

THE WORSHIP OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN HUNGARY

In recent years many learned books and articles have been published on the Reformed rite, but in all these there is a serious gap in that none of them include a detailed study of the worship of the Reformed Church in Hungary. This article only attempts a general survey, and is written in the hope that it may lead someone who possesses the necessary linguistic qualifications (which the writer does not) to undertake such a study and publish an edited version of the various Hungarian rites.

The Sixteenth Century

There are very few liturgical documents dating from the first decades of the Reformation in Hungary, and the historical data which we have as guides are very incomplete. Later writings, however, show that Reformed worship developed and was accepted without a great struggle.

Hungarian protestant worship followed Lutheranism until the time of Gal Huszar c. 1540. There was a short period of Zwinglian influence and one that was Calvinistic, but these were all isolated from each other until the decade 1540–50. When the Hungarian reformers adopted the new worship, they retained those elements in pre-reformation worship which did not contradict protestant doctrine and faith, for example, antiphons, proses, ‘canon’, etc.

The division of the country and Turkish expansion frustrated the Hungarian reformers in their efforts to reach a common agreement on the construction of new forms of worship and its common order. Hungary was divided into three territories – the Austrian (north and west), the Turkish (centre and south) and Transylvania (east). While the reforming movement varied in the different areas, they had one thing in common – a great devotion to the Holy Scriptures. On this basis there began in the middle of the sixteenth century the endeavours which brought a certain order and continuity into worship. This was the work of the Reformed Synods.

In the development of liturgical forms three factors are of prime importance – the writings of the Reformers, the Synod orders, and existing practices.

The Writings of the Reformers

The writings of Luther and Melanchthon, of Zwingli and Bullinger, and of Calvin, as well as the *Augsburg Confession*, the *Second Helvetic*

Confession and the *Heidelberg Catechism*, exercised a great influence in the Hungarian reformation: so let us look at their effect on the Hungarian reformers.

Three outstanding figures in the first generation of the Hungarian reformation had been Franciscan monks – Mihaly Sztarai, Andras Szkhárosi Horvat and Matyas Devai Biro.

Sztarai had obtained a doctorate at Padua before becoming a monk. He was the reformer of the south-west of Hungary, the area occupied by the Turks, where he organized 120 congregations. He is famous as a courageous preacher and as a hymn-writer, for the use he made of polemical drama, and that he founded schools wherever he went. He was conservative theologically and inclined to Lutheranism rather than the Swiss reformation, though in this he shows considerable independence. The influence of Calvin upon him may be seen in the fact that he turned the Hungarian psalter into verse.

Horvat preached at Tolosva and also was a noted hymn-writer. He too was greatly influenced by Luther.

Devai comes into prominence in 1531 when we find him in prison in Kasza. He had been a Franciscan, but had gone to Wittenberg and had sat at the feet of Luther and Melancthon. When he returned to Hungary he had published his *Rudimenta salutis* in the form of fifty-two theses, and this was what had led to his imprisonment. Between terms of imprisonment and of exile to the time of his death c. 1545 many towns and villages heard him proclaim the reformed faith, and over one hundred congregations claim him as their founder. Devai has been accused of seeking a *via media* between the theologies of Luther and Zwingli, but while he never followed Luther slavishly and there are passages capable of this interpretation in his writings he was never unfaithful to his master's teachings. As a result of this accusation he was constantly under suspicion by the German-speaking population in the northern highlands. On the other hand, so great was his influence and so faithful a disciple of Luther was he in reality that in later generations he came to be known as 'the Hungarian Luther'.

Gal Huszar was the reformer of the north-west, of the area ruled over by king Ferdinand. We first hear of him in 1554, when he was forbidden to preach. His theological position is difficult to determine. He never raised any objection to either the Lutheran form of worship or Luther's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. On the other hand, as we shall see below, he did have contacts with Bullinger.

During the fifth and sixth decades of the sixteenth century the Reformation spread among the German-speaking people in the cities, and it was only then that it reached out to the villages and countryside. The five royal burghs of Kasza, Locse, Bartfa, Eperjes and Kisszeben accepted the reformation. In 1546, they held a Synod for

this purpose and in 1549 signed their *Confessio Pentapolitana* declaring that they accepted the teaching of Luther and rejected that of the Swiss and the Anabaptists.

