

MISUNDERSTOOD REFORMATION

Foreword

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(Abstract) In regard to the numerous inaccurate definitions and misunderstandings in the Transylvanian public consciousness concerning the meaning of the Reformation, in the following we are intending to clarify them with some explanatory sentences. Many people like to call the Reformation as a religious reform. Our church historians used this word as well, and even our confessor forefathers were talking about old faith and new faith preachers.

The definition is incorrect, even if they considered it accurate to define the meaning of the Reformation. The historiography of the communist era liked to call the Reformation as the class war of two groups of the society, saying that it was a “revolution presented in a vestment”. Presenting the phenomenon this way means not understanding it the least. It can be read, in some places, that the Reformation is the ecclesiastical consequence of humanism and Renaissance. As its name is referring to it, humanism focuses on humanity, i.e. on humans, while in the case of the Reformation humans are removed from the pedestal and God takes their place. It is also said, that reformation was a completely new initiation, a final secession, break away and separation from the medieval church, and from everything that reminds of it. In Transylvania the bodies of the church resulting from the reformation did not separate, but were reorganized and renewed based on the same structure of the Christian qualities. Therefore, the Reformation was not a separation achieved by following plans. Gáspár Heltai’s definition is surprisingly and unexpectedly simple. In the seventies of the 16th century Gáspár Heltai described the meaning of the Reformation in the following brief sentence: Hither and yon (i.e.: here and there) the preaching of God started to lightning. Reformation, thus, is preaching, and whether we believe or not in preaching, we have to reckon with it as a 16th century historical phenomenon. The simplifying conception, which was avoiding facing the internal content of the reformation, was haunting for a long time: from the heart of the reformation come the conscious language fostering, language purification, language renewing, the consciousness towards unified official language and national consciousness, the education etc.

It is my conviction that without a strong commitment for the mission of preaching the development of an appropriate language infrastructure, first for verbal communication, then later for the modernization of the Bible, would not have started. Their motivation could have been this: if God considered the Hungarian language worthy for using it, then we have to make our national language worthy for the preaching of God, and make it capable for transferring his message accurately. The reformation completed the Renaissance’s and the humanism’s motto regarding the ideal human (*sapiens et eloquens*) with a very essential word which originates from the already mentioned essence of the reformation. This word is *pietas*, and the motto of the Reformation was created like this: *sapiens atque eloquens pietas*, i.e. wise and eloquently speaking piety. The base, source and reserve of pious life is the Preaching that teaches about the substance of God’s being, and its material, tangible form, the Bible. It was used in schools: pupils learned reading from it and the experienced scholars developed the curriculum based on it. The Reformation, thus, is not a religious reform, not a movement, not a separation, not a cultural movement, not the education of the people, not a native language fostering, not even the transformation, renovation or reformation of something, the substance of the Reformation is simply the preaching.

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