

LUTHERAN AND CALVINISTIC INFLUENCES UPON
THE HUNGARIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN THE
16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

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HUNGARIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN THE
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By

Alexander Sándor Ungváry

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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by Alexander Sándor Ungváry

The ecumenical history of Protestantism asserts that the Reformation was not an autonomous spiritual development in Hungary; rather, it was a part of a general ecclesiastical evolution.

In this thesis, we attempted to evaluate the interrelationship and influence of Lutheranism and Calvinism upon the Hungarian Reformed Church. We found that the early Lutheran domination in East Central European countries like Bohemia, Hungary and Poland was arrested in the middle of the 16th century. From that time on, the Calvinistic or Helvetic form of Protestantism began to develop in those countries. The main reason that Calvinism succeeded while Lutheranism failed was that the latter was too closely associated with the threat of German spiritual, cultural and political domination, while universal Calvinism had a supra-national character.

In the framework of ecumenical comparative church history, we proceeded to analyze the inward, qualitative elements of the Hungarian Reformation and paid particular attention to homily, theology and missionary consciousness. We found that John Calvin's theological teachings were the most influential of all the writings

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of the Western Protestant Reformers in the development of the Hungarian Reformed Church.

We described the historical role of the "fighting preachers" as a new and prominent element in social, ecclesiastical and national developments. These dominating preachers were later replaced by theologians, who built Reformed Orthodoxy in Hungary. We also discussed the absolute role of the "emergency bishop", who organized and fought for the Reformed Church in Hungarian spiritual circles.

We have tried to evaluate the missionary activity which took place during one and a half centuries among the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox people in Transylvania. The following explanation was given for its abrupt end: the Catholic Hapsburgs came into power in Hungary at the end of the 17th century and immediately terminated the Electorate of Transylvania.

A similar ecumenical endeavor in Bohemia, where the Hungarian Reformers helped to re-establish Reformed congregations during the Age of Toleration was successful over a longer period.

At the end of the 16th century, ninety percent of the population had accepted the Helvetic form of Protestantism. After nearly two hundred years of war, the Hungarian population had been reduced from four million to one million; yet, one third of the Hungarian people still belonged to the persecuted Reformed Church at the end of the 17th century.

Although the Polish and the Bohemian Reformed Churches experienced roughly

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the same difficulties as the Hungarian Reformed Church, only the latter managed to survive. Its survival can be attributed to its firm determination to fight for religious freedom and spiritual liberty.

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PREFACE

The ecclesiastical history of Hungarian Protestantism contains many unresolved, perhaps, never to be resolved, problems. Many of the primary sources on its history were either destroyed or lost in one way or another during the stormy centuries. Whoever attempts to write about the 16th and 17th centuries, as periods of the Protestant Reformation, must recognize these limitations.

Another factor which the researcher encounters is the lack of data concerning the publishers of the material which is available. During this period, the ruling power condemned and prohibited Protestant Reformed literature; thus, the location of publishers was concealed.

A final factor which has limited us in our work is the fact that the Western world today does not have access to the archives and libraries that are in the countries under Communist domination.

These compelling factors eo ipso limited our efforts to present a broader treatment of the topic. In consequence, we do not regard this thesis to be a complete presentation. These writings call to our memory the historic fact that the Reformation remained incomplete, which involves the concept of Semper Reformandi.

One requirement of this thesis was that mainly primary sources should be used. Where English translations appear in the text, the accompanying footnote, contains the authentic quotations in the original language and form.

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When one sets out to write a thesis in a language other than one's native language, an extra burden is laid, not only on the person himself, but on the professors and editor as well. Awareness of this fact makes me indebted to those who have worked with me on this thesis. My warm thanks are due:

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INTRODUCTION

The Protestant Reformation was a European crisis and it ought therefore to be studied on a Western and Central European level and not as a part of a particular national history. As we see it, its first characteristic was the intensity of the appeal of the Protestant doctrines; the second was the speed with which the Reformation occurred, and the third was its Eastern European continental appeal, which was quasi international in its influence. When in this paper we treat a part of the Hungarian Reformation, we want to keep these principles in mind.

The Protestant Reformation in Hungary may be described as an emancipation from medieval conditions in the Church. Long delayed, it came at last in the form of Protestant revolt against the papal regime, initiated by Martin Luther in Wittenberg. But the origins of this Reformation lay undoubtedly in previous centuries as we may understand from the reform movements which were initiated by Wiclif and Hussites. In spite of persecutions the Hušites remained active and Hussitism remained prevalent until the eve of the Reformation. The Reformation inaugurated by Martin Luther was in many respects the continuation and completion of the dissenting movement led by John Hus and others in the pre-reformation times. The people were waiting for a prophet and when Luther appeared and denounced the evils rampant in the Church and society and proclaimed his distinctive religious message, he found a generation

ready to respond and rally to his side. The religious conditions were there, and without them effective religious reforms would have been impossible, even with Luther as its leader. Luther was not responsible for the development of piety in his time, but he found a spiritual environment in readiness and gave this piety a new direction.

In the final analysis, the importance of the Protestant Reformation lies not exclusively in its consequences for the 16th and 17th centuries, but rather, its main significance lies in the fact that it opened the way for the eternal reformation of thirsty souls. We cannot deny that the Reformed Church retained many of the weaknesses of the medieval Church, but at the same time the opportunity for semper reformare was secured.

CHAPTER I

THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION IN HUNGARY

The tidal waves of the Reformation movement reached Hungary quickly. Two explanations can be given for their rapid spread. First, the Hungarian humanists had prepared the Hungarian mind for reform before Luther began his teachings. Second, a tragic historical situation had opened the way for successful reform.

The humanists played the same role in the preparation of Protestant reform in Hungary as in other European countries. In the religious sphere humanism provided an impulse to the assertion of the right of private judgment, to individual reason and conscience against corporate ecclesiastical authority. Many of the men who were to become leaders of the evangelical Reformation were trained in the humanist movement. Though many of the humanist reformers, like Erasmus, stopped short of a practical reformation, others went further and demanded a reform of doctrine as well as practice.

A Bohemian humanist, Bohuslav Lobkovitz, while traveling in Hungary, was moved to observe that the higher ecclesiastical dignitaries of Hungary spoke more frequently of Nemesis and Dais than of Christ, and were much more occupied with Plato and Vergil than with the Gospel.¹

¹Jeno Abel, Magyar humanisták és Dunai Tudos Társaság (Budapest, 1880), p. 5.

The presence of the humanistic spirit, which in its finest manifestations was not anti-ecclesiastical, served primarily to produce among the aristocrats and the well educated an attitude of receptiveness toward the ideals of Protestantism. The Hungarian humanists who followed Erasmus had organized themselves into the "Sodalitas Litteraria Danubiana." Founded by Conrad Celtes, this group included some two hundred prelates, artists, court diplomats and writers. It thus formed a community of high culture, whose members, linked as they were in an invisible organization with the humanist Republic of Europe, could feel at home anywhere the humanist movement had touched. In addition to living in a spiritual community, Buda, Vienna and Prague were ruled by the same king. King Lewis II, of the house of Jagello, and his Queen Mary, the younger sister of Emperor Charles V, provided amply for the needs of the humanists. Through Queen Mary the German spiritual influence made a powerful impact on the court of Buda, and the Latin-Roman influence was pushed into the background. Through the Erasmian Hungarian humanists a Germanization took place in the spiritual centre of Hungary which was unpalatable to many Hungarians. Later this development played an important role in the shaping of Protestantism in this country. Hungary turned away from German Lutheranism and followed the Calvinistic direction. This will be discussed later.

For a time, Erasmus had an absolute dominating influence on the Hungarian spiritual circle. One wonders what the secret of his great influence was. Apart from his own genuinely superior qualities, it must be attributed to nothing more than the over-development of the Court and the higher intellectual world into which the tired scepticism of Erasmus fitted so extremely well.

The Hungarian Catholic Church, a highly rationalized and decaying Church, out of joint with itself, saw in Erasmus a man whom they could follow. Not without some justification, Erasmus later was charged with a partial responsibility for the tragedy of Mohács (1526). The resolution of the Hungarians and their lack of sufficient military force in the face of the Ottoman Empire on the day of the disaster could be traced back to the working of his rather destructive mind.²

The Hungarian humanists, basking in the glory of Erasmus, were casualties of the spiritual unreliability of their adored master. They offered weak support to their Church, doubted its dogma, and were sceptics in their private lives. Although they filled high positions in the Church, they had no place there; the ignorance of the clergy was a sordid tale. During this period the Church of Rome produced only one controversialist, Gregory Szegeedi, who would take up the battle for the old faith.³

The spirit of the age of Erasmus passed quickly in Hungary. Life took on a dramatic quality. Beginning with the 1530's, the desired "peace" of Erasmus was replaced by a fanatically waged war with the Ottomans, in which

²Tivadar Thineman, Hungarian Erasmians (Pecs: Minerva, 1929), p. 47.

³Frid. Adolpho Lampe, Historia Ecclesiae Reformatae in Hungaria et Transylvania (Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1778), p. 73. The original author of this work is Paul Ember. When he finished writing it in 1708, he could not have it published in Hungary, so Lampe had it published twenty years later in Utrecht in the Netherlands.

many of Erasmus' disciples were killed. In the disastrous battle at Mohács the King, two primates, five bishops as well as the entire leadership of the country lost their lives. After having lived light-heartedly as humanists, they tossed their disrupted lives into the tempest which came from the East with the same carelessness, and they left a shattered nation behind them.⁴ The defeat at Mohács was a tremendous help to the cause of the Reformation; the nation was compelled to give up its philosophy of "a life of serenity". The age of martyrs had come to Hungary.

Changes also took place in the Roman Catholic Church; the Tridentine generation took over and the reforming Catholics, bent on their own reforms, put the works of Erasmus on the Index. Lutheran Protestantism had already long denied him. Now the broad masses of the tragically split Hungarian people were consoled by leaders who represented the Reform. The age of doubts had disappeared. The people of a proud empire of the past sought their faith in the ruins of their churches and received as the only answer the consoling word of the translated Scripture.

⁴Tivadar Thineman, op. cit., p. 66.

CHAPTER II

LUTHER'S DOMINATING INFLUENCE UPON THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE 16TH CENTURY

During the first half of the 16th century, the Hungarian nobility refused the Lutheran Reformation, because it believed the national catastrophe to have originated in the court -- that the heretic King and his courtiers had undermined the spirit of the nation. In 1523, and again in 1525, the Diet of Buda voted to reactivate certain laws, based on the Code Theodosius and Code Justian, which had earlier been passed against the Hussites. The new form of these laws provided that the Lutherans should be burned at the stake.¹

It was characteristic of the attitude of the Hungarian nobility that when their Viceroy, Stephen Werboczi, participated in the Diet of Worms in 1521, he invited Martin Luther for a splendid dinner with the purpose of convincing him to recant his theses. It was not only the Hungarian public which equated the Lutheranism of that epoch with German national policies, this attitude was shared without exception by all neighboring nations. When it became clear that Luther's preaching stirred the Polish Germans deeply, King Sigismund published in 1520, the Edict of Thorn which banned Luther's writings from the

¹ "In Comitibus ad Pestum in campo Rakos habitis sequens ferale decretum contra Evangelicos, hostes veritatis condiderunt. 'Lutherani omnes de Regno estirpentur et ubicumque reperti fuerint, non solum per Ecclesiasticas, verum etiam per seculares personas libere capiantur, et comburantur!'" Frid. Adolpho Lampe, op. cit., p. 60.

country, in an effort to cope with the danger of German influence. Three years later, the same year in which the Hungarian Diet passed the first of its anti-Lutheran laws, a more radical measure was enforced which made the spread and support of the new doctrine an offence liable to capital punishment. The Polish nobility was forbidden to send their sons to study at Wittenberg. In 1554, King Sigismund II corresponded with John Calvin, and the King read Calvin's Institutes with respect. In their correspondence, Calvin suggested a project of Polish Church Reform, but as a result of the re-Catholization of Poland, this plan was never realized. The burghers of Polish cities were Germans in those days, and they had accepted Luther immediately. In later developments the German defenders of Lutheranism compromised the religious movement in Poland by letting it become an element in the traditional clash of two ethnic groups, the Teutons and the Slavs. In this situation it meant that danger of Germanization via Lutheran Protestantism was at hand, and the politically determined nobility could not but think in terms of political Protestantism. This historico-ethnic antagonism could not be overcome by a common spiritual endeavor called evangelical Reformation.² In the end, Protestantism was split into two parts: German Lutheranism and Polish Calvinism. In Bohemia the national antagonism between Czech and German had had a long tradition since Hus' tragic fate. The strife had both ethnic and theological origins. The Czech masters espoused the side of Realism and their German

²Karl Völker, Der Protestantismus in Poland, (Leipzig, 1910), p. 169.

opponents were Nominalists. On nationalistic grounds the former were prone to support what their German antagonists attacked. This tension finally brought the country into the first of the modern religious wars. The war came to an end, but the enmities engendered continued. At the turn of the 16th century, the Czechs were regarded as pestiferous heretics in the literate as well as in the popular circles of Germany.³ On the other hand, the Czech opinions of the Germans were barely more favorable.

Luther's opinion of the Bohemians was formed in the early years under the influence of the nationalistic antagonism. In his lecture on the Psalms, in 1513, Luther regarded the Bohemians as schismatics.⁴ Luther expressed his conscious German feelings in several statements: "As I am the prophet of the Germans, I will act as a faithful teacher and warn my staunch Germans of the danger in which they stand."⁵ Luther seemed to be the hero in whom the divided Germans with all their peculiarities were embodied. The Germans admired him; there never was a German spiritual leader who understood his people so well as this reformer from Wittenberg. He wrote, "We Germans must serve all Germans I seek the welfare and salvation of you Germans. . . ."⁶ Luther committed himself to his people and formulated the

³F. M. Bartos, Archiv fllr Reformationsgeschichte (Gutersloh, Westphalia), XXX, 103.

⁴Martin Luther, Werke (Weimar, 1940) III, 292.

⁵Ibid., p. 290.

⁶Ibid., p. 291.

first conscious tenets to bring Germany closer to its divided parts. He alone impressed upon the German language, the German Bible, and the German spirit his own imperishable seal. During the dispute with Eck in Leipzig Luther was accused of being of Czech birth. Eck hoped to produce hostility toward Luther among the Germans through this false statement and to discredit him in the eyes of the Saxons. This shows what a compromising position it was in those days to be a Bohemian.

After the dispute in Leipzig Luther met with representatives from Bohemia to seek some reconciliation between the two nations, and he urged the Germans to develop a more favorable attitude toward the Bohemians.⁷ Luther wrote in a letter to Staupitz, "It is high time that we quite honestly and sincerely consider the case of the Bohemians, to unite with us. . . and cease all the slander. . . on both sides."⁸

It is clear from later developments that Luther in the early years of the Reformation had hoped that there might be some kind of organizational unity or doctrinal agreement between the Bohemians and his own people. Bohemian representatives had made several visits to Wittenberg, and Luther had corresponded with Lucas of Prague, but these efforts could not eliminate the differences. Luther was deeply discouraged by the infidelity of his protégé in Prague, Gallus Cahera, who had compromised the Lutheran Reformation in

⁷"Accepti hac hora ex Praga Bohemiae literae sacerdotum duorum. . ."
 Nicolaus Enders, *Luther's Briefwechsel*, II., 183.
 E.L.

⁸Martin Luther, "An den Christlichen Adel deutscher Nation", *Werke*, VI, 454.

Bohemia. Luther's final reflection upon the efforts to bring the two movements together were reflected in his words: "Let us both, you Czechs and we Germans, be apostles. You labor there, . . . and we will strive here as we are impelled."⁹

How deep German self-consciousness was can be seen in a sermon of a Lutheran minister in Bohemia, John Mathesius. In 1566, he wrote that although he had a living "under the Bohemian Crown," he was a German by birth, he had "preached officially in his mother tongue" and that "with a set purpose he had preached German sermons to the honor of our God and the blessed 'Theologia Germanica', and published them in the German language so that some of the Germans might be reminded of what the blessed German Church in the Kingdom of Bohemia thought of the doctrines of the great German prophet".¹⁰

A similar attitude of anti-German consciousness and fear of the consequences of Lutheran Protestantism could be noticed also in Croatia during the very early years of the Reformation, when all who embraced Lutheranism were forbidden by Law XXX of 1567, to own a house or land or to hold public office.¹¹ Mathias Murco commented in the review, "Slavia", that this action had political origins, because in this manner the government could keep Germans

⁹G. Loesche, Luther, Melancton und Calvin in Osterreich-Ungarn (Tilbingen, 1909), p. 51.

¹⁰Johann Mathesius, Historien von des Doctoris M. Lutheri Anfang Lehre, Leben und Sterben (Nürnberg, 1566), preface.

¹¹Zagreb, Jura Regni Croatiae . . . (1567), III, Law XXX.

who threatened the autonomous rights of the country at bay.¹²

Another striking example can be found in the Roman Catholic Bishop, John Erdody. He was bishop in Zagreb, the capital city of Croatia, and was accused of infidelity toward Rome.¹³ He firmly repudiated his alleged inclination toward Lutheranism, when he wrote to Rome, in 1529, that he would rather accept Mohammedanism or be a Turk than to obey "German blood", i. e. accept German Protestantism. This letter revealed the deep controversy between the East Central European people and the neighboring Germans. Later, another bishop from the same city petitioned the Hungarian King not to allow German soldiers in castles along the borders, because their territorial law forbid people of German origin to settle down there.

¹²Mathias Murco, *Slavia*, IV, 685 ". . . das hatte auch seine politischen Grunde, da man auf diese Weise die Deutschen, welche die autonomen Rechte des Landes bedrohten, fernhalten wollte."

¹³Janos Karacsony (ed.), *Monumenta ecclesiastica tempora innovatae in Hungariam religiones illustrantia*, (Debrecen, 1529), I, 428, ". . . mehe de episcopatu Zagrabiense providere gratiose, quoniam ipse episcopus in notam infidelitatis incidit."

CHAPTER III

THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF CALVIN IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

In order to evaluate Calvin's influence upon Hungary, a short account of his influence upon Poland and Bohemia is given in comparison.

Calvinism in Poland, Bohemia, Hungary and Transylvania

Calvin's Reformatory activity and influence met with several obstacles in East Central Europe and on the whole the results were not impressive. However, in 1540, in Poland, Calvin's Institutes were read in the court of King Sigismund II twice a week at the King's table.¹ Apart from France, Calvin spent most of his time and energy working for the Polish Reformation.² He encouraged the King to bring the "true religion" back to Poland. Calvin even dedicated his commentary on Hebrews to the pious King.

The Polish Reformation was, however, doomed from the beginning, because of the egoistic attitude of the leading classes. Karl Völker, a well known historian of the Polish Reformation, commented that in Poland Protestantism had been the concern of the nobility and the burghers, who were separated from the rural people by a deep social gap.³

¹John Calvin, Corpus Reformatorum, ed. Baum, Cunitz, and Reuss. (Brunsvigae), XV, 329.

²A. Roget, Calvin et l'église de Pologne, (1884), p. 95, as cited in Georg Loesche, Luther, Melancton und Calvin in Osterreich-Ungarn (Tilbingen, 1909), p.238.

³Karl Völker, Kirchengeschichte Polens (Leipzig, 1930), p. 159.

Another reason Calvin's efforts failed was that there were alternative religious leaders who sought to lead the reform movement in different directions. Calvin warned the King and Polish leaders against men like Sazzio, Stankar, Blandrata, the Anabaptists and the German Antitrinitarians, who might compromise the holy cause. Under the ingenious leadership of John a Lasko the Calvinists worked for some form of unity, but it was only after his death that the rivals signed a statement of union in 1570, the Pax Dissidentium, because of the pressure of the growing Roman Catholic Reformation. It was then too late to check the disintegration of the Protestant movement and, as the leader of the Polish re-Catholization, Cardinal Hosius, prophesized, the heretics ate each other. (Bellum hereticorum est Pax Ecclesiae) and thus secured peace for Rome.⁴

Catholicism re-established itself so completely in Poland that at the end of the Reformation period only one percent of the population were Protestants.

Bohemia

In Bohemia, during the 16th century there was a movement called the "Unitas fratrum", the Unity of Brethren. At the same time as the Polish, in 1540, the leaders of this movement sent their representatives to Strassburg to study the Reformatory movement there. In Strassburg, they met first with Bucer and later with Calvin himself, who expressed genuine interest in their confession and only objected to the celibacy of their clergy. Following Calvin's advice, the Unity of Brethren modified its concept of the Lord's Supper, something which they had refused to do when Luther had tried to win them to his fold.⁵

⁴Völker, op. cit., p. 168.

⁵Loesche, op. cit., p. 203.

From that time on, the Bohemian students favored the Swiss seminaries over Wittenberg. The strict Calvinistic influence was represented by a returning student, Vaclav Budovec, who later became a martyr.⁶ Budovec was the leader of the United Bohemian Protestants and the original instigator of the Charter (Majestätsbrief) of 1609, which secured for a relatively brief period the liberty for Bohemian Protestants. Out of fear of suppression and to defend their mutual interests, the Lutheran Utraquists and the Calvinist Unity of Brethren worked out the "Bohemian Confession". However, after the battle of White Mountain in 1620, the Calvinists lost their status. They were either exiled or persecuted or "converted". It was a fact that the Bohemian Calvinists could not show the strength which they possessed in Switzerland, France or Hungary. With the progress of the Roman Catholic Reformation the Protestants disappeared from Bohemia.

Hungary

After Luther's death Melancthon was unable to cope with the Helvetic Reformatory trends. As in the West, Zwingli's doctrine of the Lord's Supper had undermined the Lutheran-Melancthonian unity. The same dispute flared up in Hungary around this doctrinal question. The growing influence of Zwingli, Bucer, and Calvin in this country was reinforced by the "Consensus Tigurinus." The second half of the century was characterized less by the development of an organized and practical theology as by the differentiation of creeds. The formal

⁶
Ibid., p. 211.

separation between Lutheran Saxons and Hungarian Calvinists occurred in 1564, when they fought out their differences concerning the meaning and execution of the Lord's Supper.

John Calvin's interest in the Hungarian Protestant Reformation before 1544 is unknown. The first known Hungarian student who visited him was Gergely Belenyesi, who had studied in Paris and Strassburg. Belenyesi visited Calvin because he wanted to consult him about a book which he had written in Paris and which he wanted to publish there. "Calvinum invisam, quocum privatim de meo Studio theologico, in novo testamento communicabo. . ."⁷ The Hungarian theological students began to flock to Switzerland for study after 1550. Among them was the Gaspar Karolyi who later translated the Bible into the Hungarian vernacular.

In 1548, unmistakable signs of the presence of Calvinism could be detected in the deliberation of the Synod at Eperjes in North Hungary.⁸ The pioneer was Martin Santa from Kal~~l~~maneschi, after whose name in the register of the University of Cracow where he studied appears this notation: "He was the first to introduce the heresy of Sacramentarians in Hungary". As a former canon, Kal~~l~~maneschi was well prepared in theological knowledge and had worked under great hardships, but he did not cease to preach the Word of God and in the end he gained enormous success and authority.⁹

⁷Reformatus Addattar. (Budapest, 1908), IV, 76.

⁸Joannes Ribini, Memorabilia Augustanae Confessionis in Regno Hungariae (Posonii, 1789), I, 67. "Anno 1546 quinque superioris Ungariae Civitates peculiari vinculo inter se coniunctae, in conventu Eperiesini instituto, religionem suam, eiusque exercendae modum, articulus aliquot declararunt."

⁹Lampe, op. cit., p. 101.

His former Roman bishop, Draskovich, gave the following picture of Martin Santa Kalmanesehi's activities, in 1552:

"...The Sacramentarian teachings are spread wider every day in the diocese, in addition to the Lutheran doctrines. Their main prophet is the city pastor from Debrecen, Martin. According to Kalmanesehi the body and blood of Christ at the Lord's Supper are neither transsubstantial nor in any other way in reality present, but they are only signs and symbols. He has declared the altar superfluous and says a simple wooden table is good enough. He despises the vestments and surplices and thinks that weekday clothing is suitable for the worship service.¹⁰

This description shows us the simplicity and effectiveness of Calvinism in Hungary. But its march did not proceed without difficulties. Kalmanesehi was excommunicated by a conservative Synod and had to flee in order to save his life.

Bullinger reported in Switzerland, that the Gospel had been proclaimed all around Hungary, but not without strong opposition from the bishops and papal clericals. On Turkish territory, on the other hand, it was unopposed. In Transylvania, pious men proclaimed the catechism among Greeks, Walachians, Lithuanians and even among Turks.¹¹

The religious Reformation of the Hungarians developed, roughly speaking, in two centers, the city of Debrecen and the province of Transylvania, or "Eastern Switzerland". The movement crystallized in these areas for spiritual rather than political reasons. Debrecen, the "Calvinist Rome" lay, like Geneva,

¹⁰Jeno Zovanyi, Die Reformation in Ungarn bis zum 1565 (Sarospatak, 1912), p. 293.

¹¹Lampe, op. cit., p. 104.

on a great trade route and as such was a trans-shipment center for the commerce of the continent. As a consequence, its citizens early were receptive to ideas advocating independence, mobility and social development. The Helvetic movement favored the critical social outlook of the burgher class, and thus, it was the latter that came to adhere to the system of Calvin. Wherever open-mindedness toward social, economic, and political reform was lacking in the Eastern part of Central Europe, as e.g., among the Orthodox Slavs, Calvinism proved unable to conquer. It could not cross the Carpathians toward the East.

In the east parts of Hungary, which remained under the scepter of Ferdinand I, a severe law against the Sacramentarians was passed in 1548, at the peace of Augsburg. This could, however, not stop further development of the Reformation according to the Helvetic tendency, and when Peter Juhasz Meliusz became pastor of Debrecen, his office was very soon transformed into that of a superintendent (bishop). This single, outstanding personality was in himself strong enough to establish the Helvetic system in that region. The range of his activities and his tremendous capacity commands our admiration even today, when we think that he had to formulate the religious and ecclesiastical "science" of the new tendency, so to speak, overnight.

Though Debrecen had quite early adopted the Lutheran tendency, it had never entirely broken with Roman Catholicism. The citizenry was, as in Geneva, too wealthy to risk the peaceful functioning of its commerce for religious reasons. A man was needed who could cope with the tired souls bogged down in materialism. Meliusz was that man. In 1560, he established a printing press which published numerous religious works. From Meliusz' own pen, between

1561 and 1571, came no less than 31 works, among them some very fundamental ones which he also published. Most of his works were original writings and only a few were translations from the Bible. There is a translation of the Old Testament, a hymnbook, a book of doctrine and the theological handbook of the Hungarian Helvetic confession. Meliusz never tired of stressing that the new Church should be built "upon the personal study of the Word, the one true type of Reformed Christianity", and not on outward church organization.¹² Meliusz did not only place the Bible in the hands of the community but he also entrusted it with the work of bearing witness to the faith and with teaching. In the first year of his pastorate, the thirtieth year of his life, he delivered in trust to the community the three responsibilities of religious community life: ecclesiastical doctrine, the Word of God, and teaching. It was he that gave the Helvetic Confession its prophetic character in Hungary.