In Transylvania the leaders of the Reformation were Gaspar Heltai and Francis David. In 1538, the two bishops of the area sought to silence the Reformers but were prevented by John, king of Transylvania. So they dragged Istvan Szantai, a schoolmaster from Kasza, before the court. As a result of the proceedings one of the two judges, Martin Santa Kalmancsehi, became a devoted leader in the reformation. He had been a canon of Gyulafehérvár and was much impressed by the teachings of Zwingli. He was the 'pioneer of the Helvetic trend' in Hungary.

However, the reformer who laid the foundation of the Hungarian Reformed Church was Istvan Szegedi Kis. Born in 1505, he studied in Vienna and Cracow, where he lectured in classics in the university. Then he went to Wittenberg where he graduated *cum laude*. His life story, after his return c. 1544 is one of fidelity to the Reformation and dreadful persecution, fleeing from one town to another. His sufferings show us what an amount of faithfulness was needed to make God's Word known along the Danube and Tisza rivers as well as in the Turkish area of occupation. On his return from Wittenberg his whole library of over two hundred books was confiscated and he was beaten almost to death, at Csanád he was driven out by the governor of Transylvania, at Temesvár he was expelled by the captain of the castle, at Bekes he was beaten and robbed by the imperial soldiers, and at Kálmánca he was imprisoned by the Turks and released only for an exorbitant ransom. He was the most learned of all the Hungarian reformers and was a theologian of European fame. His writings are 'the essence of Reformed theology though his particular shade is more nearly that of Bullinger than of Calvin'.

When we turn to the confessional issues, we find the saxon element in Transylvania adopting the *Augsburg Confession*. The German cities in the north and west eventually did the same, but included in their number many 'crypto-Calvinists'. Here, however, the doctrine of the Lord's Supper was closer to that of Melancthon than Luther, with the result that Hungarians as a whole tended to bridge, rather than widen, the differences between Luther and Zwingli.

Devai's teaching may be taken as an example. He writes, 'In and through these tokens Christ's true body and true blood are communicated by the witness and constancy of faith'. He places the Lord's Supper and Baptism on a par. The water of baptism, he says, remains in its own substance, and thus, by means of it, the Holy Spirit, in conjunction with the Word of God, gives power. In the same way, in the case of the Lord's Supper, he argues, the bread and wine remain unchanged in their essential nature, but, because the Word is

preached along with the distribution of the elements, the bread and wine are no longer mere signs, because the Holy Spirit enables them to exhibit, confer and communicate in reality that which is signified, namely, Christ's spiritual body and blood. That is to say, for Devai the body and blood are not present in the symbol, as with Luther, but in the thing symbolized.

In the fifties Swiss influence begins to become prominent through leaders like Kalmancsehi, Meliusz and Szegedi. Through the first, in 1557, the whole of Transylvania, except the Saxon Lutheran block, accepted the Helvetic doctrine of the Lord's Supper. In 1559, the representatives of Transylvania and the districts of Cis-Tisza and Trans-Tisza reached an agreement on the Lord's Supper. In it the Zwinglian doctrine 'to eat' is 'to believe' is included, but it is affirmed that the only means of obtaining the gift offered through the Lord's Supper is by faith. It is through the Holy Spirit God communicates with the believer. 'He in whom the Spirit of Christ is not found, cannot partake of Christ's body.'

In 1561 appeared the Confession of Egervolgy, which was Calvinist in theology but not in expression, being worded in purely Hungarian thought-forms. It depended upon Calvin, but not slavishly. Christ is present at the Sacrament, not in flesh and blood, but in person, that is, the whole Christ is present.

The final development takes place with the acceptance of Bullinger's *Confession* and the *Second Helvetic Confession* by the Synod of Debreczen in 1567, and the later adoption of the *Heidelberg Catechism*.

The Confessions are important because of the emphases they produce in the various rites. Their significance for the Church has been expressed as follows, 'We thankfully accept their help to a better and fuller understanding of Scripture, but hold that they cannot and must not replace the Word of God. Their light is reflected light, their authority is borrowed from the Word of God inasmuch as they express the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. As human works they are not infallible. Hence they in themselves are not binding, but only the Word of God. In accordance with the introduction to the *Second Helvetic Confession* we affirm that "we are always ready . . . to obey in the Lord and submit with thanksgiving to those who give us a better exposition of the Holy Scriptures".'

The Synods

The first Synod of Erdod (1545) in its eighth article laid down an important principle on Christian freedom. 'We are free from all human traditions (which are not based on Scripture), rites and orders of bishops, which serve to mislead souls. However, for the sake of

good order we can keep those customs which are not against Christian freedom.'

