

A reform útján. Katolikus megújulás Nyugat-Magyarországon [On the Path of Reform: Catholic Revival in Western Hungary]. By István Fazekas. Győr: Győri Egyházmegyei Levéltár, 2014. 339 pp.

Where lay the end of *Konfessionalisierung*? This geographical and thematic question always comes up in new publications on Early Modern Church history. The historiography of the theory of *Konfessionalisierung* has sparked substantial debate over the course of the past two decades.¹ One of the main objections was the overly narrow focus on the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, i.e. the perspective of upper echelons. It is this hardly surprising that István Fazekas treats the theory of *Konfessionalisierung* carefully and prefers to use other terminology: the terms *reform* and *Catholic revival* figure in the title of the book, and he uses these concepts alongside *Counter Reformation* throughout the essays. This approach derives from his primary research interest: the changing stance of the local level of ecclesiastical society, the parish priests. He concentrates on the local communities and their priests, i.e. the very people who constituted the social group that merited more emphasis according to critics of the notion of *Konfessionalisierung*.

The geographical center of the book is the Diocese of Győr, which is situated in the western strip of what was the Kingdom of Hungary. Partly occupied by the Ottomans in the 1540s, the region was in a distinctive position, close to the Habsburg capital, Vienna. The important border defense line had run through the diocese, transforming the former bishopric seat, Győr, into a key fortress.² Some parts of the diocese had been in the hands of the Habsburgs since the fifteenth century, which made the hereditary province of Lower-Austria a secular authority in the region, while the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the bishops was left untouched.

1 For a basic summary of the theory see Wolfgang Reinhard, “Was ist katholische Konfessionalisierung?” in *Die katholische Konfessionalisierung. Wissenschaftliches Symposium der Gesellschaft zur Herausgabe des Corpus Catholicorum und des Vereins für Reformationgeschichte 1993*, ed. Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1995), 419–52. The most important viewpoints of the critical reception of the theory were collected recently in: Ute Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalization,” in *Reformation and Early Modern Europe. A Guide to Research*, ed. David M. Whitford (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2008), 136–57.

2 Pálffy Géza, *A császárváros védelmében. A győri főkapitányság története 1526–1598* [In Defense of the Imperial Capital. History of the Captain-Generalcy of Győr] (Győr: Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Levéltár, 1998).

Fazekas demonstrates the processes of revival in the various levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, from bishops to parish priests, to explore the roles of each in the reorganization of the diocese. He furthermore puts emphasis on the contributions of the religious orders and secular actors, mainly the landlords, to the missions and conversions among local communities. Since the Catholic reform movement needed a strong cultural background, he also examines literacy levels among the various groups of ecclesiastical actors, bishops, parish priests, religious orders and the different forms of baroque piety among the aristocracy and in local communities. Through his research, he offers a kind of overview of these actors, including their cultural background and decision-making processes.

Fazekas examines sources on the ecclesiastical society and its influence in the region. He tries to determine the extent to which individual groups of actors participated in the Catholic revival in the Diocese of Győr. Who played the leading role in western Hungary in the reform of the Catholic Church? Fazekas provides a complex analysis of a major metamorphosis of ecclesiastical society. As noted, he approaches the theory of Konfessionalisierung carefully, but he sheds light on its applicability in Hungary.

The revival had two parallel, linked sub-processes: internal reform and consolidation and an external movement in the form of Counter Reformation. The most important actors of the internal processes were the parish priests, as they were in direct contact with the local communities. Most of the essays deal with the situation of this lower level of ecclesiastical society. Fazekas' research is based on the canonical visitations between 1641–1741. First he draws the general outlines. Most of the parish priests originated from the diocese, so their language skills corresponded to the linguistic makeup of the population: speakers of Croatian, Hungarian and German. In the seventeenth century, due to the great shortage of priests, most of them finished their education after two years of theology. Personal career aspirations motivated priests to get positions in more prosperous parishes, such as the Archdeaconries of Locsmánd and Sopron. The parishes of Sopron, Csepreg and Sárvár were good springboards to the middle class of the ecclesiastical society.

