

Theses

HUNGARIAN REFORMED DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE IN DEBRECEN (1657-1711)

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1) Intention of the dissertation

In this dissertation we have examined an essential period of 17th century Protestantism, the ‘fruit’ of preaches at the end of this era (1657-1711). By this we have tried to overview the role and the place in intellectual history of the famous professor, György Martonfalvi Tóth, as well as that of ‘*Debrecenism*’. Our aim is to be connected to the excellent monograph made by Graeme Murdock, which is written on Hungarian Calvinism (*Calvinism on the Frontier. International Calvinism and the Reformed Church of Hungary and Transylvania, c. 1600-1660*. Oxford, Clarendon, 2000.). It illustrates – within the frames of *intellectual history* – the history of the denomination of Transylvania and *Partium* between 1600-1660.

Almost half of the publications and books were printed by the press of the city of Debrecen at the end of the 17th century. The books that were examined are not exclusively only from Debrecen: these were taken among those printed in the city, written by citizens or its clergymen, or people were somehow connected to the spirituality of this Ark of Christianity. In that period there is not such a great mass of sources, therefore preaches should have been drawn (printing and also manuscripts), so that it did not let us make such a theoretical engagement as to make differences between the form of a written or an oral work. In the international context there was not a great interest to this genre until the ’70s, which belongs mainly to the American *New Historicism*, which had expressed the text of a preaching being distinctly a literary text. This establishment stroke out preaching from the interpretation of the theology and the folklore, and diminished the significance of views of preceding sciences.

In accordance with international studies, Gábor Kecskeméti claimed in his monograph on the history of preaches (Preach, Rhetoric and Literary History) (*Prédikáció, retorika, irodalomtörténet*. Bp., Akadémiai, 1998.) that to understand the era of the Baroque means to know both the historical-stylistic and sociological researches, as well as those in *intellectual history*. In the 1990s, during the researches in Hungary, it became clear that preaches should be examined in a context of a wider cultural historical field, regarding other sciences as well, such as literary history, theology and folklore (exemplum research, history of rhetoric, reception aesthetics, sociology, cultural anthropology, etc.). The Hungarian reformed devotional literature in the 17th century is a stepchild of the international research. The great summaries on East Central Europe often misunderstand the complicated system of ethnics, languages and denominations, references to the cultural history of that multicultural region.

Otherwise we have had to consider that establishments of former Hungarian researchers on Puritanism, Coccejanism, etc. needed to be redefined.

2) Methods of the dissertation

In this dissertation we have studied the rhetorical structure of preaches, the uses of exempla, applying the methods of modern sciences of intellectual history and history of devotion (*Frömmigkeitgeschichte*). Themes on focus had to be shortened, therefore we drew out the research on songbooks, juridical writings, catechetical literature; likewise material resources of teaching and dissertations, funeral preaching and collections of lyrics. We have examined what sorts of speeches were allowed to be sound in front of a community. What kind of homilethical genres became stronger by that (polemic, prayer, dehortation, meditation), what is the place of application at the preachers of different positions in intellectual history (Orthodox, Puritan, Cocceian, Pietist)? What is the relation between the theory and the practice of theology?

The dissertation tried to ask questions and make answers on a distinctive age of spirituality of Debrecen (1657-1711) by micro-historical research. In that frame the analysis did not undertake carrying out much lack of the research on pre-modern Hungarian Reformation history, so we should employ the theoretical basis of it that was concerned to theology and literary history. After all there will be some major points that this dissertation doesn't refer to, e. g. Orthodox, Puritan, Pietist epithets, etc. and their connotations, and a survey on their roots; an appointment on the 17th century as a determined period of the Baroque, between Humanism and the Enlightenment; the dispute *plain style* vs. '*Puritan Baroque*' that caused so much controversy, we let these problems opened.

We have analysed in this dissertation the career of preachers who are not known about today but were much affective in their lives (Senior Sámuel Köleséri, István Sajószentpéteri, Pál Debreceni Ember). We examined three different styles of preaching, speaking and theological understandings in the light of the relationship with the Martonfalvi workshop, more closely with the mentality of Debrecen.

