

THE BELIEFS AND
PRACTICES OF THE
CHURCH OF GOD

IN TRANSYLVANIA
DURING THE MIDDLE
AGES
-- 1588 - 1623 --

A RESEARCH PROJECT BY
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SOURCE

DIE SABBATHARIER IN SIEBENBURGEN
(THE SABBATARIANS IN TRANSYLVANIA)

IHRE GESCHICHTE, LITERATUR UND DOGMATIC
(THEIR STORY, LITERATURE AND DOCTRINES)

EIN BEITRAG ZUR RELIGIONS UND KULTURGESCHICHTE
DER JUENGSTEN DREI JAHRHUNDERTE

(A CONTRIBUTION TO THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL HISTORY
OF THE LAST THREE CENTURIES)*

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THE EARLY REFORMERS IN TRANSYLVANIA

The reformation, as it spread throughout Europe, created a favourable climate for God's church to preach the true gospel with increasing power. The true Church, (once she was provided with effective leaders and active co-workers,) seized upon this opportunity with much zeal.

The suitable conditions prevalent in Transylvania resulted not only in God's Church flourishing; it allowed other religious movements to plant and cultivate their particular brands of Christianity, based partly on true Biblical doctrines and partly on man-made ideas and human interpretations. It was an exciting time. Men began to respect each other's religious beliefs again. Religious bias and prejudice were temporarily shoved into the background.

As a result, the Bible became the source to which exponents of various reform movements turned to substantiate the validity of their doctrines and beliefs. Whereas the Catholic church had consciously aimed at suppressing the Bible as the source of truth, the reformers stressed the Holy Scriptures as the only source of Divine Revelation. All attention was now focused on this one reliable source of truth.

New doctrines were formulated, old traditions were cast aside. New interpretations were put on old beliefs. Truth became mixed with error. The reading of religious bias and prejudice into the Bible by many reformers resulted in a conglomeration of differing beliefs, contradicting one another.

So it is not surprising that shortly after Martin Luther mailed his ninety-five points of protest to the church door at Wittenberg in 1517 A.D., there flourished in Transylvania several main Protestant sects. In addition to the Catholics, Transylvania soon sanctioned the Lutherans, the Calvinists and the Unitarians as *bona fide* religions.

But God's church (a segment of which was now experiencing a revival in Transylvania), never received the approbation and sanction of the state. Nonetheless, the Reformation had allowed the Bible to once again become the prime authority on doctrines and moral issues. Men began to argue back and forth on what the Bible purported to say and what it did not say on any particular issue.

Not guided by the right spirit, the scholars and zealots of the day allowed their own traditional views and emotional feelings to influence and so prevent them coming to a precise conclusion on what the Bible really did say on any given topic. Doctrinal errors became as numerous as zealot reformers. Confusion reigned. People began to join the church of their choice -- whichever brand of religion appealed to their particular intellect and emotion most.

It was during these times of religious fervour that a man was divinely called to be a leader of God's Church in Transylvania. With this remarkable nobleman, Andreas Eossi, we will acquaint ourselves thoroughly in the following sections.

The reformers during this time relied heavily on the Bible as the one reliable guide pointing the way to salvation. Since the Catholic religion was to a great extent founded on human tradition, the leaders of the reform movements saw in the Bible *an invaluable tool with which to cite how heavily the Catholics leaned on the commandments of men for doctrines and morality*. Thus the Holy Scriptures became a vital and necessary weapon in the hands of the reformers. The pendulum of Catholic neglect to the Bible now swung towards a Protestant stress of this divinely inspired source. Both Old and New Testaments were held in high esteem. And from the pages of this infallible source was gathered ample ammunition to destroy the Catholic claim that She represented God's true Church.

So it was that both Old and New Testaments were zealously studied once again. Also the Hebrew language began to be stressed and even publicly taught. Even the Jews heretofore little respected and much maligned, gained immensely in prestige and respect. Dr. Samuel Kohn, Chief Rabbi of Budapest in the last century, well states, "*All sides proclaimed that the Jewish people were the chosen ones and were the only people up to the Reformation which proclaimed the true God and that Christianity went out from the Jewish people.*" (P.6, Die Sabbatharier in Sienbenburgen.)