Among the parish priests, the clerics from the Holy Roman Empire formed a separate group, which Fazekas has examined thoroughly. The parish priests fled from the Holy Roman Empire because of the Thirty Years War, and they served as an important reinforcement for the diocese, which needed to fulfill the

spiritual needs of the local German-speaking communities.³ But conflicts arose in linguistically mixed areas. The case of Martin Iwanschitz, the parish priest of Mannersdorf, sheds light on one such conflict. The conflict involved several factors, including language use, the unconventional expectations of the German landlord, and the Croatian parish priest's habit and financial circumstances.

Fazekas examined two other aspects of the parish priests. His observations concerning their erudition are based on book inventories. Most of the books served as resources for sermons and other, everyday activities of a parish priest, while the polemic literature was almost completely absent. Unfortunately, Fazekas did not compare the situation with that of other dioceses, such as the dioceses of Pécs or Várad (Oradea, Romania).⁴ He claims that on average in 1651 a parish priest in the Diocese of Győr had four or five books, compared with an average of ten volumes in France. The cultural background is reflected in the case study on the inheritance of Francesco Orsolini. Although he was in a privileged situation as the court priest of Palatine Pál Esterházy, his library was similar to that of the parish priests.

Fazekas also examines the circumstances of the dwellings of the parish priests. In the western part of the diocese they used the buildings of the former Protestant preachers as their residences. The quality of their lodgings improved with time. In the eighteenth century, tiered houses were built, but the upkeep of the buildings was a source of conflicts, mostly between the priests and the local communities. In general, the building plot was provided by the local landlord and the construction and upkeep of the parish house were the responsibility of the community. But in confessionally mixed communities or in parishes with more filial churches the distribution of the tasks became a subject of debate.

In contrast with the parish priests, with a few rare exceptions the bishops of Győr were unable to fulfill the expectations placed on them in the wake

3 In the early eighteenth century, the German settlers also needed German parish priests in the Diocese of Pécs to solve the problem presented by the need to hold holy mass and confession in the native tongue of the parishoners: Zoltán Gózszy and Szabolcs Varga, "Kontinuitás és reorganizáció a pécsi egyházmegye plébániahálózatában a 18. század első évtizedeiben" [Continuity and Reorganization in the Parish Network of the Diocese of Pécs in the Early Eighteenth Century], *Századok* 143, no. 5 (2009): 1153.

4 Zoltán Gózszy and Szabolcs Varga, "Papi műveltség a Pécsi Egyházmegyében a 18. század első felében" [Clerical Erudition in the Diocese of Pécs in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century], *Jelenkor* 54, no. 5 (2011): 509–14; András Emödi, *A nagyváradai egyházmegye alsópapságának könyvkultúrája a korai újkor végén. 18. századi plébániai könyvjegyzékek, személyi gyűjtemények fennmaradt kötetei* [The Book Culture of the Parish Priests in the Diocese of Nagyvárad at the End of the Early Modern Age. Eighteenth-Century Parish Book Inventories and Surviving Volumes from Personal Collections] (Szeged: Szegedi Tudományegyetem, 2013).

of the Council of Trent in large part because of their official duties, often as royal chancellors. Bishop György I. Draskovich called a diocesan synod to Szombathely in 1579 to put the decisions of the great council into practice in his diocese. Fazekas identifies the tenure in the position of the younger Bishop György II. Draskovich as a turning point because Draskovich was able to reside in his diocese without having to serve governmental functions. Draskovich was able to implement effective measures to promote the revival. Fazekas also examines the life of the Bishop György Széchényi, who later served as Archbishop of Esztergom. Because of his long life and his special aptitude for economics, Széchényi was able to establish a series of ecclesiastical institutions (Jesuit colleges, seminaries, academy, etc.), and this made him a significant figure of the Catholic revival in Hungary.