The Synod of Beregszasz (1552), generally regarded as 'the first synod in the Reformed spirit', attempted to reconcile the differences between the Lutherans and Swiss on the Lord's Supper, and after a discussion about altars decided that 'where the altars have been destroyed there is no necessity to restore them. But if the people are fond of it, it may stay in the church, only the ministers must keep the pure doctrine of holy Communion.'

The second Synod of Erdod (1555) held that the Church must be 'careful not to receive in prayers, hymns or readings anything which is not written in the canonical books, but must hold to and advance those rites which are with good influence on the order, piety and peace of the Church'.

The Synod of Egervolgy (1560) declared the mass to be a 'heinous idolatry' and that 'inward fasting' is more important than 'outward'. It declared that the churches of pious Christians are to be 'without luxury and without superstition. Let there not be scandalous pictures, idols, false doctrines and human traditions which are against the Word of God. We can respect the saints as human beings, but not with the reverence of worship or by asking them for help. We can ask only God for help through Jesus Christ, in spirit and righteousness, in true faith.'

The Synod of Tarczal (1563) resolved to discontinue the use of the wafer and to teach diligently the doctrine of predestination. As this was a majority decision it led to a separation between the Lutherans and Reformed.

The year 1564 is significant for while both Lutherans and Reformed had for some time been communicating in both kinds, the emperor induced Pope Pius IV to issue a bull, addressed to Nicolas Olah, archbishop of Gran, directing him to administer communion in both kinds in the hope that the granting of the cup to the laity might heal the breach in Austria. On 2 September the king directed that permission to use the cup should also be extended to Hungary.

The Synod of Goncz (1566) ordered, 'Let every minister have, if it is possible, his own Bible'. The reason for this was that there were very few copies of the new translation and the cost was high. The *New Testament* was translated into Hungarian in 1541 by Janos Szilveszter, and in 1590 Gaspar Karoli published the complete *Bible*. This is commonly known as the Vizsoly Bible because it was printed there. This synod also ordered, 'Let the reading of the Bible be the most frequent work every day for the minister' and 'Nobody may teach as a minister without ordination.'

The Synod of Debreczen (1567) was the most influential in estab-

lishing the doctrine and worship of the Reformed Church. Peter Meliusz Juhasz realized from the first that the most effective way to promote the Reformation was not by polemics but by witness. It was he who convened this synod for 24 February 1567. It adopted Bullinger's *Confession* and the *Second Helvetic Confession* as distinct from the *Augsburg Confession*, and drew up the *Articuli Majores* for the government and discipline of the Church.

This synod did not create a unified Hungarian Reformed Church because the country was divided into three territories, but its decisions were approved by the 'seniorates' organized by Gaspar Karolyi and by the Danubian bishop, Istvan Szegedi Kis. They were also adopted by the transdanubian and upper-danubian Reformed communities when, at the end of the century, they separated from the Lutherans.

With regard to worship its fifth article states, 'Nobody may dare privately with his own imagination to make any change or addition in the basic doctrines of the Reformed Christian faith, in its orders, and in the two sacraments. If anything is to be changed in the rites or doctrines it must be with the consent of the whole Church. First, it is necessary to convoke the Synod, and in this meeting the proposed change must be compared with the Scriptures and with the writings of the apostolic fathers.'

It also enacted, 'Baptism, like Holy Communion, must come after the sermon, and always be in the presence of the congregation.'

The Synod of Csepreg (1587) issued a series of articles. Number fifteen on the time and order of Sunday Services states, 'There shall be a sermon preached on the mornings of the Lord's Day from the Gospels or the prophets. After dinner it is necessary to hold a meditation on the letters of St. Paul, and the knowledge of the children shall be examined by the minister from the *Heidelberg Catechism*. In larger congregations it is needful to preach a sermon twice a week, and also to hold twice an instruction from the Catechism.'

The *Heidelberg Catechism* was known in Hungary from 1564, and from 1577 it appears in translation. Soon afterwards it was raised to the rank of a confession by the public opinion of the Church.

The Articles of Northern Hungary (1595) embody most of these decisions. They declare that 'the Sacrament of baptism must be administered during the morning Service in order that the dignity of the sacrament become not inferior'. The one new feature in them is that 'before the baptism of adults they must be instructed in the *Heidelberg Catechism* and in their knowledge of the Scriptures'.

The Articles of Borsod-Gimor-Kishont say, 'The Lord's day (with the other festivals which aim to glorify Christ's incarnation) is to be kept holy because it is for the preaching of the Word of God, for the administration of the sacraments, for praying and for thanksgiving.'

