

Abstract of the Thesis PhD of Gabriella Hubert

Hungarian Protestant Congregational Singing in the 16th and the 17th Century  
(History and Collection of Data)

Szeged

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\* For the differences in German and English hymnology terms see *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, hrsg. Ludwig FINSCHER, 1-9. Bd., Kassel etc., 1994-1998; BLUME, Friedrich, *Geschichte der evangelischen Kirchenmusik*, 2. Aufl., Kassel etc., and its English transl.: *Protestant Church Music: A History*, by F. Ellsworth PETERSON et als., London, 1975; JULIAN, John, *A Dictionary of Hymnology, Setting Forth the Origin and History of Christian Hymns of All Ages and Nations*, vols. 1-2, 2th ed., New York, 1957; *The New Oxford History of Music 4: The Age of Humanism 1540-1630*, ed. Gerald ABRAHAM, London, 1968; *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley SADIE, 2th ed., London, etc., 2001.

## I

The subject of this thesis is a literary history of the Hungarian Lutheran (Evangelical-Lutheran), Reformed (Calvinist) and Unitarian (Antitrinitarian) congregational singing in the 16th and the 17th century. Some references and even analysis of a part of the sources given in this dissertation can be already found in the specialized literature. Nevertheless, a summary that eliminates the contingency of the references and systematizes the different types of data, had never been born before. My thesis is intended to be exhaustive in collecting and classifying all the relevant sources of the 16th and 17th century. Certain data are analyzed in detail, others are only mentioned – however, this collection of data comprehends the whole history of the Hungarian congregational singing. I give examples also to the European context of the Hungarian congregational singing.

The history of the congregational song<sup>\*\*</sup> takes up a significant part in the history of Hungarian poetry of the 16th and the 17th century, in terms of quantity as well: we know about approximately 350 songs created in the 16th century and some 300 songs that came into being in the 17th century, and we have to take into consideration the rhymed translations of the *Psalter*<sup>\*\*\*</sup> as well. In addition to the verbal spreading of the congregational songs, the printed songbooks<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> have also taken a prominent part in their expansion. Considering that the congregational song is a literary genre of the *registre popularisant*, it is essential to examine almost every appearance of a certain song or a certain group of songs, if we would like to analyze them. On the other hand, such interpretation cannot be given without a profound knowledge of the songbooks in point and their relations to one another. That is why this thesis emphasizes the problem of the printed songbook which is a very important type of source, raising many questions. It would have been impossible to write the history of congregational songbooks of the 16th and the 17th century without the general works on book history (e.g. *RMNy*), poetry history (e. g. *RPHA*) and music history (e. g. *Magyarország zenetörténete II: 1541-1686*), all of them published in the last few decades.

I treat the history of congregational singing until 1700. (At the end of the 17th century, and at the beginning of the 18th, important changes were to begin in the singing of all the three Protestant denominations.)

## II

The first two chapters collect and analyzes all the data in connection with the singing of congregational songs in Hungarian at the worships (divine services) and with the songs themselves. In the centre of the collection of data and the analysis (supplied with references to the specialized literature) you can find the requirements prescribed to the pastors, to the editors of the songbooks, to the hymnwriters, to the members of the congregation and the European context of these requirements.

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<sup>\*\*</sup> See also: Congregational hymn, congregational lied, congregational choral, spiritual song, etc.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> See also: Metrical Psalter, the Psalter of David in metre, rhymed Hungarian version of the Psalms, etc.

<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> See also: Hymnal, congregational Hymnbook, etc.



(The most significant texts can be found in transliteration in the appendix 3.) The third chapter gives a survey of 70 editions of printed songbooks.

I treat the congregational songs from two different points of view: on the one hand, from the narrower point of view of literary history, and on the other, from the wider one of pragmatics. In the first case, my approach is philological (bibliographical) and poetical (a history of literary genres). In the second case, the phenomenon of singing (the functioning of the congregational songs in the church life) is placed into the centre. This dissertation approaches the documents from the points of view of literary history, church history and songbook-history, rather than from the point of view of musicology. All the three chapters follow the method of historical poetics and interpret the sources from the point of view of the receptor (namely the contemporary receptor of the congregational songs) who takes a prominent part in the literary process.

### III

The first chapter defines the following types of source (all giving evidence of Protestant singing in Hungarian in the 16th and the 17th century): congregational songs; different types of songbooks; orders of the songs (drawn up in accordance with the pericop or not); volumes of sermons; other theological works (dogmatics, commentaries, disputes); confessions, decrees of synods, agendas; other sources (records, diaries etc.); Catholic sources on the Protestant singing; Protestant sources from the period after 1700. Except for the single songs and the last two types of source, my thesis is intended to be exhaustive in giving all the contemporary works in which any precious data can be found in connection with the singing.

The second chapter, supplying the adequate sources, reconstructs the system of requirements concerning the congregational singing and the song-writing of the age: examples of the Bible and other authorities; where and on which occasions the congregational songs were sung; who has sung these songs; which were the Hungarian hymns to be sung; manner, mission, benefit and effect of the singing; prohibitions (prohibited secular songs); other data from literary history, musicology, church history, book history. The Hungarian authors have expounded their views in accordance with their foreign education and reading, but in an original way. The same clichés and examples that appear in the 16th century in the foreign commentaries of the Bible, '*loci communes*', prefaces to songbooks and works treating the prayers, can be found in the Hungarian works as well – generally without any explicit references. In many cases, certain views can be traced back to the Fathers of the Christian Church. Our authors approach the question of singing from a practical point of view rather than from a theoretical one. Two theological works from the 16th century: the writings of Péter Laskai Csókás and István Szegedi Kis (both of them have used the *Loci communes* of Petrus Martyr Vermiglius) can be considered exceptions. We can observe a major change at Puritan theologians. Thanks to the translations, we can follow the influences exerted on them during their field trips in England and the Netherlands. My dissertation not only lists and systematizes the system of requirements, but at certain points it analyzes this system as well. After having examined (from the point of view of literary genres) the references to the Bible verses constituting the