That the whole section of the country which Meliusz influenced was penetrated by the Calvin-Bullinger nuance of the Helvetic tendency, which in the beginning differed from the Luther - Melancthon tendency only in the question of the Lord's Supper, was the fruit of the unaided, spiritual activity of this one man.

Transylvania

In Transylvania, we witness a similar process which took place under the leadership of Francis David, who, in 1559, was able to bring the whole Lutheran clergy into the camp of the Debrecen trend. The accession of

¹²Mihaly Bucsay, Geschichte des Protestantismus in Ungarn (Stuttgart, 1959), p. 53.

Transylvania led to the formulating of the first Confession, the "Confessio Catholica." The principles of their ecclesiastic organization which took place in 1561, were put down in writing. The spirit of these two actions was Calvinistic. In the following year a common Confession was issued by the synod of Tarczal-Torda which reconciled the divergent theological views which characterized the two regions.¹³ In this Confession we recognize the predominant intellectual influence of Theodore Beza.¹⁴

Doctrinal and Organizational Activity in the Hungarian Reformed Church

At last the Hungarian Reformed Church was ready to begin its activity both in the doctrinal and the organizational field. The church historian Révész has analyzed the merit of these measures:

"As a standard of doctrine and the norm of religious education the Second Helvetic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism came to be accepted. It was mainly through these documents that the spirit of the Swiss Reformation cast its spell over the Hungarian soul and shaped it through the centuries. In the atmosphere of this spirit the fundamental quality of the Hungarian soul found its full development and sanctification, that natural bent for practical morality, especially its capacity for obedience in many freedoms, which it had brought with it from the distant steppes of the Volga."¹⁵

The question of the Lord's Supper had helped bring in to the open the

¹³Lampe, op. cit., p. 121.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 125. "Confessioni Genevensi a Theodoro Beza accurate conscriptae Ministri Ecclesiarum Reformatorum, Universae ferme Hungariae, cis & ultra Tibiscum subscripsere. . . ."

¹⁵In Révész, Magyarország Protestantizmus, (Budapest, 1927), p. 5.

deep spiritual and religious differences which existed between the Lutheran and the Calvinistic tendencies. This question deserves some more attention. All parties agreed on one thing, that the Lord's Supper was an "outward sign" through which God wanted to point to the "indicated 'thing'". They also agreed on the point that that "thing" was remission of sins, salvation, union with Christ. There was, however, one fundamental difference, a disagreement concerning the point whether Christ's body and blood are involved in the sign or in the "thing indicated."

Luther declared that they were involved in the sign. Zwingli, however, and the adherents of the mediating tendency taught that Christ's body and blood were the "thing indicated." The "mediating" tendency deviated from Zwingli in that it believed that, owing to the mediation of the Holy Spirit, Christ's body and blood were really present in the Lord's Supper. What they objected to in Luther's point of view was posed in their question: of what avail would it be if the disbeliever too were able to eat with his mouth of the real body of the Lord? The doctrine of Meliusz and his circle of Debrecen was truly original. Although, fundamentally, it coincided with the doctrine of Calvin, its order of ideas and its chain of arguments were independent inventions. According to Meliusz and his circle, Christ is present in the Lord's Supper, not only the body and blood of Christ, but the person of Christ himself, the whole Christ.¹⁶

The union is nevertheless a spiritual one, because the living Christ is dual, and the believer can be united only with the part of the body of Christ which

¹⁶ Peter Juhasz Meliusz, *Refutatio Confessionis de Coena Domini* (Debrecen, 1561), I, 90. "Christus totus personaliter cum tota Trinitate ubique enter, potenter, et praesenter omnia replens adest."

entered such a personal union with the Logos. That part of the bodily component which came into the person of Christ became itself imbued with Logos and thus itself became spiritual. Although originally only the divine "image of God" was filled with the features of the "ancillary form", it finally remained the Logos, a spiritual reality. The backbone of the theology of Debrecen was the restoration by grace of the lost image of God. Their doctrine of the Lord's Supper is only derived from this doctrine.

Another victory for the ecclesiastical-political-theological development of the Helvetic tendency of Debrecen had been gained in a Dispute of 1560, which saw the Lutheran preachers become a minority. Not only the position concerning the Lord's Supper but also that of predestination had been fixed and the purest Helvetic formula, that of Beza, had been adopted. Meliusz attended an uninterrupted series of disputes; as bishop he invaded new territories and challenged and crossed intellectual swords with his Lutheran adversaries. These disputes were events of national importance, and they attracted intellectuals from all parts of the country, who, after having attended spiritual bouts which were often extended over several weeks, carried home clarified theological doctrines. The incomparable mental energy and the vital creativeness of Meliusz did not find opponents worthy of them. It is noteworthy that secular authorities never were permitted to influence the disputes.

The religious growth which was achieved by spiritual argument caused the entire population to forget its misery. These disputes made Calvinism known all over the country. The intellectual genius and the imperturbable spiritual depth of a single man became decisive for the destiny of Calvinism in

this part of Hungary.

Calvin's Orthodoxy in Homiletics

The development of Hungarian homiletics was influenced by many foreign Protestant schools of homiletics. In a later period a dominating role was assured to John Calvin in this field. This meant a victory for Reformed Orthodoxy among the native preachers in Hungary.

Although Luther was often called the Prophet of Protestantism, Calvin was the Theologian of the Reformation. His role as a preacher was the more influential role. His congregation was the congregation of the spoken Word. It was shaped by the ministri Verbi Divini and the whole Reformation started under an aegis of the proclaimed Word of God. In other words, preaching stood in the center of Calvin's creative lifework. It was he who flooded the Protestant world with preachers and martyrs of the Gospel from Geneva.

Over two thousand sermons of Calvin were preserved by his pupils, sermons with which he had conquered first Geneva, and, later, many countries.¹⁷ For centuries these sermons were a model for preachers who followed Calvin's classical trend by writing their sermons around the Word of God. In this tradition the sermon was a life-directing and determining act. Its first task was to awaken the guilt feeling in the fallen man and then to lead him back to his Creator. Consequently the center of the sermon was "soli Deo gloria", the

¹⁷ Erwin Muelhaupt, Die Predigt Calvins (Leipzig, 1931), p. 7. Catechismus Genevensis, Corpus Reformatorum ". . . qua glorificetur in nobis."

absolute and sovereign God.¹⁸

This involved automatically the axiom that only those persons should preach who were living for the glory of God. This axiom, as a premise for homiletics, denied any rhetoric in the pulpit. The preacher was not expected to be an orator, but only an organ through which the Word of God flowed into their souls. The minister of the Verbi Divini was a shepherd, whose preaching did not end in the Church of Christ but in the life of believers. The flock of the Gospel was in this way to become a visible church, and, at the same time, the life of a nation was to represent the glory of God. In the final analysis, it was the Gospel which would rule the community.¹⁹ The nature of the preaching and the preacher of the Reformation disclosed how great an influence the minister in the pulpit and in the society had in Calvin's program, which was to build a new order. The most influential preacher in Hungarian Protestantism was Peter Juhasz Meliusz, Bishop of Debrecen.

Meliusz, the "Hungarian Calvin," was also called "the Pope of Debrecen," titles which revealed his personality, his firmness and dominating leadership in ecclesiastic life. Like his master Meliusz was an ardent preacher, theologian, organizer and also a prolific writer. This man was an uncompromising leader of the Reformed world in Hungary. In one of his sermons he left us a viable description of his contemporary preachers, "If the pastor does not plough or hoe

¹⁸ Calvin, "Catechismus Genevensis", op. cit., XXXIV, 10.

¹⁹ "Ordonances," ibid., XXXVIII, 1, section 146.

he cannot exist".²⁰

He explained in his sermon how ministers lived like the prophet who was fed by a raven or like Elijah who was nourished by a poor widow. The life of ministers as disciples required an heroic effort. In the persecution of 1559, and, during the decade that followed, three hundred congregations lost their pastors.

That thirst for the comforting Word of God was remarkably alive in those days was demonstrated by the fact that the Turkish non-Christian conquerors of Hungary felt the need to send letter after letter to the Synod of Debrecen, in 1551, urging it to provide the congregations with preachers, knowing that without preachers the people would leave the occupied lands. The Turkish Pasha offered letters of safe-conduct and even a salary for pastors, to keep in his realm the people, who yearned for the proclamation of the Gospel.²¹

Among the other preachers Meliusz represented a specific type of preaching and therefore he deserves special mention in the history of homily. He constantly published his sermons in order to spread the Gospel, to teach the Reformed dogmatics, to shape the community, and to challenge his papist and sectarian opponents. In the introduction to his "Selected Sermons", he put his principles down in the following words, "Those who are wiser, I admonish them to write sermons and explanatory exegeses." How did Meliusz preach?

²⁰Peter Juhasz Meliusz, Magyar Predikaciok, (Debrecen, 1563), XV.

²¹Zovanyi, op.cit., pp. 79-81.

He took his text from the Scripture, never a short verse but a long passage. Customarily, his sermon was divided into three parts: an introduction to the chosen passage, an explanation of its meaning according to the Greek and Hebrew texts, and, finally, its application to actual life situations. It was the applications of the Word of God that created a great demand among believers and even among other pastors for his sermons. Meliusz believed that congregations needed to acquire the knowledge that would save them, and that the obligation of preachers was solely to teach the Gospel, without compromise.

“. . . you teachers are servants of Grace, feed your congregation with the living bread of Christ. Do not be afraid to tell the truth, because God will save you, even as he saved Daniel from the lions, Paul on the sea and Peter in prison. . . . I have to preach, even if the world will strike me or the power persecute me, whether I starve or thirst, I must edify my flock.”²²

This was Meliusz's conception of the duties of preachers in the 16th century. He had them codified in the Canons of Debrecen, in 1567. Article XXXVI declared to pastors, “that those servants who do not teach, who are idle and do not study or learn must leave the pastoral profession”.²³ We must stress the historic importance of the uncompromising attitude of this reformatory leader, who subordinated everything to God, who was ready to suffer, to be persecuted, and to serve the Church without hesitation. The synod led by Meliusz required

²²P. J. Meliusz, *Magyar Predikaciok*, op. cit., I. 3.

²³Lampe, op. cit., p. 286 : “. . . negligentes ministros, qui tantum Dominicis diebus Codices in manus recipiunt, coeteris autem profestis diebus computationibus et cursitationibus vacant, post admonitiones, nisi se emendarint, deponendos esse judicamus.”

pastors to "serve the Gospel outside of the ecclesiae and pulpit". (Canons of Debrecen, art. 50). But this service to the Gospel needed the written words, too, and Meliusz set a good example by publishing his books year after year. In the introduction to one of these volumes, he stated, "I therefore wrote these sermons for those who are captives, who are sick, or could not be present in the church."²⁴ It was the church policy of those years to edify every one, in order to build up the Reformed Church. Meliusz closely followed Calvin in tying together the practice of theology and life.

The picture of Bishop Meliusz which emerges from his sermons is that of a servant of the Gospel and a scholar of theology. Meliusz never spoke of human wisdom and never mixed philosophy with the Word of God. At the same time, he never missed the opportunity to edify his people on the importance of schools, academies, printing presses, and publications and on the importance of living a life of self-sacrifice. He did not proclaim dogma in his preaching, but he taught the books of the Bible as Calvin did and he encouraged, admonished, warned and lifted up his congregation. He declared with deeply felt joy that the shepherds were the privileged, because it was to these simple men that God first revealed the birth of His Son. The miserable, oppressed, and despised pastors could also be happy in the knowledge that once again through them God had revealed the birth of Christ to his ecclesiae.²⁵ Meliusz concluded that if we want to be told about Christ's birth we also must stand on guard against evil doings.

²⁴P. J. Meliusz, Magyar Predikaciok, op. cit., introduction.

²⁵Ibid., p. 94.

During the 16th and 17th centuries the Reformed theology began to flourish. The preachers spoke the Gospel, but they used it as a foundation upon which to build their social message. They were bold enough to object to the injustices perpetrated by the rich and powerful, and they proclaimed the revolutionary ideas of human equality. They hurried to defend the oppressed and to remind the rulers of their human obligations. In an epoch when the world was divided unequally between the privileged nobility and the outcast poor, these sermons voiced the yearnings of the latter. Those preachers were the greatest levelers in the history of Reformed Protestantism.

The following three conclusions can be made regarding the essence of Protestant homiletics in the 16th and 17th centuries: (1) The preachers spoke the living Gospel and, through the Word of God, they comforted the whole nation which lived in a miserable divided situation. These sermons are still meaningful today, because they point towards Christ. (2) These pastors were ministers of the Verbi Divini, serving Him as good shepherds in a disturbed flock; they were not orators. (3) They moved on a cosmic level, proclaiming God's eternal plan in His redemptive history. Meluisz heartened his generation to repent and to accept God; to love each other and to look for God's will, that we may receive His mercy for our nation.

CHAPTER IV

THEODOCY AS HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION IN PROTESTANT LITERATURE

From historical data, we have received a clear picture of the fear with which Lutheran Protestantism was regarded in East Central Europe: a fear based in part on the political implications of the movement.

The first man from Hungary who established contact with Luther was Simon Grynacus, who had migrated from Swabia to Buda and become a professor and librarian there.¹ By 1519, he was an adherent of Luther's theses. Two others were Cordatus, curate of Buda and secretary to the Queen, and Speratus, who had been driven out of Vienna and had been given an office in Buda. The Saxons who lived in Hungary began their correspondence with Luther at the same time as these three men. We have knowledge of the fact that Saxon tradesmen who lived in Hungary but often traveled to Germany, brought home with them in 1520 two works of Luther: "De Captivitate Babylonica" and "Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen."²

These data show that the first representatives of early Protestantism in Hungary were German humanists and Saxon settlers, who regarded the movement as their own affair. In spite of the rapid propagation of Luther's

¹Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²Mathias Szlavik, *Die Reformation in Ungarn*, (Leipzig, 1897), p. 2.

writings and doctrines, the nobility chose to reject them outright. In fact, they decreed that Lutherans should be burned at the stake. In some places the pires flared. In 1527, George Gregori and Philip Nicolay became the first identified martyrs of Hungarian Lutheranism, when they lost their lives at the stake. But the flames burned down speedily, as if they had been extinguished by the very men who had lighted them. The nobility found a more formidable enemy in the Ottomans with whom it began a fight to the death. In the course of 160 years, the nation which had had a population of four million was reduced to a mutilated and almost bloodless body of only one million.²⁴³

The tragic outcome of the battle at Mohács, like the battle at White Mountain, Bohemia, had changed the life of a nation. The defeat was without qualification considered a punishment inflicted on the nation by God. The historians of the age tried to look at events "through God's eyes". Hence, this fight to death of the Hungarian nation was regarded with great sympathy throughout the entire European continent.

When we look at the underlying reasons for this war against the Ottomans, we find in the historical literature of Europe two interpretations. The first interpretation can be found in the writing of Luther. In his book of consolation for the widowed Queen Mary, he presented the following analysis of the tragic Hungarian situation:

Had the Hungarian bishops permitted the Gospel to propagate,
the world would now resound with shoutings that disaster came

³ Petrus Bod, *Historia Hungarorum Ecclesiastica* (Leyden, 1760), p. 69.

over the land because of the Lutheran heresy. Let them now meditate over the question of whom to charge with the guilt.²¹

According to Luther's interpretation, the Roman Catholic Church had to bear the responsibility for the great catastrophe. The Master of Wittenberg wrote the Pope that God had sent the Turks because Rome had not been willing to accept the Reform. In his argument about the holy crusade against the Turks, as it was decreed by the Pope, Luther declared categorically that the Turks should not be resisted with a crusade but rather had to be accepted as God's punishment upon sinning Christendom. He argued further that the Pope and the Turks were but two versions of the same dreaded Antichrist. In a letter to Spalatin, Luther wrote:

"It seems to me that if we must have a Turkish war we ought to begin with ourselves. To no avail we fight carnal wars abroad, if at home we are conquered spiritually. Now that the Roman curia is more tyrannical than any Turk, and fights with such portentous deeds against Christ and his Church, and now that the clergy is sunk in the depths of avarice and luxury. . . there is no hope for a successful war or victory. As far as I can see, God fights against us; so first we must win Him over with tears, pure prayers, holy living and pure faith."²²

In 1519, Luther was still strongly opposed to any Turkish crusade, though he recognized the seriousness of the military threat. He argued that Rome was using the crusade as an excuse to exploit German Christians. He appealed to the Germans to act in a way consistent with their hostility to Rome. Later, however, when he realized that German national sentiment was strongly

⁴ Luther, *op. cit.*, XIX, 540.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 282.

aroused by the Turkish threat, he modified his views. He stated then that his objections to a crusade had religious grounds and that he did not oppose war against the Turks. He even went so far as to make a distinction between ideological and military warfare saying that if Islam was a spiritual threat, it had to be regarded as a divine punishment for sins, and the way to destroy the threat would be by repentance and reform and not through violence.

In 1529, when the Turks carried the war to German territory, Luther was compelled to revise his previous pacifist or indifferent view completely. He had to solve the dilemma created by his theological interpretations of the historical events: he could call for a holy war and defend the "Holy Roman Empire" and the hated papacy, or he could be silent and leave the Christians in the hands of the Turks. To adjust his former teaching to the situation confronting Germany, Luther decided to make a distinction between the crusade of the Pope and the just war lead by the worldly magistrates. His introductory statement to the new interpretation of the Turkish war was:

". . . now that the Turk is actually approaching, my friends are compelling me to this duty, especially since there are some stupid preachers among Germans who are making people believe that we ought not and must not fight the Turks."²³⁶

To Luther the crucial point was that the war should be fought by the properly constituted secular authority and not by the Christian clergy. If these conditions prevailed, then he felt war would not only be permissible but it would be mandatory and every true German Christian would be duty-bound

⁶ Ibid., XXX, 2, 137.

to participate. In Luther's mind the Turks were more than an earthly enemy, they were an instrument of the devil. Indeed, the inability of the civil magistrates to overcome the enemy was a part of divine punishment for human sin:

"God had even instilled fear in the human heart and thereby caused the brave spirit of the ancient Germans to deteriorate."

He exhorted his followers to revive the spirit of the ancient Germans, whose women even, as Tacitus testified, had fought beside their men on the battlefield.⁷ As a true theologian Luther never forgot to reassert time and again that the struggle was more than a simple power struggle, more than a fight between good and evil, more even than a struggle among cosmic and eternal forces. In his mind the struggle had eschatological implications also. Drawing upon Daniel's vision, Luther developed his final attitude toward the Turkish war. The essential point was that the Turk was subject to God's plan, and Daniel had prophesied the ultimate destruction of the Turks. Using the same logic, the war was placed in an eschatological setting. This was a comforting interpretation, for it placed the Turk in a framework in which he could be understood. The war was at once a test and an opportunity for the Christian to be a witness. It was in this apocalyptic spirit that Luther issued a solemn warning to Christians of all ranks to come to the aid of the emperor in his struggle against the Turk.

⁷"Eine Heerpredigt wider den Turken," ibid., XXX. 2. 184.

The issue was clearly defined by the Scripture and a victorious outcome was ultimately certain. Thus, this was to be regarded neither as a crusade nor even a political struggle, but as the culmination of human history.

The second opinion was represented by Roman Catholic writers. According to them, it was the Protestant Reformation which had unleashed the wrath of God. While both parties accused each other, they finally agreed on the point that Christianity's apostasy from God was responsible for the evil things that happened. The Roman Catholic camp regarded the Hungarian people to be a strong wall for the German nation which had been under attack from the Turks for more than a hundred years.⁸ These two opinions, the Lutheran and the Catholic, pervaded the entire literature of the age on the continent.

The theocentric interpretation of history in the Hungarian literature is first to be found in a philosophical tract of Gaspar Karolyi, who later was to translate the Bible.⁹ The so-called Protestant Middle Ages, i.e., the 16th century, came to view world history in a supernatural context, in which the events were seen as just so many feats of God. Karolyi writes in the austere style of the Old Testament, more particularly with the voice of the Prophets, of the crisis of the age and the reasons which lie beneath it. In this new philosophy of history lies a source of great moral strength. Although Karolyi did not

⁸Conrad Celtes, *Ursache* (Wien, 1529), p. 28, ". . . das mänliche starcke Ungarische Volk, ein Mauer an dem Orthe der deutschen Nation, an welchem Mauer der Türcke über hundert Jahr gestürmet."

⁹Gaspar Karolyi, *Ket könyv* (Debrecen, 1563).

hesitate to affirm Rome's responsibility, he also stressed the concatenation of moral issues. In his words one hears the pessimistic voice of the Biblical prophets.¹⁰

Parallel with the theocentric interpretation of history, another was voiced. The few surviving writers of the humanistic era continued to support their own philosophy of history. For example, Bishop Brodaries, who had succeeded in fleeing from the battlefield of Mohács, described this battle as if its outcome were due to mere coincidence. It is interesting that he regards the first use of three hundred cannon against the Hungarian cavalry as a surprise in the battle. Brodaries was one of the diplomats of King Lewis II, and he knew very well the dealings with Rome which had taken place before Mohács.

Thus, the great debate between Protestant historical interpretation on the one hand, and that of the Catholics and humanists on the other, was continued. The former was in essence Biblical, the latter, rationalistic. The rationalistic view saw the root of the tragedy in the ill-educated King. What followed was a spiritual polarization of Hungary, determined by religious doctrines. In national life two different interpretations were interwoven in these formative years of reorientation. One was offered by a Roman Catholic epic writer, Miklos Zrinyi, in his work "Zrinyiasz". It was his thought that God had decided to annihilate the Hungarian people, because He regretted that

¹⁰G. Kathona, Das Geschichtsbild des Gaspar Karolyi: Studie aus dem Bereich der ungarischen-protestantischen reformatischen Apokalyprik. (Debrecen, 1943).

He had ever created such a sinful nation. He had chosen the Turks as a tool to realize His plan, but in the last moment His decision was altered by the selfsacrificial death of Zrinyi.

When, in 1566, Suleiman had attacked the town of Szigetvar, its commandant, Zrinyi, had refused to capitulate to the Turks. During the siege of the impregnable city, Suleiman had died, but this fact had been kept a secret from the besieged by the vizier Sokoli. Meanwhile, the castle fell in ruins under the artillery attacks. So, Zrinyi clothed himself in his most magnificent garments, put gold in his pockets "so that something might be found on his corpse". Standing at the head of his remaining soldiers, he threw himself into the midst of the Turks, where he found the death which he sought.¹¹

A grandson of the "hero" developed from this epic his concept of substitutional atonement, according to which a man offered himself up to save his nation and to reconcile her with the wrath of God. From this slowly developed the concept of Mary as the Patrona Hungariae and the doctrine of meritorious good work. The concept of martyrology as developed in "Zrinyiasz" represented a change in the meaning of Christ's saving work and his atonement for mankind. The act of atonement, which long had been regarded as having taken place once and for all in the redemptive plan of God, could now be repeated by men. The concept did not demand the repentance of sinful men. Consequently, instead of the moral renewal and change of man, the change in God's plan was put into the centre of the problem. The central idea was that

¹¹ Paul L. Leger, Austria-Hungary (New York, 1936), XVII, 220.

God is changeable.

Other Protestant theologians and writers proposed a second powerful religious interpretation. They stressed that God had made a covenant with the Hungarian nation, because he wanted to manifest His glory through their life. If the nation wanted to live and to become free again it would have to become entirely holy. If it strayed from the way which God had prescribed, it would fall into misery, captivity and would be dispersed. The Calvinist preachers offered this remedy to the people and they were moved by it. Soon the whole nation's destiny was shaped by this profound theodicy. In those apocalyptic decades of Protestantism, it became the most influential idea. It organized and directed moral and religious life, and it united this nation in crisis toward a mighty struggle for survival. The Calvinistic teaching of theodicy not only gave the nation an idea around which to rally, but it made the history of the Magyar people.

A sudden change took place in the picture of ecclesiastic life in Hungary during the 1530's. The Humanists disappeared from the scene; the power of the nobility was broken down, and even the medieval Fratres, who, in their stuba scriptoria, had copied the old manuscripts, disappeared also. In the tumult caused by men in search of God, their place was occupied by the fighter-preacher. These preachers were to translate the Word of God, to write, print, publish and sell the good and comforting word for which the age thirsted. These new writers were to involve themselves in disputes even to the extent of staking their lives; losers often paid with their lives. We must not forget that Hungarian Protestantism never produced a single conspicuous figure who was

not at least once subjected to torture or imprisonment. In fact, prison became almost a preparation for their mission. Once confronted, most of them were unable to avoid additional persecution. These preachers were steadily on the run, either fleeing from aristocrats or prelates or escaping the parts of the country that were under either Hapsburg or Ottoman domination. Mathias Devay is a good example of this new type of preacher.¹²

These servants of the Gospel rushed from one end of the country to another to attend religious disputes. Whenever a new book was published, they put their heads together and discussed its new theological points of view. It was necessary for them to so engage themselves, since they denied the authority of the Pope as the infallible interpreter of the truth. They substituted their own authority for his, and since there was constant theological dispute, they were kept busy bringing the divergent trends under some control. There was hardly one among those men who did not for years attend foreign universities, only to come home and find they must flee again to the freedom of foreign soil. Half of their lives passed in attending synods and disputes. They burned with an ineffable fever of the soul. They suffered and consoled the suffering. The religious dialectic of the age was such that those who once had repudiated dogma, and placed themselves in the realm of free critical choice, could no longer find a fixed point on which to stand. Hungarian Protestantism, therefore, had to go through many stages before it became what it is today. Whereas the strength of the Roman Catholic religion lay in its stability in resisting historical

¹²Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

revolution, the strength of Protestantism lay in the dynamics of its development. Each Protestant Reformer feared all new movements of Reform: Luther feared Calvin; Calvin hated the Anabaptists, and those of the Helvetic Confession feared Unitarianism even more than the Roman Catholics feared heresy. This was a universal symptom in Christendom. Bainton formulates it thus:

"The Protestant Reformation at the outset brought no gain for religious liberty. Rather the reverse, for Protestantism arrested secularized tendencies and made religion again the permanent concern of men for another century and a half. The spirit of persecution was thereby aroused."¹³

Those spiritual leaders desperately needed that depth of religious conviction and faith which alone can make a religion work. The disintegrating spiritualistic individualism of Sebastian Franck needed a strong counterbalance, since he desired no organized church at all:

"I will not and want not to be a Baptist, I will not and want not to be Lutheran, I will not and want not to be Zwinglian, I don't want to be an Anabaptist."¹⁴

The same can be said of Castellio, who as Bainton says, "comes close to reducing the Church to an invisible fellowship." They were symptoms of the disintegration of the Protestant movement and they were also warnings to responsible ecclesiastical leaders in Hungary. The historical and psychological situation just described helps us to account for the extraordinary theological

¹³Roland H. Bainton, "The Struggle for Religious Liberty," Church History, X (1941), 96.