The other festivals of Christ's incarnation are said to be his birth, his circumcision, his passion, his resurrection and the festival of Pentecost. They add, 'The festivals of saints, which are not ordered either by our Lord or by the apostolic writings, let stay festivals for the papists, but not for us.'

The Church laws show clearly that until the second Synod of Erdod (1555) there were no strict differences in rites and liturgical forms in Hungary between the Lutherans and Reformed. The beginnings of the division date from the Synod of Ovar in 1556, and of Kolozsvár and Debreczen in 1561. The division was doctrinal and the liturgical differences followed from this. In the beginning these were not so evident in the Sunday Services, but rather in the administration of the sacraments as both parties held the institutions of their founding fathers in great respect. This had an influence in the compilation of rites, but in them we also find many independent features. The forms of worship in the sixteenth century were established rather through natural and independent consideration and planning than in a slavish and strict following of the liturgical customs of the Reformers abroad. 'Two of the most powerful formative factors of the Calvinistic Reformation,' writes Dr. Emeric Revesz, 'its form of worship and its form of government, were never transplanted by the Hungarian reformers into the soil of their Church, at least not their original and pure Genevan, respectively Huguenot – Scottish – Dutch type. For a considerable length of time, their form of worship retained certain elements characteristic of the Roman Catholic cult (such as antiphons, passion-songs), although naturally by far not so much as in the form of worship of the Lutheran brethren.'

The Hungarian ministers, educated abroad, were familiar with the liturgical revisions of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. Some preferred the views of Luther or Zwingli, others those of Calvin, especially of the Genevan rites, but in the beginning both Lutherans and Reformed were more influenced by Luther, for example, terms like 'altar' and 'wafer' were retained.

From this first period we have the so-called *Batthjamy Codex*, which is the oldest protestant hymn-book in Hungary. It contains psalms from the Breviary, hymns for the main festivals of the Christian Year, antiphons and proses. It points to a transitional period. In places where a radical changing of the liturgy was not possible, or because of hesitation by the minister or the congregation, this form was used. It transformed the liturgical material of the Roman Church to the new doctrinal views, and it was used by all whether they followed Wittenberg or the Swiss. This was the type of liturgy used during the first decades of the Reformation in Hungary.

The Order of worship broadly speaking, which we find in the writings of the Hungarian protestants, is:

Introit (antiphon, psalm and gloria)
 Hymn
 Collect
 Gradual (psalm, hymn and prose)
 Lections (epistle and gospel)
 Sermon
 Creed
 Prayer
 Benediction

In the above Order the prayer following the Creed in some places consists of versicles and responses and in others of a chant, but where the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered every Sunday it was a confession of sins. Also, in some instances the gradual came between the lections and the sermon. Originally communion was celebrated weekly, but after 1560 this became infrequent because the followers of the Zurich reformation were satisfied if it was on fixed dates during the year and was announced beforehand.

This was the first common type of Reformed liturgy in Hungary. The Synods were occupied with the outward requirements of worship, but found it impossible to systematize its content and structure.

Concrete evidence for the Sunday Morning worship of the period is to be found in the *Hymn-book* of Gal Huszar and at the end of the *Book of Sermons* of Peter Bornemisza. Unfortunately there are no extant copies of this Order.

When minister of Ovar, Huszar wrote to Bullinger in 1557 asking him for suggestions how the Hungarian form of service might best be unified. While he, as we have seen above, never raises any objection to either Luther's doctrine or the Lutheran form of service, he published Bullinger's reply in which a purely Helvetic form is set out, and along with which Bullinger had forwarded a copy of Lavater's *de Ritibus et Institutis Ecclesiae Tigurinae*. The result is a simplifying of the earlier forms. In worship the minister is the leader. First he announces the theme of the worship. He selects the singings. The prayer before the sermon is fixed. The sermon itself was normally divided into several parts and concluded with questions which the congregation answered by repeating the words of the minister. The congregation at every Service made a confession of faith, but the emphasis was on knowledge rather than the life of faith. The Service ended with the Lord's prayer and a singing. In this worship dogmatic and didactic elements are prominent. The Order of the worship, according to Bornemisza, was:

Declaration of the theme of the Lord's Day.
 Singings (two or more)
 Lections

Prayer (fixed)

Sermon

1. About the Gospel
 - Summary of the Gospel passage
 - Reading of the Gospel
 - Exposition of meaning
2. What is instructive in this passage?
 - First
 - Second
 - Third
3. What have we to learn from all this?
4. Questions
 - Q. To which part of Christian doctrine does this Gospel passage belong?
 - A. The congregation repeats the answer in the words of the minister.
 - Q. In what way?
 - A. The congregation again repeats the answer in the words of the minister showing in what way the Gospel passage is the testimony of the Creed.