3) Results of the dissertation

The international research on preaching in the 17th century is wider than ours: many catalogues were made, texts of preaches were edited. There is a large lag in- and abroad on

the field of text editing nowadays: until now mainly great persons' works were critically edited. The premodern Hungarian Reformed preaching belongs to the common knowledge of literature first of all by its elements of folklore (e. g. exempla), by Lajos György and his contributors (Ferenc Schram, Sándor Scheiber, Ákos Dömötör). From the '70s on it was discovered by literary historians (Imre Bán, Béla Tóth, János Győri L.), theologians (Géza Kathona, Imre Czegle, József Barcza, Géza Nagy, Sándor Czeglédy), and historians of rhetoric (István Bartók, Gábor Kecskeméti, Mihály Imre). The aim of this dissertation was to analyse preached from the 17th century, taking them to their context, illustrating their influence for themselves. Theological problem-analysing gave reason for the theme, and therefore we have had a wider approach more than before: exemplum research, narratological analyses, history of rhetoric and homiletic were first of all used.

The dissertation represents the effects and the cultural historical background of the Martonfalvi workshop in an educational-historical way. Different chapters deal with the political and mental relations between the leaders of Debrecen, between the clericals and the prince of Transylvania. Its sets – by the analysis of a unique diary of Paul Debreceni Ember – that the generation of students grown up in the '*illustre Collegium*' of Debrecen were given a long-life mental and spiritual basis. Although every man could live with his good conscience, yet there are few ecclesiastical people from that period declaring themselves non-Orthodox: the reason for the homogenous faith at the end of 17th is the disadvantageous position of Hungarian Protestantism.

The analysing chapters follow the mentality, the homilethical concepts and the historical thinking of the three preachers. The first among them, Senior Sámuel Köleséri is the contemporary of Martonfalvi, earlier both worked in Várad, then fled to Debrecen. Since the city practised the law of 'holding a preacher', Köleséri stayed in Debrecen. His case, therefore, shows us how his Cocceian piety was accepted in the Puritan Debrecen. At the end of his life he put an emphasis on the symbolic role of the city in guarding merits. The two other preachers, István Sajószentpéteri and Pál Debreceni Ember are the 'real' Martonfalvi students. The analysis of narratology and the history of exempla may reinforce the differences that can be seen in theology (these are mainly ethical and homilethical differences). Although both of them were inspired by the same spiritual workshop, their ways were different. This can also be explained by the atmosphere of the places where they practised (villages in the Hajdúság and Hegyalja) and their different temperaments. Our final statement is that the piety of the city and its spiritual leaders differs from the religion of those who lived half a century earlier, not in theological concepts, but in the way they lived their piety. This phenomenon is

called *Reformed Pietism*, and according to this István Sajószentpéteri is said to be precise, while Pál Ember is pietist.

During writing this dissertation, we have managed to create a clearer picture of the highly respected era of educational culture and cultural history of the 17th century Debrecen. To illustrate the historical effects of Apácai's *Encyclopaedia* and the *Dictionary* of Albert Szenci Molnár, we have found several examples among the arguments of preaches, but the origin of the texts were not signed. We emphasised the presence of certain symbols of Biblical phraseology: e.g. the application of *bitter-sweet* phrases, the possible understandings of the *halcyon* 'kingfisher', the different traditional layers of national decline, which are illustrated by Pál Kismarjai Veszeli, Pál Medgyesi, Senior Sámuel Köleséri and István Sajószentpéteri.

We have first explained the lately found funeral speeches held at the funeral of Mihály Apafi, and set them among the speeches of Jeremy-like position at the end of the century. We have proved and developed by the micro-analysis of the diary of Pál Debreceni Ember and the catalogues of his students, which had not been examined earlier, the concepts of Sándor Czeglédy on educational culture. We appointed two effective dates, which have not been given much attention so far: we defined the years of 1657 and 1681 as characteristic in the way of thinking in the second half of the 17th century.

We have mentioned several points of view that basically belong to the field of analysis of the literature of preaches and can still be thought about, but because of the limits, were not dealt with in the dissertation. Hence we have examined just in short the collections of books and the history of their effects; the barriers in the genre of the encyclopaedic characteristics of preaches; the astrological thinking of the era in connection with the comet-belief; and the collection of folk sayings is not put an end to, either. Another question is the examination of the mutual effects of texts of prayers of the Middle Ages, Catholic, para-liturgical prayers and piety-texts, which are present in the early Modern Age preaches (Köleséri, Pál Debreceni Ember). These questions are being dealt with in partial studies, some of them are already under being published.