Nonetheless, most men, *having lived too long in a world of spiritual darkness*, were blinded by the brilliance of God's revelations as they scanned the pages of the Bible. The divine demands found therein seemed too difficult for mortal man to fulfil. So it was that man willingly shut his eyes sufficiently enough so that only part of the truth could penetrate. If demands of the Author were convenient to fulfil, they were accepted; otherwise, they were rejected. Man's main desire had not changed, he still wanted to please the created more than the Creator, who thus had to be satisfied with partial obedience. Not all, but most men were thus inclined.

It was only a relatively small group which was led to see the whole Biblical truth and was willing to practise and believe whatever they saw written therein. Dr. Samuel Kohn sums it up correctly:

"There were also those who went one step further and decided to restore the original and true Christianity, in that they actually accepted and practised Jewish religious customs and statutes, which the Old Testament prescribes and which original Christianity observed as bidding and only later discarded." (Ibib., p.8.)

It is this group which interests us in the main, a people which, according to Kohn, were similar to the Ebonites and other Judaic-Christians of the first few centuries after Christ. These were the men and women who represented God's true Church in Transylvania from the latter 16th to the beginning of the 17th centuries.

THE EXTENT AND WORK OF THE SABBATARIANS

Initially under Andreas Eossi

In the person of Andreas Eossi the sabbath-keepers of Transylvania were given effective if short lived leadership. Though members of the four recognised religions reproached these people for their *radical beliefs and practices*, severe persecution on a large scale was absent. This made it easy for the truth to spread. Residing in villages and towns at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, where practices, beliefs and doctrines of various reformers spread like wildfire, a small yet considerable number accepted the Biblical Doctrines as taught by Eossi and others.

The Sabbath keepers, before Eossi became their leader in 1588, constituted a loosely knit structure. But since this time they developed more and more into an organised movement. It grew steadily. Within a decade, Sabbatarians were represented in many towns and villages. The two main concentrations of true believers were in the towns of Szekely-Keresztur (today the Romanian town of Cristuru-Secuiesc) and Koropatak (today Bodoc.) For the exact location of these towns and villages see a map on Transylvania. The main villages where God's people resided towards the end of the 16th century were the Hungarian residences of Nagy Solymos, Kis Solymos, Uj-Szekely, Szent-Demeter, Ernye, Ikland, Bozod, Bozod-Ujfalu and the home residence of Andreas Eossi, Szent-Erzsebet.

During the time of Eossi's leadership, most but not all of the Sabbath-keepers constituted God's Church. Soon after his death in 1599, an apostasy set in, of which we will hear later. But for three to five decades, God's Church flourished on the foot of the Transylvanian Alps. It was during this time only that the true message sent from Heaven was preached and published.

In the field of publishing, the true church was up against one problem, though. The public printing facilities were not made available to these people. But despite this obstacle, the true Gospel was published nonetheless. This was how it was done.

Eossi would write a particular article relating to some Biblical truth. Next he would hand reproduce multiple copies to be sent out. His main co-workers, *some of them also authors of some of the literature*, were Enok Alvinczi, Johannes Bokeny, Thomas Pankotai and Simon Pechi (his closest associate with whom we will deal later.) Of necessity then, all copying of written articles was done by hand and proved to be highly successful. Thus the prohibition of using the conventional methods of printing God's truth did not prevent the Gospel going into thousands of homes.

During the twelve eventful years that Andreas Eossi led God's Church in Transylvania and for some time thereafter, much was accomplished and numerous Hungarians were brought into the true Fold. Sabbath services were held in a variety of locations. In one of two areas, they even built their own houses of worship.

THE SABBATARIANS AND THEIR DOCTRINES

Andreas Eossi

Sabbatarianism in Transylvania was a by-product of the reform movement. Since much stress and interest was centred around the Old Testament, it was but a natural outgrowth for some of the reformers to keep the Sabbath. And not a few did accept the Sabbath along with several other biblical doctrines. These Sabbath - keepers did not, however, represent the true church. It was out of this Sabbatarian movement that Andreas Eossi was called to lead a segment of God's Church.

