Religious Intolerance after the Patent of Toleration (1781): the Case of the Hungarian Lutherans

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ABSTRACT

Religious tolerance and freedom is a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of Europe. By the mid-16th century the Habsburg monarchy had to deal with confessional diversity, and in its Hungarian dominions the government could not enforce the same level of confessional conformity from the estates as they were accustomed to within its traditional strongholds. When the monarchy became embroiled in a security crisis in the mid-18th century, religious tolerance was considered one of the ways to achieve internal stability. Its articulation by way of the Patent of Toleration (25 October 1781) was considered to be a success of the enlightened thinkers surrounding Joseph II. The decade after its proclamation was noted for the open optimism towards the prospects of a renewal of church life for both Catholics and Protestants. The Catholic majority seemed, however, to be unprepared for the Patent. This chapter examines the various responses to the Patent, and the new waves of intolerance – especially in everyday life and education – which followed its enactment.

The concept of religious tolerance and freedom in the history of western European civilization is only a few centuries old. Despite much of its theology and teachings, the Christian religion has traditionally demanded conformity among its worshipers and combated heresy resolutely. In order to stamp out heresy and schism, the church developed repressive measures, including the physical removal of dissenters, often facilitated by the increased power of the state. Protestant states proved just as uncompromising as the pre-Reformation church had been and the Catholic
states had become. Thus, at the time of the birth of the modern state, it was scarcely possible to achieve universal religious accord. “Heresy” was a major concern of society, especially among ruling elites. Elites had the duty and competence to enforce denominational unity: discipline, persecution and ultimately religious war were among the measures considered to achieve this end. Only the cataclysm of the Thirty Years War revealed the futility of this ambition, and states had to accept that their international destinies were governed by the reality of the balance of power. As an extension of this, ideas surrounding confessional minorities shifted gradually, and elites sought to become more accommodating towards other religions by accepting dissenters into their ranks. The impulses from the practical political sphere occurred in parallel with the transformation of theological, philosophical and ethical opinions: tolerance began to replace the elimination of heterodox people as an accepted value and political maxim.

The Habsburg monarchy was confronted by the confessional disparity which was widespread through the early modern period. In its Hungarian territories, the government struggled to enforce the same degree of religious uniformity as was obtained elsewhere in the empire. The system of excluding non-Catholics from public life was a potential source of local and national problems: first, the government encouraged disaffection and resistance from Protestants; second, Protestants were denied platforms from which they could declare their loyalty. Therefore, when the monarchy became embroiled in a defence crisis during the mid-18th century, religious toleration was considered a means of achieving internal stability. Its realisation through of the Patent of Toleration (25 October 1781) was the triumph of the enlightened thinking of Joseph II’s inner circle (as well those within the Catholic hierarchy in favour of reforms). Although it did not bring about complete confessional equality, the Patent offered freedom to choose one’s denomination – making it easier to incorporate non-Catholics into civic life – and regulated conditions for practicing Protestantism.

THE AMBITIOUS ACCEPTANCE OF THE PATENT OF TOLERATION

The decade after the proclamation of the Patent of Toleration was characterised by open enthusiasm about the possibilities of a renewal of church life for both Catholics and Protestants. There was a boom in publishing and educational activities, but also a growing sense of disappointment arising from the authority’s response to the requests of church communities. All of this was in relation to the implementation of measures counter to the Patent of Toleration. Such inconsistencies in the impact of one of the most significant reform measures by Joseph II were not accidental. Despite the coexistence of various denominations, as a whole, the Hungarian public was surprised at the wording of the Patent, and developed strategies to cope with the new acceptance of minorities.

Non-Catholics in early modern Hungary were subordinate citizens. They were not allowed to hold office in the state or municipal administrations, nor in guilds; nor were they able to obtain a proper education if they were vocal in declaring their beliefs. Social pressures exerted on them included sanctions for craftsmen who absented themselves from civic occasions, forced conversions after the conclusion of mixed marriages, along with the refusal to grant passports for students or tradesmen. This provoked feelings of injustice, and a psychological aversion and resistance to the innovations enforced by the authorities – the chief intention of which was the diminution of their status. It resulted in the mental formation of a “closed group”, and an entrenched adherence to traditions and attitudes among the various denominations – thus the confessional boundaries were set and maintained.