theological bases of the singing, one can see (both in Hungarian and in foreign texts) that the concepts *psalmi* – *hymni* – *cantica spiritualia* appear both as synonyms and as denominations of three different kinds of genre. Regarding the influence exerted by the Puritanism on psalm-singing, I show the factors that have helped or hindered the late application of the Calvinian principles (only the hymns inspired and taught by the Holy Ghost are allowed to be sung) and the practical results of the debate between Orthodox' and Puritans. (The metrical *Psalter* became well-known by every Protestant denomination and in even almost every Hungarian-speaking area; at the same time the rich hymn-poetry of the 16th and the 17th century was not driven out of practice; but the liturgical singing (gregorian chant) went into a decline). In connection with the data concerning the musical instruments, I show the opinions of Calvinists and Unitarians relating to the organ, as well as the historical changes and the foreign context of these opinions. As for the beginnings of the Unitarian singing, the analysis of the part concerning the singing of *De falsa et vera unius Dei... cognitione...* reveals that at the beginning – for a very short time – Hungarian Antitrinitarians were Zwinglians from this point of view. The third chapter describes the history of the researches on congregational songbooks. It lists in chronological order the editions of songbooks in the 16th and 17th century (from among which 54 songbooks are congregational and 16 are funeral ones), and it analyzes them from bibliographical, literary historical and hymnological points of view. (The editions of Szenci Molnár's *Psalter* are touched only in a superficial way.) The manner of posing questions concerning the genre 'songbook', the classing structure and the depth of the descriptions in this thesis are often different from the manner we are accustomed to in *RMNy*. Here, the analysis of the editor's activity (selecting the songs) and of the point of view of the receptor (member of a denomination), takes a prominent part. In this thesis the particular characteristics of the songbooks and the relations among the different songbooks are defined more precisely than ever before. Regarding the influence of foreign countries on the Hungarian editing of songbooks, generally all we can give are similar examples from abroad, and not direct models. Instead of copying, we see individual initiative. Analyzing the songbooks led me to some more or less considerable results and to new questions. (Here are some examples: while analyzing the preface to the Bártfa Songbook from 1593 (*RMNy* 713), I have revealed that the two copies of this songbook (one is guarded at the OSZK, and the other is at the MTAKK) are not completely identical – we can distinguish two printing variants of the same edition; the first result of seeking out the two copies was the appearance of the Bártfa Songbook from 1647 (thought to be lost); after having surveyed the songbooks of Debrecen, I realized, that even in the cases of the less varying series of edition, the editors have used the preceding works in a creative way; the first printed appearances of the congregational songs written by Mihály Sztárai (deceased in 1575) prove, that we have to take into consideration not only the traffic of the manuscripts (containing one poem or more) but also the long time of that traffic before the publication of the song in printed form; the practice of „Ad notam”; the origins of editing the Unitarian songbooks in alphabetical order are not explored so far, etc.) Among the analysis of the 17th century, I lay the stress on the four-part Lőcse Collection from 1635 (*RMNy* 1628). This songbook, using the Debrecen and the Bártfa prints as sources, gives the most complete selection of Protestant hymns till then. As editors of this songbook, both the circle of Hungarian Lutheran



intellectuals of Eperjes or Albert Szenci Molnár (and maybe Imre Pécseli Király as well) have to be taken into account. There is one case where my dissertation gives an analysis song by song: in the case of *Zöngedöző Mennyei Kar* (Lőcse, 1692-1696). I recognized two characteristics of this songbook. 1st: The ZMK was meant to be a Lutheran addition to the Protestant Collections already existing (types Lőcse B). 2st: We can show the influence of Pietism in the history of reception of the ZMK. On grounds of the point of view of the receptor, my thesis distinguishes four periods in the summary following the analysis of the songbooks:

- (1) Songbooks come into being in the first period of the Reformation (1536-1566);
- (2) Denomination songbooks (1569-1642);
- (3) General Protestant songbooks (1635-1700, and still in the 18th century);
- (4) The second period of denomination songbooks (from the last decade of the 17th century).

So, the analysis of the songbooks published between 1645-1670 shows an appearance of mutual Protestant songbooks. Imre Újfalvi was the initiator of this new type of songbook that had been developed by the editors of the Lőcse Songbook of 1635, and Ábrahám Szenci Kertész (Várad) distributed it in its final form. As a result of this process, local variations appeared of the same songbook-editions, sometimes even the same printing house produced different variations. Every denomination could use these collections. (This unity was helped by common characteristics: structure, repertory of hymns, thematical and genre groups, typographical features, church historical and editorial background, orality). I close my work with a descent graph (not a tree but a network) and by three appendices: (1) Table on the Lőcse Songbook of 1635, (2) Table on the funeral hymns, (3) A critical text edition of the most important sources relevant from a point of view of the history of criticism.

Researchers studying certain questions of detail can find the necessary sources and the basic interpretations for their work in the collection of data and the appendix'. The analysis of the songs from the point of view of the literary genre can be utilized when publishing them in a future critical edition. The songbook history can give a basis for that critical edition work. Of course, this kind of literary history and book history can be of help also to the musicologists in refreshing data found in the international specialized literature (e.g. among the latest publications: the entries treating the congregational singing of *MGG*<sup>2</sup> and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*).

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