Here is what transpired. As far as can be ascertained, it was 1579 when the Unitarian church split into two parts; Sunday and Sabbath keepers. The Unitarians, it will be remembered, differed from the other Protestant sects in three main doctrines:-

- 1) disbelief in the Trinity and so were called Anti-Trinitarians by their opponents;
- 2) disbelief in baptising children;
- 3) disbelief in Christ's divinity.

The leading champion and defender of their faith was one Francis Davidis, who was also the founder of the Unitarian church in Transylvania in 1566.

It was Davidis' death in 1579 when the Unitarian church split into a Sunday and Sabbath group. For almost 10 years these Sabbath-keepers were without an effective leader, until Andreas Eossi, a Hungarian Nobleman, was chosen to lead those whose eyes were being opened, into more Biblical truths. Born at Szent-Erzebet (Sankt Elizabeth) in the province of Udvarhely, Eossi accepted The Unitarian faith in 1567. Not satisfied that the Unitarians were teaching all the Biblical truths, he set out to study the Bible thoroughly. Having lost his wife and three sons, he spent his time studying the Holy Scriptures till he had formulated a set of Biblical Doctrines for his followers, already keeping the Sabbath. During the twelve years he was leader over God's Church, he enjoined the following doctrines upon his followers:-

- 1) The Passover -- Days of Unleavened Bread -- Pentecost -- Day of Atonement -- Feast of Tabernacles -- The Last Great Day. During the Passover season, no leavened bread was eaten. Obviously, Easter, New Year, Christmas and Sunday were rejected as days invented by Rome. They also adhered to the Sacred Calendar.
- 2) The Ten Commandments.
- 3) The Health Laws (no eating of blood, pig, strangled animals etc.)
- 4) The Millennium, to last 1000 years, at the beginning of which Christ will return and regather both Judah and Israel.
- 5) The use of God's Sacred Calendar. (Taught against Gregorian, Roman calendar.)
- 6) Two different Resurrections; one to eternal life at Christ's coming; the other to judgement at the end of 1000 years.
- 7) Saved by Grace, but laws still need to be kept.
- 8) It is God who calls people into His Truth. The world in general is blinded. The truth is not generally revealed to the mighty, but to the small, insignificant.
- 9) Christ was the greatest of the prophets, the most holy of all the people, the 'Crucified Lord,' *the Supreme Head and King of the real believers, the dearly beloved and Holy Son of God.* (Note! After Eossi's death,

some Sabbath-keepers began to look upon Christ as a holy man, but not as the divine God or even the divine Son of God in the strictest sense.)

- 10) Christ upon His return, will take over David's throne.
- 11) Pictures of Christ and God were considered idolatrous.
- 12) The New Covenant is only partly fulfilled now - in those now called.
- 13) Disbelief in the Original Sin idea.
- 14) Disbelief in predestination as taught by Calvin. Instead, every person is a free moral agent.
- 15) Luther, Calvin and the Pope were considered "abominations."
- 16) As far as can be ascertained, they kept, (perhaps to put more emphasis upon God's Sacred Calendar) the New Moon.

There were other beliefs, but the above constitute their main doctrines.

THE LITERARY WRITINGS OF THE CHURCH

The Old Sabbath Songbook

Remains of which are scattered throughout various Romanian libraries. The hymnal was written in Hungarian by Eossi and his immediate successors, covering the time period from 1585 to 1623.

It consists of 102 hymns for various specific occasions:-

- 44 for the Sabbath
- 5 for the New Moon
- 11 for Passover and Unleavened Bread
- 6 for the Feast of Weeks
- 6 for Tabernacles
- 3 for New Year
- 1 for Atonement
- 26 for everyday purposes

The old Sabbath Songbook was written by:-

Andreas Eossi; Enok Alvinczi; Johannes Bokenyi; Thomas Pankotai; Simon Pechi.

NOTE As time passed and particularly after the death of Eossi, other material was added and some was also discarded.