The Catholic majority, with the exception of their elites, seemed to be unprepared for the Patent. They were unwilling to recognize the rights of their fellow citizens – especially in the areas of eve-
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ryday life which were affected deeply by the Patent of Toleration. The Patent included the unprecedented measure of sanctioning officially the consolidation of Protestantism – by, for instance, allowing the purchase of municipal land for the building of churches or schools, and allowing Protestants to serve in the central or regional administrations. Accustomed to severe restrictions on Protestants and the monopoly on many benefits of citizenship, Catholics were shocked by the Patent’s provisions. To make things worse, concessions for Protestants were accompanied by various restrictions on Catholic worship, such as a limit on the number of church holidays and a gradual attack on Baroque devotion. Understandably, the Patent did not usher in a period of warm relations between Catholics and Protestants in Hungary: rapprochement took place at a very slow pace. When Catholic resentment against Protestants was encouraged there was a real danger of mutual conflict.

It was difficult, therefore, to unite the population in order to promote the common good of the country, when a major part of the population remained under suspicion of disloyalty. The myth of a betrayal by non-Catholics during the aristocratic uprisings in Hungary in the 17th century was reflected in the ban on Protestant mass petitions and large-scale assemblies. There was a good deal of censorship, particularly on publications addressing controversial issues. Therefore the Catholic public considered the Patent of Toleration, and the measures taken on its basis, to be prejudicial towards them and often reacted to the Patent with apprehension. A question like: “Should we become Lutherans?” (sollen wir lutherisch werden?), which was asked by the people of Bavaria, where the coexistence of various denominations was unusual, was never expressed openly in Hungary. But anxiety surrounding the Patent’s implementation showed almost immediately.

The acceptance of the Patent, devised by Joseph II, did not correspond with legal theory and practice in Hungary: the proclamation of an Imperial mandate regarding the application of general imperial policy into Hungary was allegedly in breach of the Hungarian constitution. Catholic commentators in Hungary maintained that the Patent was unnecessary since the laws regulating the position of non-Catholics remained effective. These laws, adopted by the Hungarian Diet, were more binding than the Patent. To these polemicists, the existence of non-Catholics in Hungary was considered to be sufficient proof of official tolerance. They appealed to the emperor to adhere to a more consistent application of the actual legislation, raising the spectre of rebellion in the face of Protestant gains. Arguments for protecting the status quo were not limited to printed treatises or pamphlets, but were also presented via official political forums – in local noble councils where all royal decisions were publicized. It was a rather long process because communication between the ruler and the population took place through a number of different levels within the state administration. It was therefore understandable that it took several weeks before the public became familiar with the Patent. In the meantime the information was being spread by word of mouth or the press. However, due to the low levels of literacy and limited distribution of the press, the latter source was used the least.

INTOLERANCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Propagation of the Patent in the provinces exposed the level of intolerance at a local level. Assemblies of local nobles took place from mid-January to April 1782. They tried to use the arguments that the Hungarian constitution had been breached to question the Patent’s validity, or simply they resolved not to publish it. Only in places where there was a high number of Lutheran nobles would the regional meetings take place promptly and without such a spirit of resistance. The non-Catholics in Hungary were mostly interested in the practical aspects resulting from the Patent of Toleration: the possibility of building churches and schools, establishing new church
congregations and the requirement to pay fees for religious acts to the Catholic priests. The latter issue remained important throughout the 1780s: payments from the laity constituted a significant source of income for the Catholic Church, and also symbolised its dominant status. The Catholic priest was entitled to it by law, even if a Protestant minister was available. Joseph II did not have the courage to eliminate this controversial practice in the inter-confessional relationship due to his already contentious measures against the Catholic Church.

The establishment of new church congregations was not without problems, and this was not helped by the ambiguous wording of the Patent. Implementation of all the acts related to the creation of church congregations took place under the supervision of local and provincial elites and the Hungarian government (the Vice-regency Council), and experienced bureaucrats moved especially slowly when it came to dealing with Protestant requests. Protestant submissions required numerous proofs. These could be obtained only after the submission of the request to the regional administration, the formation of a mixed committee, and, finally, the confirmation of its findings by the relevant bishop. These procedures allowed constant obstruction of certain provisions included in the Patent of Toleration. The Hungarian bishops even compiled a so-called “catalogue of obstructions”, which was accepted as an unofficial directive, despite the king’s disapproval14.

The conservative Catholic hierarchy was fairly satisfied with it, but it predictably helped to foment impatience and dissatisfaction from Protestants, and mutual intolerance.