¹⁴Paul Wackernagel, Das Deutsche Kirchenlied (Leipzig, 1870), III, p. 817. "Ich will unnd mag nit Baptisch sein, ich will unnd mag nit Lutherisch sein, ich will unnd mag nit Zwinglisch sein. Kein Widertaufer will ich sein."

tension which prevailed in Hungarian Protestantism in the second half of the 16th century. The great theological discussions of that epoch did not take place between Roman and Protestant opponents, but between Protestants of different shades. Roman Catholic theology had become paralyzed because of the blood-letting Catholicism had experienced and the deep corruption of its spirit. The threefold political division of Hungary among the Hapsburgs, the Hungarian nationalists in Transylvania and the Muselman Turks in the South, put a great demand upon conscientious preachers to overcome their disagreements and to secure a spiritual unity of the nation. By the middle of the 16th century, pioneer work in this direction had been accomplished and the churches of the Protestant Reformation were scattered throughout the land to serve the people in their great moral, political and religious need.

In this framework of theodicy, for example, the preacher could calm down the suffering brethren under Turkish rule, explaining to them the meaning of suffering, with the voice of Jeremiah: "Our fathers sinned and are no more, and we bear their iniquities . . . woe to us, for we have sinned," (Lamentations 5:7) With this approach these preachers as a rule considered the Turks as a scourge from God, because the nation had turned to the idolatry of Rome. A Protestant who wrote to Melancthon, in 1551, said almost joyfully that God willed it that all their strongholds were under Turkish rule.¹⁵ This preacher, who as a writer and disputant lived in a feudal society, observed and proclaimed the alarming social facts which surrounded him. Yet in all his social and

¹⁵Karacsanyi, *op. cit.*, p. 596.

historical analyses, he continues to search for the underlying moral cause. The priest-confessors were seeking for a new yardstick with which to measure mankind, especially their own people. They found it in the Scripture, in the text of the Old Testament that abounds in historical crises. Thus the atmosphere of the Old Testament invaded the souls, penetrated the literature, and gave to the struggling people a deep feeling of guilt. One of the characteristic features of the new literature was that it approached public and common confession very closely. It sought common absolution, because the great historical tragedy common to all had swept the whole nation into one community of sufferers.

CHAPTER V

THE ESSENCE OF THE REFORMED PREACHING IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

The most characteristic genre of the age of the Protestant Reformation was the sermon, since the new religion's movement depended entirely on preaching the gospel. Out of the ruins, beneath which lay among other things, the old belief in authority, a new type of man had grown. The new type of man no longer practiced his faith because he was told to do so, but rather, out of personal belief and conviction. There was a Reformation because the Word of God was preached in the Church. From this preaching we can reconstruct the theological spirit of that age. This preaching of the Word of God was, among other factors, a history-making activity, because personality and character of the individual were formed by it and were directed toward secular events. When we present a history of the preaching of the early Protestant Reformation, we also draft the history of the theology upon which it was built. We can identify two epochs. In the first, the preaching was overwhelmingly Reformed, in the second, the preaching was non-Reformed, influenced by pietism, the Enlightenment and rationalism. A constant interrelationship with European homilies is to be expected, and we must stress again that we cannot treat Hungarian Protestantism in an isolated situation. It always remained in contact with other countries and was modified in this manner.

The Influence of Western Protestant Homiletics Upon the Hungarian Reformed Homily

Hungarian pastors with few exceptions studied at Western schools and were consequently well informed and prepared to preach at home. Wittenberg's influence was dominant in the beginning. Melancton is the best known of the theologians at this university.¹ His homiletics were laid down in his book "Elementa Rhetoricæ". Next in acceptance came St. Augustine's teachings in the field, followed by the teachings of John Calvin. The first Reformed handbook of homiletics was published in 1553, in Marburg, Germany, under the title, "De formandis contionibus sacris se de interpretatione Sacrae Scripturae populari." The author was Andreas Hyperius, and he was called by his students in Hungary for centuries "the father of Reformed homiletics." His ideas about preaching were clearly expressed in the title of his book, "popular interpretations of the sacred Scriptures."

The next influential theologian was Wilhelm Zepper of Herborn, Germany. His "Ars habendi et audiendi contiones sacras," in 1598, and "Politia ecclesiastica", in 1607, were often quoted by his Hungarian students when they edited their own handbooks of homiletics, concerning "de methodo vel ratione formandi et habendi contiones ecclesiasticas." Zepper's methodology included the use of rhetoric. His teaching revealed the influence of the classical school oratory, in contrast with the teaching of Hyperius who made a distinction between homiletics and rhetoric. To Zepper, the preacher was a church-orator, to

¹G. Loesche, op. cit., p. 173.

Hyperius, he was a minister of Verbi Divini.

During the 17th century, a former professor in Herborn, John Henry Alsted, had a formative influence upon Hungarian homiletics.² Alsted spent his life in Transylvania, together with John Piscator. Both were well known German reformed leaders who helped achieve a victory for John Calvin's theology in both countries. The work of Alsted most frequently referred to in the College of Transylvania was "Theologia prophetica", which he wrote in 1622.

In Heidelberg, Abraham Scultetus had been a favorite with his "Postilla Scultetica." This book was published in Hungary, in 1617, by Albert Szenci Molnar.

The Puritan school of Wilhelm Amesius was well represented in Hungary by his students, who translated several of his books, among which "Medulla Theologiae."³ The best known Puritan theologian, Paul Medgyesi, was a former student of Amesius. He wrote the popular homiletic, "Doce nos orare, quin et praedicare", which was the first Hungarian homiletic from the Puritan school.

When we study the sermons of Reformed theologians like Gelei Katona, Peter Juhász Meliusz, or Medgyesi and are led to wonder why they preached the way they did, we find the answer in the influence of these masters upon the methods, force and content of the sermon.

The Basic Principles of Homiletics in Hungarian Confessions and Theological Writings

The Confession of Debrecen was formulated in 1562.⁴ It described

²Lampe, op. cit., p. 596.

³Ibid., p. 389.

⁴Ribini, op. cit., 160.

the duties of the bishop, among which, the most important were learning and teaching: the work in speech and teaching ("laborare in sermone et doctrina"), preaching in vernacular to the common people ("concionari populo lingua intellecta"), explanation of the writings of the prophets and apostles ("scripta prophactorum recte interpretari"), and to pasture the flock on the Word of God ("pascere gregem verbo Dei").⁵

We find the classical principles of homiletics in the "Debreceni Hitvallás" (Confession), when it speaks on how and what to preach. It requires first and foremost a basic Biblical text.⁶ In this requirement, a great Reformed principle of preaching was articulated: there must be an exegesis, an explanation and an application, nothing else. A preacher should never add human tales to the Scripture. Rather, he should outline the essence of the Biblical text and unlike the Roman fashion, should actually read the selected scriptural passages. The Holy Scripture should speak to the believer for itself ("Scripturarum Scriptura exponimus") and should add to the simple conclusion which the sermon leads its hearers to reach. The most important part of the pastor's work should be simple and clear teaching and preaching. He should drive away all doubt from the minds of his audience and should refute all non-Reformed imputations about religion. The final aim of his sermon should be to show how it applied to daily life, thus directing his flock toward a holy secular life and calling. In these homiletical rules, one can recognize the influence of Hyperius, who was

⁵ Aron Kiss, Magyar Homiletica, (Budapest, 1869), p. 181.

⁶ Debreceni Hitvallás, (Debrecen, 1562). "ordine testum eponimus, additis ex textu loca communibus, applicandis in usum."

quoted by Bishop Geley Katona in his introduction to the confessions.

The most scholarly writer among the 16th century Hungarian Reformers was Istvan Szegedi Kiss, who was referred to as "Magnus Noster Reformator."⁷ His theology reflected the pervasive influence of Calvin. Of his numerous theological works, the most significant is "Loci Communis". He displayed an extraordinary exegetical skill and an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures. To him the Bible was the only pure fountain of salvation and knowledge of the one God. This book is filled with the principles of homiletics. His handbook of homily, "Tabulae analyticae" was published in London, Basel, Scaphusiae, (Schaffhausen) etc., in 1592. It is an immense volume which contains exegetical and homiletical treatment of various books of the Old and the New Testament and was obviously designed to instruct his theological students in the art of preaching.⁸ For Szegedi, the minister's duty was: docere, errores impugnare, flagitia accusare. He called "wolf" those preachers who did not explain the Word of God and did not apply it ("qui verbum Dei sincere non explicant").⁹ The only concrete purpose for the preaching was to teach to those who wanted to repent the way to salvation, through the examples of apostles and prophets. Kiss' sermons were characterized by dignity and reason; the dignity of the new faith attracted even the papists who listened to him gladly. This was possible because in the beginning services were held by both groups in the same church building.¹⁰

⁷Lampe, op. cit., p. 98.

⁸Regi Magyar Konyvtar, III, 727.

⁹Ibid., p. 195.

¹⁰Mathias Skaricza, Vita Stephani Szegedini (Groningen, 1761).

John Smarjai, a pastor, wrote in his "Agenda", in 1636, about the essence of preaching:

"We read and explain the written Word of God to the believers, as once it was preached from the peak of Sinai to His people. We explain sometimes God's law, othertimes the Gospel. We edify our people, we admonish them, we encourage them when we are in fear and always comfort because we are a miserable and forsaken generation on earth. But we do the same with the magnates. We do not cease to teach them and rebuke them. We speak in the language into which we were born."

In the same year, 1636, a translation of the "Praxis Pictatis" was published in Hungary, and with this began Puritan and Presbyterian literary activity and theological controversies. The Orthodox trend was represented by the Reformed bishop, Gelei Katona, in his book, "Praeconium," in which he followed Calvin's teachings and clarified his thesis that man's goal should be to glorify God.¹¹ His basic point was that a Christian needs knowledge in order to understand God's will and to defend his own conviction of faith. It would be misleading to have certain feelings in the heart and not to understand with one's reason the Reformed faith. Man cannot regulate his life with piety if he does not understand the law of life ("Pietas sine fide est speciosa impietas"); theory without practice is as useless as the practice without theory. In his sermon, a preacher should not only advocate the humble life, Christian morality, and rebuke of the sinner, but he should rebuke and refute heretical views about the Christian tenets. Katona is a typical representative of Hungarian Reformed Orthodoxy; his final appeal to reason knows only one limitation -- biblical absoluteness.

¹¹St. Gelei Katona, Praeconium Evangelicum, in quo Evangelia Omnia Omnia Anniversaria, vulgo Dominicalia vocitate . . . (Debrecen, 1638).

The Hungarian Puritans, on the other hand, stressed also the ethical and practical views of their theological teachings in their sermons. The prominent representatives of this trend were Paul Medgyesi and John D. Tolnai, who both studied in England and the Netherlands. They were faithful followers of their teachers when they said that theology was the kind of science through which people with feeble hearts and sentiments could grow toward their salvation, that faith is a subjective feeling.¹²

In a dispute with the Orthodox Calvinists, Paul Medgyesi argued that it was not too much to preach two to three hours on Sunday, in order to wake up the sleepy souls in the dormant Christians, since these same people were likely to spend that much time eating their supper. His sermons were no longer than Paul's who sometimes preached until midnight. He condemned the practice of Roman Catholic priests weaving non-Biblical stories into their sermons. In his "Doce nos erare, quin et praedicare," he gave a methodological description of his sermons: first, stated his text, second, the prologue, third, the "corpus" of the sermon, and finally, the conclusion. He divided the "corpus" into eleven subdivisions, among which the most important was the "confirmatio doctrine," which tended to make the sermon apologetic in its essence. He felt that the strength of a sermon lay in the convincing power of the preacher, who had to "irritate" his audience with questions. But Medgyesi differs, however, from his contemporary Calvinistic ministers when he declares the comforting tendencies in the preaching to be unnecessary. Let the Gospel by itself torture and irritate

¹²Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

the sinners.¹³

The fact that by the end of the 16th century, ninety percent of the Hungarian people had accepted the Reformation is ample evidence of the powerful influence of these Protestant preachers in opening up a previously unknown facet of Church life.

¹³Jeno Zovanyi, Puritanische Bewegung in der ungarisch-reformierten Kirche (Budapest, 1912), p. 53.

CHAPTER VI

THE GENESIS OF PROTESTANT ORTHODOXY

The Reformed Orthodoxy as recta fides stood in opposition to the falsa fides, and represented the true theology of the Church. It was a basic concept of Reformed Orthodoxy that Christianity was a systematic body of knowledge, a theology. Thus, it was regarded as necessary that this closed system of doctrines be recognized as the only truth. Since this truth was the only possible one, it was the duty of the theologians to defend it vigorously against all kinds of innovations. With a deep conviction of the received truth, based upon sources of the Scriptures, Reformed Orthodoxy had developed its conservative peculiarity.

The twofold theological consciousness which included the possession of the exclusive theological truth, and an instinctive soul-saving tendency, which was the result of the former conviction, urged Reformed Orthodoxy to be involved in a constant intellectual struggle. This theological peculiarity was the basis for the offensive and polemic character of Reformed Orthodoxy. This kind of tendency was considered a duty and mission for each church.

"There is not one Christian Church that has not the obligation to try to keep up the purity . . . A Church which does not want to become 'Orthodox' does not know where her mission lies."¹

The course of Protestant Reformed Orthodoxy was determined by many historical developments. After the death of the reformers, the heroic epoch

¹Henrich Hepppe, Die Dogmatik der Evangelisch-Reformierten Kirche (Halle, 1935), pp. ix-x.

of Protestantism ended and the building and organization of the Protestant Church began. The pupils of the reformers faithfully kept up the dogma and perpetuated it among the followers. The completion of the evolution of the dogma fell to Reformed Orthodoxy, who made it more intellectual and rational. Its sources were the creeds. During the slow development Reformed Orthodoxy emphasized the dogma within theology to a great extent. The dogma provided the needed authority to the Protestant Reformation which had been lacking after the movement had refused Papal infallibility. Though the genius of the reformers had been the originator of these dogma, Reformed Orthodoxy planted them in the souls of people and had in this manner secured the whole cause of the Reformation. Consequently the period in which Reformed Orthodoxy was predominant was the first epoch during which Protestantism became a historical factor in Christendom.²

Now what were the main generating factors which called Reformed Orthodoxy into life? Mainly, they were the concepts of predestination and inspiration. Both Biblical concepts had been challenged from the early beginnings of Calvin's work. The struggle against the anti-predestinational trend became the principal factor shaping Reformed Orthodoxy. Protestant Reformed Orthodoxy accepted the basic premise that there was only one truth, and that was God's truth. This was represented in the orthodoxia sempiterna, which was derived from the Scripture. The theology as presented by John Calvin was thus seen as the purest

²Gustav Frank, Geschichte der protestantische Theologie (Erlangen, 1898) II, 1. "Die protestantische Orthodoxie war nach dem Gesetze der Staetigkeit geschichtlicher Entwicklung die erste naturgemaesse und berechtigte Form, in wlecher die Idee des Protestantismus sich darstellte."

form of the revealed will of God, and it had therefore, the exclusive authority to rule. Protestant Reformed Orthodoxy was a ruling force in Switzerland, Holland, Scotland, Germany and Hungary, and it reached its peak at the end of the 16th and during the 17th centuries.

Hungarian Reformed Theology

The Reformed Theology of the 16th century in Hungary had a rather complicated basis. The doctrinal system of the Hungarian Reformers who followed the Helvetic Confession, like Szegedi, Meliusz and others, deviated from John Calvin's concepts on several fundamentals. It was more a mixture of the theology of Zwingli, Melancton and Bucer, interwoven with the peculiarity of the individualistic way of thinking. This fact can be explained from the circumstance that the Hungarian Reformers and the following generation of theologians received their theological training in the crypto-Calvinistic Wittenberg. Only after the Formula Concordiae of 1577, after the Hungarian youth which belonged to the Helvetic Confession began to avoid the severe Orthodox-Lutheran University of Wittenberg and to show a preference for the Reformed universities in Germany and later also for those in the Netherlands and Switzerland, did the Hungarian Reformed theology begin to assume the characteristic trends of Calvinism.

The controversy involving the Formula Concordiae began when Jacob Andrea, a theologian in Tübingen, wanted to eliminate from Lutheran ecclesiastical life Calvinistic influence. The latter had achieved the influence during the period in which Melancton was a leading theologian in Wittenberg.

Under the forceful leadership of Elector Augusta of Saxony, the Lutheran theologians asked the students to sign this reformulated Augsburg Confession. The Hungarian students refused to do so and left Wittenberg.

When we realize that these universities were the strongholds of Reformed theology, the reason for the shift becomes clear. These young adherents of Calvin's teachings witnessed the heated debates between Reformed Orthodoxy. Protestant Reformed Orthodoxy in Hungary was by no means an independent and separate movement with a special theology, rather, it retained the pure Calvinistic teachings, which the students had carried home from the foreign universities.

The Hungarian ecclesiastic situation differed from the Western, and her special theological antagonists shaped the development of the Hungarian Reformed Orthodoxy. The Antitrinitarians had suddenly arrived on the field and the Jesuits followed later. This forced the Reformed Church to formulate its final dogma, creeds and liturgy. During the first clashes with the new opponents, Orthodoxy had to face a problem of defending the true and rejecting the false ecclesia. Peter Karolyi, dean of the Reformed Church, formulated the essence of the true ecclesia in 1576:

"The true faith is nothing but an absolute knowledge of Christian teaching from the One God, who has revealed His will."³

In defending the true ecclesia, reason was appealed to, and the author addressed first of all the intellect when he stressed that it was necessary to have a clear

³Peter Karolyi, *Az apostoli Credonak avagy Vallasnak igaz Magyarazattja* (unknown, 1584), pp. 14-15. "Az igazi hit semmi sem egyeb, hanem az egesz keresztyeni tudomanynek az egy igaz Isten felol es az o kijelentett akaratja felol valo tudasa értelme."

concept about religion, and even more important to know God's revealed truth.

One of Karolyi's contemporary fellow-ministers defined knowledge and faith as a basis of Reformed Orthodoxy. He argued that Christian science, which he also called divine wisdom, was many sided; it was offered to us in dogma which were good and useful to know, since without knowledge no salvation was possible. In a dispute with his Roman opponents this pastor said: "We are Christians in a faith which is absolute."⁴

While these debates raged through the country, the catechism literature was being developed, and the latter formed generally the knowledge of Reformed Orthodox principles. The leaders of the debates soon recognized that it was not sufficient to ridicule their opponents and to destroy their authority, that it was more important to teach their own Reformed dogma and creeds to their adherents who, though they had participated in the disputes, were not well prepared. The leaders appealed to the tradition of the Church-Fathers, saying that without intellectual foundation they would never win the "gentiles" for the Church of Christ. The concrete purpose of the catechism was made clear by Paul Margitai:

"To own rudiments of Christianity is needed not only for the old generation, but to teach the basic principles to the youth is even more urgent."⁵

To serve this purpose Peter Juhasz Meliusz edited and published many catechisms in Debrecen as early as 1562, among which was "The short fundamentals

⁴Peter Karolyi, Articulusirol valo konyv (unknown, 1593), p. 1.

⁵Paul Margitai, Az apostoli Credo (unknown, 1620).

of true Christianity".⁶ His co-worker David Huszar, translated the Heidelberger Catechism in 1577, and Peter Csene Szenczi translated the Second Helvetic Confession in 1616. These provided the new Reformed generation, who were called the "true believers" with an understandable and simple version of Calvin's teachings. The translation of Calvin's Institutes was another decisive factor in clarifying the idea of Reformed Orthodoxy in Hungary. The translator warned the enemies of the "true religion" that he who attacked the Institutes was not attacking Calvin rather, was attacking the Holy Scripture itself and the early Church Fathers. The "Institutes" became the Magna Carta for the Reformed cause among the Hungarian preachers.

The victory of Hungarian Reform Orthodoxy can, for the most part, be attributed to the existence of an independent principality of Transylvania, where the Electors protected the Reformed theology. During this era, the concept of "one country with one denomination" came to be preferred. Though Calvinism was highly individualistic, it tended also toward exclusive domination. The Princes were at that time all convinced Calvinists and though they guaranteed freedom for all the "allowed religions", i. e. Roman, Lutheran, Calvinist and Unitarian in the Diet of Torda in 1568, 80 years prior to the Westphalian treaty, the Electors emphatically supported Reformed Orthodoxy. The historian John S. Szabo remarked that although there was no law passed to the effect,

⁶Peter Juhász Meliusz, Az igaz keresztyensegnek rövid Fundamentoma (Debrecen, 1562).

⁷John S. Szabo, Der Protestantismus in Ungarn, (Enyed, 1927), p. 27. "Man kann sagen, dass der Calvinismus, wenn auch nicht durch Gesetz ausgesprochen, so doch in Wirklichkeit in diesem Lande (Siebenburgen) zur Staatsreligion geworden ist."

Calvinism could be regarded as a state-religion in that country.⁷

Orthodoxy⁸, the living conscience of the official Church, was in intense controversy with its declared opponents, especially with the leaders of theological movements that did not comply with the recognized Church dogma, but rather, taught foreign and new ideas and seemed therewith to threaten the very existence of the Church.⁸ The essence of Reformed Orthodoxy manifested itself in the struggle with these deviating theological tendencies. During the 17th century, four such trends could be observed. The first foreign inspired theological doctrine which questioned the authority of Reformed Orthodoxy in Hungary was English Puritanism. The others were Presbyterianism, Cocceianism, and Cartesianism.

Reformed Orthodoxy and Puritanism

The Origin of Puritanism

Puritanism began its spiritual activity under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I as a reaction against the Anglican State Church. It was moved by the Genevan spirit to exclude all non-Biblical elements from the ecclesia. In general, it aimed to simplify life inside as well as outside of the Church. The Puritans accepted Calvin's teachings including the doctrine of predestination.

A Hungarian student, Pal Medgyessi, who returned to Hungary from England in those days wrote: "There are Puritans in England who do not accept

⁷1605 was the year in which the expression "Orthodox" appeared in literature and common usage for the first time.

⁸When Istvan Bathory, a devoted Calvinist, was dying, he obliged his sons under oath, to keep up "orthodoxa reformata religio." Jozsef Pokoly: Az erdelyi reformatus egyház (Budapest, 1904), 32.

the ritual and ceremonies of the Anglican Church, but otherwise they agree in basic principles with the true ecclesia."⁹ Those who accepted the Puritan teaching and the new explanation of the Christian essence, were also taught that theology was not a scientia rerum divinarum but a doctrina Deo vivendi, and that the Holy Scriptures were not only revealed secrets of God, but also a kind of "travelers guide" for the road leading to salvation. According to the Puritan explanation, everything centered around the practical salvation. Faith was seen as nothing but a subjective feeling, a kind of residing with God. The Puritans often consciously neglected the intellectual features of Christianity, and a nostalgic moralism was infused into the souls of Puritans.¹⁰

The Struggle of Orthodox and Puritan Tendencies in Hungary

The first contact with English Puritanism occurred in Hungary during the first half of the 17th century. Its adherents were young Hungarian pastors who had accepted the Puritan ideas during their studies in England and the Netherlands. These men began to spread the new ideas in their own country, first through literature, and, after 1638, openly in their church services and meetings. Soon, they began to demand that innovations be made in practical churchlife.

The leading men of this movement were John Dali Tolnai, John Hagedtis from Nikola, Peter Kovászai, Paul Medgyessi and others. Reformed Orthodoxy not only closed its gates to the new spirit, it began immediately to attack

⁹Fal Medgyessi, Praxis Pietatis (Patak, 1636), p. 144.

¹⁰August Lang, Puritanismus und Pietismus, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Lehre der Reformierten Kirche (Glückersloh, 1911), VI.

Hungarian Puritanism. This was due to the fact that Orthodoxy and Puritanism as church movements were completely opposed to one another. The Orthodox represented conservatism; the Puritans represented progress and innovation. The Orthodox were the protagonists of human intellect, and the Puritans were advocates of subjectivism.

According to Lampe, the Orthodox Calvinists took immediate action to exclude the Puritans from influential positions in Church and schools.¹¹ The first of the important Puritans was John Dali Tolnai, who had studied in England and the Netherlands, and who after his return to Hungary had introduced the Puritan ideas ("Puritanum vocabant"), into the Reformed Church, with the ambition "ad primitivae Ecclesiae restituendis." The Orthodox Reformed writer, Miskolezi, described these actions in the following terms:

"... now these wanderers who just plodded back from the Netherlands and England, have brought with themselves pestilent heresies and have shamelessly begun to advocate their ideas."¹²

Before Tolnai left England in 1639, he had made a pledge with nine fellow students from Hungary, which was signed under the title "Formula singularitatis". With this pledge they offered their whole lives to serve God, because "God made mighty things with them." These first pious representatives

¹¹Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 385. "A modo deinceps Academici Nostra popularis non sunt admitendi ad ullam functionem Ecclesiasticam vel Scholasticam primusquam post reditum, rationem Didei et Doctrinae, honestaeque apud exteros conversationis superioribus vel Senioribus suis dederint, et sub juramento conditioni sequenti subscripserint."

¹²Karoly G. Miskolezi, Angliai Independentismus (Debrecen, 1654), p. 99.

of Hungarian Puritanism also compelled themselves to take care of each other's spiritual welfare with a view toward salvation. With firm determination, these men returned to their home country to start a "new reformation."¹³

The new idea was met with total rebuff from the side of the official Reformed Orthodox church leaders, but the Hungarian Puritan pupils remained undaunted and proceeded to publish the literature which they felt supported their beliefs. The first of these was St. Augustine's Confessiones which was published by Paul Medgyessi. He also edited Lewis Bayly's "Praxis Pietatis". During the remainder of the 17th century, these men never ceased their literary activity.

The "new reformers" remained in every respect faithful to their teachers abroad and kept in close contact through correspondence. They not only introduced innovations in the theological field but in practical church life as well. They practiced a personal daily devotional living and criticized their fellow Hungarians--including the clergy--for their worldly attitudes.

At the same time they publicly recommended their ideas about holidays. To them holidays were a human invention and, therefore, should be abolished. In the eyes of the Puritans, every day was, or ought to be, a holy day. Puritans and Orthodox clashed, and the clashes led to fight. It became an obligation for Reformed Orthodoxy to begin a battle against any form of innovation, because its convictions represented the absolute truth. Reformed Orthodoxy was in a favorable position because it could refer back to the decisions of the Reformed Synod.

¹³

Jeno Zovanyi, Puritanus mozgalom (Budapest, 1913), pp. 25-27.

"English piety . . . (is) a Trojan horse . . . its emissaries spread it over the whole of Hungary".¹⁴

As a result, the theological battle was fought in the pulpits, at Synods and in personal theological and religious disputes, and the fight was carried on with vehemence and intolerance. These conflicts led to debates on a national scale.