Contents of some of the songs:-

- No. 36 The meaning of the Sabbath
- 20 Preparation for the Sabbath
- 46 & 48 Sacred song at New Moon Festival
- 52 & 58 For the Passover Festival
- 43 "Defend, O God, the Observers of Thy Law"
- 66 "Observe the Law and you shall live"
- 42 "Lord, God, redeem"
- 6 & 7 Acrostic Sabbath songs
- 3, 17 & 18 Sabbath songs
- 60 Hymn for the seventh day of the Passover Festival
- 75 New Year's Festival
- 71 & 72 Tabernacles
- 103, 104 & 105 Burial Hymns

Source: *Songbook written for the destruction of false religion and the portrayal of all parts of the true religion*, as mentioned by Samuel Kohn in **Die Sabbatharier in Siebenburgen**, pp. 62-67.

RELIGIOUS PRACTISES AND BELIEFS OF SABBATARIANS

(1588-1623)

Kohn* They considered themselves as converted gentiles who had inherited from the Jews the eternally binding law, which God had given. (p. 116)

Church** This law must be studied day and night, so that one knows how to fulfil it without fail and adding to. (p. 116)

Kohn* Such religious customs and ordinances of the Jews which were not found in the **Lawbook** they avoided. They celebrate, for example, only those festivals mentioned in the Pentateuch and rejected all other feast and fast days of the Jews. (p. 117)

By accepting the **Law** they became **Abraham's sons**. (p. 117)

They recognised that no one can keep the law perfectly. Hence, according to their writings, they asked for forgiveness and mercy.

They observed the *Jewish health laws*, as far as they were to be found in the Bible and abstained from animals described as unclean, neither did they eat blood. They also stressed that pork was not to be eaten. (p. 117)

They did not bother about circumcision.

They observed the Sabbath for three reasons:-

- 1) it commemorated creation week
- 2) given as a sign identifying Israel with God.
- 3) rest day for man and beast.

Each service included "*Instruction*," that is exhortation or a sermon, before and after a fitting song was sung. **They sang Psalms**. (p. 119)

The New Year they observed with the Jews in the autumn, on the first day of the Jewish Calendar,...month of Tishri. (p. 121)

Church* He who wants to dedicate a new year festival to his God, let him do so as the Scriptures say on the **first of Tishri**. (p. 121)

Kohn# For the Christian new year is a papal invention,...the creation of the world occurred likewise on the first of Tishri.

- * Samuel Kohn, Chief Rabbi of Budapest in the late 19th century and author of *The Sabbatarians in Transylvania, Budapest and Leipzig*, 1894
- ** Church of God in Transylvania during 1588-1623.
- # Samuel Kohn, Author is paraphrasing the writings of the Church.

Kohn* They observed all the Jewish festivals, something they emphasised at every opportunity, in order to follow the teaching and example of Jesus. (p. 122)

They sang songs at burial services

The Christian holidays, which according to them are not Biblical but rather the *invention of the popes*, they omitted completely in their worship. (p. 124)

They also forbade the sounding of church bells. (p. 124)

At the evening of the Passover they partook of unleavened cakes, the *bread of the Messiah*, in commemoration of the first coming of Jesus as well as his second coming in the future. (p. 124)

A true Christian must always walk in God's ways, so that he can develop unto perfection:-

he himself must be temperate in all things and fight against the pull of the flesh

he must really abhor this world, so that he regards it as nothing and vanity.

he must be patient and be prepared to suffer for his beliefs.

in order to shake off the wrongs and sins of this earthly life, fasting and afflicting one's soul is advised. But the most effective means is repentance and spiritual growth. (p. 125-126)

Church** Only he will partake of salvation who forsakes his sins, learns to abhor them and never again partake to them. (p. 126)

What is good for you, do also to others . . . whatever you don't wish others do to you, don't do to them.

Concerning one's enemies, one should not hate them nor bear feelings of revenge.

One should rather pray for those who persecute us. (p. 127)

Kohn* Neighbourly love must be in deeds. Well-doing or charity is the one doctrine stressed most fully by the Sabbatarians.