Despite the obstacles, the Lutheran communities proved capable in many places of consolidating their position, and within a few weeks they were able to secure permission for the performance of services15. Even if in Hungary the number of converts was not as high as in Bohemia or Moravia16, the success of the renewal of Protestant church life motivated the king and the Catholic hierarchy to the acceptance of so-called “counter-measures”. Issued by Joseph II on 24 May 1782, this took the form of a six week educational course in Catholic belief for those who had informed the administration of their intention to convert17. The emperor thereby protected himself against rumours originating in the Austrian part of the Monarchy that he was too favourable towards Protestants and negligent of Catholicism.

The test of the Patent of Toleration occurred in relation to the application of those aspects it which threatened long-standing customs, such as the ban on public displays of Protestant identity. In Bratislava, for example, there was a large Lutheran community (around 7,000 souls), and the first flashpoint occurred on 5 February 1782. On this day, one of the German Lutheran pastors attended a dying woman in the suburbs, who allegedly did not belong to the Bratislava Lutheran church congregation. It was a pretext for the municipal Catholic priest to complain about the breach of the accepted protocol18. Protests against visits to the sick by Lutheran pastors or their ministration at funerals were not initiated by the general laity, but by clergymen concerned about the violation of former ecclesiastical norms, as well as the loss of expected income. The latter anxiety was particularly well-founded. When, for example, the Patent was announced in one of the superintendencies, its inspector, Baron Georg Hellenbach, gave the incorrect information that the fees would be paid to the Lutheran pastors, not to the Catholic priests19. This misunderstanding showed the importance of translating and distributing a translation of the Patent of Toleration in the various native languages of the realm.

Questions relating to the establishment of congregations and churches were not the only problematic aspects of the Patent of Toleration, influencing inter-confessional relations and testing the level of tolerance in Hungarian society. An important part of religious autonomy was education, which was crucial in securing people’s future confessional loyalties. The efforts of the imperial government to unify and secularize the Hungarian education provoked anxiety among Lutherans
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(not to mention Catholics), and showed that both churches were determined to retain autonomy in education – something which Lutherans argued was guaranteed in the Patent of Tolerations. From the 1770s imperial thinking considered education to be a politicum, set above the interests of individual confessions20. In accordance with this principle state supervision came to be exercised over Lutheran as well as Catholic schools. The reform plan, Ratio educationis (1777), and the setting up of effective school districts were geared towards establishing uniformity throughout the education system; and it brought about a conflict between the state and Protestant educationalists over the question of autonomy.

State supervision of Protestant schools encompassed the inspection of teachers and pupils, textbooks and syllabuses; schools were requested to use prescribed teaching methods and books, and obligatory state training for teachers was established21. In practice, however, state intervention in Lutheran educational establishments was not very pervasive by the end of the 1770s. For instance, visits of state officials to schools were only tolerated during examination periods. At the beginning of his reign in 1780, Joseph II wanted to accelerate state control over elementary schools, but the proclamation of the Patent of Tolerations slowed down this process, as Protestants became more confident in their right to educational autonomy. They managed to postpone the negotiations on exercising the state’s influence in their education, but this step proved to be counter-productive at least in the area of elementary education.

At the same time as Lutheran teachers and politicians were developing the defences of their educational autonomy, Vienna transferred power to settle the controversy to the Study Court Commission22. Influential thinkers were, however, in the ascendancy, and men such as Gottfried van Swieten argued effectively for the secularization of education and for the establishment of mixed schools, composed of both teachers and pupils from various faiths, as a pragmatic method to confront the religious division within the polity. These principles were implemented from September 1785, and to their surprise, the Protestant public found out that some of their representatives had contributed to its implementation. Among the Protestants connected to Vienna Enlightenment circles were men like Gabriel Prónay, the freemason Ferenc Kazinczy, and enthusiastic adherents of the German Enlightenment such as Johann Klancia. They argued in favour of Joseph II’s plans, stressing that mixed schools were of educational and economic benefit, and would also help the church by providing it with more qualified ministers23.