Prayer

Lord's prayer

Singing.

Bornemisza's homiletic method created a school of preaching. It was recommended by the Synod of Debreczen (1567), which applied it not only to the Sunday Morning Service but also to the afternoon Service if there was a sermon. Many of the afternoon Services consisted only of Scripture reading, singing and prayer, to which, in some instances, was added a short meditation. Mostly, however, these Services were for the instruction of the young. The Scriptures were read, and this and the Catechism were expounded, after which the young were examined in the presence of the congregation. This ended with singing and prayer for the deepening of the faith, for increase in the knowledge of the young, and for the extension of the kingdom.

Service-Books of the Sixteenth Century

The first Service-Book, similar to a Scottish Book of Common Order, is Gaspar Heltai's *Agenda*. It is a compilation of some widely used liturgical forms from the first decades of the Reformation in Hungary, and provides Orders for baptism, marriage, burial and the visitation of prisoners. There is no Order for Holy Communion.

The second is Peter Meliusz Juhasz's *Book of Sermons* (1577), which

contains Orders for baptism, the Lord's Supper, marriage, and visitation of the sick. It also provides a form for divorce.

The third is Gal Huszar's *Hymnbook*, the only extant copy of which is in the Theological College at Eperjes. It is not a book of common order, but provides liturgical material in the form of graduals and hymns.

The fourth is Peter Bornemisza's four booklets on the *Science of the Christian Faith*, in which he gives Orders for baptism, the Lord's Supper, marriage, and visitation of the sick.

The fifth is the *Book of Common Order of Keresztur*, which had its origin in the separation of the Lutherans and Calvinists, and was compiled in the interests of the latter.

The sixth is the *Book of Common Order* of Istvan Beythe, produced in 1582 under the influence of Meliusz.

Baptism

Several Synods issued regulations for the administration of baptism. The first Synod of Erdod (1545) in article six says, 'In the administration of the two sacraments we follow Christ's commandments and the forms of the early Church. We want that Christ's commandment be followed in our churches. Let the administration be in the native tongue, with full reverence and in a common rite. Those are doing great harm to the Church, whose opinion it is that there is no need for the baptism of infants and who think that original sin is of little importance.'

The Synod of Ovar (1554) answers the question as to why godparents are important and necessary. The Confession of Egervolgy (1561) sets forth the Reformed doctrine of baptism. From these and the decisions of the Synods of Hercegszollos and of Debreczen (1567) we have complete details for the administration of baptism.

Little children must be baptized.

The rite must be in the vernacular.

There must be a common rite.

The godparents are important and are responsible with the parents for the Christian education of the child.

Only an ordained minister may baptize.

Baptism must be in the presence of the congregation.

Baptism must be in the triune name.

Clean water and vessels must be used.

The whole body of the child is to be washed.

The Lord's Supper

The Confession of Egervolgy sets out the doctrine of the Lord's Supper on strict Calvinistic lines. From the different books of

common prayers, and incidental references, the most generally followed liturgical order is:

Penitential singing (between the end of the Sunday Morning Service and the Communion Service)
Invitation to penitence
Confession of sins with Lord's prayer
Singing (thanksgiving for forgiveness)
Words of Institution with exposition
Prayer for worthy reception
Questions
Absolution
Final warning (fencing of Table)
Prayer
Distribution of bread and wine (Scripture sentences read and singing meanwhile)
Prayer of thanksgiving with Lord's prayer
Benediction
Singing

This was the Lutheran Order. The first three items were omitted by the Calvinists because in the Reformed rite the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Faithful form a unity so these elements were already covered in the prayer of confession and for pardon with which the Liturgy of the Word had begun.

The Seventeenth Century

There was little modification of the liturgy during the seventeenth century. At the Synod of Csepreg, in 1591, Count Francis Nadasdy sought in vain to reconcile the Calvinistic superintendent, Istvan Beythe, and the Lutheran Severin Skulteti of Bartfeld on the question of the Lord's Supper. In the years that followed the clergy ranged themselves into two parties around the question of the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ. Each party appointed a Visitation of the churches in order to purify them in its own way, and there was no peace until the two parties separated from each other completely. The result of the separation of the Lutherans and Calvinists was that no need was now felt for concessions in the hope of living together. Instead of a uniting mixed liturgy the aim on the part of the Calvinists now was to establish the pure Reformed rite. The same applied to the Lutherans.