Church** He who is able to help and refuses, sins.

At the Feast of Tabernacles they sang:-

Today at Tabernacles let us, like the Jews, help the poor who are in rags, without clothes, even now as winter approaches. (p. 127)

Kohn* Alms one should give to all the needy, but especially to those who fear God.

Sobriety and temperance were stressed, in that drunkenness and gluttony were condemned as gross sins. (p. 128)

The Sabbatarians encouraged the complete fulfilling of civic duties, respect for the Sovereign and leaders, as well as respect for law. But if the keeping of a law would transgress against God's law, then one would have to disobey. (p. 128)

Church** Our Sovereign we should respect and honour, Judges and laws we should loyally adhere to. To their word, God wills it, we should listen. But never by so doing we go against God. (p. 129)

Instead of the Sabbath, they keep Sunday. Passover they have altered to Easter. At (their) Pentecost they discard the 50th day feast.

The New Year and its festivals they boldly shrug aside. Moving it from autumn to winter. And keep, like the heathen, none of the other feasts. (p. 91)

Kohn* Contrary to God's plain command, they have forced a new calendar on the world, whose compilation is not based on the new moon, as the Bible prescribes. (p. 91)

Church** The new Covenant is only partly fulfilled today. (p. 92)

Kohn* But God will send Jesus again, when the time is come, back to the earth . . . in order to create a new world. (p. 92)

That will be a time of deliverance, **Jerusalem** will be built again and all people on earth will live, like the angels, according to the will of God. (p. 93)

Church** Jesus will then sit upon **David's throne** in the holy place. (p. 93)

Kohn* Therefore had God not cast off the Jews in their present state of banishment. (p. 94)

Church** We can not boast Abraham as our father, nor claim to be his descendants. We are but the *offshoot of Japhet's house* and foolish heathen children.

Only in Thee, Father, will we rejoice . . . The one who has brought *us heathens* to Thee and made us children of Abraham. (p. 96)

Kohn* The reward which awaits the righteous in paradise, they define as a purely spiritual one, as *a life which the human mind is incapable of comprehending*. (p. 97)

When Jesus returns, in order to establish **the 1000 year long Kingdom of God** on the earth, the dead will be resurrected. But not all, only the saints of God, the faithful keepers of the law. These shall awake to a new life with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and among them also the deceased Sabbatarians.

That is the first (but only part) resurrection, which will occur simultaneously with the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the deliverance of Israel. After the Millennium, the second, general resurrection takes place, the time of world judgment. (p. 97)

Church** All the *unbiblical festivals*, of this there can be no doubt, originate from the Italians. As a witness to this fact we have in the papal city itself the Pope himself. If you ask him, he will admit that his festivals don't originate with God, but with the Popes The Bible his is forced to proclaim as divinely inspired, yet his feasts are not found therein. And he will not deny that Rome invented them by human decree. Yet he himself used to keep . . . and here there can be no doubt . . . the biblical Passover and mentioned in the Bible. It was Pope Victor who changed the Jewish festival into another feast. This audacious change was introduced during the reign of Commodus in 170 A.D. (p. 64-65)

Buried lay the old teachings of Christ. . . . But to us, the least of all, the most insignificant on the earth, to us the poor and despised ones, You have revealed it. (p. 71)

With great joy do we look for the Lord's glorious day. The Lord Jesus' glorious and honourable day. Then we will behold your Holy City in reality. The likeness of your Holy Son In His glory.

(Old Sabbatarian Songbook.)

MISCELLANEOUS

According to one contemporary report of 1600, the Sabbatarians were listed in *second place* among the four main religious confessions on Transylvania.

In 1602, bishop Demetrius Napragy listed them in third place:- "Catholics, Calvinists, **Sabbatarians** and Arians (Unitarians)."

During this period, many from the Unitarians and some from the Calvinists were converted to Sabbatarianism.

Altogether, Sabbatarianism was represented in eleven villages and towns. Later in thirty two.

Who were the Sabbatarians socially? Many farmers, servants, but also a number of educated people from the nobility including ministers of religion.