In spite of these arguments, the majority of Lutherans cherished the idea of “the school as the entrance to the church”, and were shocked by the prospects of Joseph’s reforms. They condemned the theory of religious indifference in non-denominational state schools24. Emphasizing the “purely Christian” character of mixed schools was unacceptable because “Christian belief contains in itself also Catholic religion”25. It was argued that if religious belief was not fostered in schools, this would inevitably lead to decay in the true religion or conversion26. By delegating the educational role of religion, the standard of education would deteriorate and non-denominational schools would breed tension and disharmony among the citizens27. These protests were supported by a huge campaign during which the domestic, as well as the international press, criticized the authorized schoolbooks, as well as the project of mixed schools itself.

Catholic clerics were also concerned about the ‘nationalization’ of education and the reduced religious dimension28, even if it was maintained that reform would improve the level of spiritual education because religious instruction could now be offered by priests outside of the school curriculum29. Neither priests nor the laity were ready to accept this. The clergy were worried about losing their influence on education: according to the directive of February 1786, only lay persons could become supervisors of mixed schools. In practice, of course, at parish level the clergy remained in a position to influence the
education of their flock. For example, the Catholic priest of the village of Neded, without authorization fulfilled the office of superintendent of a non-denominational school, and monitored the state of religious instruction within. Under his influence Catholic parents withdrew their children from the local school despite the protests of two officially appointed superintendents.

In the face of much protest and resentment, the state insisted on its policy and mixed schools gradually began to be implemented. This was encouraged by people such as Prónay, Klanica and Kazinczy. But despite the arguments in favour of the reforms – including financial expediency – Protestants in general remained sceptical, and they opposed anything which was seen as being in breach of the Patent of Toleration. This attitude was understandable given that Joseph II had tried to impose a new liturgy and administrative machinery for Lutherans in Hungary. The emperor also attempted to introduce the so-called simultaneum, or the use of common church buildings for both Catholic and Protestant use. Just one town in Hungary – Skalica – accepted the idea. The simultaneum was repealed within a year (27 January 1789) as unrealistic.

A more permanent result of implementing the Patent of Toleration occurred in public life, which witnessed a gradual increase in Protestant representation. Hitherto, positions in the state administration had been restricted to Catholics; officials had to take an oath to the Immaculate Conception and the saints. This discrimination against Protestants was duly eliminated, though there was no immediate flow of non-Catholics into public office. Protestants could only obtain high-quality secular education abroad. It was difficult to fund their studies because most scholarships were assigned to theology students. Only later improvements in domestic education in schools and universities increased the prospects for Lutherans of joining the bureaucracy. Non-Catholics remained the exception rather than the rule in the majority of local, regional and central officialdom. However, Protestants gradually attained more influential positions, becoming important advocates of the reforms of Joseph II. Radicalization of reforms – essentially the enforcement of German as the language of state, taxation of the aristocracy, and administrative centralization – encouraged opposition to Vienna from the traditional nobility. However, when the war with the Ottomans brought about stagnation, aristocratic critics were reinforced by the ‘enlightened’ supporters of Joseph II, who wished to see the more rapid implementation of reform.

Towards the end of Joseph’s reign, the polarization of Hungarian society along political lines also manifested itself in religious terms. Protestants became suspected, with some justification, of negotiating a transfer of Hungarian sovereignty to a rival prince. This intrigue occurred in the context of the religious divisions which emerged in the proceedings of the Hungarian parliament after the death of Joseph II. The policies of the Catholics, who began questioning the validity of the Patent of Toleration and attempted to restore the status of the Catholic Church, intensified the situation and encouraged escalation and facilitated the penetration of French revolutionary ideas in Hungary. Social tension increased rapidly, and there was a threat of open religious hostility. These developments were commented on by Pavol Schramko, a Lutheran pastor in the small town of Nemecká Lupča, and elaborated on in his tract De conciliandis Hungaris proiectum. He recommended resolving religious animosity by creating a Consistory, headed by the Hungarian Primate, in which all the main church communities in Hungary – Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans and Calvinists – were to have three representatives each. This body was supposed to deal with all cases relating to the coexistence of confessional groups in the secular sphere. Schramko considered the links between the Catholic Church in Hungary and the papal curia to be a problem, and suggested that the state should control Catholic patronage.