The leading debater for the Orthodox position was Istvan Katona from Gelei, bishop of Transylvania. Stephen (Istvan) Katona Gelei had studied abroad at many universities, while attending Heidelberg, in 1615, he had debated with David Pareus to defend his thesis, "Theses Orthodoxae de Justificatione Hominis Peccatoris Coram Deo." After a sojourn in the Netherlands and Switzerland, Gelei returned to his homeland where he assumed, in 1620, the court chaplancy of the Elector. Shortly there after, he was elected Superintendent of the Reformed Church in Transylvania. He was the most talented Orthodox leader and helped greatly toward its victory. As bishop, Gelei led the struggle with the Romans, Lutherans and Unitarians, and when the Puritans endangered the "true faith", they found a mighty opponent in him.

Along with organizing and administrative work Gelei provided his church with considerable literature. Among his first publications, we find "Praeconium Evangelicum", a thousand page book with sermons, both apologetic and polemic.¹⁵ His ideas about the status of preachers included a description of the tasks of pastors as well. In his opinion, the Orthodox pastor had a twofold task: to

¹⁴Lampe, op. cit., p. 387. "Anglicae pietatis . . . equo Trojano . . . per suos emissarios totam Hungariam incendere posset."

¹⁵Istvan Katona Gelei, Praeconium Evangelicum (Alba Julia, 1638), "Pastores domum Dei, quae est Ecclesia, unu manu docendo nimirum extruere, altera vero nampe refutendo . . . deligenter cavere debet."

teach and to guard his flock against false prophets (hupi). As to the first task, constant teaching was his duty, but he stressed that philosophy was of no help in this task because philosophy was in his eyes only a "pest".¹⁶ The basis for teaching for him was the Bible. The second task was frequently a bitter struggle for the good pastors, "nobis militandum est". Gelei stressed that God had donated three special talents to the Orthodox preachers: heavenly doctrines, eloquency, and spiritual capacity.¹⁷

A second volume of Latin sermons, "Praeconii Evangelici Tomus Secundus" was published in Alba Julia, in 1640. It was with this second book that Gelei began his bitter struggle with the Hungarian Puritans, who were at the time lead by John D. Tolnai. Gelei called the Puritans "semi - Anabaptismus seu Puritanismus".¹⁸ With authority he accused the "innovators" of preaching false dogmas, which he compared to leaven that fermented the whole Church of Christ ("Similis certe est falsa doctrina fermento"). He regarded it as the duty of the Orthodox to rebuke and eliminate them. In connection with this argument, Gelei brought up the essential question of Reformed Orthodoxy, namely, what is truth, which he defined as "Qui veritatem dicit". In 1645, Gelei published "The Secret of Secrets," Titkok Titka, in which he outlined the theological arguments he had with the Antitrinitarians, which were called Unitarians in Transylvania by the main protagonist Ferenc David. In this work, Gelei described the historic

¹⁶Idem. "Philosophia . . . in rebus fidem concernentibus nocentissima pestis est".

¹⁷Idem. "scientia doctrinae coelestis, hoc est facultas sense animi ac conceptus mentis dextre eloquentiae explicandi".

¹⁸Lampe, op. cit., p. 388. ". . . nisi mature compescantur . . . sub praetaxtu pietatis et humilitatis turbas in Ecclesis Ungaricis et Transylvanicis sunt exituri . . ."

development of Reformed Orthodoxy in the Hungarian Reformation, pointing to the inspiration and influence of Western Protestant theologians, mainly Swiss and Dutch writers. Their influential help had been necessary because many sects like Francism (followers of Ferenc David) and the Blandratans (followers of Blandrata) had diluted the "true religion". The unsuspecting believers had been deceived by the Unitarians, who for years had covered up their real identity and had deluded the people by feigning Christian devotion. Thus, the believers had been led into a lukewarm creedal position. Frequently, even Reformed congregations had called Unitarian pastors, like wolves into a flock of sheep, and had blindly followed them. A vivid account was given by Gelei of how the Electors of Transylvania had searched in other countries for well known and faithful Orthodox theologians and had asked them to join the faculties of Hungarian Colleges in order to spread the doctrines and thus help in the shaping of the Reformed ecclesia. Among the best known who settled in Hungary were John Biesterfeld, Amos Comenius, Piscator, J. H. Alstedt, John Drury, and Martin Opitz. Gelei had nothing but praise for the Electors who had accepted the strict Calvinist Orthodoxy and had secured its supremacy, and had opposed the emotional subjectivism of the Puritans. He especially praised the great and unique service of Prince Bethlem, who had elevated all graduated preachers and teachers to the ranks of the nobility, thus giving them political and social immunity, in an effort to create an elite for the Reformed Church, which would serve God's cause faithfully in a troubled age of force and cruelty.¹⁹

¹⁹ Janos Konez, Gelei Katona Istvan Könyvei (Budapest, 1899), p. 28.

Gelei's next work was devoted to the problem of heresy, "The Origin and History of Heresy" (Az eretnekségek eredetéről az terjedetéről). His thesis was that heresy always existed parallel with religions, and therefore its return should be accepted as a Divine warning. He questioned the need for heresy, stressing that those who thought in carnal terms would deny its necessity and value, since people who were living a secure and peaceful life would be afraid of the evil influence of heresy, as they themselves could fall prey to the temptation. He felt that although these people were in the church, they were not in the faith, that these men of "hardened hearts"* would have to take off their masks. To Gelei heresy was needed to serve God's purpose in selecting those people who should be saved. So, he greeted it as a Divine sign to Reformed Orthodoxy to fight against all kinds of innovations, schisms and heresy, because as co-workers one had to help in the redemptive work of God. For him the "good Christians" would have to stand up and fight in the coming tribulation, or yield to temptation and perish; there were no other alternatives.

In his three volumes on "The Secret of Salvation" (Valtság Titka), Gelei treated the divine work of the Savior, Christ's birth, suffering and resurrection, in connection with the Puritan heresy. He carefully sought the weak points in Puritanism so that he could attack them there. According to his formulation, Puritanism kept men in ignorance concerning their salvation, and thus robbed them of their chance for redemption. Some thought that they could secure their salvation by pious behavior, without faith and knowledge. Gelei argued that if this were the

* Hungarian text: "meg vastagodott hitü."

road to redemption than even the godless pagan, the Moslems and semi-Jews* could attain it. Gelei then analysed the Puritan theses one by one and refuted them. The center of the discussion was the problem of doctrinal teaching. John D. Tolnai, in opposing Orthodox rationalism, had argued that teaching had been necessary in the time of the Apostles when the people were ignorant, but now they lived and worked among people who were well versed in dogma and creeds, and thus teaching was unnecessary. The practice of piety was the way to be saved. Gelei retorted that although it were true that the people knew the teachings of the Fathers and had a deep faith in Christ, that one could only build as long as these fundamentals were kept up. The foundation of the religion would be ruined by doing away with doctrinal teaching; an atheist or a papist would immediately emerge who would lead the people back into darkness. To Gelei no true Orthodox who lived under God's commandment could tolerate any ambiguity.

The Church of Christ could be rescued with "pious feelings" as the Puritans believed, was a false impression. He warned against the Puritans' denunciation of the intellectual contribution of the Reformers, which they labelled as "useless cerebral outpourings". He maintained that if the Puritans' impious assertions were true, the work of the Apostles had been in vain, and even harmful, and this he could not accept. Gelei stressed that the first thing in Christian life is the fundamentals, which is called knowledge. Later good practice and piety could be derived from it. The only other way to develop the

* semi-Jews: Hungarian Sabatharians.

needed knowledge would be by discussion or dispute, through self-searching of the soul, this would day after day also lead closer to God's will. To wisely glorify God one needed a well educated reason, because with empty piety one could not even make a distinction between a false Papism or Blandrataism.

Gelei never tired of searching for new arguments against the Puritans who appealed to the common sense of the Hungarian people and who recommended that useless dispute be abolished in the pulpits. He answered the Puritan mysticism with another book, "To the Reader-Benefactor" (A'jo-akaro olvasokhoz). In it, he defended the open discussion as a way which would enable people to learn how they could defend their convictions. This thesis was fought by two aggressive Puritan leaders, John D. Tolnai and Paul Medgyessi, who declared that it was useless to bring complicated theological questions before naive and uneducated people, whose intellectual capacity was limited. They felt the place for disputes was in the schools and at the Synods, that the beneficent faithful would benefit more from examples of pious life than they would from being subjected to diatribes against other sects. Gelei responded vehemently, it was his view that in preaching one did not only teach morality, one had to refute heresies from the pulpit as well, and appeal to sane reason. To this he added the need for constant prayer, which he regarded as a key to heaven from which we can receive bonum magnum; he also advocated sound Bible reading as a second key with which the believer can control the temptations of human reason.

In the last year of Gelei's life, 1649, the third volume of "To the Reader-Benefactor" was published. In it his tone was much milder and he demonstrated a deeper understanding of the controversy when he addressed the Elector and

paid homage to him for his support of the Orthodox Reformed cause:

"This kind of religious controversy could have been avoided if the importuners had softened their positions; but as long as the Orthodox truth is challenged we have to be on guard."²⁰

At the end of this opus, Gelei admitted openly to the "pious reader" that the Orthodox-Puritan controversy was rooted in mutual ignorance.

"They never came to my office and they never told me who is the responsible guardian of Christ's Church and what they want. Consequently I could not mingle with them because of this aimless darkness."²¹

When historians study Gelei's ecclesiastical and theological writings, they recognize easily that he was the major representative of typical Orthodoxy, that he defended Calvin with uncompromising faith, during a stormy century. Only Calvinism could have created such an iron will. Gelei always appealed to reason as the final forum, his ambition was to transform men's minds so that they could understand the meaning of the Reformed creeds and the essence of Reformed Orthodoxy.

Gelei, who, as bishop, had assumed the great responsibility of developing and keeping the true reformed doctrines, was well prepared for his task.

Versatile in the whole field of European theological trends, a scholar of classical and Biblical languages, he had visited the influential centers where he could learn the Reformed Church policy. At the same time that he led the creedal controversies and argued at the Synods, he clarified the Orthodox dogmas.

²⁰Istvan Katona Gelei, A'jő - akarő Olvasőkhoz (Varad, 1649). "Effőle vallásbőli viszálykodásoknak ős vetőlkedőseknek Talán ugyan nem-is kellene lenniek, ha az ottan-ottan tőmadő ellenkezőknek alkalmatlankodásoktól nem kenszerittentőnek;"

²¹Idem. "ős ez okon kőrethenőll tsak vakjőban magamat kőzzőjek őgyeliteni nem akartam."

In his struggle, one can observe again that frequent historical occurrence in which the fate of a man as a leader is determined by his opponents. Gelei found in John D. Tolnai a man of broad education and experience in the scholastic world, a man who was able to challenge him in his role of bishop.²²

Tolnai headed the College and Seminary of Sarospatak, and he was able to force the Reformed circles to call together several Synods at which he could clarify Puritan dogma. At the Synod of Szatmar, in 1646, he was condemned for his ideas.²³ After this decision, Tolnai's influence did not decline.

On the contrary, many theologians were won to his side, because, in common with the Puritans, they wished to deepen the spiritual life inside the Church by introducing the daily practice of personal devotion and by improving morality.

The same Synod placed a stigma on the Puritans, and stated that they were scandalously deviated, obnoxious, and uncooperative usurpers.²⁴ At this time the Synod also restated its entire body of dogma, set up stricter rules for ecclesiastic life, ordered daily Bible readings, prescribed exceptional preaching and retained the customary holidays. The Puritans particularly opposed the celebration of holidays. Without Synodical permission it became impossible to attend foreign theological schools or to publish books without the permission of an ecclesiastical office. It is interesting to note that the sanctions of this Synod were signed by Bishop Gelei and by the then famous "imported" professor, John H. Biesterfeld, from Heidelberg, who had settled in Hungary.²⁵

²²Janos Konez, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²³Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 395. "Confratribus D. Tholneaus, ne tales innovationes contra usum et praxim Ecclesiarum Hungaricum, magno cum multorum offendiculo introducerat: aut si quid tentare vellet, idex communi omnium Ecclesiarum consensu faceret."

²⁴Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

²⁵Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

Aroused by these events the Puritans renewed their attacks and stirred up new hostility toward the Reformed Orthodoxy, for example, with an unaccustomed application of the Lord's Prayer. The Puritan preachers frequently excused their congregation from attending the worship service, and advocated that the latter be replaced with extemporaneous prayers. The Orthodox pastors and their congregations were completely horrified. The "innovators" defended their practice, however, by explaining that mechanical repetition of prayer was dangerous, that it could be misused. Slowly, however, Orthodox vehemence lost its power, and the Puritans grew steadily in number. Although the Calvinists could not reconcile their own theology with the new emotional religious concepts, in time the tension between the opponents was relaxed. Two mediators, Emeric Paris from Papa and Benedict Nagyari, made an attempt to bring the two movements together. The motto of the mediating "narrow-road" school was: "There is no Christian faith without knowledge", and "Science is not enough if we do not practice daily devotional life."

As a result, Reformed Orthodoxy and Puritanism merged in the second half of the century. The two mediators, however, were assisted in their efforts by the arrival of Hapsburg Catholicism. Its cruel persecutions silenced the enmity within the Reformed Church. The successful influence of Puritanism can be seen even today, notably in the deepening of reformed piety, in the purification of the Reformed liturgy, and in several smaller innovations in practical church life.

REFORMED ORTHODOXY AND PRESBYTERIANISM

The Hungarian Church Constitution in the 16th Century: Organization of the Project

The data presented above show that the events which took place in Hungary represented a spiritual revolution which expressed itself within the ecclesiastical order in the language of religion. Through this revolution, the Protestant churches of Hungary took a big step in the direction of reestablishing the true and early Church. With unprecedented depth and scope, the Word penetrated the souls, thus creating a spiritual community with Christ and through Him, with the people in all three parts of the tragically divided land. Without the strength of the recognized and accepted Word, both the Church and the nation would have disappeared from the earth.

As the three Protestant churches of the divided country merged their theological forms, they slowly built the units of their organization. The formation of these ecclesiastic groups was facilitated by the fact that in Hungary the followers of Luther were separated from those committed to the Helvetic tradition in the field of dogma, but not in ecclesiastic organization. Compared with the Lutheran-Melanchtonian, the Hungarian Lutheran Church was more original in the field of ecclesiastical organization than it was in the field of dogma. In the German Church, the highest ecclesiastical leader was occasionally called Superintendent, and he was appointed by the Prince. In Hungary, in contrast, he was elected by the Synod and was responsible not only to it but also to various deaneries. Thus, while in the West the organization of the Church was monarchical, in Hungary it was corporative. The superintendent later came to be

called Bishop, but the adherents to the Helvetic Confession always reaffirmed their belief that "bishop is a name which denotes a function and not a dignity" and "every bishop is elected by the people and the teachers of the Church. He is not allowed to interfere against their will with the ecclesiastical office."

This picture coincides with that which Calvin described for the use of the Calvinistic Churches in Poland. He had advised them to establish a national synod with an Archbishop as its president. City and provincial bishops should be elected, "but they ought to be elected from below; it is precisely this act of election which was neglected by the Papal Church."²⁶

The organizing ability of Peter Juhasz Meliusz was decisive in the organization of the Hungarian Churches. He was even called "Pope Peter". The Prince of Transylvania personally warned him "not to act like a pope, not to remove pastors nor burn their books, and not to force anybody to abandon his religion . . . for we wish everybody in our Kingdom to be free to follow the voice of his conscience."²⁷

In the "Articuli Maiores", the organizational statute of Meliusz, the entire Helvetic church organization consisted of three levels. On the highest level was the superintendent and on the middle level, the presbytery. The Biblical principle of corporative government applied to these two levels. On the third level, the principle prevailed that the Church does not consist of priests but of the congregation of the people. "for the congregation is a church even without a priest." Consequently, such a church is entitled to elect whomever it desires

²⁶Calvin, op. cit., XV, 329.

²⁷T. Wotschke, "Zur Geschichte des Trinitarianismus," Archiv fllr Reformations Geschichte, XXIII, p. 94.

to be its pastor, provided it has previously examined the purity of his principles and his knowledge. Once elected, the pastor was expected to administer the sacraments. Meliusz wrote: "In every house there is a pious Christian congregation", but he added, "The preachers are bound to tell the truth, even if the gates of hell were against them."²⁸ The great shortcoming of the Hungarian Reformed Church of the 16th century was the fact that it did not apply the corporative principle in the government of the congregations. The whole burden lay on the shoulders of the preacher. The system of presbyteries did not reach the congregation until the next century. One reason for this was that the laymen, who had grown up in the Roman Church were not self-reliant. It would have been absurd to expect them to engage in self-reliant activity. Not even Calvin in Geneva could achieve the election of a presbyter by the congregation.

Another question for church historians concerns the conditions under which the order of bishops was established. How was this practice introduced into the Calvinistic Church? The first circumstance to be pointed out is the fact that the Protestant Church in Hungary was never a State Church, not even when its believers formed a decisive majority. For this reason, the secular power could not appoint its representative as bishop at the head of the Church. It was the confusion in the situation prevailing at a given historical moment that accounted for the election of emergency bishops. Church government demanded that important decisions be made quickly; therefore, a bishop was needed.

²⁸Meliusz, "Magyar Predikaciok, op. cit., XVI, 2.

Other factors may be cited. One certainly was the strong personality of Peter Juhasz Meliusz. Memory of the Roman Catholic practice also pointed to the need of a bishop. Even the Hussite tradition may have been a contributing factor; Hussitism too had its episcopal system.

We see in a later period a gradual building up of contacts with Geneva. In 1562, the joint Synod of Debrecen and Transylvania adopted Beza's work on the Confession, "Confessio Christianiae Fidei," which had been published both in Hungarian and Latin. It should be mentioned that the Hungarian Protestants of 1562 accepted only the purest theological doctrines and made extensive changes in those which concerned church government. In particular, the section protesting the setting up of walls to separate the clergy from the laity was vigorously rewritten. We point to this detail in order to emphasize that the policies of church organization in Hungary were determined not so much by pure dogma as by a long series of decisions on the part of Hungarian synods. These decisions were to a large measure influenced by Peter Juhasz Meliusz, particularly in the first part of the Reformed development.

Presbyterianism

At the same time that Puritanism manifested itself in the 17th century, another British movement, that of Presbyterianism, came to life in Hungary. Its goal was to set up the synodical-presbyterial system of government in the Hungarian Reformed Church. The system of government in the Church had been copied from Wittenberg during the 16th century by the Hungarian Reformers, therefore, the system was in the early years built upon the canonical thoughts of

Luther and not those of Calvin. The system is, therefore, neither pure Episcopalian nor Presbyterian, but a combination of both.

Hungarian students began to attend Wittenberg as early as 1522. Thereafter, a remarkable development set in. The moment they arrived they formed a national student organization, the "Libera bursa Wittenbergica". Among the later rectors of the university we also frequently find names of Hungarians who had attended Wittenberg as students.²⁹ The home of Melancton especially was a haven for Hungarian students who attended Wittenberg.

Between 1522, and 1559, four hundred Hungarian students were enrolled at Wittenberg, and between 1559 and 1599, six hundred more attended the university. However, when William, Elector of Saxony, in 1577, tried to force the Hungarian students to sign the Formula Concordiae, they refused to do so and went to other universities instead. Later, during the thirty years in which cruel religious wars were being waged on the continent, these students preferred to go either to Switzerland or England. In Geneva, they became familiar with Calvin's teachings on church organization and the synodical-presbyterial sphere in England, they observed how the Presbyterian movement came to power in that country.

When, in the beginning of the 17th century, these Hungarian students returned to their home country, they began immediately to introduce the synodical-presbyterial system in the Hungarian Reformed Church following Calvin's ideas.³⁰

²⁹Jeno Abel, Magyarországi diákok külföldön, (Budapest, 1890) I and II.

³⁰John Calvin, Institutes, tran. John Allen, 7th American ed, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Education, 1936) IV, 3. IV and IV, 2. III.

The Presbyterian movement appeared almost simultaneously in the eastern and western parts of the country.

In 1608, Emeric Szilvas Ujfalvi, organized a movement which had as its goal to do away with the episcopalian organization of the Hungarian Reformed Church.³¹ Two synods which met in Nagyvarod declared this movement heretical. Szilvas Ujfalvi was condemned as an heretic and imprisoned, where he soon became ill. By advocating the adoption of the Presbyterian constitution, the advocates of Presbyterianism became engaged in active literary discussion, in which they used Calvin's writings mainly as their authoritative source. John Samarjai in "Magyar Harmonia", 1626, questioned who these Presbyterians are. Answering his own question, he wrote,

"The Presbyterians are the elite of a church, the oldest and most experienced dignitaries, who help to govern Christ's Church, to bring forward the salvation."³²

Paul Medgyessi gave a description of their tasks:

"First of all they are the helpers of the pastors, and these helpers were elected from the people with the consent of the congregation; their main duty is to care for the church discipline, they admonish the transgressors. They bring them back to the fold as penitents. or they expel them from the community of saints."³³

Since most of the burden of the Church service had been on the shoulders of the pastor, great relief for him was expected from the help of good elders. "He also must be saved from the humiliation and despise of the disciplined guilty members of the congregation."³⁴

³¹Lampe, op. cit., p. 336.

³²Janos Samarjai, Magyar Harmonia (Debrecen, 1626), p. 75.

³³Pal Medgyessi, Dialogus Politico Ecclesiasticus, (Patak, 1650), p. 47.

³⁴Ibid., p. 67.

The Presbyterians used two arguments for the change. The first stressed the Biblical origin:

". . . from the beginning, every Church has had its senate or council, composed of pious, grave and holy men, who were invested with that jurisdiction in the correction of vices. . . . Now, this regulation was not of a single age, experience itself demonstrates. This office of government is necessary, therefore, in every age."³⁵

A second argument favoring the Presbyterian system of government in Hungary was that the Western Reformed Churches had already established the offices of elders,

"The nations abroad have unanimously introduced governing Presbyteries into the Church, composed of elderly honest men."³⁶

Whenever and wherever Orthodox representatives heard the voice of the Presbyterian "intruders", they lined up to fight and to silence the innovators, because they were afraid that this might mean a complete modification of the church constitution and hierarchy, which had served the Reformed cause for a hundred years. Presbyterianism was condemned by the Orthodox because it could destroy the Reformed movement; they regarded the struggle as a fight for their existence. We can find no adequate explanation for their complete refusal to accept Presbyterian reforms. The Reformed Orthodox Church was well aware of the western church organization in Switzerland and Scotland. They knew that it was based upon Biblical and patristic traditions. In the controversial literature

³⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes*, op. cit., II. 3. viii.

³⁶ Pal Medgyessi, op. cit., p. 67.

we find only one argument which could be a justifiable basis for refusing the reform and this was based on a false interpretation of an historic fact: namely, that the revolutionary ideas of the Congregational-Independent ecclesiastic movement had resulted in an open war. Because the Congregational and Presbyterian interrelationship was well known, the Orthodox Fathers pointed to the former as a horrifying example of what could befall the homeland Church at a time when it had just achieved consolidation.

George Miskolczi, who had just returned from England, formulated ~~his~~ his comments on the subject:

"There is no comparable heresy on our earth, such blasphemy, such pestilent diverging opinions, which we cannot register. In England, the Church fell from one crisis and sickness to the next: Libertinism, Familism, Antinomism and many other calamities were multiplied; the promising Reformation had fallen into Deformation."³⁷

He warned the pious and God-fearing Hungarians to keep Presbyterianism out, before it destroyed the "orthodoxa reformata ecclesia". The first Synod was called together to discuss Presbyterianism as early as 1610, in Nagyvarad. The Elector himself was present, and all Hungarian congregations were well represented.

Whatever the bishop's office had developed into by this period in history, its organization and operating principles were completely incompatible with strict reformatory principles. Yet, the office was retained and incorporated in the church canons, because it was felt to be essential to the circumstances of the times. The discussion continued for a long time and men turned their eyes to the

³⁷G. Miskolczi, op. cit., Introduction.

Netherlands, Switzerland and England, to see what had been done in these countries with the office of the bishop.

Szilvas-Ujfalvi was accused of "miras in Ecclesiis excitovit turbas". The Synod stated four conditions under which the accused could be excused if he recanted, which he did temporarily, although the next year he renewed his agitation. The second Synod degraded him, in 1612, and expelled him from the country.³⁸

As a consequence of the Szilvas Ujfalvi controversy, Bishop Hodasz turned to David Pareus, a Reformed theologian in Heidelberg, and asked his opinion about Presbyterianism and his criticism of the Synod's decision. Hodasz formulated the following questions:

1. How do the Western Reformed Brethren judge the Hungarian Orthodox Church and its Constitution?
2. Does Pareus agree with the accusations as formulated by Hungarian Presbyterian heretics?
 - a. The Superintendent's office is an accusing mirror of Papal tyranny.
 - b. The Superintendent has no right to condemn any one to prison or fine.
 - c. It is illegal to prescribe conditions to ecclesiastical candidates before their ordination.
3. Is it permissible to use worldly power to enforce Synodical fiat?³⁹

In 1614 Pareus answered the questions as follows:

1. He appraised the separation of Church and State in Hungary and considered practices of the Father's early Church to be consistent with the Bible (. . . similis fuit ecclesiae apostolicae)

He admitted that the constitution of the Hungarian Reformed Church was in need of change on many points; he was informed that it was formulated in an

³⁸ Lampe, op. cit., p. 337.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 346.

emergency situation when the Turkish threat was the greatest. This historical situation required that extra power be given the superintendents, and this power has since been retained by them as a tradition. (. . . Turcicis vexacionibus misere perturbato)

2. a. The superintendent's office is not tyrannical. Pareus proved the office had its origin in the Bible, and stated that each community was in need of authoritative leadership. Therefore, the episcopus was entitled to some power, as long as he used it with moderation. The early congregations had already their episcopacy. (Apostoli: omnia decenter et ordine fiant)⁴⁰
 - b. Pareus said that the practice of requiring pastoral candidates to take on an oath before they were ordained was justified ("obligation fiat solemnijure-jurando quae vestrae Ecclesiae contentae sunt")⁴¹
 - c. Pareus wrote that episcopal jurisdiction had many interpretations, and in essence nobody could deny its validity.
3. Pareus gave his ius placetum to the superintendent to use the power of magistrates to enforce his verdicts, as long as the decisions had been based upon the Word of God: "ex verbo Dei sit judicanda".⁴²

The close relationship between the Hungarian and Western theological Seminaries and church leaders is striking. The relationship is similar to that established, in 1549, in the case of the Consensus Tigurensis, when Bucer, Bullinger, and Calvin formulated their conditions for an agreement and sent the text to the Hungarian Church-Fathers for consultation, when the latter had signed it it was brought before the Synod in Switzerland. The closeness of this relationship was required, because generally there was a need for authority to fill the vacuum created by their denial of papal authority.

In another part of Hungary, the Trans-Danubian territory, which was under Hapsburg domination, the pastor from Papa, John Palfi Kanizsai spread

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 349.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 351.