Two Service-Books are important in this period. The first by the north-danubian Reformed bishop, Janos Samarjai, contains many particulars which are Roman Catholic, for example, exorcism and 'egyhazi keles' (Scottish, 'mother's kirkin'). In the latter the mother

goes to the Church, where standing before the Communion Table she says a prayer of thanksgiving with the minister. This possibly was in the interests of living in harmony with the Lutherans. On the other hand, his book contains elements which are nearer to Calvin's Genevan rites than those based on Zurich, for example, the confession of sins by the whole congregation.

The second was the *Book of Common Worship* of Istvan Nyilas Milotai. This had a great influence on the Reformed rites which broke with everything Roman and Lutheran. Later it was received in Transylvania and the area east of the river Tisza. At the same time, it did not introduce anything that was new in that it conforms to what had been the practice of Debreczen up to that time, Debreczen then, as it is today, being regarded as the 'Reformed Jerusalem' in Hungary.

Several other Service-Books appear to have been published, but they had little influence compared with those of Samarjai and Milotai.

Many sermons of the seventeenth century survive, and in the middle of the century one can meet great preachers, such as, Istvan Cegledy, Gyorgy Csipkes Komaromi, Peter Alvinszi, Istvan Katona Gelei and Pal Medgyesi. The last three, in particular, are interesting. Alvinszi shows that a change has taken place from the beginning of the Reformation. His preaching consists in setting forth 'permanent truths' rather than the proclamation of 'good news'. Gelei's preaching was the proclamation of a Calvinistic dogmatism. Very different to these was that of Medgyesi, who was much influenced by the English puritans. He is completely subjective and his emphasis is on sin and the necessity for repentance.

The puritan movement in the Reformed Church in Hungary began in the middle of the seventeenth century as a reaction against a stereotyped orthodoxy. Its leaders, Janos Tolnai Dali and Pal Medgyesi, strove after the renewal of the whole Church in faith, morals and structure. Medgyesi's famous *Praxis Pietatis* was a translation from the English of Louis Bayley, and became one of the most popular books in the country. Through it there developed a peculiar Reformed piety of puritan type, characterized by its emphasis on simplicity, obedience to conscience, faithfulness in doing one's duty, and, above all, a view of life based on predestination.

The middle of the century also saw a great disputation about the use of a lectionary and preaching between Gelei, who followed a lectionary, and Medgyesi, who did not. Through puritan influence the Hungarian ministers ceased to use a lectionary and began selecting the Scripture readings freely.

In the field of Church singing there was also a change. Besides the various hymn-books, for the first time the use of the metrical psalter

becomes widespread. Prior to this Hungarian versions of the psalter had been in prose, or if metrical had suffered from various defects of rhyme or rhythm, consequently the psalms were displaced by other chants or hymns. This led Albert Scenci Molnar, who also was the first to translate into Hungarian Calvin's *Institutes*, to undertake the task. Taking the French-German metrical psalter of Marot-Beza-Sobwasser as his basis, he tackled it with such enthusiasm that he completed the work in three months. This psalter, published in 1607, to the present day enjoys a unique popularity not only in the Reformed Church but throughout Hungarian protestantism. Along with Molnar's verse the original French melodies of Louis Bourgeois also won a lasting victory. This psalter is still revered in Hungary because in the years of persecution it strengthened the faith of the people and helped them to remain loyal to it. It completely supplanted the *Old Gradual* of prince Gyorgy Rakoczi I, edited by Janos Dajka Kesern and Istvan Katona Gelei, which had contained psalms, hymns and chants for singing by the minister and choirmaster, but not for the congregation.

The Hungarian puritans also sought reform of liturgical practice, for example, they objected to the elevation of the cup at the eucharist and left it out, and they declared that baptism should take place only at the Sunday Service and be by the minister in the congregation. This, of course, had been ordered by the Synod of Debreczen (1567), but few had obeyed with the result that baptism was generally administered in the home.

The Synod of Szatmarnemeti is the most significant of this period. It approved the use of Molnar's psalter. It re-enacted the decree of the Synod of Debreczen concerning baptism, but as 'baptism out of the church' was permitted as an exception no great change took place. Synods had frequently discussed communion of the sick without arriving at any final decision. Now it was agreed unanimously that the Lord's Supper may be administered at private houses only in the case where there has been a celebration in the Church that day, that it shall only be for those who when in good health used to take it in church, and that as well as the minister and the sick person it is necessary that 'the small congregation of Christ be present'. It was customary at burial services to have 'a funeral sermon in rhyme' delivered by the choirmaster. This practice was condemned.