Schramko’s utopian plan was never implemented, but it resonated in the spheres (mainly the secular ones) of Catholic reformers who prevented the repeal of the Patent of Toleration and who
passed Clause 26/1791, favouring non-Catholics. It also showed that even the clergy was not universally opposed to appeasement and tolerance between the confessions. Although it is clear that the ‘toleration from above’, as practiced by Joseph II, was not the most practical solution possible, nonetheless it prompted some local elements to attempt to reduce confessional tensions for the greater good of society. At the same time, however, it could provoke the opposite reaction. One of the pioneers of tolerance, Baron Johann Calisius, witnessed a curious case on his manor: the local Catholic priest gave an order to divide the cemetery, which until then had been used peacefully by both Catholics and Lutherans, by a deep trench. This drew an immediate response from an unknown local Lutheran, who fastened a short derisive text to the cemetery’s monumental cross. This minor conflict, in its appropriation of the major symbol of Christianity, highlights the very limited impact of the Patent of Tolerance.

Notes


5 The Catholic Enlightenment thinking was expressed, for example, in the poem “Freude, eines gegen die Protestant-en wohlgesinnten Römisch-Katholischen Christen über das […] Edict, vom 15.8bris A.1781”, in Slovak National Library, Archive of the Slovak literature, manuscript MJ 729. It reacted to the publication of the Patent in the Austrian part of Habsburg monarchy and defended it.


11 Dissertatio Ecclesiastica et Politica de Iure et Dominio Religionis Catholicae in Hungaria, SNA Bratislava, collection Bratislavská kapitula, súkromný archív, secretarius-acta, fasc. C 56, No. 33. The royal court in Vienna had at its disposal the very different opinions presented by the radical Joseph Grossinger: Maximae, pro R(egno) Hungariea seas Proiectum, in opprimendam Nobilitatem Hungaricae vergens […] 1781. Article 26 emphasized that toleration would bring peace and stability to Hungary. For some, Lutherans and Calvinists were more of an adornment of the court than Catholics. Library of the Lutheran lyceum (hereafter LL) Bratislava, manuscript, fasc. 241/5.

12 See Joseph Bencur’s letter to Michael Institoris, 9 February 1782, LL Bratislava, manuscript, fasc. 348. In Nitra county, altum silentium prevailed concerning the Patent even at the beginning of March, just as in the assemblies at Bratislava and Trenčín.

13 The assembly of Zvolen county published the Patent as early as 15 December 1781.
Their arguments were based on the *Puncta schematica, iuxta quae in negotio Religionis [...] Investigationes peragendi dae sunt*. SNA Bratislava, collection Archív rodu Zay, Bučiansky archív – Ján Kališ, kr. 141, fasc. IV, fol. 80-82. An anonymous author prepared a detailed treatment of the obstacles created to hinder the Patent, *Schreiben eines Wiener an einen im heiligen römischen Reich wohnenden Ungarn*, 1783, 21 n.

A total of 130 Lutheran church communities by August 1783, Gabriel Prónay in letter to Peter Zay. LNA, AEG, I. b. 11, No. 5.

The contemporaries estimated the number of new Protestants in the Czech lands to be 80,000 families. J. Martini in a letter to M. Institoris, 11 June 1780. LL Bratislava, manuscript, fasc. 346.

The order was published on 20 June, 1782.

The priest Zigmund Kunics described the activities of the Lutherans as impudence. LL Bratislava, manuscript, fasc. 685/40.


“Pressburger Zeitung”, 1 May 1779.


This was argued by Gabriel Prónay, 8 December 1787. His proposal was then accepted and issued as a royal decree on 31 January 1788. National Archives Budapest, C 69, 1788, Schol. Nat., fons 20, pos. 1, fol. 366-370.

For the purposes of engendering a common ethos, non-denominational prayers and a school song were prepared. The tri-lingual version, in German, Hungarian and Slovak was printed in 1786. I used a copy preserved in SNA Bratislava, Branch Banská Bystrica, fasc. 1016/76.

Michael Szinowicz to M. Institoris, 24 August 1789. LL Bratislava, manuscript, fasc. 355.


National Archives Budapest, C 69, 1787, Distr. Pos., fons 68, pos. 1, fol. 283

E.g. Brezno requested that mixed schools be opened as early as September 1786. *Ibid.*, C 69, 1786, Distr. Pos., fons 54, pos. 2, fol. 3-5. After 1790, when there was no pressure to keep the mixed school, the Lutherans in Pezinok wanted to maintain it. They were aware that "the school helps to unify the inhabitants, promotes harmony among them and supports love and kindness". *Ibid.*, 1791, Schol. Nat., fons 4, pos. 38, fol. 142-143. After 1790 the number of the mixed schools declined rapidly.

