

## PREFACE

The history of Hungarian Protestantism, and in it that of the Reformed Church, is very little known in English speaking countries. It is almost like a *lacuna* in the general text of the story of Evangelical Christianity. Due to the alleged difficulty of the Magyar language, few Western church historians ever tried to study and examine the primary sources and documents of Protestantism in Hungary. This fact explains the scarcity of other than Hungarian language publications in this field. One could easily hold the English language books of this nature in one hand. The first complete Hungarian Protestant Church History ever published in English was printed in 1854. It was written by the Rev. George Bauboffer, Lutheran Pastor of Buda, and translated into English by the Rev. J. Craig, D. D. Its exact title is: "History of the Protestant Church in Hungary, from the beginning of the Reformation to 1850; with special reference to Transylvania." The preface was written by J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, D. D., the famous Geneva church historian. The book is a mine of information.

The second work is "A Short Account of the Hungarian Church", by Prof. Louis Csiky, published in 1877, and the third is the "History of the Reformed Church of Hungary", by Prof.

Francis Balogh, one time professor of Church History at the Theological Seminary at Debrecen. It is a very condensed translation by the late Rev. Louis Nanassy, D. D., and was published as a reprint from the Reformed Church Review in 1907. This booklet of 66 pages provides but a mere glance at the colorful history of the Hungarian Reformed Church.

In addition to these three works covering the field of Protestant Church History in Hungary, a few monographs in English were also published, the enumeration of which we may omit.

The very first modern attempt to give an accurate and usable version of the History of the Hungarian Reformed Church is represented by this present volume. Its co-authors are Mihaly Buesay, Endre Toth, Zoltan Varga and Sandor Biro, a brilliant ensemble of younger church historians. Their voluminous book, "A Magyar Református Egyház Története" (History of the Hungarian Reformed Church), was published in 1949. It was prepared and edited under the guidance of the Rt. Rev. Imre Revesz, Th. D., a former professor of Church History at the University of Debrecen and a former Bishop of the Trans-Tibiscan Church District, who is the foremost church historian of Hungary. The preface was also written by him.

The translation and the abridgement of the book was prepared by Prof. George A. F. Knight of Dunedin, New Zealand. Before World War II, between 1935 and 1940, Professor Knight was a

minister-in-charge of the Scotland (Jewish) Mission in Budapest where he learned Hungarian (and married a Hungarian lady). From 1941 to 1946, he was minister of a parish in Glasgow. At the present time, since 1947, he is professor of Old Testament Studies in Knox College, Dunedin, New Zealand. It is interesting to note here that Professor Knight is a great-grandson of the Rev. Alexander Somerville who conducted a great evangelistic mission in Hungary in 1887-88. This mission was greatly influential in the renewal of the life of the Reformed Church in modern times.

After the War, Professor Knight returned to Hungary and spent some time there. This is what he writes of the post-war Church: "I have seen with my own eyes the gallant witness that the Magyar Reformed Church has made under the Communist regime. It is my conviction that there are many Church men in the West who would like to know something about this very living Church."

In order to make the "Church men in the West" "know something about this very living Church", he translated, in a concise form, Bishop Revesz's book: "History of the Hungarian Reformed Church", published in 1950. The last chapter, bringing the story up-to-date, was written by Professor Knight.

The publication of the present book was made possible by the generosity of the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America. This Federation is a fraternal organization established

in 1896, with headquarters in Washington, D. C. Beside furnishing its members with life and sickness insurance, the Federation, from its very inception, has been the foremost cultural factor in the life of Americans of Hungarian extraction. In the spirit of the highest ideals of the Reformed Church in Hungary, the Federation has been instrumental in alleviating misery at home and abroad by donating generously to every worthy cause, and in spreading light by its numerous publications in educational, literary and ecclesiastical fields. The present "History of the Hungarian Reformed Church" is a momentous milestone in its cultural activities.

The editing of the book was done under the aegis of the American Hungarian Reformed Ministerial Association embracing ninety members in the two Americas. The Ministerial Association is grateful to the author and translator of the book and, especially, to the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America for publishing this very timely history of a confessing Church.

May this story "of a very living Church" enhance the glory of the Savior of mankind!

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