God, while also eliminating popular beliefs. However, the Transylvanian mission imposed a different approach which focused on the preservation and reinforcement of existing traditional beliefs and practices as means to strengthen Catholicism. The Orthodox Church, as the only Transylvanian Eastern Christian Church which had traditional connections with other Orthodox believers, was also suffused by the Western Reformation spirit, but managed to maintain its integrity and in the end these influences became an interior Reformation of the Eastern cult.

[200] Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe*, 234–35.

The medical knowledge follows the same evolution as in the West, seeing that most physicians had an education from outside Transylvania. Moreover, practical medicine seems to have been a common interest even among learned people who did not have a specific medical background, as the examples of György Lencsés and János Gellértfi of Aranyas have shown. Two important aspects of the medical discourse can be identified: the first one is the slow shift towards a more anatomical perception of the human body (without neglecting the spiritual dimension of it) and the openness towards a larger public by using vernacular languages in the medical writings. The process of disseminating knowledge corresponds to the religious Reformation spirit of these centuries.

Concerning the reflection of these tendencies in the practical, administrative measures, it appears quite clear that these were also oriented towards change. Most of the efforts for eradicating the plague were based on recommendations coming from town physicians, while the preachers (especially the Lutheran ones) often aided the authorities in their sermons by encouraging the people to keep the cemeteries clean. The hygienic process and the reorganisation of the cemeteries led to their gradual removal from the city to its outskirts.

This phenomenon came primarily from necessity, but in time it led to the rise of a new mentality related to burial places: the separation of the dead from the alive.[201] This action is a clear trademark of change, as sanitation became an integrating part of the eighteenth century public interest. Under the Austrian coordination, this aspect became even more pronounced in the Transylvanian landscape; beyond the cemetery aspect, urban hygiene included street paving, creating a proper canalisation system, developing parks and moving

[201] As in the West, moving the cemeteries out of the cities did not have just a sanitary meaning, but it also had an echo in the people's mentality; cemeteries were gradually excluded from the public, everyday life of the community. Ariés, *Western Attitudes toward Death*, 70. For more on this subject, see Philippe Ariés, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Jean-Louis Harouel, *Histoire de l'urbanisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985).

the hospitals and prisons on the edge of the cities.[202] The sanitisation process seems to have been indeed effective, since the plague disappeared from Transylvania by the second half of the eighteenth century.[203]

[202] Mihaela Grancea, "Apariţia cimitirului municipal transilvănean în contextul urbanizării moderne" [The Emergence of the Transylvanian Municipal Cemetery in the Context of Modern Urbanisation], *Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis. Series Historica* 5 (2008): 149.
[203] Paul Binder, *Cavalerii apocalipsului: calamităţile naturale din trecutul României (până la 1800)* (Bucharest: Silex, 1993), 188.

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