⁴²Ibid., p. 348.

Presbyterian ideas. While studying in Heidelberg in 1609, Kanizsai became familiar with the Presbyterian ideas that had been developed from Calvin's experiences. These had already been introduced, in 1564, by the Elector of the Palatinate.⁴³ As a pastor he organized the first Presbyterian Church in Hungary in 1605, in his own parish. When he became a bishop, in 1629, he began to organize the presbytery in his church district. Kanišzai's accomplishments were independent from those of Szilvas Ujfalvi.

In the course of a few decades, the presbyterian constitutional system was well rooted in the Western part of the country. The development in that region was unopposed, because the elite were adherents of Hapsburg Catholicism. The Reformed pastors drew their support from the common people, and this was sufficiently widespread as to secure the survival of the Reformed movement. This historico-social situation provided the development of the Reformed Church in Western Hungary, a unique feature: namely, the congregation came to be governed by laymen, rather than by the nobility.

At the same time, in Transylvania, the nobility and the Elector himself continued to be adherents of evangelical faith, and they chose not to recognize the local parish-presbyteries, because, as patrons, they desired to retain for themselves prominent places in church affairs. This tradition was rooted in the Lutheran concept of cuius regio eius religio, which prescribed a dominating rule in church matters for the nobility and princes in Germany, and had been accepted

⁴³R. Muller, Die Unterschiede Lutherischer und Reformierter Kirchenverfassung (Leipzig, 1916).

by the early Protestant reformers in Hungary.

In defense, Reformed Orthodoxy called several Synods together and re-endorsed the Synodical Canons of Debrecen from the year 1567. They published them, characteristically in Wittenberg, under the title Articuli Minoris". In these canons, the presbyter was equated with the episcopus. The Synod recognized the legitimacy of presbyters, but it did not define the term as applying to lay leaders, elected by their congregation, rather, it identified the dean, and in another case, the pastor himself as "presbyter" ("De Presbyteris communiter sic dictis seu Pastoribus Ecclesiarum").⁴⁴

Quite characteristically the Puritans, with few exceptions, did not become involved in the struggle for existence between Reformed Orthodoxy and Presbyterianism, though they also shared the opinion that the episcopus could be equated with elders or presbyters or seniors.⁴⁵ Gelei himself said that the elders shared the responsibility for taking disciplinary action, and that they had spoken and taught in the church.⁴⁶

Istvan Czeglédi also made no distinction between the two:

"In God's book, as in our canons, presbyter means the same thing as episcopus. Under episcopus we do not understand a big clergy with a bejeweled bishop 'a miter and a crosier in his unemployed hands; not only deans, but every one who is legally ordained to preach God's Gospel is a presbyter, because in the Bible there exists no difference between bishop and elder."⁴⁷

⁴⁴Lampe, op. cit., p. 369.

⁴⁵Peter I. 5:1.

⁴⁶Istvan Katona Gelei, Valtsag Titka II. (Alba Julia, 1647), p. 1047.

⁴⁷Istvan Gzegledi, Igazsag Istapja (Debrecen, 1669), I, 420.

Toward the end of the controversy the historian Martonfalvi summarized the obstacles which delayed an acceptance of Presbyterian teachings in his Desputatio Theologica De Presbyterio.⁴⁸ The main objections, which he expressed in the form of a dialogue were:

1. The planned presbyterian system is not consistent with a monarchic church constitution.

Answer: If it could fit in Jesus' time and in that of the Apostles, why not also today?

2. Church leadership is more consistent in the hands of a well educated and trained man than in those of a less edified layman who has no previous practice.

Answer: It is more profitable to govern Christ's Church according to the rules of Apostles than according to human philosophy.

3. If we introduce the presbyterian order we will endanger the authority of the synod and the episcopacy.

Answer: It will abolish only the very hierarchical episcopal office.

4. The sinful and stiff-necked Hungarian nation does not deserve a new constitution.

Answer: On the contrary, they will slowly accustom themselves to Christian virtue, and they will be broken into Christ's yoke.

5. Presbyterianism is or later will be a new popular tyranny, and its goal is to abolish the rule of the nobility.

Answer: On the contrary, it shall degrade any tyranny; in Jesus' Kingdom every one is a servant.

6. In Hungary we have serfs, and the privileges of the nobility have prohibited mingling with each other.

Answer: Serfs are also potential members of Christ's Church.

⁴⁸ György Mártonfalvi, Disputatio Theologica De Presbyterio (Debrecen, 1662).

7. It is too premature to introduce Presbyterianism in this country.

Answer: When will be the proper time? If we postpone it too long God may take away the entire Gospel from us.

8. According to the principles of Presbyterianism everyone must practice polygamy.

Answer: This is "Calumnia diabolica:"

9. The Pope will aid Hungary in its struggle with the Turks if this heresy is accepted by Christians.

Answer: The Pope does not help us anyway so we have nothing to lose."

Thus, the dialogue expressed the hopes and fears of both sides. It also revealed the weaknesses of Reformed Orthodoxy which was unable to follow the road of Calvin. The latter had experienced a similar struggle in Geneva and was never able to realize his teaching completely there. The most convinced advocate of Biblical Presbyterianism was Paul Medgyessi, who expressed his fear and warned his antagonists in the introduction to his Dialogus Politico-Ecclesiasticus.

"God was merciful to the Hungarians when He permitted them to learn the essence of the Biblical traditions of presbyters as a holy order, because He wanted to test our wisdom and fidelity. If we refuse His will, He will fill up the cup of His wrath, and we will have no excuse but to be punished."⁴⁹

At the time that this statement was formulated and addressed to the common people the Orthodox Reformed Church was at its zenith. After a few years the stronghold of Calvinism, Transylvania, was invaded by the Turks and Tatars. The visible part of the Orthodox Reformed Church, its Colleges, and other institutions were covered with ashes. In a few more years the preachers, who had been the pillars of the Reformed Church, the theologians of the seminaries,

⁴⁹Pal Medgyessi, Dialogus Politico-Ecclesiasticus, op. cit., p. 203.

and the school teachers had been sold as galley slaves by the Hapsburg Catholics. The remaining members of the Orthodox Reformed movement fought a bitter and desperate fight for existence and found that there was no time left to experiment with new reform ideas. Because of the Turkish threat, they were forced to retain the old constitution, which had served the Reformed Church for a century, and dared not risk any innovations.

But the principle of Presbyterianism remained alive in Hungary, and in modified form it slowly gained its place inside the Orthodox Reformed Church. In 1682, a Church Council was organized on the basis of equal representation of the clergy and laity to govern the united Reformed Church in Hungary. Its significance was that laymen with their secular authority were given an overwhelming role in the Reformed Church, because they were independent and immune from persecution. Another peculiarity was that the Moderator visited all congregations which were under his care and he nominated the "presbyters" as assistants for the pastors. But the transformation of this primitive synodical-presbyterial constitution into a purer form of Calvinism took place in the 18th century,

". . . the Church council is constituted by pastors and elders from the people to govern the Church"50

Reformed Orthodoxy and Cocceianism

Towards the middle of the 17th century, the theological influence of the famous professor John Cocceius (Koch) from Franeker and later Leiden, could be

⁵⁰György Martonfalvi, Exegesis Libri Primi Madullae Amesianae (Debrecen 1670), p. 982.

noticed in Hungary. John Cocceius was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1603. After working in Hamburg, he left for the Netherlands where he worked in Franeker. In 1650, he became a professor at the University of Leiden where he remained until his death, in 1669.⁵¹ Though John Cocceius was a follower of John Calvin he modified his teachings and with new methods he innovated a new trend in theology. Similar to Orthodox teaching Cocceius stressed that the Bible was the only source for theological studies. Aristotle, Plato or Thomas Aquinas could not be the educators, only the Holy Spirit. Until here Cocceius followed Calvin. In the Old Testament, all verses point toward Jesus Christ and, therefore, Cocceius introduced the allegorical exegesis in his interpretation. For example, using the text of Isaiah 23:13, he explained why the Turks were ruining Hungary.

Since many Hungarian students studied in the Netherlands it was natural that the new theological trend had a noticeable impact in Hungary. Equally understandable was the opposition to the new ideas which came from the ruling and responsible Orthodox Reformed theologians there. Although Cocceianism at first appeared in the framework of Reformed Orthodoxy, it caused heated debates. The literature which was circulated by the adherents of Cocceianism was often introduced with sound Orthodox Reformed spirit. What this meant was that "strange and heretical" teachings of the new movement were introduced into Hungarian theological thought under the cover of alleged Reformed Orthodoxy. It was true that in the beginning there was a tendency among the followers of

⁵¹H. Heppel, Geschichte des Pietismus und der Mystik in der Reformierten Kirche (Leiden, 1879).

Cocceius to remain within the framework of Reformed Orthodoxy. But the defenders of the "true faith" pointed out the differences between Reformed Orthodoxy and Cocceianism and refused any alliance with the adherents of Cocceius. Theologically speaking, these trends were in essence close to Calvin's theology, but each of them accentuated a different part of the same theology. From 1670 on, a great number of the young Hungarian pastors who had studied at universities in the Netherlands during the 17th century were influenced by the Cocceian school, which, as mentioned above, differed on many principles from Reformed Orthodoxy.

The most prominent of the many representatives of the Cocceian school were Marton Dezsi, Istvan Pataki, Marton Tonko from Szilagy, Tamas Vere-segyhazy, Paul Ember from Debrecen, Samuel from Szatmarnemet, and Janos Csecsi.*

Reformed Orthodoxy was represented in this struggle by Matyas Nogradi, Janos Posahazi, Istvan T. Eszeki, Janos Dregely-Palanky and György Toth from Martonfalva. When the Cocceian trend began its influence in Hungary the Reformed Orthodox Church was still battling with the Puritan and Presbyterian tendencies. The newest innovators proclaimed the practical character of their theology and science, which was similar to the arguments used by advocates of Puritanism.

In the eyes of the Reformed Orthodox theologians in Hungary, there were two strange theological tendencies in John Cocceius work. The first thesis to which they objected was the so-called covenant-theology; their second objection

* Supra, Ch. 1, fn. 3.

was directed against the practice of the Sabbath.

In Cocceius' opinion, God had made two covenants with his people; the first, before the Fall, called foedus operum, and the second, after the Fall, called foedus gratiae. But God had promised the redemption of men who repented via Jesus Christ. Cocceius divided the covenant of grace into three phases: ante legem, the period from Adam to Moses; sub legem, the period from Moses to Christ; post legem, the age after Christ's coming. Jesus Christ stood in the midst of all these periods, as Saviour. Cocceius then introduced his special interpretation of Romans 3:25.⁵² According to him, the Old Testament sinners could not participate in a total, only a partial, forgiveness of sins, because God did not abolish their sin; He merely overlooked them: transmissio or paresis. He interpreted the text Hebrew 10:18 as total redemption by the cross in the New Testament period: remissio or aphesis.⁵³ The Hungarian Reformed Orthodoxy dropped the differences between transmissio and remissio with regard to the forgiveness of sins of the Old Testament Fathers.

As to the practice of the Sabbath, the Reformed Orthodoxy declared that it could not agree at all with the liberal attitude of the Cœcœcian school. According to Cocceius' exegesis, the fourth commandment of the Decalogue was a later interpretation, namely, that it was not necessary to remain absolutely idle on the Sabbath, that the Old Testament law had lost its validity in the age of the New Covenant.

⁵²Romans 3:25: "For God designed him to be the means of expiating sin by his sacrificial death, effective through faith. God meant by this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had overlooked the sins of the past . . ." (Oxford, 1961), New English Bible.

⁵³Ibid., Hebrews 10:18: ". . . And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any offering for sin."

It is interesting to observe here that, though Cocceius was a Biblical theologian, who had accepted Calvin as his master, (he advocated the same doctrine of predestination as Calvin), he still was an innovator in form and methods.⁵⁴

The first Reformed Orthodox who openly refused Cocceian innovations was Matyas Nogradi, a former student in Leiden, Utrecht, and Oxford, who was well schooled in foreign Reformed literature. In 1651, he contested the distinctions which the advocates of Cocceianism made between the Old and New Testament periods in his book, Epistolae ad Romanos Scriptae Brevis explicatio . . .⁵⁵

The point he made was that if Cocceius were right there should be two Bibles from God, rather than one, and this he regarded as nonsense. Nogradi defended the infallibility of the Scriptures as divinely inspired. Nogradi's Reformed Orthodoxy was so insistent upon a belief in verbal inspiration, for instance, that he refused to recognize any vernacular translation of the Bible as equal with the original Hebrew and Greek texts. He believed that only the original preserved the infallibility of divine inspiration. This consideration led him to the conviction that "the whole Reformation is God himself", that God did not inaugurate a new religion. He used Calvin's Biblical work in order to purify it.⁵⁶ Nogradi treated also the Cocceian allegorical interpretations with the same faithful Reformed Orthodox tradition; the Holy Script could only have one meaning: the literal one.

⁵⁴Henrich Hepppe, op. cit., p. 54.

⁵⁵Matyas Nogradi, Epistolae ad Romanos Scriptae Brevis explicatio. . . (Debrecen, 1651).

⁵⁶Jeno Zovanyi, A coccejanizmus tortenete, (Debrecen, 1890).

Another prominent personality of the late Reformed Orthodoxy was Janos Posahazi. He was aware of the great responsibility with which Reformed Orthodoxy was faced with regard to the new trends, and asked the opponents for reconciliation. He himself adopted those tenets which could fit into his Reformed Orthodox theology, like the covenant-idea. Posahazi's main work was Igazsag Istapja, (The Patron of Truth) which was published in Sarospatak, in 1669. In this work he laid down in four parts the fundamentals of Reformed Orthodox theology. He built up the Scriptures and investigated thoroughly theological trends abroad. He emphasized the teaching of the Biblical inspiration. He shared Nogradi's opinion regarding Biblical inspiration and he also insisted that the original Hebrew and Greek texts deserved to be called "God's dignity". He offered two reasons or proofs for this view: (1) the prophets, apostles and evangelists, who had been the "public notaries" of the Holy Spirit, had only written in those two languages, and (2) the original languages were the "sources", and the translations only "outfalls".

When he discussed predestination, the covenant, the Church, the constitution, the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer, his explanations were fundamentally close to the Calvinist theology. His writings against the Cocceians in Hungary, Syllabus Assertionum . . . were published, in 1685, in Kolozsvar.⁵⁷ In this work he treated forty four theses of John Cocceius. It is not without significance that he treated Cartesianism in 32 theses in the same volume. From the Cocceian

⁵⁷Janos Posahazi, Syllabus Assertionum, Thesium et Hypothesium illarum (e multis), quibus Neoterici quidam Theologi et Philosophi hoc tempore in Belgio, Hungaria et Transylvania scholas et ecclesias turbant, ex propriis ipsorum scriptis collectus cum succincta as illas Animadversione (Kolozsvar, 1685).

doctrines he wrote. "lues et omnia innovandi coeactes . . ." which spread with great speed ". . . velut in vacuum domum ingressi novatores omnia susque deque vertent"⁵⁸

The disputes had given Posahazi the essence of the most natural theme, the problem of the true religion. He stated with genuine self assurance: ". . . I showed that the Apostolic Helvetic Confession is a pure science and Jesus Christ's real religion.", but he added that "theologia est practica disciplina et non speculativa." In this statement he revealed that he had been influenced by Puritanism, but he regarded himself still as a Reformed Orthodox because he fought against Cocceius. He contended that theology, in the final analysis, was the kind of science which taught men to offer their life to God, that theology not only declared God's will, but it led men to act and to practice what they believed. Faith was nothing more than a relief of the heart; faith secured redemption. In Posahazi, we see a gradual reconciliation of several religious tendencies in Hungary. He remained an Orthodox Reformed, but his rigidity was loosened by the warmth of Puritanism. His example was the first warning that within the Orthodox Church a yearning for some form of peace was present and that one grew tired of the constant antagonisms.

In the second part of the 17th century, the situation was then that the dominant Reformed Orthodoxy accepted Puritanism, tolerated Presbyterianism, and had to face a new competitive pretender in Cocceianism. An author who lived during these times, Gabor Nanasi, write about the situation:

⁵⁸ Ibid., II, 16.

"In the midst of contradicting interpretations of the idea of salvation, the Reformed believers lost themselves because the leaders of each movement proclaimed their own, exclusive, truth."⁵⁹

The irenic Frank Foris from Otrokoecs tried to reconcile the contradicting tendencies, mainly the Reformed Orthodox and Cocceians. Foris had lived an eventful life. He had studied in Utrecht in the Netherlands and Marburg in Germany. After his return to Hungary, the Hapsburg Catholics had condemned him to death and then sold him as galley slave. After being ransomed by the Dutch admiral Michiel Adriaensz de Ruyter, he had spent many years in Switzerland, England, and Germany, before he returned to his homeland.⁶⁰ Frank Foris Otrokoeci's first writing was devoted to peacemaking, as the title of his work which was published in 1690 in Amsterdam revealed: "Fratres ad pacem et concordiam mutuum invitans." In the introduction, he analyzed the European and Hungarian Christian situation, which was completely confused because of the endless disputes between Reformed Orthodoxy and Cocceianism. In each of the four divisions of his book, he tried to give a reason for the calamity in the Church. In the first part, he listed as a cause for antagonism that "everyone wants to become a judge"; in the second part, he discussed "prejudice is a satanic invention"; in the third, "nobody wants to admit his errors" and in the last part, he deplored that "among those who talk about humanity, nobody practices

⁵⁹Gabor Nanasi, Lelki Tudakozas. (Sarospatak, 1675), Introduction.

⁶⁰Ostrokoeci Foris Ferenc, Furor Bestiae (Republished by Sandor Csikesz, in Debrecen, in 1933.)

it." These elements had in his eyes caused the hostilities "inter fratres" in the Netherlands and Hungary. His personal view was, "God tests us now; do not be pro or contra Cocceianism, because on both sides many human errors have been made."⁶¹

His good intention did not achieve its aim, however; the followers of the new school remained convinced of Cocceius' teachings and continued to spread them. The average member of the Reformed Orthodox Church learned from Otrokoesi a warm evangelic faith, which was in sharp contrast to the form of dogmatic expression accepted by the Reformed faith.

The school of Cocceius contributed positively to Reformed Orthodox theology in the field of Biblical exegesis:

". . . the most important was their hermeneutic principle according to which the word of the Scripture should not be isolated, but interpreted in its historical connection."⁶²

When we consider the importance of Cocceianism in connection with Hungarian Reformed Orthodoxy, we can see that it weakened the peculiar scholastic tendencies of the Reformed theology and at the same time drew the attention of Reformed theology to the original axiom of the Reform that divine revelation was the only source of Christian doctrines. The successful influence of Cocceianism can even be seen today in Hungarian Reformed theology.

⁶¹Otrokoesi Foris Ferenc, Fratres ad pacem et concordiam mutuum invitans (Amsterdam, 1690). "Dico ergo candide: in utraque parte esse, quod mihi placere non potest."

⁶²Mihaly Bucsai, Geschichte des Protestantismus in Ungarn, (Stuttgart, 1959), p. 114. "Wichtig war vor allem ihr hermeneutisches Prinzip, nach dem das Schriftwort nicht isoliert, sondern in seinem geschichtlichen Zusammenhang interpretiert werden soll."

Reformed Orthodoxy and Cartesianism

The Beginning of Cartesianism

At all times the tendency of philosophy has been to be a science independent from Christian theology. René Descartes (Cartesius) was the first successful philosopher who realized this idea in his system in the 17th century. On the one hand, Descartes renounced all authorities, and, on the other hand, he introduced doubt into the world of thought; he doubted the absolutism of mathematics and the validity of sense and religious dogma. This did not mean he believed that doubt was an end in itself or an 'arriving' which it was for the sceptics, rather, doubt was for him a beginning; he created doubts to reach certainty.

In Descartes' system the conscious thinking I, res cogitans, was the soul. The concept of the res cogitans led him to be certain that God actually existed. In reason, the concept of God had an innate reality (though in a dormant state), which was a gift of a perfect entity. This perfect and infinite entity was existing, ens perfectissimum, it was God. The perfect and existing God was a guarantee of the validity of an existing outworld, res extensa. Descartes' philosophical system was built upon three basis principles, principles which in themselves were gradual substances: the soul (res cogitans), God (ens perfectissimum), and outworld (res extensa).

According to Descartes' explanation, once the basic principle cogito ergo sum was recognized, all doubts should perish and all knowledge should be viewed as based upon absolute certainty, since God tells the truth. This should have

calmed helpless souls. This new concept was suddenly introduced in the severe and controlled times of the 17th century.⁶³ Descartes' ideas quickly spread throughout Roman Catholic France and the Protestant Netherlands, where he lived and worked from 1629-1649. The Hungarian pastors who studied in the Netherlands brought the Cartesian ideas back home. They had become thoroughly acquainted with them, since they heard them preached from the pulpits, read them in literature, and heard them in the classrooms and at synods. By the end of the century, practically all the universities had accepted Descartes' teachings. He often used St. Augustine's writings, which helped him to gain authority in his works. An example of this can be found in his statement:

"I hold that all those to whom God has given the use of reason are bound to use it mainly in the effort to know Him and to know themselves."

This is in substance Augustinian language, but it is also in substance Calvin's opening sentence in the Institutes of 1536.

During the first period of Descartes' teaching, his Hungarian pupils were aware of his philosophy, and their main ambition was to bring Reformed Orthodox Biblicism into harmony with Cartesianism. Apparently, the theologians remained loyal to their dogmatic viewpoints, and when they wanted to pay tribute to both ways of thought, they obscured the essence of each.

The struggle of Reformed Orthodoxy and Cartesianism in Hungary

Reformed Orthodoxy, in this stage of development, stressed the intellectual part of Calvinism and was seemingly close to Cartesianism, but on closer observa-

⁶³Joseph Bohatec, Die Cartesianische Scholastik in der Philosophie und der reformierten (Breslau, 1937).

tion, deep seated differences became apparent, and they carried within themselves therefore the tendency to produce conflict.

Reformed Orthodoxy was exclusively a theological concept, which analyzed and systematized religious dogma. Cartesianism was basically a philosophical school in which religion had only secondary importance. The source for Reformed Orthodox dogma was God's revealed Words. Cartesianism, however, had set aside all authority and had built upon another source, namely, the autonomy of human reason. It glorified reason and despised revelation.

The tension between the two movements increased when Cartesianism appeared as a collaborator of Cocceianism. In Hungary, we saw that both these schools were often represented by one writer. This was reason enough for supporters of Reformed Orthodoxy to regard Cartesianism with enmity. It is a historical fact that wherever Cartesians went attention immediately was drawn away from the basic interest of the Reformation, and this especially weakened the hold of dogmatic Calvinism. The traditional Orthodox Reformed theologian, Sandor Felvinczi, was eager to summarize the weaknesses and dangers of Cartesianism:

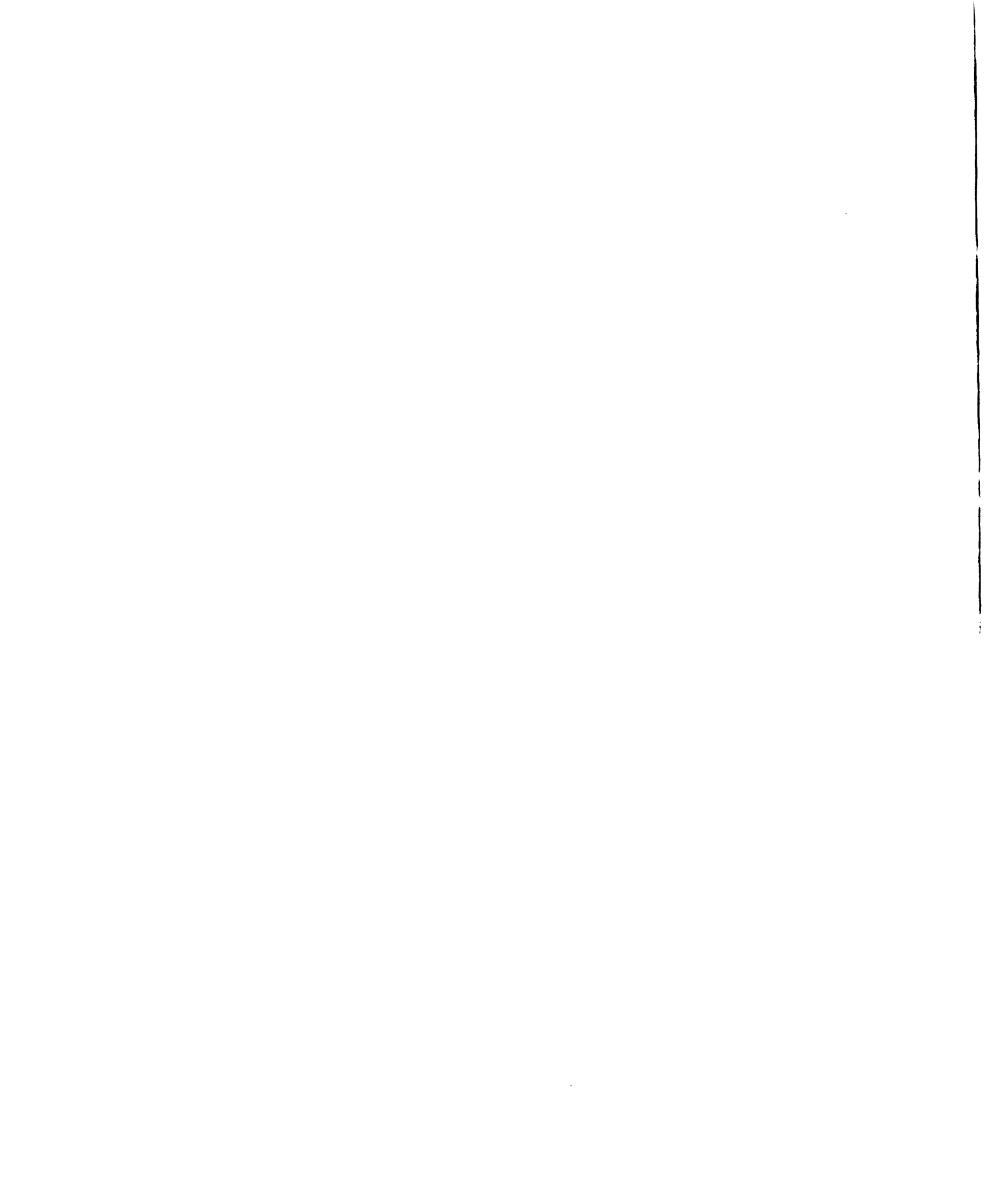
1. They doubt every existing matter (Dei essentia).
2. They say God's idea in man is a venture.
3. They assert that the human soul in itself is knowable.
4. They say the World is indefinable.⁶⁴

Hungarian officialdom became aware of the open antagonism between Reformed Orthodoxy and Cartesianism when the Elector Apafi subpoenaed the two main protagonists, both professors at the Electoral College, Marton Dezsi and Pal

⁶⁴Sandor Felvinczi, Cum Bono Deo, Haeresiologia . . . (1683), p. 105.