Fazekas admits already in the introduction that he has not included the middle class of ecclesiastical society, the members of the Chapter of Győr, in his study, although he mentions the generally ambivalent attitudes of the chapters to the reforms of Trent.⁵ One case study on the career of Máté Szenttamásy, Provost of Csorna and nominee for the position of Bishop of Transylvania, does something to fill this gap. Fazekas contends that Szenttamásy also promoted the revival, but only on a limited scale by providing financial support for literature and a foundation for Transylvanian seminarists in Nagyszombat (Trnava, Slovakia). Although Fazekas doesn't examine the role of the chapter in any depth, new research on members of this ecclesiastic group suggests that they had limited opportunity to participate in the Catholic reforms.⁶

Due to the absence of the bishops and the weakness of the middle class of ecclesiastical society, the secular landlords gained important roles in the other sub-process of Catholic revival, the Counter Reformation. In the early seventeenth century, almost without exception the most important aristocratic families were Lutheran. After their re-Catholicization, however, they became the protagonists of the revival through the “landlords’ Counter Reformation,” as Fazekas calls it. This model is based on the theory of Katalin Péter, who examined the activity of the Jesuits in Sárospatak under the protection of the

5 For example, the Chapter of Győr raised objections to the settlement of Jesuits in Győr, see Zsófia Kádár, “Jesuitische Kolleggründungen im westungarischen Raum in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts. Die Beispiele von Győr/Raab und Sopron/Ödenburg,” in *Frühneuezeitforschung in der Habsburgermonarchie. Adel und Wiener Hof – Konfessionalisierung – Siebenbürgen*, ed. István Fazekas, Martin Scheutz, Csaba Szabó, and Thomas Winkelbauer (Vienna: Institut für Ungarische Geschichtsforschung in Wien, 2013), 155–70.

6 Antal Molnár, *A bátai apátság és népei a török korban* [The Abbey of Bata and its People in the Ottoman Era], METEM Könyvek 56 (Budapest: METEM, 2014).

re-Catholicized Rákóczi family. She refers to the pre-1670 era as the “landlords’ proselytizing Counter Reformation.”⁷

Fazekas first examines the general outlines of the landlords’ Counter Reformation. The landlords fell back on the religious orders, mostly Jesuits and Franciscans. Although the first phase of Catholicization was more peaceful, later violent tactics were used, for example the summoning of soldiers and the deportation of the resisters. In another study Fazekas, makes the focus more narrow and examines the re-Catholicization of the villages in the manor of Kismarton (Eisenstadt) and Fraknó (Forchenstein). This region was acquired by the Esterházy family, who successfully promoted the “landlords’ Counter Reformation” in it. The results of their efforts, however, were questionable. Visitation records suggest that local communities became Catholic in appearance only, and they preserved many Lutheran traditions, This would suggest, as indeed Fazekas’ research indicates, that the phenomenon of *Kryptoprotetantismus* observed in Austria temporarily existed in a specific form in western Hungary as well, although recent studies have rejected the idea of any serious presence of *Kryptoprotetantismus* in Hungary.⁸

The Missio Segneriana therefore still had work to do among the seemingly Catholic communities in the early eighteenth century. The primary purpose of the mission was to strengthen the faith of the Catholic communities and only then to convert the Protestants. Although the mission was successful and had significant effects in Hungary,⁹ when folklore research began in Hungary in the nineteenth century scholars still found signs of Lutheran song traditions among Catholic believers. Fazekas points out the important role of the religious orders, mostly Jesuits. Bishop Miklós Dallos, who was a successful diplomat of the Habsburgs, founded the Jesuit college in Győr and set up a foundation for a diocesan seminary.¹⁰ Fazekas also examines the rich collection of the library

7 Katalin Péter, “A jezsuiták működésének első szakasza Sárospatakon” [The First Period of the Jesuits’ Activity in Sárospatak], in *Az értelmiség Magyarországon a 16–17. században – Die Intelligenz in Ungarn in dem 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. István Zombori (Szeged: Csongrád Megyei Múzeumok Igazgatósága, 1988), 103–17.

8 Rudolf Leeb, Martin Scheutz, and Dietmar Weigl, “Mühsam erkämpfte Legalität und widerstrebende Duldung. Der Protestantismus in der Habsburgermonarchie im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert,” in *Geheimprotestantismus und evangelische Kirche in der Habsburgermonarchie und im Erzstift Salzburg (17./18. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Rudolf Leeb, Martin Scheutz, and Dietmar Weigl, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 51 (Vienna: R. Oldenbourg, 2009), 7–24, here 11, 14.

9 Orsolya Száraz, *Paolo Segneri (1624–1694) és magyarországi recepciója* [Paolo Segneri (1624–1694) and his Reception in Hungary] (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, 2012).