Reformed worship, during this century, undoubtedly made great strides towards consolidation and clarification, but the desired unity of structure did not take place in spite of the fact that the synods laid great emphasis upon its desirability. The principal reason for this failure was the dismembered state of the Church, which made it impossible to publish a book which would have produced a unified form. Normally in a Church-district there were as many liturgical

forms as the Books of Common Worship the various ministers had in their possession.

The Eighteenth Century

During the century of Hapsburg oppression (1715-89), Bibles, hymn-books and all foreign theological literature were confiscated. Religious liberty was non-existent. Consequently there were no great changes in worship.

Only three Books of Common Worship were published during this century. Gyorgy Zovanyi, bishop or superintendent in Debreczen, published one in 1733, as did Jozsef Karman, minister of Losoncz, in 1787, and Istvan Nagy Szerenszi, minister of Gyor, in 1788. None of them, however, came into common use. The ministers rather used the older books, but because these were becoming obsolete and fewer in number they, for the most part, re-wrote for themselves the older Books of Common Worship making their own additions and omissions. So arose almost an anarchy of liturgical usage. In vain the synods attempted to prevent this, but it was impossible as they could not create a unified book owing to there being no unity among the territories, and also because even had they been able to do so publication was impossible owing to State censorship until the Edict of Toleration of Jozsef II in 1790. Even then the problem had to remain untackled because the Church was now so occupied with practical problems, such as building new churches and organizing the Church's life.

In such circumstances, even though they did not come into common use, there was a need for the works of Zovanyi, Karman and Szerenszi. Zovanyi's book was based on the principles of Milotai's *Book of Common Worship* and was planned to achieve a unified form, but it was unsuccessful. Karman's work reproduced the practice of Losoncz. Szerenszi's book was a copy with a few minor alterations of one by Geregeli Kis, who was professor in the theological college in Szekelyudvarhely. It had the best chance of success in that it was adopted as a basis for worship by the Reformed Church in Transylvania. At best, however, these books must be seen as experiments preparing the way for the future establishment of a common form of worship.

In Hungary itself no Books of Sermons were published during the eighteenth century until the Edict of Toleration (1790), and in Transylvania only a few. Even so, the extant evidence shows that there was a great change in the content and mode of preaching. At the beginning of the century the sermons were dominated by Calvinistic orthodoxy, but from mid-century the influence of rationalism is very pronounced. This may be partly the influence of theology

from abroad, but more likely stems from the situation in which the Church found itself. During the years of Hapsburg oppression the Church had to choose whether it should live 'lamenting its lot' or seek, within the narrow limits of activity permitted to it by the State, to deepen its own spiritual life and strengthen the things that remained. The Church wisely adopted the latter course, but this naturally led to an inward-looking religion and a rationalizing approach.

One of the Church's greatest problems of this period concerned baptism. The so-called *Carolina resolutio* (1731) in article five states, 'Protestants . . . are . . . in ecclesiastical matters subject to the arch-deacon of the Roman Catholic Church, who shall be bound to take care that the baptisms are properly administered, and that the clergy are properly instructed in the nature of baptism.' One of the reasons for this was that Gyorgy Csipkes Komaromi's translation of the New Testament read 'baptizing them *for the name* of the Father, etc.' instead of (as in Karolyi's), '*in the name* of . . .'. For this reason this translation was banned. Not satisfied with banning the book, the Roman Catholic Hapsburg State issued the above decree. In the morass of Roman Catholic and Hapsburg brutality following 1731, hundreds of instances occur of the Reformed being harassed and forced to accept baptism at the hands of priests.

An interest in Confirmation appears in this period. While, in the strict sense, the rite is unknown there are references pointing to its introduction. In sermons there are references to 'how it is a right and good custom among our brethren in Reformed Churches abroad'. Also, the minister in the sermon of preparation for Holy Communion, recommended to the sponsors that they should teach the young the doctrines of the Reformed Church and the meaning of the Lord's Supper, or send them to him if they are not able to do so. Istvan Gombaszi in an appendix to one of his sermons writes, 'I prepare the young in every week of penitence by prayer and instruction in the catechism for coming to the Lord's Table. On Sundays (and when time permits) I do it in the church in the presence of the whole congregation for the sake of those who missed it in their younger years'. It would appear that Gombaszi's practice was widely followed.