By 1637, there were believed to be between **15,000 and 20,000** Sabbatarians in Transylvania.

As a rule, they prayed for the unbelievers who persecuted them, that they may also be converted. They believed that the truth would finally succeed . . . even if not until Jesus returns to establish His 1000 year Kingdom.

PERIODS OF PERSECUTION

The *new* religion increased in power and scope. About seven years after its founding it had attracted the attention of the Hungarian parliament. The periods of persecution were at hand:-

1588 - 1594.....none

1595ineffective laws were passed at Alba Iulia (Karlsburg) in an attempt to stop the spread of the movement

1600decree was passed which allowed their estates and properties to be confiscated

1607a more severe decree for the same reason was passed

1610a Diet and Bistritz decreed: "There are many in the land who . . . following **Jewish doctrines and rites**. . . . are speaking blasphemy. The desire of those presiding at this conference wanted the Prince himself to take up the issue...

1618At Cluj, a decree was passed with the approval of Prince Bethlen which gave the **Jewish Christians** one year to come to their senses and rejoin one of the recognised churches. Soon thereafter, their books were burnt.

Despite the severe persecutions, society was unable to extirpate these people. The political heads of State were too deeply involved in military exploits to bother much about religious matters.

Their persecutions they bore gladly, reassured that man can only take away the physical, but not the spiritual life.

MID - 17TH CENTURY . . PERIOD OF DECLINE AMID SEVERE PERSECUTION

Now unable to hold public Sabbath Services, the Sabbatarians were limited to keeping the seventh day holy in their own homes or gardens. Their children's **education** was not entrusted to the *Christian* schools, but they were taught at home. So the private home of the Sabbatarians became a place of worship as well as a place of education. They married only among themselves.

Because of persecution, small chambers were built into the homes of those not wanting to worship on Sundays. Curtains were hung to make doubly sure that no one saw them. During the annual holy days they were wont to leave for the woods, caves and the mountains so that they could keep these days collectively. These places of worship were altered to ensure that no *Christians* would notice them.

It must be mentioned here that by the mid 17th century, the average Sabbath keeper - in order not to be recognised as one - did attend the established churches on Sundays; not by desire but because of fear. Usually a family of Sabbatarians would send a different member of the family each Sunday to represent them. Thus each member of a family might only attend one Sunday out of several.

Once entering the *Christian* church on Sunday, the person would usually not participate at all but merely look down to the ground whenever the minister preached typical *Christian doctrines*. However, when the Old Testament was mentioned or Moses and the Torah, then the visitor would look up and take it in. When the wafers were passed around, they would hold them on their tongue and later discard them. Crosses and rosaries they carried only when forced to do so in church. At home they would never carry them. When they were presented with crucifixes or sacred pictures they would accept them but discard them afterwards.

Up until the mid 17th century, the Sabbath keepers had their regular minister or teacher. Soon thereafter the more zealous and educated of the congregation shared in these responsibilities. Their responsibilities were to carry out the ritual slaughter of animals for private consumption purposes, (they were loath to buy meat from the Christian butcher) leading the Sabbath Services and teaching the Pentateuch. There was a reason for allowing qualified members of the congregation to serve in this ministerial responsibility. Since the Jewish writings forbade the shaving of the beard while performing ministerial functions, they would be recognised very easily by their enemies if they never shaved. Thus the reason for serving for a short duration. Consequently their beards were always comparatively short.

Regarding *unclean meats* such as swine's flesh and rabbits, the excuse they would give - here again because of fear - was their stomachs were unable to digest such meats. Whenever they were invited by a Christian family, they would usually give some excuse or another for why they were not able to attend. Occasionally they would send some unconverted member of the family or working staff to represent them.

A dying person was never allowed to receive the last *unction* . Only after a person was dead did they call for a Christian minister, giving one or another excuse why they did not call him earlier. The dead bodies were often buried secretly at night and when the set time for burial came - which had to be carried out by the established church (usually Catholic) - a coffin was handed over to the minister containing stones, instead of a dead body. On top of that, the lid was nailed down already so as to prevent undue investigation.