10 Kádár, “Jesuitische Kolleggründungen”.

of the Jesuit college of Győr. Although the library was broken up after 1773, Fazekas concludes on the basis of contemporaneous book lists that it contained 4,000–4,500 volumes of some 2,800 books. That also indicates the role of the Jesuit college as an important cultural center of the diocese.

These missions shed light on popular religious rituals and practices, but Fazekas also examines how the Hungarian aristocracy confirmed their re-Catholicization symbolically. The Baroque restoration of the shrine of the Blessed Virgin in Mariazell gave the Hungarian nobility an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the Catholic Church and the Habsburg dynasty. A series of side-chapels were built by Hungarian aristocrats and prelates in the new church, which became an imperial shrine and symbol of the Baroque idea of *Pietas Austriaca*. But these chapels, with their altarpieces portraying the saints of the first Hungarian dynasty, the Árpád family (Saint Stephen, Saint Emeric, Saint Ladislaus and Saint Elizabeth), also emphasized Hungarian sovereignty within the Habsburg Empire. Support for pious Baroque literature served a double purpose: it was testimony to the booming Catholicism of the Hungarian aristocracy and it represented this aristocracy as the heir to the medieval, sovereign Kingdom of Hungary.¹¹ Fazekas examines the ex-Jesuit Márton Nagyfalusy's translation of the famous *Intelmek* (Admonitions) of Saint Stephen I to his son, Saint Emeric, from this perspective. Nagyfalusy transformed the story into a parable for the relationship between the re-Catholicized, wealthy Hungarian aristocrat Ádám Batthyány and his son.

With his complex analysis, Fazekas shows that although the bishops participated in the revival as founders of key institutes (Jesuit colleges, seminaries, etc.), the greatest burdens lay on the shoulders of the parish priests and missionaries. The Catholic aristocracy represented the most powerful source of support for the Catholic revival. Fazekas points out, with regards to this, two of the limits of the *Konfessionalisierung*-theory in Hungary. A state-supported Counter Reformation only began in the 1670s, and it was preceded by the landlords' Counter Reformation, which regained positions for the Catholic Church that had been lost during the Reformation. The Protestant preachers were persecuted, and their places were filled with Catholic parish priests. Although the local communities seemingly changed their religion, the priests found themselves in hostile surroundings. The Jesuit missions therefore had a

11 On the problems of the integration of the Hungarian aristocracy into the supranational nobility of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Habsburg Court of Vienna see: Géza Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 71–88.

very important supportive role for local priests. This observations harmonize with the findings of Antal Molnár, who also examined the applicability of the theory of Konfessionalisierung in the southern region of the Diocese of Eger, which was under Ottoman occupation.¹² Of course, the landlords' Counter Reformation did not take place in the Ottoman-occupied territories, but the parish priests and Jesuit missions played the same successful role in this region as they did in western Hungary. But Fazekas' book is the first to deal with the Catholic revival of a region in Hungary that was under Habsburg rule. His research has yielded results similar to those of Marc R. Forster, who in his study of religious life in southwest Germany points out that in a case of weak secular or ecclesiastical authority, the Catholic revival took place because of the efforts and endeavors of parish priests.¹³

After several decades of Communism, scholarship on church history was revived in Hungary in the 1980s and then became even more vibrant after 1989. Fazekas is a member of the first generation in late-socialist Hungary to take an interest in Early Modern Church history. As this generation had no predecessors on whom to draw, they had to find their own way. Fazekas' early research on the history of the Catholic revival in the Diocese of Győr became an exemplary model for the next generation of historians. The title of the book (which contains his most important essays concerning church history), "On the Path of Reform," has a double meaning in his case. These essays show not just the process of Catholic revival in the Diocese of Győr, but also the revival of the study of Church history in Hungary.

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12 Antal Molnár, *Mezőváros és katolicizmus. Katolikus egyház az egri püspökség hódoltsági területein a 17. században* [Market Town and Catholicism. The Catholic Church in the Ottoman-occupied Territories of the Bishopric of Eger in the Seventeenth Century], METEM Könyvek 49 (Budapest: METEM, 2005).

13 Marc R. Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque. Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550–1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).