Csernatoni, for examination, in 1673. After Dezsi and Csernatoni had explained themselves, Prince Apafi, who himself was a learned theologian and an author, silenced them until the Reformed Synod could be called. This Synod hastily convened in that same year in Radnot, and it was a well attended meeting of magnates and clericals. The Orthodox Reformed Church fathers were filled with "sacred intolerance" and were ready to condemn the accused, even to burn them at the stake. The majority of the Synod, moderated by Bishop Kovasznai, approved of a fair public hearing and dispute for the two innovators.⁶⁵ These history-making theological disputes were public. Two Orthodox Reformed theologians challenged the accused Dezsi and Csernatoni and won an easy victory over them. The Orthodox Reformed Synod asked Dezsi and Csernatoni to sign a pledge under oath recanting all innovations that were opposite to the officially taught dogma. They were also requested to resign from their chairs in the university, but they were allowed to remain as pastors with their congregations. Some time later the Prince and the Bishop made the ultimatum less severe, and in the end it was the Orthodox Reformed who suffered a setback in its fight against Western influence. The two Cartesians continued their defense by writing and publishing their opinions, and neither the court nor their bishop could hamper their activity. During the one and a half centuries since the Reformation began, its spiritual followers had been educated, and slowly a large literary group of writers and readers had been formed who provided Hungary with a highly developed collection of theological literature. This great service which Calvinism had

⁶⁵Janos Bethlen, Historia Rerum Transilvanicarum (Kolozsvar, 1783) II. 388.



rendered to Hungary now produced good results.

The Reformed Church and the educated believers somehow felt that this was the last phase in their religious movement, and they had to defend their inheritance. As a result, every well-known person participated in this campaign. When we try to summarize the arguments of a few of the people who committed themselves as witnesses to one of the movements, we come first to Istvan Keresszegi, who published his collected sermons. "Faith and Goodness," in 1635, in an effort to stem the modern flood of Western intrusion.

His sermons concerned themselves with the problems of faith and reason. For Keresszegi, natural reason and faith were in opposition to one another, ". . . and when reason is unable to measure eternal and supernatural matters, it has always been ready to deny their existence." Keresszegi argued that faith could measure eternal and supernatural matters, because with faith they could be comprehended as existing, while with reason they could not. "Faith can never be shaken, even through paradoxical daily experiences, because God may change courses according to His will." The controversy between faith and reason had to lead ultimately to clashes between theology and speculative philosophy. For Keresszegi, theology was richer and deeper, because it could explain the greatest secret in man's life, namely, the existence of God. However, he also was aware that the time was coming when rationalism and the fruits of the secularized world in Western Christendom would be dominant, a time in which human reason would declare religion to be an enemy.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Istvan H. Keresszegi, Az Hitnek és jószágos Cselekedeteknek tündökliből Pldairól való praedikaciok. (1635), p. 64.

Janos Posahazi was another Orthodox Reformed thinker who dedicated most of his life to a constant literary fight to serve the Orthodox Reformed hegemony in Hungarian intellectual life. He began his discussions with the Cartesians in 1657, when he delivered his inaugural address in Sarospatak at the College where once the famous Amos Comenius had taught. His lecture centered around the problem of "the true knowledge in comparison with reason". He sadly commented on the beginning of a new epoch, which had started with the denial of the "infallibility of inspiration."⁶⁷

He himself did not want to avoid public literary or theological discussions, which he referred to as ". . . Disputationem non improbo . . ." ⁶⁸ But he was confused and troubled by the fact that people did not want to discuss the truth, rather, they wanted to discuss something else, which was sometimes called philosophy. At the same time, Posahazi recognized the need of a certain amount of philosophy and stressed that theology and philosophy did not need to be enemies ("philosophicae pariter theologiae"). He supported the classical relationship between the two sciences and saw philosophy as the "maiden of theology". In his publication of 1658, the "Disputatio Philosophica De Principio Philosophandi", Posahazi devoted his whole talent to refuting Cartesius' basic thesis." According to Posahazi "Cogito ergo sum" was not the primary principle of a true philosophy.

⁶⁷ Janos Posahazi: Oratio inauguralis: De recta eruditionis comparandae ratione (Sarospatak, 1657), p. 19. " . . . quod apud omnes extra omnem dubitationis aleam positum esse deberet, apud Christianos hodie in controversiam trahitur"

⁶⁸ Idem., "Disputationem non improbo, sed vehementer laudo verum hac lege, ut animum ad disputandum adferas pacatum, non tribulentum contentionsum et seditiosum. Dico veritatis inveniendae causa.

The principle of a philosophy was universal; it included all philosophical axioms with which one could examine and answer the questions. Cartesius missed this a priori in his system and as a result had formulated a false hypothesis.

Simultaneously, Posahazi presented his view about a workable system:

"My principle of philosophy is that many components make up a good thought, such as reason, experience, observation, sensation, indication and the truth carried by the Holy Spirit, which is an adequate truth in itself."

He also touched upon the often disputed theological question of the knowability of the Creator. Could God be known through philosophy? Posahazi's point of view was that what the natural human reason was able to recognize was already included in theology, and that through the Word of God men received all the knowledge he needed. All of Posahazi's books were concerned with the same burning questions. One of the well informed of his time, he was eclectic in accepting from every one those ideas that could fit into his Orthodox Reformed system of thinking. The only ones he refuted completely were the Cartesians, whom he regarded as heretics.

Another creative Orthodox theologian was Mihaly T. Dobos, a former student of Professor Voetius of Utrecht, Leiden, and Harderwijk. Dobos succeeded Istvan Gelei in the Bishopric of Transylvania. As Dobos grew up in the Calvinish concept of Christian theology, he became more and more anti-Cartesian. In his Summa Theologia, A Szent Soltarok Resolutioja (Decree of the Holy Psalms) he tried to question and answer all human problems that had arisen during this period of religious thinking.⁶⁹ The theme which was discussed most frequently

⁶⁹Mihaly T. Dobos, A Szent Soltarok Resolutioja (Kolozsvár, 1683).

in his writings was the characteristics of the true church. To Dobos, the Gospel and the true Reformed ecclesia were God's great grace, since outside of them there is no answer to human sorrow and tribulation. He argued that one should not look at the outside poverty or simplicity of religion, because its values lay inside. He was comforted in the belief that Reformed Orthodoxy was the exclusive possessor of the "true religion" and that "from this ecclesia the road led to the Kingdom of God and reversed from the Kingdom of God to the ecclesia. Other roads were roads to hell." It was consistent with Dobos' Orthodox conviction to challenge the Cartesians in all forms and in all places. His formal accusation was ". . . they want to take away heaven and earth from God, give the heaven to the philosophers and the earth to worldly powers."⁷⁰ He also quoted a former pupil of Descartes: "Volzoigius told us that Cartesians did not care too much about the existence of soul or immortality. . . . think it over, O pious man, if the master is such, what can his pupils be like?"

"Those men who always doubt, who are fluctuant, unfaithful, and hesitant about their salvation do not know that:

1. God is good.
2. The Covenant is unchangeable.
3. God elects his people through predestination.
4. Christ's work is saving work."⁷¹

He earnestly warned his fellow Orthodox Reformed believers that man would go astray if he put philosophy before Christ's teaching; human speculation would make him poorer and not wiser.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 36.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 57.

In spite of all these Orthodox efforts, the new ideas of Descartes won more and more adherents, as had the ideas of the Puritans and the Presbyterians. A new theological school developed whose intent was to bring the two fronts into harmony. Their methods for mediation were non-polemic, since they recognized the futility of the hairsplitting controversies. Instead they stressed the essence of truth, which they believed always spoke for itself, defended itself, and was victorious in itself. Samuel Köleséri, the leader of the mediating group, concluded, in his work "Idvesség Sarka Avagy az Evangelium" (The cornerstone of truth . . .).

"there was never a more effective refutation of false dogmas than in the proclamation of the simple form of truth; how often has man failed to see the truth in the midst of a bitter dispute . . ." ⁷²

Köleséri witnessed how the theological controversies of his time led to a dead end; he witnessed the disappointing religious wars and the futility of human philosophers. Consequently, he stood above captious antagonism with an absolute certainty in the fundamental truth, which was incorporated in theology as well as in philosophy. Köleséri was a convinced Orthodox, who firmly believed that if one did not know the ABC's of Christianity he was not entitled to be a "dignified" disputant in controversies. He came to this conclusion in his book, "Szent Írás Rámájára Vonatott Fél-Keresztyén Avagy Igaz Vallás Szines Vallójának Próba-Köve" (Half Christian in the frame of the Holy Spirit), which was published in Debrecen, in 1677. He identified two kinds of half-Christians: those who had devotion without knowledge, he called bigots; those who had knowledge without faith, he called

⁷²Samuel Köleséri, Idvesség Sarka Avagy az Evangelium . . . (Sárosatak, 1666).

the vane speculants. He regarded the latter as "a spiritual pest in Western society, once called sophist."

In the "whole Christian", faith and knowledge are balanced and harmonious: he has warmth in his faith and light in his mind. This human quality could not be found in the schools of Plato or Zeno, only in Christ's. Kőleséri represented the irenic school which had already integrated all contemporary trends. He was an Orthodox who was ready to accept whatever Cartesianism offered that would bolster Christianity, as he saw the weak position of the Orthodox Reformed. However, the mediating group failed to bring the two movements together, and Descartes and his teachings became more popular, and soon his theses were to be heard even from the pulpits and no voice could be heard any longer in opposition.

The Sudden Collapse of the Orthodox Reformed Hegemony

When Orthodoxy waged its battles against all innovators, it suffered defeat after defeat. These defeats foreshadowed the collapse of Orthodoxy, which, when it finally occurred, was quick and unexpected. Reformed Orthodoxy had opened the door voluntarily to the Puritans. Presbyterian ideas had conquered the Reformed theology, and later the Church herself had let Presbyterianism achieve victory in her realm. Cocceianism could not be stopped in Hungary, and Cartesianism had easily shaken off the opposing Reformed Orthodoxy. All these events slowly weakened the influence of a hegemonious Reformed Orthodoxy among the Hungarian believers. But the Hungarian Orthodox Reformed were still in a commanding ecclesiastical position when a sudden tragedy occurred. In 1670, the "decade of mourning" began. The majority of the Reformed Church leaders were

subpoenaed to a "delegatum iudicium extraordinarium, i.e., a special court instituted by the Catholic Hapsburg dynasty, under the direct presidency of the Roman Catholic Primate of Hungary, who was a foreigner.⁷³ The Hungarian Reformed pastors, teachers, theologians and many laymen were accused of defaming Roman Catholicism and of having a rebellious attitude.⁷⁴

The peculiarity of the Hungarian Reformation was that it had fought out its freedom by itself, and the liberty of the Church had been guaranteed by the Hungarian Constitution and by the Diet. The situation was such that if somebody offended this religious liberty, he offended the constitution itself. The most remarkable of the religious guarantees had been granted in the year 1608, when the religious freedom of the peasants had been secured.

"Freedom of religion was extended also to the villages, even to Protestants who lived on the properties of Roman Catholic owners. It granted the Protestants church autonomy."⁷⁵

This resolution had meant the total rejection of the oligarchic religious policy of cuius regio eius religio.

These constitutional rights of religious liberty had not been established easily; the Hungarians had to fight against their own King before the nation achieved freedom for every confessing member in the country.

⁷³ Lampe, op. cit., p. 451. "Posodum, praetextu quidem Rebellionis, sed re ipsa Religionis, citati sunt fere omnium Hungaricanum Ecclesiarum Reformatorum Ministri."

⁷⁴ Lampe, op. cit., p. 474. "Contra Papistas ex cathedris declamitassent."

⁷⁵ Corpus Juris Hungariae (1618), preface. "Es erstreckte die Religionsfreiheit auch auf die Dörfer, also auf die Protestanten, die auf Guten katholischer Besitzer lebten. Es Gewährte den Protestanten das kirchliche Selbstverwaltungsrecht."

These circumstances make it understandable that the Hungarian Protestants never asked for help from abroad when it came to defending their interests and their independence. It was also natural that the Western Protestants did not pay any attention to the cruel persecutions at first. But the terrible fate of the Reformed ministers eventually reached the ears of the Protestant foreign powers, and ultimately they were instrumental in obtaining the release of the ministers.

A Hungarian student wrote Professor Leusden in Utrecht, the Netherlands, that the Reformed religion in Hungary had been extirpated and that its pastors were either expelled or imprisoned, and the seminaries closed.⁷⁶ The Reformed Netherlands rose up in protest. They asked Vienna, and later England, Sweden, Switzerland and Belgium to intervene in order to save the lives of the suffering pastors. Suddenly they discovered their own Roman Catholic minorities; and they began to retaliate by expelling the Jesuits from the Netherlands and by confiscating many Roman Catholic properties.

All these things happened because in a remote country pastors were being exterminated for their convictions. The intervention of the Protestants in the Netherlands was the first international incident in which a nation raised its voice on behalf of Hungarian Protestantism. This proved Calvin's view of lex evangelii, which would not accept national boarderlines. This was Calvin's concept of ecumenical solidarity.

The campaign was directed by the famous Orthodox theologian, Voetius.

⁷⁶Odon Miklos, *De houding der Nederlanden in De Hongaarse geloofsverfolgingen* (Amsterdam, 1919). "Reformata religio totaliter iam nostra Hungaria extirpata est. Omnes pastores partim expulsi, partim Presburgi in carceres, numero 150 coniecti sunt. Nulli theologo amplius sub poena capitatis in Hungaria viveri licet."

who based his argument concerning Reformed solidarity on Hugo de Groot's (Grotius) doctrine of international law, i.e. his formulation of what constitutes "human rights."⁷⁷ When Hapsburg diplomacy delayed the solution, the Diet of the Netherlands ordered its navy under the command of Admiral Michiel Adriaensz. de Ruyter, to liberate the pastors from galley slavery, if necessary by force.⁷⁸ The solidary Dutch and Swiss Reformed Churches collected the requested amount of money with which they would be able to buy the pastors back from the galleys. A final arrangement permitted this form of solution under the condition that not one of the pastors would return to Hungary. De Ruyter was requested to take the pastors aboard his own ship and when his eyes fell upon the poor emaciated bodies, he is reported to have said:

"I have many battles to my credit against all kinds of enemies, but this is my first victory in that I have been permitted to set Christ's innocent servants free from an unbearable burden."⁷⁹

In the meanwhile, the counter-Reformation in Hungary was being furthered viciously; the pastorless congregations suffered every form of persecution and everywhere Roman priests and monks were introduced in the place of the Reformed Orthodox ministers. The result of one year of merciless re-Catholization was reported by a Jesuit in the yearbook of his order, in 1674:

". . . this year gives a shining example to future generations of what armed force coupled with the proclamation of the truth

⁷⁷ Albert Elkam, Vindicae contra Tyrannos (Heidelberg, 1905), p. 60.

⁷⁸ Lampe, op. cit., p. 471.

⁷⁹ Miklos, op. cit., p. 132.

can do for proselytizing on behalf of the just cause. Namely the number of those who left the heretical movements, either for fear or because of the exhortations and corrections by the members of our order, totaled 50,219 souls, among whom, 69 were preachers. . . . The military help has been important in the fact of their return, since they stayed in the villages and cities till the population accepted the true faith."⁸⁰

The reaction among the persecuted, at home and later abroad, was what one could expect from the Orthodox Reformed believers, whose teaching of the Gospel had included suffering in the discipleship as well. They proclaimed in their letters that they put their lives in the hand of the Lord, "cui est Rex Regnum." They were called the first martyrs of Reformed Orthodoxy.⁸¹

During the years of persecution the pastors and theologians were silenced as religious defenders; the pens lay still, the voices grew faint, since life had become so unsure.

With the weakening of Transylvania in 1691, which under the Elector's rule had been a stronghold of the Reformation and which had borne the consciousness that it had been called by God to defend that faith with all their might, the fate of Reformed Orthodoxy was sealed. For centuries the persecuted had found their refuge in Transylvania. Now, after the last Elector, Mihaly Apafi, 1690, this part of Hungary also fell under Hapsburg rule, and religious persecution was

⁸⁰ Mihaly Bucsay, *op. cit.*, p. 96. "Dieses Jahr gibt der Nachwelt ein glanzendes Beispiel davon, was die bewaffnete Macht, gepaart mit der Verkündigung der Wahrheit, bei der Eroberung der Seelen für die gerechte Sache auszurichten vermag. Die Zahl derjenigen nämlich, die verschiedene Arten der Häresie teils aus Furcht, teils auf Grund von Ermahnung und Bekehrung durch unsere Ordensbrüder verlassen haben betrug 50.219 darunter 61 Prediger. . . ."

⁸¹ Istvan Szonyi, Martyrok Koronja (Varad, 1675), p. 175.

initiated immediately. The uncompromising spirit of the Reformed Orthodox was silenced through the liquidation of its representatives.

We have attempted in these chapters, to limit ourselves to the discussion of the inward, qualitative development of the Hungarian Reformation, i. e. to homily, theology and missionary consciousness. In consequence, the outward, qualitative, historical events were not widely treated. We wanted to evaluate evangelical, and not the political, aspects of the Hungarian Reformation, since the inward, qualitative elements mainly had determined the survival of the Hungarian Reformed Church. The fact that Hungarian Protestantism, in contrast to Polish and Bohemian Protestantism, had survived in East Central Europe, was due to some extent to such outward factors as the larger popular involvement in the Reformation and the political support of the Transylvanian Electorate. In later developments of the Reformation in Hungary, Calvinism provided the nation with a new spiritual and national awareness of their destiny. During this period, spiritual freedom and political liberty became synonymous. Calvinism and Hungarian national and religious identity led the people collectively to defend themselves against the Hapsburg dynasty when the latter tried to rid the nation of Protestants and to make it, first, Catholic, later, German. This absolutistic policy was revealed in the "Einrichtungs Werke" of Primate Leopold Kollonich, who, according to his plan, wanted to make Hungary: 1). poor; 2). Catholic; 3). German.⁸² This plan was adopted when, after two hundred years, that part of Hungary that had been occupied by the Turks, was finally freed. The Hapsburg

⁸²Henrik Marcali, Magyar Nemzet Története (Budapest, 1912), VIII. p. 337.

ruler prohibited the Hungarians from re-occupying their own territory, and instead, he offered it to Catholic foreign settlers. At the same time that this re-Catholization policy was being introduced in the Protestant part of the country, systematic confiscation of church properties was begun with the help of military forces, e.g., in 1681, eight hundred and eighty-eight churches were taken away from the Protestants. In addition, the latter were forbidden to hold public worship services. However, prayer meetings were allowed in private homes. This offensive policy was established in the notorious Explanatio Leopoldina in 1691. Protestant nobles and their servants, chained together, were forced to attend Catholic worship services. The Communion-wafer was even forced into their mouths.

At the Diet, the Protestant majority was dismissed. Trials were ordered, at which Protestant leaders were condemned and decapitated. We have already mentioned the intervention of Protestant nations. The Dutch and British warned that "the billet of soldiers cannot replace the Apostles", and they protested against the outrageous policy of keeping foreign soldiers in the homes of Protestant believers, as long as they remained intransigent Calvinists. This practice was further proof of Hapsburg action against the Reformed Church.⁸³

Hungarian Protestantism was outlawed by the Hapsburg Catholic ruler. It is no wonder that Church historians have called this era "The Babylonian Captivity of the Hungarian Reformation." Under these circumstances, the nation drew upon her constitutional right to resort to armed resistance. This right dated back to 1222. At that time, the Golden Bull granted the ius resistendi to the King's

⁸³ Bucsay, op. cit., p. 105.

subjects. This right could be resorted to if the ruler should attempt to deprive the people of their constitutional liberties. Under the leadership of Imre Thokoly, and later, of the Elector Ferenc Rakoczi, the Hungarian people fought openly against their own ruler for more than twenty years in order to secure religious and political liberty.

During the tragic wars between 1526 and 1711, the nation was reduced from four, to one million people. In spite of this enormous sacrifice of lives, their identification of religious freedom with national liberty was sufficient to keep their spirits unbroken. The nation finally established her constitutional status, and Protestantism was saved from complete annihilation. The Reformed Church was decimated, but it was not broken. At the end of the 16th century, ninety percent of the Hungarian nation had accepted the Calvinistic faith; at the end of the 17th century, when the population had been reduced to one quarter of its original size, thirty percent of the remaining Hungarians still adhered to this faith, a percentage which still prevails today.

CHAPTER VII

REFORMED ORTHODOXY AND ITS MISSIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS

In the previous chapters, we have tried to present an account of the nature of the homiletics and theology of Reformed Orthodoxy. A third aspect, namely, its missionary consciousness, must still be discussed.

Missionary consciousness has always been the essence of Christianity, and where it was present, it demonstrated the vitality of Christian witnessing. As Reformed Orthodoxy had founded its existence upon the Gospel, it was evident that it would stress that "faith without deeds is dead." After witnessing with words and theology in preaching and in teaching, the Hungarian Reformers added in the 16th and 17th centuries a third deed of witnessing, that of missionary consciousness.

It would have been natural and human if the energy and attention of the Hungarian Reformed in those centuries had been wholly taken up with the question of its own existence, since the conditions of the times were so difficult. The nation had been divided into three separate parts after the defeat at Mohacs. The incessant war and plundering had caused poverty, and poverty had turned into utter destitution. The ministers were completely uncertain concerning their livelihood. We recall that Peter Juhasz Meliusz wrote, "He who neither ploughs nor hoes cannot live."¹

¹Supra, p. 24 footnote 16.

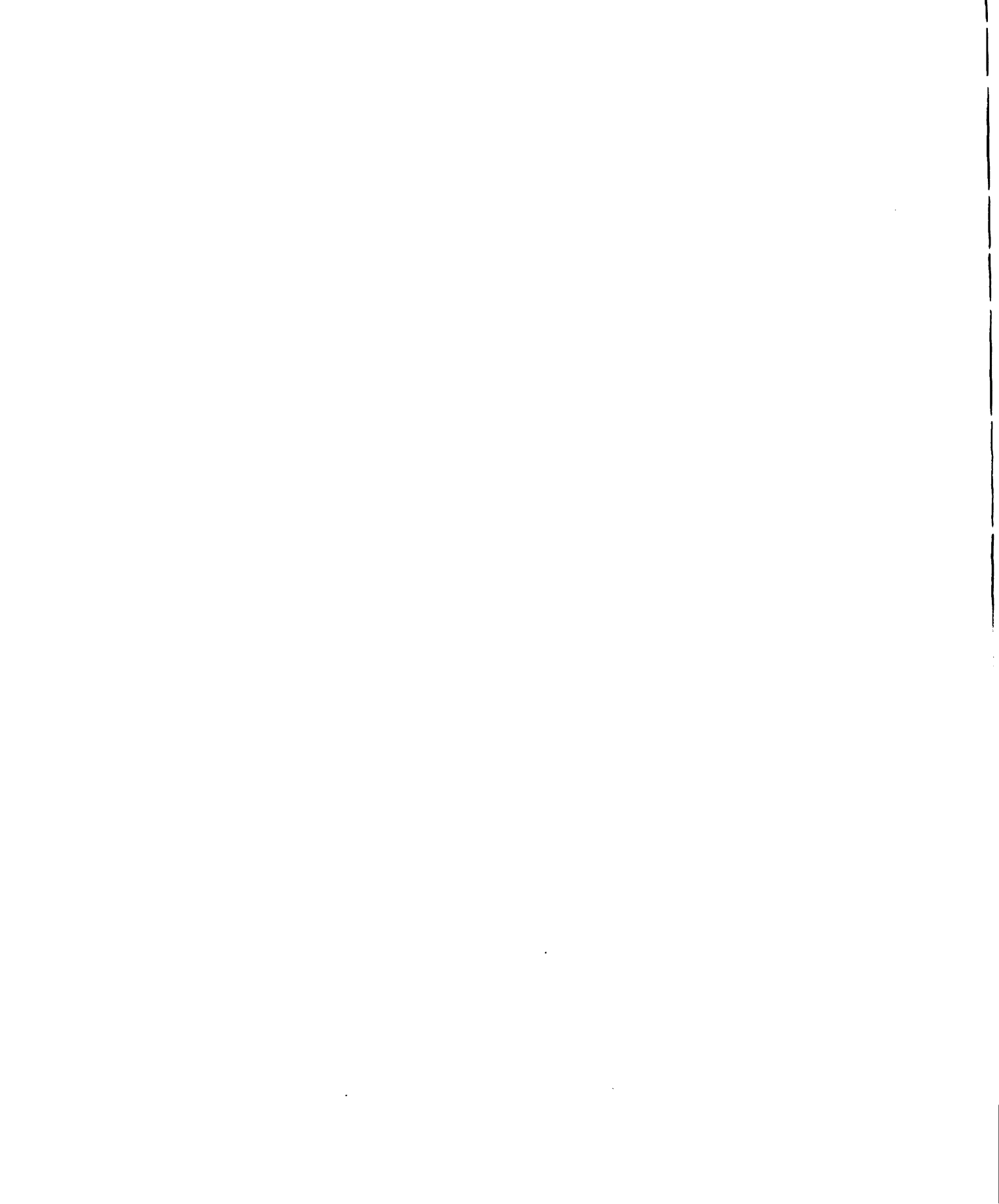
Peter Bornemisza wrote, "Stephen Szegedi, Michael Sztarai. Gallus Huszar and other ministers of my time underwent terrible sufferings at the hands of both Turk and Papist."²

In the previous chapters, we have shown that in spite of these troubles the Hungarian Reformed Church felt a deep sense of responsibility for the service of the Word during those centuries. Both the extent and the intensity of its influence, the amount of work which was put into spreading the Word in the century of the Reformation probably has no parallel in Hungarian church history. A great number of printing presses made possible the spread of evangelic truth; there was a wealth of Bible translations, and under the missionary urge of the Orthodox Reformed Church a multitude of books and pamphlets were printed. The Roman Catholic Bishop, Nicholas Telegdi, exclaimed, "Where do you find more frequent preaching than amongst these heretics?"³ Coming from the enemy camp, this was an authentic and valuable witness for the evangelistic fervor of the Hungarian Reformation.

The Synod of Debrecen, in 1567, had prescribed the duty of administering the Word "even outside the congregations and the pulpit." In harmony with the biblical principle of the "priesthood of all believers", all the faithful had to participate in the work of witnessing to the Truth. Practically every concern and care in the Home Mission outlook of today regarding the inception of many types of service and organizations can be traced back to the Sixteenth century; the literature of that period discusses many of them.

²Peter Bornemisza, Predikaciok Detreko, (Detreko, 1584).

³Nicholas Telegdi, Az evangéliumnek elso resze (Vienna, 1577).



Evidence can also be found of their feelings of responsibility toward foreign missions. The generation that witnessed the Hungarian Reformation had a vision of, and a sense of obligation to, a mission beyond their own nation.