At the end of the 17th century, the Sabbatarians were still represented in at least eleven towns and villages in Transylvania.

THE 19TH CENTURY - - FEW REMAIN

During this century, the Sabbatarians accepted more purely Jewish practises. They desired to copy from the Jews their mode of worship. Often the Sabbatarians would get members of their families to work in a Jewish household - even without pay sometimes - so as to learn their mode of religious and social practices.

When two Sabbatarians married, they would allow the Christian church (which they attended outwardly) to perform the wedding. Considering such a ceremony as null and void, they then went to the Rabbi to take their genuine vows.

During this time, most Sabbatarians drew further and further away from the New Testament teaching. Christ was no longer considered the Messiah. The Old Testament, especially the Torah, became their obsession. Purely Jewish prayers were recited. Prayer booths were built, facing the east. The Rabbis were asked to slaughter the animals they would consume for food. One of their songbooks, originating between 1850 and 1860, began with the first hymn on the last page, as the Jews do.

In 1867 the Hungarian parliament gave complete religious freedom to all religious confessions, including the Jews. Many Sabbatarians now left their Christian churches and revealed themselves as really Sabbath-keepers. Since their doctrines and way of thinking corresponded very greatly to that of the Jews, most Sabbatarians went over to the Jews. Many took Jewish names.

In 1870 they formed their own group, officially incorporated as "**Israelitish Proselytising Congregation**" in Bozod-Ujfalu (near Gyula Feheruar). It had 138 members. The other Sabbath-keepers in other parts of Transylvania went over completely to the Jews and were absorbed by them.

By 1865 there were in the town altogether forty Sabbatarian families numbering 170-180 souls, which was one fourth of the population. They were at peace with one another, although the Sabbatarians still had suspicions of their former adversaries. However, they had become very friendly with the Jews. Some married into Jewish families. The Jews, on the other hand, did not care much for them, even though Sabbatarians were, for religious purposes, almost Jews themselves. What probably contributed to the lack of friendship Jews showed toward these people was that they no longer circumcised their children. So the Jews did not really share a common religious tie with them. Rather they scoffed at the Sabbatarians, calling them neither Jew nor Christian. No Jew would eat with them out of a common bowl. A Jewess never became the wife of a Sabbatarian.

In Bozod-Ujfalu there were (in 1890) a small group of Sabbatarians who *had not gone over to the Jews* or become part of the Jewish "Israelitish Proselizing Congregation." At this time the group consisted of five families, numbering seventeen men and women. They remained faithful to the doctrines as taught by Simon Pechis (the successor to Andreas Eossi). They continued to keep the Sabbath and the other Jewish (Old Testament) laws. Their prayers continued to be based on the prayer and ritual book of Simon Pechis, of which one copy was found in each home. They didn't intermarry with Christians. The jews wanted nothing to do with them. The village judge, Josef Sallos and his older brother were among this Sabbatarian group.

20TH CENTURY REMNANTS OF SABBATARIANS IN TRANSYLVANIA

As much as can be ascertained, there are in Transylvania three different groups of Sabbath-keepers. At the turn of the century there lived in the town of Bozod-Ujfalú a very few families which constituted the followers of Simon Pechis. They kept the Sabbath, Holy Days, food laws etc. with a heavy Jewish flavour. What happened to this tiny group since the early part of this century is not known.

The next group of Sabbatarians at the turn of the Century - and here there is no way of knowing whether they continue to exist today - were the group calling themselves "The Israelitish Proselytising Congregation." Their main beliefs are very close to what the Jews believe. One could hardly consider them Christian, since the Messiah had not yet come, according to their belief. This group - if it has survived communism - is also relatively small, having its seat in Bozod-Ujfalú.

The largest group of Sabbath keepers in Transylvania today - and they number in the thousands - are situated in the areas of Cluj and Sibiu. The bishop of Cluj, Romania's second largest city, keeps the Sabbath. They are not Adventists. They keep the Sabbath, health laws, practise the first tithe and expect Christ to return to the earth, there to rule. If there are any other Biblical doctrines that they teach, it is not known.
