

REFORMATION 500



The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation at NSZL

In 2017, the entire world commemorated the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, a cultural movement of decisive influence that spread quickly in the 16th century due to the wide use of typography.

National Széchényi Library is a keeper of a rich collection of books related to the Reformation, including contemporaneous editions of the works of the first Protestant reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin, their translations dating from the succeeding centuries, and the biblical, theological and devotional literature inspired by their activity. Our collection of printed works and manuscripts of Hungarian Protestantism might be the largest in our country, as the national library has the mission of collecting, elaborating and preserving all the documents of Hungar-

ian language, published in Hungary or authored by Hungarians.

No wonder that the anniversary exhibitions nationwide borrowed a great number of items from our library. Most of them, almost 200, were displayed in the large-scale *Grammar and Grace* exhibition of the Hungarian National Museum, under the careful curatorship of János Heltai. As NSZL was the co-organizer of this grand event, no independent exhibition of ours was set up for the anniversary.

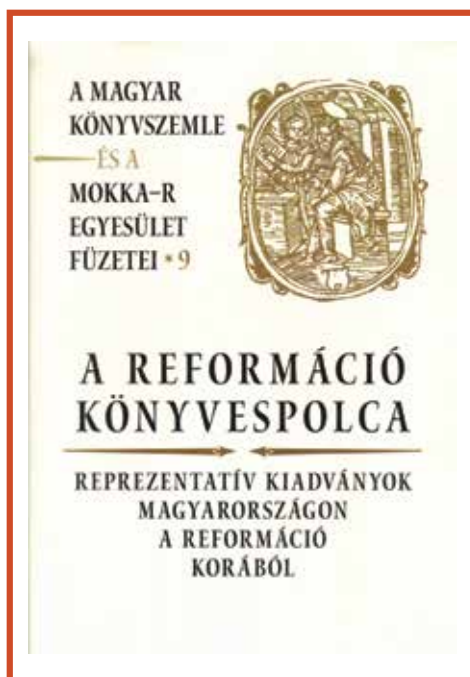
We hosted, however, a book history conference on 16 October 2017, under the title *The Bookshelf of the Reformation. Representative Editions of Books in Reformation Era Hungary*. The successful event was attended by a large audience and presented prints and manuscripts that in terms of edition, book history, typography, bindery and contents, played symbolic role or contributed to prestige during the history of



the Reformation in Hungary and Europe. The books included works of Martin Luther and John Calvin from church and secular collections, and exquisite editions of the most significant psalters, song books, sermon books, devotional and prayer books, catechisms and confessions of faith made under the patronage of Hungarian aristocratic families like the Rákóczi, the Thurzó, and the Ráday.

The contributors of the conference were researchers of NSZL, and staff members of historical Hungarian collections founded in the Reformation Era, all specialized in the Early Modern Period. We had two guest lecturers from the Slovakian National Library of Martin that has several old historical collections, and a colleague from the Central Archives of the Transylvanian Diocese of the Reformed Church. The edited version of the papers will be published by Argumentum Publishing House as the 9th Booklet of Hungarian Book Review and MOKKA-R Association.

NSZL was a co-organizer of *The Memory of the Reformation in Early Modern Period Hungary (Protestant and Catholic Interpretations in the 16th-18th Centuries)* conference held in Debrecen between 18 and 20 of May 2017, together with the Research Institute of



Hungarian Literature and Culture of the Debrecen University and the Renaissance Department of the Institute for Literary Studies at the HAS Research Centre for the Humanities, with their respective faculties of Old Hungarian Literature and the Refo 500 – Refo

RC international consortium. Our lecturers at the conference were Judit P. Vásárhelyi and János Heltai.

The two researchers also contributed with introductory essays of cultural history to the anniversary edition of the revised *New Testament and Psalter* in Gáspár Károli's translation, published by the Hungarian Bible Association Foundation, adjusted to modern Hungarian spelling. A specialty of this publication is that the Bible translations were typeset with the original letters used by Mikós Tótfalusi Kis and the illustrations for the introductory essays were selected from the collections of National Széchényi Library.

The anniversary year was a good opportunity for NSZL to publish, together with Balassi Publishing House a facsimile edition of a fundamental work of the Reformation in Hungary: the first edition of the translation of Albert Szenci Molnár of the *Geneva Psalter*, with the well-known psalms singed until today, and a brief catechism (*Psalterium Ungaricum. Brief Catechism*. Herborn, 1607). The facsimile of this rare book was made upon the copy at the Ráday Library, with an accompanying essay by Judit P. Vásárhelyi.

The volume went in pair with *An Anniversary Sermon* originally published in Heidelberg for the 100th anniversary of the Reformation. The sermon was preached by Abraham Scultetus in 1617, and published in Hungary one year later in the translation of Szenci Molnár (Oppenheim, 1618). The facsimile was made upon the copy at National Széchényi Library, with an accompanying essay of Mihály Imre. Both facsimiles belong to the *Bibliotheca Hungarica Antiqua* series of Balassi Publishing House.

Also on the occasion of the anniversary, NSZL published the essay [*„And What Could I Say Before Thee My Lord” Pál Keresztúri Bíró and the Heavenly Conversation*] of Bernadett Varga. The author analyzes the Protestant meditation of Keresztúri Bíró who was court educator of the sons of Transylvanian Prince György Rákóczi I and court preacher of Prince György Rákóczi II. The work clarifies the origin of the text, enumerates its 18th century editions, and includes a critical text edition.

All the events and publications were sponsored by the Reformation 500 Memorial Committee.

Judit P. Vásárhelyi
 pvj.at.oszk.hu