John Fehertoi wrote, in 1551, to Bullinger:

". . . in Transylvania there are pious and learned men with a good knowledge of languages, who have sent out Catechisms to the Greeks, Thracians and Lithuanians, prepared for them in their own languages Many say that in the land of the Turks, the religious services are often visited by the Turks, who live in close proximity to the Christians. This was an unheard of thing in previous centuries."⁴

Sigismund Torda wrote to Melancton in 1559:

"There are many in Turkey who preach about Christ. Francis Picus, a Hungarian from Szeged, speaks before audiences of great numbers, sometimes in Galata, sometimes in Constantinople."⁵

Thus, we find the Orthodox Reformed Christians of Hungary engaged in the 16th and 17th century in what one may definitely call foreign missionary undertakings.

While the Orthodox Reformed Church in Hungary had been vexed with the constant need for self defense against Hapsburg Catholicism, the Transylvanian Reformed leaders turned their energies for one and half centuries to the evangelization of its Eastern Orthodox Rumanian neighbors.

The Hungarian Orthodox Reformed Mission among Rumanian Orthodoxy

The Reformation among the Rumanian people was not an historical action of the Rumanian Orthodox Church itself in Transylvania. Its spiritual genesis

⁴Lampe, op. cit., p. 101.

⁵Segesmuad Torda. "Letter to Philip Melancton, 1559." Corpus Reformatorum Melanctonis Opera (Brunsvogae, 1863).

was not based on an anti-papal policy, nor on an anti-denominational bias, but on the missionary consciousness of the Hungarian Orthodox Reformed Church. The so-called "Rumanian Mission" in Transylvania is a reflection of this consciousness.⁶ The Electorate of Transylvania itself had been originated by the Protestant movement in East Central Europe. The geographical separation of Transylvania had begun with the Turkish conquerors, who invaded the southern part of Hungary and divided the Hungarian territory into three parts, but the political separation was accomplished by Elector Bocskay, who, in 1608, articulated the following policy in his will, "It is advisable to uphold a separated Protestant Transylvania from the Western parts of Hungary, as long as the Roman Catholic Hapsburgs are ruling in Vienna, to force them to keep up our religious freedom . . ."

Since the Electors were devoted Reformed Christians, they consciously supported the spread of the Gospel among their subjects, who were Magyars, Szekely, Saxons and Rumanians.

When we review the history of the Rumanian Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries, we find that to serve God's glory was the main motive behind the actions of men who worked actively in the "Rumanian Mission."

One would receive an incomplete picture if one tried to interpret the whole endeavor from a national, historico-cultural, or from a literary point of view. It was not just an historical phenomenon or purely human effort, but it was based also on transcendental awareness as a form of stewardship. In the beginning of the Rumanian Reformation, the preachers, writers and public disputants produced

⁶Imre Revesz. A Reformatio az erdelyi romanok kozt (Debrecen, 1938)

feelings of guilt among men, and later, they captivated them. In the second phase, a change occurred. The Reformation did not grow through a step by step conversion of individuals or groups of sects, but rather through corporative actions, either from the Diet of the nobility and magistrates or from the decrees of the Elector of Transylvania. It is remarkable to observe how much the Reformed literature occupied itself with the influence and responsibility of the magistrate. It was felt that the first duty of a magistrate was to guard the Gospel and religious matters.

Calvin had formulated this idea in his Institutes as follows: "Civil government is designed to cherish and support the external worship of God; to preserve the pure doctrine of religion; to defend the constitution of the Church."⁷ Theodore Beza codified his Confession, which was adopted by the Diet of Torda, in 1563, in a similar way: "The duty of the Christian magistrates is to defend God's ecclesia."⁸ The Second Helvetic Confession, written in 1566, had the same tenor: "We teach that the main duty of a magistrate is to control the religion, consequently the officials keep the fate of the Gospel in their hands and do not permit any false propaganda."⁹ The best known preacher of those days, Peter Bornemissza, said: "The princes are the 'nurses' of the Church and schools; they order the people to

⁷ Calvin, Institutes, op. cit., II. Ch. IV. p. 20.

⁸ Decrétumok Reformatus Szinod (Budapest, 1881), p. 408.

⁹ Second Helvetic Confession, xxx, p. 113.

glorify God and to demolish the idols; to secure free proclamation of the Gospel."¹⁰

With these views we have attempted to illustrate the theological background of an age in which people lived under the "compulsion" of God; an age which demanded the total participation of every one in the religious movement, including the political office holders and the Electors. At the same time these Protestants did not want to gain power over their subjects. Their intention was to secure for them spiritual welfare because the Electors regarded themselves to be God's stewards. This atmosphere brought the promulgation of the following decrees at the Diet of Torda, in 1566:

"We guarantee the free proclamation of the pure Gospel among all 'nations' in our country; we do not permit the blasphemy of God's glory by ignorance, so we decree to do away with all idols which have been kept among our people, and to preach the Gospel, especially among the Rumanians whose pastors are blind, leading blinded people."¹¹

The Religious and Spiritual Situation of the Rumanian People

The first confessed motive of the Rumanian Reformation was the religious awareness that one was permitted to offend God's glory and to obstruct the growth of the Kingdom of God in Transylvania. From this religious conviction the Diet had acted logically in warning the Rumanian clergy about its "pastors who were blind, leading blinded people." (see footnote 11) What was the historical situation

¹⁰ Peter Bornemissza, op. cit., p. 40.

¹¹ Sándor Szilágyi, Monumenta comitialia regni Transylvaniae. (Budapest, 1880), II, 326.

of which this warning was only a reflection? Anton Possevino, a well known Jesuit theologian, wrote in his report on Transylvania, in 1583. "The Protestant and Roman Catholic religious propaganda remained fruitless among the Eastern Orthodox Rumanians, because of their complete illiteracy."¹²

From the published documents of several Diets and archives of magistrates we obtain a general description of the Rumanians in the 16th century. They are pictured as serfs living unsettled lives as nomad shepherds, wandering from one corner of the country to another.

The most authentic source for data about the Rumanian people is the Codex Sturzanushan. This volume contains the writings of Bishop Gregore in the 16th century, who collected all kinds of popular religious beliefs and legends that lived in the memories of these wanderers. According to the Rumanian historian Hasdeu, who published this Codex, the legends and religious beliefs were the products of the Bogumils, a 13th century sect of Manichaeic descent. The Rumanian popular religion had perpetuated these heretical beliefs in the Balkans.¹³ These beliefs ultimately inhibited the spread of Western religious ideas among the Rumanians. The Gospel preaching did not reach the ears of those emotionally inhibited simple people. These notions affected the religious world of the Rumanians to a great extent, since they were imbedded in their superstitious souls. It delayed the development of an intellectual form of Christian faith. The Reformed

¹²Documenta privitoare la Istoria Ardealului . . . I-IX, (Bucuresti, 1929), II, 274.

¹³P. B. Hasdeu, Cuvente din Batrani (Bucuresti, 1879).

Synods and the few well-educated priests engaged in an endless battle to ban these popular superstitions. Until the arrival of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, an Eastern Orthodox Church had never been organized. The Diet of 1566 authorized Bishop Gregore, acting in his capacity as Rumanian Superintendent, to organize the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church in Transylvania. A Protestant pastor, who translated and published the first Rumanian catechism, in 1546, wrote to Germany concerning the Rumanians:

"Here is a nation, called Walachian, which differs not only in language but also in religion from us; they have refused the papal authority and baptize themselves in rivers; the Holy Communion is served in both kinds with leavened bread and with wine; the Gospel is read in a foreign language, called Slavic, which nobody can understand."¹⁴

The Literary Preparation of the Reformation in Rumania: Rumanian Translation of the Catechism

In the early period of the Protestant Reformation, the catechism had been a popular form to teach the newly interpreted Christian dogmas. Among the first writings published for propagation of the Reformed teachings among the Rumanian Orthodox people was the catechism.¹⁵ In 1559, Simon Massa, a Protestant pastor, reported, "In this year the city magistrate with the help of other senators has reformed a Church of Rumanians and ordered them to learn the catechism."¹⁶

¹⁴Henrich Wittstock, Beitrage zur Reformationsgeschichte des Nosmergaues (Wien, 1858), p. 58.

¹⁵E. Hurmuzaki, Documente privitoare la Istoria Romanilor (Bucaresti, 1929) p. 859.

¹⁶P. B. Hasdeu, op. cit., II. 92.

The catechism was introduced with the following explanation:

"As once the Lord Jesus Christ selected four evangelists to translate the Gospels from Hebrew to Greek, so the Paters Basileos and Cyrill translated the messages from Greek into Slavic. Now some God-fearing Christians have done the same when they changed the Gospels from the Slavic to the Rumanian language, with the permission of the King of Transylvania and of Bishop Sava, so that it may become understandable for all Rumanian Christians. We have acted as St. Paul once advised: 'In the congregation I would rather speak five intelligible words, . . . than thousands of words in a strange language' (I. Cor. 14:19)."¹⁷

The main contribution of the catechism was that it made available to the Rumanian people in their mother tongue such needed ecclesiastical literature as the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, and the Gospels. An outspoken reformatory spirit could be observed in the explanation only and not in the text. Although one may question whether the Rumanian catechism fulfilled the purpose for which it was intended -- whether it opened the souls for Christ's message -- it appears from the information which we could gather that the catechism was a positive contribution to the Christian education of the Rumanians, since it was read widely and found its way to quite remote corners where Rumanians lived. Another positive result was that the reformatory literature, especially the translated Holy Scriptures, freed the Bible from the domination of the ecclesiastic liturgy and thus offered the Word of God to the believers and clericals.

In Brasso, in 1561, only twenty years after the first Hungarian Bible translation had been finished, the New Testament was translated into the Rumanian

¹⁷ Nicolae Sicula, II Catechismele romanesti (Solyom Fekete, 1936), p. 40.

vernacular. Its translation was of great importance to the history of the Rumanian Mission. It also meant the transformation of the Slavic liturgy into the Rumanian. The tendency of the Reformed Orthodox Mission among the Rumanians was not to proselytize the Rumanian shepherd people, but it was rather a Christian edifying program.

The Rumanian Reformed Episcopacy

The Rumanian efforts toward reform lasted over one hundred and fifty years. During that period a second step was taken, after the literary preparation, to introduce a practical reform inside the Eastern Orthodox Church. To this purpose the Diet and the Elector appointed Gregore as bishop. As a result, he became the head of all Eastern Orthodox ecclesia in Transylvania.¹⁸

From the Electoral decrees one gets the impression that Bishop Gregore met with strong opposition in his unifying efforts. John Sigismund, the Elector, ordered every priest to obey Bishop Gregore, who called several synods together to lay down a church policy, but the priests simply did not come. Others objected to the Rumanian language in the church services, "the complaint was that they wanted to praise God in Slavic only." But later Bishop Gregore reported joyfully: "We have several Rumanian Christian priests now who write the creeds in the Rumanian tongue." Gregore disappeared from the scene soon, but the reformatory effort was continued, and many of the results that were gained were preserved

¹⁸Stefan Metes, Istoria Bisericii si a vietii religioase a Romanilor din Transilvania di Ungaria (Nagyszeben, 1935), p. 81.

by the Eastern Orthodox Church, among them, use of the Rumanian vernacular. The next bishop was Paul Tordasi. His task and the conditions of his appointment were described in a letter of confirmation by the Elector: to spread the Gospel and to reform the sacraments according to Christ's teaching. Tordasi immediately called a Synod together, in 1569, which resulted in the following agreements:

- a. Everything which is a human innovation and contrary to the Holy Scriptures must be removed from the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church.
- b. The Church will cease to hold liturgies for the souls of the departed.
- c. Permission of remarrying for priest-widowers.
- d. The clergy must explain the Credo and the Lord's Prayer each week.
- e. People who have not learned the Credo and who do not attend the worship service will not be allowed to partake of the Holy Communion.
- f. Priests who refuse the Rumanian liturgical language must be dismissed.¹⁹

This is an interesting document of Rumanian church history which fortunately was preserved in those stormy centuries in which the ever-changing dominating parties destroyed all literature and printing presses. The Diet accepted these points of the Synod of 1569 as the first reform-spirited constitution in Rumanian Orthodoxy. The Synod's main effort had been to teach first fundamentals like the Credo and the Lord's Prayer. This was a basis for a coming episcopacy among the Rumanians, upon which later an Eastern Orthodox or Protestant Christianity could be built.

¹⁹ Istvan Juhász, A Reformáció Az Erdélyi Romanok Között, (Cluj, 1940), p. 83.

Eastern Orthodoxy and the Reformed Mission in Transylvania in the 17th Century

The Reformatory work among the Rumanians in Transylvania had a definite connection with the church policy of the Electors in the 16th century. This policy became more obvious in the 17th century when the Church was better organized and was more successful, and when the status of the clergy had improved remarkably. All of these benefits had depended upon the Elector's ius placetum. The princes of Transylvania had been deeply influenced by their confessed Calvinistic theological principles which demanded from them, as stewards of God, a great responsibility toward their subjects. This explained why they tried to bring the Orthodox Reformed Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church in close relationship by means of the Orthodox Reformed mission among the Rumanians, using schools, literature and missionary organization.

Electoral Religious Policy

In the history of Transylvania the Rumanian elements did not play an important political or ecclesiastical part until the 17th century, because until that time their number had been so small in comparison to the "three nations", that they were regarded as unimportant.

The Electorate was constituted of "three nations": Magyar, Szekely and Saxon, which represented four so-called "allowed religions", as it was formulated in the "Book of Constitutions" of Transylvania:

" The four allowed religions were introduced with the consent of the Diet of Torda, which ordered that these four religions be held in perpetum pro receptis, to sustain our country and to

glorify our ancestors, who were tolerant: The Four allowed religions were: Evangelica Reformata; vulgo Calviniana, Lutherana sive Augustana, Romana Catholica, Unitaria vel Antitrinitaria . . ."

and:

"nobody, cities or landlords who belong to the nobility, can force their subjects to the religion of their lords, as this will be punished 'sub poena florentus 200'."²⁰

The peace treaty of Vienna, in 1608, had refused the concept of cuius regio eius religio and had opened a new chapter in church-history, that of personal freedom in religious matters. Elector Bocskay regulated the ecclesiastical relationship between the State and Rumanian Eastern Orthodoxy in a similar broad sense of religious liberty. To realize this, he nominated the vladica Spiridon as "episcopus et supremus superintendens", over the Rumanians in his country.²¹ Bocskay confirmed the guiding principles of the Electoral religious policy by stating that the tradition of the "nations" that were living in Transylvania was that the different peoples were represented by their own clerics.

The Prince wanted to follow a similar policy concerning the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church which was inclined toward the "Greek sects", because he was conscious of his duty to defend his people and their religions, "to preserve the God-given order we must keep these traditions unchanged." It is interesting to observe that the 16th century's Reformed concept of the magistrate's duty had now already become "tradition". That this "tradition" was often inclined to tie the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church with the Orthodox Reformed Church in

²⁰Stephan Benko, Transylvania (Seben, 1618), II, 136.

²¹Sandor Szilagy, op. cit., V, 304.

order to influence the Eastern Church with evangelical teachings is obvious.

In this case it was the Elector himself who prescribed in his "Conditions" what kind of church life would have to be established among the Rumanian subjects by Rumanian bishops who were obliged to apply the Electoral church policy.²² These "Conditions" vividly illustrated how temporal the bishopric was in those days and also how much support the unstable Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church received from the Electors. But the Elector's politically influenced policy of tolerance finally stabilized the status of Rumanian Eastern Orthodoxy, as one reads from an Electoral decree at the Diet of Alba Julia in 1609:

"The Elector, prompted by the miserable situation of the Rumanian clergy who follow the 'Greek sect', and out of respect for God's glory, has felt himself moved to exempt the Rumanian clergy from serfhood."²³

This meant that the clergy were free to move from one place to another, but only with the permission of their bishop. A second provision exempted the clergy from taxation, an obligation which they had had as serfs. This policy, by which the clergy were liberated, represented an advancement over the situation of clergy in neighboring countries, as the Eastern Orthodox historian, Benedek Jancso, has pointed out:

"From the Slavic document it was clear that rural priests in the Balkan countries were serfs; Bulgarian Czar Simon in his time . . . donated to the Rikski monastery Priest Todor and his family, as a present. Only those who eventually might become bishops were exceptions. The serf status was common everywhere where Rumanian shepherd people were

²² Imre Revesz, Magyar Reformatus Egyház (Debrecen, 1938), p. 35.

²³ Alba Julia, Libri Regii (1609), XIX, 36b.

living. They brought it with themselves, together with other social and cultural traditions."²⁴

With this Electoral church policy the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church slowly crystallized its status and gained social privileges for her clergy. The next important Elector who was concerned about the Rumanian interest was Gabor Bethlen, who was prince of Transylvania from 1613-1629. Almost immediately, he issued a decree in which he described his intention:

"Our goal is to have no vacant Rumanian Orthodox bishoprics but to fill them with ardent and talented bishops who will edify their clergy with redeeming dogmas, through which they can save their Church from all aberrations."²⁵

With this intention Bethlen installed Bishop Theophysus Praesopli in 1615. His "condition" had as its main goal: to teach the true faith and to save the clergy from any schismatic influence. The tendency of Electoral church policy in this age was to oppose proselytizing; it simply strove for a voluntary, self-reforming development within Rumanian circles. The Elector often warned his ecclesiastical workers to build their congregations faithfully; these warnings were formalized later in the "Conditions." Prince Rakoczi II, who ruled from 1629-1648, inaugurated the same missionary policy toward the Rumanian people as his predecessors had used, but he acted authoritatively in this field also when he limited the rule of the nobility. He governed by decree and the Orthodox Reformed bishop was occupied with the formulations of Electoral "Conditions" for Rumanian bishops.

²⁴Benedek Jancso, A roman nemzetisegi torekvesek (Budapest, 1896), I. 512.

²⁵Nicolae Dobrescu, Fragmente Privitoare la Istoria Bisericii Romane (Budapest, 1905), pp. 19-22.

Rakoczi's rule brought constitutional security for the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church, when, in 1653, the Prince regulated their constitutional rights at the Diet. The Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church had for a century belonged to the category of "tolerated" churches, but now through Rakoczi's actions at the Diet Eastern Orthodoxy was declared constitutional. This was published in the following form:

"We prohibit the introduction of any religious innovations besides the already established four religions, but from this prohibition are exempted the members of the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church who 'pro tempore' were tolerated."²⁶

One article prescribed the examination and acceptance of the newly arrived foreign Eastern Orthodox clergy, calugerii, who had emigrated from the Balkans. This emigration showed the constant fluctuation of population and the more desirable conditions of Transylvania when compared with the Voivodina. The Reformed Bishop, Istvan K. Gelei, who was a man of strong character, praised the Elector's good intentions and his patience toward "these ignorant believers" and added "who are yet our brethren even in dark spiritual condition. The Elector's duty is serious since he is responsible for their salvation. I am afraid that God will call us to account for their ignorance if we neglect them."²⁷

The tolerant spirit was partially influenced by outward activity, which we nowadays call ecumenicity. The concept of a closer Christian cooperation between Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism, proposed by the Englishman John Dury, reached the Elector's court. Dury communicated with Gelei, who then outlined

²⁶Varad, Approbatæ Constitutiones (1653), Art. III.

²⁷Uj Museum, (Kolozsvar, 1859).

his ideas and conditions; he suggested a union between the Hungarian Orthodox Reformed Church and the "to be reformed" Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church, recommending that this union take the form of a loose alliance with broad autonomy.²⁸

If Gelei saw the possibility of such union (though he admitted that the Rumanians stood closer to Rome than to the Reformed), it was because he thought that the differences between them concerned secondary matters which were of human making, and he misjudged the importance of the Eastern Orthodox liturgy and the ceremonies.²⁹ He had a clear eye for the problem of the deeprooted superstitions³⁰ among the Eastern Orthodox laity, but he supposed that teaching would overcome this problem and that the Rumanian Church could be restored to her original evangelistic character, and the re-introduced Gospel would automatically unify the two branches of Christ's Church.³⁰

²⁸ Arpad Bittay, Az erdelyi romanok a protestans fejedelmek alatt (Dieso, 1928), p. 83.

²⁹ Arpad Bittay, op. cit., p. 97.

³⁰ Uj Magyar Museum (Budapest, 1640).

³⁰The following superstitions were condemned, in 1675, by the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Synod, which reflected how deeply rooted they were even among the clergy:

1. Use for Baptism only water and neglect the fire.
2. Do not pray for human bones or for clothes of dead relatives.
3. Do not swing chickens and kids over a corpse to immunize them against phantoms.
4. Do not wash animals feet with holy water against foot and mouth disease.
5. Do not burn candles before the heads of bulls.
6. Do not throw bread and money into a grave during a funeral.
7. Do not pray for lost animals to bring them back.
8. Prohibit the conjuration of spirits on Maundy Thursday and do not bring food to the dead in the cemetery. (Alexandru Grama, Institutiile calvinești in Biserica Romanesca din Ardeal (Balzafalva, 1895).

The new Rumanian Eastern Orthodox ecclesiastical life which was created through the "Conditions" was so remarkable that it even attracted foreign writers. The Western theologian, Isaac Basire, reported on the activities of the Reformed clergy:

"George Czulai, chaplain of Elector Rakoczi II, . . . who for the first time presented the New Testament, the Psalter and the Catechism to the Rumanians in their own language with the purpose of reforming the Rumanian Church . . ." ³¹

A further significant step was the development of the preaching in the Eastern Orthodox Church service: each Sunday, the Gospel had to be proclaimed. Baptism was performed with water only, and all former rituals were left out. Holy Communion was served with leavened bread and pure, unmixed wine. Christ was declared to be the only Mediator and the Virgin Mary and/or saints could not be invoked. These simplified forms illustrate how Gelei could suppose that he could bring the two branches of the Christian Church into the ecumenical frame.

Outside of the church realm, on the social level, a definite improvement came about. More and more Rumanian priests were elevated to the ranks of the nobility, and with that their historical role was growing for the first time in the history of Transylvania. ³² When the Rumanian leaders with their congregations were made equal to the Hungarians, it meant that the Elector's policy was based on a solid foundation.

The last Prince of Transylvania, Mihaly Apafi, himself an educated

³¹Tortenei Ţar (Budapest, 1889), p. 496: "Georgius Czulai Principis Georgii Rakoczi II, Pastor Aulicus. Electus anno 1650, Vir sedulus, qui primus in gratiam Valachorum curavit Novum Testamentum, Psalterium Davidis, et Catechismus verti in linguam Valachicam, aliquote etiam Ecclesias Valachicas reformavit."

³²Alba Julia, Libri Regii (1609), XV, 90.

Calvinist theologian, did not stop with pious statements concerning the duties of the Rumanian clergy. He himself secured the necessary financial support for church developments. He finally went so far as to abolish all taxation for clergy, even on their private property. This final act ended a century of long development. The clergy of the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church was constitutionally adopted. It was in Apafi's decree that the popular name for the Rumanian priest, "pope," was first mentioned.

The Electoral church policy was characterized by conservatism, and it could not further any new ideas. The ecumenical coordination, as Gelei had planned it, was abandoned and the new political situation did not permit any peculiar ecclesiastic innovations. The weakening position of the Orthodox Reformed Church in Transylvania eo ipso limited its influence and the missionary consciousness died off. Almost immediately, Hapsburg Catholicism arrived, and the persecutions began.

The Facts of the 17th Century Mission

The distinctive characteristic of the Reformed missionary work in Transylvania, when compared to the Roman Catholic missionary activity, was that its goal was not to force church authority upon believers. Its main purpose was to awaken faith and, through education, to strengthen it. Another peculiarity was that the unity among the Reformed congregations had been secured in creedal unity and not with authoritative decrees from Synods. In the age of Reformed Orthodoxy, the identity of creeds and Biblical principles was kept with fearful

loyalty. To teach and to introduce them had been the real missionary purpose of Reformed Orthodoxy, and these happened to be the main points in the Elector's "Conditions", too.

Of the literature of Reformed Orthodoxy, the Catechism especially found strong opposition from the Rumanian clergy who had close religious ties with the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs. The historical significance of the controversies is that they led to a reconsideration of the dogmas of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It could be compared with the development which took place among the Roman Catholics in the 16th century as a result of Protestant activities. Many decisions of Eastern Orthodox Synods and the religious apologetic writings reflected the changes and reforms that took place within the Orthodox Church as a result of the Protestant activity. From the point of view of the Reformed mission among the Rumanians, these Eastern Orthodox, anti-Calvinistic writings were of significance, because they later became the main source from which the Rumanian church leaders secured their arguments and self-defense in Hungary.

Rumanian Reformed Catechism

In the 17th century, the Reformed Catechism was still the best tool of education, especially the Heidelberger Catechism, which was even called the "Small Bible". It was translated and published three times during the missionary campaign, in 1640, 1648, and 1656. How great its impact was upon the Rumanian soul can be seen from the action of the Metropolitan Varlaam, who called together a Synod in Voivodina, to refute its contents.

The Role of the Printing Press in the Reformed Rumanian Mission

The first printing press was used for religious purposes in earlier years, but during the turbulent times it had been destroyed. In 1620, the Elector donated a new one, and he even paid the translators, authors and other workers generously in order to spread the Gospel among his subjects. Prince Bethlen saw the impact which the translated Word of God had made upon the Hungarians, and he ordered the Rumanian Orthodox Bishop to arrange for a translation of the Bible into the Rumanian vernacular. After a while, the Elector himself gave a Rumanian manuscript to the Rumanian Orthodox Bishop for a final revision, but the entire manuscript disappeared because the Eastern Orthodox feared the consequences which might result from changing the Greek into the Rumanian language.³³

On the orders of the new Prince, Rakoczi II, another translation was prepared. In 1639, the New Testament was the first book printed on the new printing press, and it was a translation in the vernacular.³⁴ A similar one appeared in Moldavia one year later. In 1640, a Rumanian Catechism was published; the next year, a book with biblical exegesis and prayers. But the most important work was the New Testament translation. The Prince presented this book to his Rumanian subjects as a personal gift, saying, "When God gave His order to the rulers to take care about the need of the subjects, He meant to secure them spiritual food and

³³Tamas Redmeczi, "Record," Bibliografia Romano Ungara (Szeben, 1622) I, 72.

³⁴Aladar Ballagi. A magyar nyomdászati története (Budapest, 1878), p. 240.

and drink.”

During the reign of the next Elector, another part of the Holy Scripture was translated and published, “The Book of Psalms.” In 1651, it was presented to the Rumanian clergy at the Diet of Alba Julia.