On the other hand, in Debreczen a *Short Catechetical Instruction* was published in 1751 'for those . . . who wish to come to the Lord's Table for the first time, and especially for those who have no opportunity to learn more fully Christian teaching in school'. This was in harmony with the practice at the beginning of the seventeenth century, according to which 'those young people, or any church member, who wishes to partake of the Lord's Supper for the first time let them come before it to the minister for instruction'. The *Short Catechetical Instruction* of 1751, however, shows that the young were allowed to

learn it by rote and to repeat it 'in the presence of God and the congregation as a confession of faith', after which the minister led the congregation in prayer, and the candidates were asked 'to strengthen this confession in their future life by taking the Lord's Supper at every celebration'.

A devout people is a worshipping people, so, in passing, it should be noted that this period of persecution produced the most popular devotional book of the Hungarian Reformed Church. Many and vivid are the pictures drawn of individual Christians after a hard day's work returning to their homes, reading the Scriptures and finding spiritual nourishment in 'old Szikszai', the frequently published *Christian Instructions and Prayers* by Gyorgy Szikszai, which first appeared in 1786.

The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The years 1790–1848 proved to be a period of great revival and reconstruction in the Hungarian Reformed Church. Attendance at public worship was good. Sermons were carefully prepared. Baptism, except in cases of sickness, was administered in church in the face of the congregation. First communicants were carefully instructed, and holy communion was administered with dignity.

The failure of the War of Independence (1848) was followed by a spiritual decline. So serious was this that the four Church-districts in Hungary, along with the Transylvanian Church, called in 1881 a united Synod in Debreczen. This was the first such united meeting. It united the Reformed Church of Hungary with the Reformed Church of Transylvania, and completely reorganized the constitution, structure and life of the Church, with the result that by 1910 'the Reformed Church in Hungary had taken her rightful place amongst the living Churches of Christendom'. Soon, however, the Church had to face the disaster caused by the First World War (1914–18). Its effect upon the Hungarian Reformed Church may be judged from the report of Gesza Takaro, minister of Budapest, to the World Presbyterian Alliance in 1921: 'In our last report . . . we stated that we had 2,086 congregations. Now, after the enforcement of the peace treaties, we have but 1,008. This means that more than half of our constituents have been torn away from their mother, the Reformed Church of Hungary. Out of the five ecclesiastical districts, one, the Transylvania district, is lost in its entirety; the remainder is mutilated more or less'. Such events, while producing solidarity of spirit and outlook, do not provide much opportunity for taking decisions on the structure and content of worship. However, in 1929, the General Conventus, the highest Court of government, in the Reformed Church of Hungary, introduced a new Book of Order,

which took into consideration the rich historical traditions of the Church. This *Book of Common Worship* was first published in 1930, and a revised edition in 1942. It is in use in Hungarian Reformed Churches in Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, America and Brazil. The Hungarian Reformed Church in Roumania, however, uses a different book. So, for the first time, we may say, the Reformed Church in Hungary had a unified Book of Common Worship.

Limitation of space makes it impossible to give a detailed analysis of this book, so let it suffice to set out the structural outline for the Sunday Morning Service, Baptism, Confirmation, and the Lord's Supper.

Morning Service for Sundays and Festivals

- Singing (hymn or paraphrase)
- Singing (psalm)
- Invocation
- First Reading (usually OT, but not necessarily)
- Prayer
- Singing
- Second Reading (NT)
- Sermon (based on NT)
- Prayer
- Lord's prayer
- Offering
- Benediction (apostolic or aaronic)
- Announcements
- Singing

Order for Baptism

- Invocation
- Sermon on the Warrant for Baptism (Matt. 28:18-20)
- Vows of parents and/or godparents
- Apostles' Creed (said by the congregation)
- Prayer
- Act of baptism in the triune name
- Prayer of blessing

Order for Confirmation

- Singing
- Prayer (at the Lord's Table)
- Sermon on Confirmation
- Vows of candidates
- Confirmation by laying on of hands
- Declaration of admission to full Church membership

Prayer
Benediction
Distribution of Bibles and certificates
Singing

The rite for the baptism of adults on profession of faith includes confirmation.

Order for the Lord's Supper

Apostolic greeting
Sermon on Communion
Prayer of confession (from Calvin's Genevan rite)
Absolution
Invitation to the Lord's Table
Prayer of consecration
Distribution of bread and wine (psalms sung meanwhile)
Short address after reception
Prayer of thanksgiving
Lord's prayer
Benediction (apostolic or aaronic)
Singing

JOHN M. BARKLEY, Assembly's College, Belfast.