State archive Bratislava, collection Župa Bratislavská I-AC, 1788, fasc. 12, No. 25. The order was issued on 26 December 1787.

The conflicts concerning the oath of the representatives of city council in Bratislava in 1742 led to the open protest of the Hungarian Protestants as a whole. Despite the audience with Maria Theresa, 3 August 1749, it was forbidden to present collective complaints about religious persecution. Haus-, Hof- Staatsarchiv Wien, Ungarn-Miscellanea, fasc. 432, *Diarium [...] in mense Julio 1749 ablegationis, continnatum per Alexandrum de Berzeviczy Scepusiam*.

For example, the “dictatorship” of the city notary in Banská Bystrica, who organised the election to the city council, asserted that the Lutherans could hold only one seat, despite their majority among the inhabitants. SNA Bratislava, branch Banská Bystrica, collection Magistrát Banskej Bystrice, fasc. 976/70. Lutherans were represented among the royal officers as early as in 1783.


On Prussian interventions in favour of Hungarian Protestants, see J. Bahlcke, *Konfessionspolitik und Staatsinteressen. Zur Funktion der brandenburgisch-preußischen Interventionen zugunsten der ungarischen Protestant an dem Westfälischen Frieden*, in “Jahrbuch für Schlesische Kirchengeschichte”, 1997/98, 76/77, pp. 177-187. According to the police informer of 3 October 1788, it had been suggested that the Hungarian crown be offered to the "prince
The Lutheran baron Joseph Podmaniczky has been considered the author of this idea. The records of police informers 5, 27 September 1789. AVA Wien, Polizei-Hofstelle, XI/B 24, H 24, fol. 77 and ibid., H 45. The parliamentary discussions on religious questions were widely discussed in public.


38 For its formulation see in P. Wallaszky, *Consectus reipublicae litterariae in Hungaria*, Ofen 1808, p. 539.

39 In this way also the students of General Seminaries were educated. The positive opinion of them was quite common even in the Lutheran milieu: "Edle junge Geistliche, die an G nl. Seminario unterm K. Joseph studiert, werden ohne Unterschied deshalben verfolgt, weil sie gesündere principia alldorten eingesogen, welches den ältern, wegen des dadurch vermindenden Verfolgung Geistes, so mißfällig und anstößig ist". Johann Calisius in a letter to Stephan Zitkovsky on 26 August, 1793. SNA Bratislava, collection Archív rodu Zay, Bučiansky archív – Ján Kališ, kr. 140, fol. 82.


**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


There are more than 200 countries in the world and even more nations. The world is open now and at your work, during your business trips and studies or just through the Internet you can be involves in the multicultural communication. Someone thinks that for efficient conversation good communicational skills and language proficiency (usually, in English) are enough. However, it's not is easy. Knowi. Religion is the "final frontier" of personal prejudice, with attitudes to faith driving negative perceptions more than ethnicity or nationality, a report to be published tomorrow will say. How We Get Along, a two-year study of diversity by the Woolf Institute, is due to conclude that most people are tolerant of those from different ethnic or national backgrounds, but many have negative attitudes based on religion. Europe's Muslims are European. Stop outsourcing their plight to foreign leaders | Shada Islam. Read more. This is particularly so in the case of Muslims. Almost three-quarters of non-black or Asian respondents said they were comfortable with a close relative marrying a black or Asian person, but only 43% were comfortable with a close relative marrying a Muslim. The Patent of Toleration (German: Toleranzpatent) was an edict of toleration issued on 13 October 1781 by the Habsburg emperor Joseph II. Part of the Josephinist reforms, the Patent extended religious freedom to non-Catholic Christians living in the crown lands of the Habsburg Monarchy, including Lutherans, Calvinists, and the Eastern Orthodox. Specifically, these members of minority faiths were now legally permitted to hold "private religious exercises" in clandestine churches. The New Religious Intolerance. This article is more than 10 years old. Share to Facebook. Share to Twitter. Share to Linkedin. Many arguments made in these recent exchanges are inconsistent and self-serving, proposing restrictions for the newcomer group that one would not be prepared to tolerate in the case of one's own group, or, more generally, treating similar cases dissimilarly without a reason. (Do people propose to ban Christian churches on the grounds that criminals have often invoked Christianity in defending horrible crimes?) Exposing such deficiencies can be very helpful, because most people want to reason well and are embarrassed when it is shown that they are reasoning badly. But we also need specific