Among the Rumanians, the intransigent Metropolitan Sava Barankovici hid the printing press for well over a decade in an effort to stop all reformatory efforts of the Elector. When Sava was tried, it was discovered from his testimony at the trial that the Russian Czar, whom he had visited and who supported him politically as well as financially, had influenced him to do so. The Russian Eastern Orthodox Patriarch was opposed to the introduction of the Rumanian language, and Sava had hoped through his activities to hold off this development. But in the end his own Rumanian deans revolted against him and indicted him. In 1675, at a Synodical trial, ninety-eight clerics and laymen sentenced him to imprisonment for his immoral life and financial corruption.³⁵

When the last Elector died, his final report spoke about the “persecuted printing press”, which had been confiscated by the Hapsburg Catholics. The latter used it for a new purpose, namely, to prepare the union between the Eastern Orthodox Rumanians and the Roman Catholic Church. This union took place in 1690.

The End of the Rumanian Mission

The Rumanian Mission broke down suddenly when the political situation changed. Transylvania lost its independence and Prince Apafi died in 1690. A

³⁵Margaret G. Dampier, The Orthodox Church in Austria-Hungary (London, 1905), I, 30.

new chapter was opened in church history in Transylvania. What the Protestant leaders had not been able to do, the Roman Catholics did now: they imposed their religious system upon the people. The Orthodox Church was faced with two alternatives: to continue her relationship with the Reformed system which now was under oppression or to accept the Romans and gain through them higher status and recognition. In 1700, an overwhelming majority of the Rumanian clergy accepted union with Rome. In Transylvania, as in Poland, the Reformation and its mission had prepared the way back to Rome.

In conclusion, we will let some Rumanians speak for themselves. In thinking about the Protestant mission in Transylvania, the Rumanian historian, Baritiu, wrote:

"The historian who is occupied with the essence of the Reformation feels uneasy about one question: how and why did it happen that between 1566 and 1670 not one Rumanian Orthodox stood up firmly for his religious conviction, for dogmas, sacrificing even his life, or why can one not find even one who could stand fast for the new religious beliefs, like a hero in the Western lands . . . ?"³⁶

Alexandru Grama, a Rumanian specialist on Rumanian Church history during the 16th and 17th centuries, had made the remarkable statement that in a deeper sense the Rumanian Reformation has no history. History exists only where there is struggle, resistance, victory or defeat. But these elements were missing from the Rumanian reformatory endeavors. This means that it never became a part of the Rumanian Orthodox soul.

³⁶Benedek Jancso, Erdely Tortenete (Kolozsvar, 1931), I, 264.

Ecumenical Contacts between Hungary and Bohemia

The second dynamic center of the Hungarian Reformation was Debrecen. Its most prominent personality, Bishop Meliusz, found opportunity to express solidarity with the Bohemian Brethren in a form of ecumenical cooperation, which later, in the 17th century, brought the two churches into a close relationship. Among the "four nations" who constituted the University of Prague was the Hungarian. This meant that since the 14th century an established spiritual and religious contact had existed between Hungary and Bohemia. John Huss' influence had been extensive. The Hungarians had received the first translation of the Bible from Hungarians who were former students of Huss; Tamas Peesi and Balin² Ujlaki. These two translators began their work in 1416, finished the complete translation in 1436.³⁷

According to Lampe, the Fratres ex Bohemia had spread throughout Hungary and even into Moldavia when the papal inquisitor, Jacob Marchiani, arrived in 1437, and began to persecute them ruthlessly.³⁸ Marchiani reported to the Pope how successful the Hussites had been throughout all of Hungary.

One branch of the Bohemian Reformers, the Unitas Fratrum, approached Bishop Meliusz via Adam Uher, who delivered a letter from Peter Pisek and a

³⁷ Istvan Harsanyi, Magyar Biblia (Sarospatak, 1927), p. 6.

³⁸ Lampe, op. cit., p. 38.

Latin translation of the confession of the Bohemian Brethren. In his answer, Bishop Meliusz praised the Brethren and asked them for further explanation, especially regarding the Holy Communion. In return he sent them, in 1565, the Confessio Ecclesiae Debreciensis, in which a creedal and apologetic part were included. The letter disturbed the Bohemian Brethren, because Meliusz had not hidden his disapproval about the promiscuity of the Bohemian Brethren.

" . . . several letters show that you can keep yourselves from marriage but not away from concubines. . . ." ³⁹

The Bohemian Brethren answered in angry tones denying the charges, but Meliusz did not answer this letter. The Bohemian Brethren then added a statement condemning Peter Meliusz in their book of ecclesiastical history. (Broda Hunnorum, 1566):

" . . . though there are many true dogmas in his (Meliusz) writings in accordance with Christ's teachings, he has mixed it up with dirty matters and therefore I boldly state that since I am alive and reading I never read a more audacious and arrogant book" ⁴⁰

The Calvinistic tendency of the Unitas Fratrum was preserved in later developments also. When the Lutheran majority reached an agreement with the Hapsburg Dynasty in 1575, the Unitas Fratrum shared in that privilege. However, the Roman Catholic Church took revenge on the Bohemian Hussites after the battle

³⁹Peter Meliusz, Confessio Ecclesiae Debreciensis (Debrecen, 1565). "Sprobo igitur eam confessionem, quatenus cum scriptura sacra et Patrum orthodoxa confessione consonant . . . sicut autem nuper quid mihi placeat et consonum veritati esse videretur, significavi: ita et nunc pronuncio de libero arbitrio, de coena Domini, de coelibatu . . . Coelibatus autem perplexa et ambigua fictio est, doctrina daemoniorum prohibens abstinere a cibis et nuptiis . . . a faedis autem concubinis et scortis minime: facitis ut legam Daemoniorum sanciatis violate lege et institutione divina.

⁴⁰Jednani a pometi Jednoty Brati Ceskych (Broda Hunnorum, 1566) X, 234 a.

of White Mountain in 1620; the Hussites were partially massacred, another part fled abroad. A group of these refugees settled in Hungary and Transylvania.⁴¹ Later, Emperor Ferdinand demanded the Elector, Gabor Bethlen, to deliver all Bohemian refugees to him, but the Elector refused. In 1622, he secured for them complete religious freedom in Transylvania through a special bill from the Diet of Kolozsvár:

" . . . to exercise their religion according to their customs, to work in whatever profession, to free them from taxes which have to be paid to the state . . ."⁴²

In Hungary, the Bohemian refugees were accepted by various dioceses of the Hungarian Orthodox Reformed Church. They still continued to maintain their own religious customs, as they had brought their own pastors with them.

It is known that John Amos Comenius, as Superintendent of the dispersed Bohemian-Moravian Hussites, held a Synod in Hungary, in 1650. This Synod was held for the purpose of outlining the conditions under which Comenius would be willing to accept a call from the College of Sarospatak. It was decided that he would accept the call only if Zsigmond Rakoczi would protect the Bohemian-Moravian Brethren, and would provide a few Moravian students with free tuition and stipends at the school of Sarospatak.⁴³

⁴¹Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁴²Kolozsvár, Transylvania, Approbatae Constitutionis, (1622), Art. XXIII.

⁴³Lajos Racz, Comenius in Sarospatak (Budapest, 1931), p. 39.

It is further known that in 1660, ten Hussite pastors were still able to hold an ecclesiastical meeting for the purpose of protesting against Nicolos Drabik's Lux in Tenebris, published in 1657, by Comenius.⁴⁴ Their protest resulted in the execution of Nicolos Drabik in Pozsony. (Presburg) in 1671.⁴⁵ John Amos Comenius spent four years in Sarospatak, during which he wrote the famous book, Orbis Pictus, in which he used, for the first time in the history of education, visual methods. As the result of this work the Seminary of Sarospatak became the best known Hungarian Reformed Orthodox institute which, in the centuries to come, defended Calvin's theological heritage. The Bohemians still continued to be Hussites and to take care of their own refugees. When, in 1670, the "Delegatum Judicium Extraordinarium" condemned the Hungarian Reformed leaders, the Bohemian pastors were also accused of the same conspiracy, after that, they were no longer able to continue a regular church life.⁴⁵ As a result, the Hungarian Reformed Church took care of the Bohemians, and they began to accept the Orthodox form of Calvinism. Many decisions made by the Orthodox Reformed Churches to accept the Bohemian refugees, have been found in archives, e.g. in 1647, in Szakolca.⁴⁶

The tradition slowly developed that the Orthodox Reformed Churches on special occasions were visited by Bohemian Brethren, and on such special days,

⁴⁴ Joannes Ribini. op. cit., II, p. 13. "Drabik gente Morauus, tam erat mente insana, anno 1629 in Hungaria uenerant una cum capite, simul et semel amputare, deinde ibidem linguam eius blasphemam euellere . . . neo propheta in Hungaria derirante et turbulento.

⁴⁵ Supra, p. 102.

⁴⁶ Archives of Szakolca, 1647.

the Hungarian pastor would memorize the sermon in the Czech language. There are many records of such visits e.g., in the towns of Rete and Pusztaterebes; many Brethren were reported to have come even from Bohemia and Moravia to participate in the worship service. Later, the Hungarian Orthodox Reformed leaders organized these sporadic visits into a regular missionary service. For this systematic work sons of former Bohemian families were appointed, and they prepared to be ministers. The first among them was John Valesius, who was endorsed by the Seminary of Debrecen. After his ordination he served a mixed Bohemian-Hungarian congregation, thus remaining faithful to his people. The Orthodox Reformed leaders then entrusted him to carry on the work, covering all his expenses. Valesius was called "Ecclesiarum Bohemicarum in Hungaria et Moravia dispersarum Orbis Pastor." In his successful work he took the title of "episcopus Bohemicarum." He secured financial aid and educated pastors for his destitute people. In one letter which he sent to the Reformed College of Debrecen, he wrote that he recommended to the good grace of the faculty of Debrecen three Bohemian youths, John Glassius, George Jessenius, and John Stettinius, who had treated him well in the interest of the destitute Bohemians. He asked the college to help these young men and to educate them as pastors, so that "after my death this people of God will not be a flock without a shepherd." These young men later undertook missionary work among the Bohemians and provided the necessary literature for their people. Jessenius translated the Hungarian Hymnal into the Slovak language with a Catechism of preparation for the Holy Communion, written in the Bohemian language, attached to it. These books were published and the costs defrayed by the city of Debrecen. This literature reached Moravia and

Bohemia via the visiting pastors from Debrecen and helped also those Brethren who were hidden there. The "Orphan Bohemian Church," as Valesius called it, continued to receive support from the Orthodox Reformed Church during the great persecution.

This work which was kept alive among the Czech Brethren through missionary activity and which was rooted in the Orthodox consciousness finally produced great results. When Emperor Joseph II promulgated the Edict of Toleration in the 18th century, which put an end to the worst of the civil disabilities Protestants had had to endure Hungarian pastors and theological students in great numbers began ecumenical work in those countries where the Gospel had been silenced for a century and a half.

According to the record of a Hungarian pastor in Bohemia, Janos Vegh, the Bohemians declared themselves in favor of the Protestant religion". . . by the hundreds and thousands;" and almost without exception they embraced the Reformed faith of Calvin and did their utmost to secure Reformed pastors. Being somewhat impatient, they wrote to the Emperor who then ordered the Bishop of the Cis-Tibiscan Diocese to provide ministers for the Czech and Moravian churches.⁴⁷ It should be noted that when Slovakian Lutheran pastors went to help Moravia, the Brethren refused them; this fact was reported by Lutheran Bishop Janos Czernanszky in a letter to Samuel Szalay, bishop of Debrecen.⁴⁸

The new "Macedonian Call" was not in vain; the Hungarian Reformed Church

⁴⁷Sarospataki Füzeték, 1860, p. 149.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 153. "Mitte Frater Dilectissime Ministros tuae confessionis in Bohemia et Moravia, quia mei nun sunt acceptabilis."

took immediate action to meet the ecumenical demands. The excellent result of a century of Orthodox mission became apparent in that the Bohemian Hussites turned to the Reformed faith. The Hungarian Reformed pastors, so-called "Tolerance-preachers", organized well established congregations in both Bohemia and Moravia in the course of a few years. Approximately eighty pastors left Hungary for Bohemia in the 18th century. We know that Hungarian students who studied at Western theological seminaries were recalled and sent out on this ecumenical fieldwork.

Ferenc Kovacs from Debrecen was appointed by Emperor Joseph II as the first Superintendent of Bohemia. The Hungarian ministers overcame the obstacle which hindered them in their work with the Bohemians by learning the Czech language. They were also able to overcome their financial problems, because Switzerland and the Netherlands contributed heavily, but they were still superceded by the Orthodox Reformed congregations of Hungary. In the financial records of the latter, this heading appeared for decades: "Subsidy for the destitute Bohemian congregations."⁴⁹

The Hungarian ecumenical workers shared also in building up their churches in the literary field. Among the many, Janos Vegh was the most productive in Czech ecclesiastical literature. He was also the first dean in Prague. Many books from his pen are still in circulation, and his "Fervent and Edifying Prayer Book" was reedited 13 times. It was he who wrote the factual history of the rebuilding of the ecumenical work under the title:

⁴⁹Geza Kur, Cseh-Magyar reformatus torteneti kapesolatok (Komarom, 1937) p. 68.

"Nachricht von Entstehung der ref. Gemeinden in Böhmen" (report on the origin of the reformed congregations in Bohemia). Joseph Szalay translated the Helvetic Confession, and Moses Tardy soon rendered a new translation in the Czech language, the "Confessi Helvetska". The Hungarian pastors all used the Heidelberger catechism parallel with the Helvetic one.⁵⁰ Still others translated the Agenda or the Book of Worship. Mihaly Blasek made Sziksz'i's "Christian Exhortation and Prayers" popular. Blasek organized the first Reformed congregation in Bohemia after he had been recalled from Utrecht by Bishop Paksi and sent to Bohemia.⁵¹

Later, Bishop Ferenc Kovacs returned to Debrecen to find more pastors for this ecumenical work. During this period, he died. He was succeeded by Samuel Szucs, also from Debrecen, who in turn later had a Debrecenian successor. Mention should be made of the fact that during this period, practically everyone who labored directly toward strengthening the Church suffered bitterly from Roman persecution. Several suffered imprisonment. The Roman Catholic hierarchy had been enraged by the promulgation of the Edict of Toleration and had tried to obstruct the introduction of the clauses of the Edict wherever it was possible. Pastor Istvan Gall, who, at the age of 83, returned to his country from Bohemia, gave a deplorable picture of the life of the faithful Hungarian pastors in that country in his appeal to the Classis of Gomor:

⁵⁰George Loesche, op. cit., p. 219.

⁵¹Sarospataki Füzeték, op. cit., p. 201.

I suffered much from the Papists and the Arians as well as from the Adamites. I was derided and mocked because I believed in a God who has a Son. They tried to have me torn apart by bulldogs. Twice, all my poor belongings were stolen. Finally even my house was set on fire during the night. I had to bury the faithful in gardens and woods. The bodies were exhumed. Again I buried them only to have them exhumed anew. Although a minister, I had to be a lawyer as well. I applied therefore to his majesty the Emperor Joseph for assistance and asked that we should be given sites for church buildings and cemeteries. I myself was exposed day and night to the deadly persecutions of the Papists and the Arians. Finally we received sites for church and cemetery, and later I conducted funeral services under the protection of the military. After my many and bitter persecutions on behalf of our holy religion, today at the age of 83 I hardly have enough to maintain myself alive.⁵²

This was the way to build and live in an age of so-called tolerance, when the ministers were so eager to witness that God made mighty things with them.

In this short treatment we have wanted to prove the vitality of the Hungarian Orthodox Reformed and their missionary consciousness, as it was expressed in the Bohemian-Moravian movement. The Hungarian pastors, deans and superintendents reorganized the Church of Christ and led the new congregations for more than a hundred years. It was these young and enthusiastic pastors that put the Church of the Czech Brethren on its feet.

The majority of the Hungarian pastors remained in Bohemia and Moravia, "identifying themselves fully with the Church of their adoption, so that their descendants are to be found in the Czech Brethren Church right to the present day, still bearing their original Hungarian names."⁵³ This ecumenical solidarity succeeded, because it had begun, was conducted, and was concluded in the name of Christ and solely for the glory of God.

⁵²Istvan Szoke, Reformatus Egyház és Iskola (Debrecen, 1932), VII.

⁵³George Knight, History of the Hungarian Reformed Church (Washington: American Hungarian Federation, 1956), p. 107.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HUNGARIAN PROTESTANT REFORMATION: A FIGHTING REFORMATION

The historical influence of Calvinistic Orthodoxy reached the Hungarian nation through the "fighting preachers."¹ These preachers had replaced the former secular political leaders in a historical crisis, when the nation lost its independence and political autonomy. They had offered the people a transcendental explanation for the national misery and a remedy as well. In the 16th century, the nation's destiny was shaped by the concept of theodicy; the Orthodox Reformed preachers of theodicy not only gave an idea to the nation, but they gave a history to the Magyar people. The same new leading elite, who lived in a feudal society, observed and proclaimed the alarming social facts which surrounded them, and they stood up for social justice and equality. The preacher-confessors were seeking a new yardstick with which to measure mankind and especially their own people. The individual Hungarian believer represented for the first time in history a new human attitude based on personal conviction, rather than on authority.

The events which took place in Hungary represented a spiritual revolution, which expressed itself in ecclesiastical form, in the language of religion. We must emphasize that the divided country with its three religious tendencies, i.e. Roman Catholicism, Islam, and Protestantism, by necessity lived in a climate

¹Supra, p. 31.

of continuous spiritual tension. The writings and teachings of the Orthodox Reformed confessors were permeated with the suffering which people who had experienced happier times found hard to withstand. A nation which for two hundred years had lived in a practically uninterrupted state of war had come to the brink of annihilation. The Hungarians approached their destiny with a "consciousness of mission", agreeing to shed their blood for the Christianity of the West in order to reach salvation through their wounds. The people themselves felt enveloped in the heavy atmosphere of the Old Testament and saw in their sufferings the punishment of God. As Pope Paul III wrote to King Ferdinand in 1537, ". . . it is well known that Hungary was the bulwark of Christianity. . ." ²

After this awareness of destiny had been developed in religious and political thought, it was natural that the people were ready for active resistance and fight to save their religious liberty and political independence, since they saw that freedom was irrevocably bound with "the true Christian faith". This spiritual preparation brought the divided nation into one spiritual community, which was ready to follow those leaders who stood for the same principles. A series of religious wars was started by Transylvania, where the Electors overwhelmingly were Calvinists. Among them, Bocskay in 1606, forced the Hapsburg Catholics to guarantee religious freedom for the nation, including the individual peasants. The most vigorous Elector and defender, Gabor Bethlen, who in his sixteen years of reign participated in twenty-six different battles, none of which ended in defeat, forced the Hapsburgs in the peace treaties of 1622, 1624 and 1626 to guarantee religious freedom. It

²Monumenta Hungaria Historica (Budapest, 1880), II, 258. ". . . Mivel Magyarország mindig a kereszténység erős védbastya volt"

was Prince Rakoczi who definitely established and defended religious liberty throughout the whole nation. These wars had the full support of the people, who soon became conscious of the national Hungarian cause and the cause of the Reformation were slowly but surely becoming one and the same thing. With this historical and religious consciousness the nation survived those stormy centuries, because they were ready to fight and sacrifice.

The Victory of the Helvetic Trend

The preceding chapters have dealt with the development of the Hungarian Reformation and have shown that after an initial acceptance of Lutheranism the Hungarians changed direction and finally accepted overwhelmingly the Helvetic tendency.³ In order to explain this we should focus awhile on earlier Hungarian, i. e. Magyar, history. The Magyars had been living for centuries at the cross-roads of four spiritual influences: German mysticism, Latin rationalism, Slavic melancholy, and Islamic fanaticism. These four influences confronted one another and even became mixed in those border zones which were given the name of inner-Europe ("Zwischen-Europa").

Since the Magyars lived in constant contact with all four currents of thought, they had to build up a relationship with at least one of them. Through the impact of Roman Catholicism, it was Latin rationalism which became their own, and the active and rational spirit succeeded during five hundred years in gaining

³Supra, page 16.

substantial influence. This Latin ethos prevented the Hungarian mentality from being attracted by either Slavic messianism or Islamic fatalism. During the Reformation, however, in the time of the religious disputes, the Hungarian psyche awakened to its own existential consciousness. Hungarian literature was born. Through the reformatory writings, faith, as an existential reality, found its way into the people's awareness. Had the soul of the Magyar, the nomadic horseman of old, always been that of a spiritual fugitive in Europe, it found itself elevated in the role of pilgrim in the Helvetic Protestant tendency. It was in this pilgrimage to Helvetic Protestantism that the Hungarian soul acquired awareness of its European mission and national vocation. The Hungarians acknowledged that they had sinned, but now they were assured the privilege of becoming a bulwark and making the sacrifice of fighting the East for the sake of the West.⁴ This was to make the Hungarian people worthy of the solidarity of Christendom and to end their loneliness.

In this irrational consciousness of mission, the rational Latin element did not cease functioning, not even after the arrival of Protestantism. It was this element which turned the cosmic orientation toward the moral sphere through which the Hungarian soul was prepared for Calvinistic Puritanism. By the same token it avoided the temptations posed by Slavic messianic pretensions.

The basic element of German mentality in Lutheranism, on the other hand, was a burden on the Hungarian soul, and for this very reason it preferred to orient itself toward the Calvinistic-Helvetic religious forms.⁵ These forms were

⁴ Supra, p. 34.

⁵ Supra, pp. 4, 7, 8, 12.

expressions of the grave ideas in the Old Testament, which coincided entirely with the Hungarian spirit of self-accusation. The only acceptable explanation of Hungary's sufferings lay in the exclusive sovereignty of the Almighty, and this explanation at the same time saved the Hungarian soul from accepting authority at a time when there was religious freedom from any other source. Neither Hapsburg nor Ottoman authorities could accustom the Hungarian soul to accept humility or servile subjection.

Aside from these external, non-theological forces, there were three intrinsic theological factors which contributed to determining the ethos. First, the Hungarian mentality by now was prepared to accept the idea of predestination, because nowhere except on the transcendental level was it able to explain their new historical destiny and human condition of their nation. This destiny was not shaped by human will, but rather, by higher forces. Once the Hungarians had adjusted to this change in their lot, they hastened without reservation, during an otherwise defenseless epoch, to aid their neighbor. Thus, the moment that the representatives of the Lutheran tendency in Hungary tried to enforce the principle of cuius regio, eius religio, on a matter involving the freedom of conscience, the Hungarians refused with incredible courage. This act contributed to making the shift to the Helvetic way automatic: their firm belief in the doctrine of predestination further contributed to shaping the Hungarian ethos.

The second factor was that the Helvetic principles of Church organization later became sources of modern democracy. They applied the same organizational concepts to the political situation in the Hungary of the 16th and 17th centuries. Through the Calvinistic principle of equality, each member of the nation could be a

participant, not only in church life but in local civic organizations as well. In no other way than by adopting the Helvetic principles, could the population, divided as it was into three churches, organize itself for maintaining its religious beliefs. In small congregations, built on the principle of autonomy, they could revive the dreams of a life as free as that of a nomadic horseman. Extensive decentralization, in contrast with the authoritarian and centralized Lutheran order, likewise contributed to expanding the Helvetic principles on the social level, in that it broke down the feudal system. This development did not occur in the neighboring Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox countries. Only the Reformed Orthodox society could guarantee equality to its members. When the Roman Catholic reformation politically re-conquered Hungary, it refused this democratic principle and replaced it with Hapsburg Catholic absolutism.

From this discussion it may be obvious that in Protestantism the revolution of the Hungarian soul went through a specific European evolution. It was Europe that had brought about the conversion in the first place; and now Europe made the Hungarian soul fertile again. From the deep recesses of that soul had become deeply European-Christian in the Helvetic tendency, it also had become deeper in its Hungarian essence. Here, it definitely reached its maturity, both in faith and mentality. During the 16th century, Hungarian autonomy was restored, and, as a consequence, theology showed admirable creativity.

This is the metaphysical background of what is called the "Hungarian religion" (magyar vallás), an epithet given to the Hungarians by neighboring nations, and by which is meant the Helvetic form of the Protestant faith.

The final factor which made the Hungarians turn away from the Lutheran

tendency was the fact that the initiators and representatives of Lutheranism in Hungary were Germans. When the Hungarians became aware of this fact, they realized that the danger of political Germanization was at hand, and they turned their back on Lutheranism. As the spiritual autonomy of the Hungarians developed, their inclination toward Calvinism grew.

This process is analogous to processes that could be observed in other European nations which succeeded in keeping their intellectual autonomy and expressed it in the religious field. In this respect, Hungary appears to be an organically integral part of a general European process. In the last stage of his development, the "nomadic horseman of the steppe" reached the heights of the loftiest expression of Christian faith. He found it in the doctrines of Helvetic Christianity.

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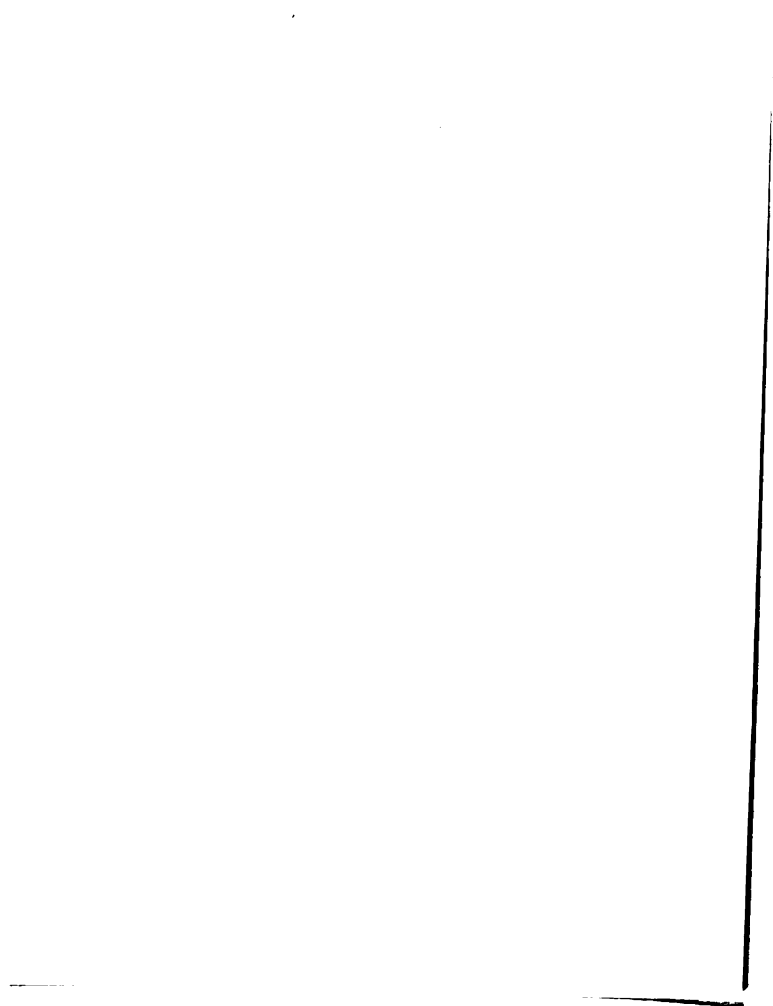
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