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***Wishing you a very blessed Easter!
Áldásos húsvéti ünnepeket kívánunk!***

Apáczai Csere János and Házsongárd Cemetery

By: Erika Papp Faber

Following the Reformation, Protestantism made great inroads in Transylvania. Its emphasis on presenting theology and the Scriptures in the vernacular was a strong drawing card. At the same time, education and learning flowered under the rule of the Protestant Princes of Transylvania. Many young men who enthusiastically embraced the new teachings went to study at the great Protestant centers of Holland and Switzerland, often with financial assistance by those same Churches and Princes.

One such enthusiastic young man was Apáczai Csere János (1625-1659), who introduced western educational principles and was the first to compile a Hungarian encyclopedia.

Born into a free Székely peasant family, Apáczai Csere János was granted scholarships by the Reformed Church, and studied at various Dutch Universities. He became the first Doctor of Theology at the newly established university of Harderwijk. He also had the opportunity to travel to France, Belgium and England. There he absorbed the philosophy of the Frenchman Descartes, which placed rationalism above everything else, and he believed that progress was made when reason was properly applied. He was also greatly influenced by the Puritan views of the English with their scientific reasoning, which he incorporated in his encyclopedia.

While abroad, he noted that his contemporaries could fluently discuss in their vernacular the topics of the times, whereas he and his fellow Hungarians wrote that they could have expressed themselves so much easier in Latin. Apáczai himself invented Hungarian words and expressions to cover modern concepts already familiar in other languages.



Bust of Apáczai Csere János in Győr

In 1651, he married a well-to-do Dutch burgher's daughter by the name of Aletta van der Maet from Utrecht.

Soon thereafter, he began to write his Hungarian Encyclopedia, in the vernacular. As he wrote in its introduction, "It is the orderly presentation and publication in the Hungarian language of all that has been invented so far, of true and useful wisdom, by Apáczai Csere János at Utrecht, 1653-1655." It deals mostly with natural science, phi-

losophy, and mathematics, as well as inventions of all kinds.

At the invitation of Reformed Bishop Csulai György, Csere returned to Transylvania with his wife. He taught poetry, logic, diction, Hebrew, Greek and the Latin classics first at Gyulafehérvár (and later at Kolozsvár), applying the Protestant educational principles he had absorbed abroad. He also promoted the presbyterian form of church organization on the English model.

In 1654, he published his "Magyar logikácska" (Little Hungarian Logic) for youth. But as his wide literary interests took form, so did opposition by the ruling classes. He had to defend, in a public debate before Prince Rákóczy György II, his principles for the spiritual development of his country. Consequently, Prince Rákóczi deprived him of his teaching position. Only through the intercession of Lorántffy Zsuzsanna, mother of the Prince, was he transferred to the Reformed College of Kolozsvár which he intended to make into a well-respected academy, imparting "useful and neces-



Apáczai Csere János; his and his wife's monument in Házsongárd; monument of Kós Károly and his family. Center: Crypt of poet Dsida Jenő; grave marker of poet Reményik Sándor; an old-fashioned hearse. Bottom: one of the main paths in Házsongárd; view

sary knowledge" by intellectually prepared professors. But he died of tuberculosis before it could begin to function.

He was buried in Házsongárd Cemetery, Kolozsvár, soon followed by his wife Aletta and their son. (The poem by Áprily Lajos elsewhere in this issue refers to her.)

One can only speculate what more Apáczai Csere János could have accomplished had he lived longer!

Many other illustrious personalities of the Reformation were also buried in Házsongárd, dubbed the "Hungarian Pantheon" on that account. Reformed and Unitarian Bishops, numerous famous poets (including Reményik and Dsida), political figures, artists, singers, sculptors and outstanding personages in every profession and field of endeavor found their final resting place there.

Unfortunately, following the Romanian takeover after the Treaty of Trianon (1920), many of these tombs have been expropriated, the names chiseled away and replaced by Romanian ones. This process is still ongoing today.

Erika Papp Faber is Editor of Magyar News Online. She is the author and translator of "A Sampler of Hungarian Poetry – Izelítő a magyar költészetből" and of "Our Mother's Tears - Ten Weeping Madonnas in historic Hungary" and its Hungarian version, "Égi Édesanyánk könnyei – tizenkét könnyező Mária-kép a Kárpát-medencében" (the discrepancy is due to more information having surfaced between the English and the Hungarian editions). Both are available at Magyar News Online.

Tavasza a házsongárdi temetőben

This poem was written in memory of Aletta van der Maet, wife of Apáczai Csere János, buried in Házsongárd Cemetery, Kolozsvár.



Áprily Lajos:

Tavasza a házsongárdi temetőben

Apáczai Csere Jánosné, Aletta van der Maet emlékének

A tavasz jött a parttalan időben
s megállt a házsongárdi temetőben.

Én tört kövön és porladó keresztben
Aletta van der Maet nevét kerestem.

Tudtam, hogy itt ringatja rég az álom,
s tudtam, elmúlt nevét már nem találom.

De a vasárnap délutáni csendben
nagyon dalolt a név zenéje bennem.

S amíg dalolt, a századokba néztem
s a holt professzor szellemét idéztem,

akinek egyszer meleg lett a vére
Aletta van der Maet meleg nevére.

Ha jött a harcok lázadó sötétje,
fényvel dalolt a név, hogy féltve védje.

S a dallamot karral kísérve halkán,
napsugaras nyugat dalolt a dalban,

hol a sötétség tenger-árja ellen
ragyogó gátat épített a szellem.

Aletta van der Maet nevét susogta,
mikor a béke bús szemét lefogta.

S mikor a hálátlan világ temette,
Aletta búja jajgatott felette,

míg dörgő fenséggel bűgött le raja
a kálvinista templom orgonája.

Aztán a dal visszhangját veszthez, félve
belenémult a hervadásba, télbe.

Gyámoltalan nő - szól a régi fáma -
urát keresve, sírba ment utána...

A fényben, fenn a házsongárdi csendben
tovább dalolt a név zenéje bennem.

S nagyon szeretném, hogyha volna könnyem,
egyetlen könny, hogy azt a dallamot
Aletta van der Maet-nak megköszönjem.

Árily Lajos (1887-1967) was born in Transylvania. The poetry of Ady made a great impression on him, so much so that he followed Ady to Paris. But due to his innate shyness, he turned back from Ady's front door, and never met him. He soon went back to Transylvania on account of his aging parents. At first, he taught at Nagyenyed and later became Editor of Erdélyi Helikon, a literary magazine. In order to be able to support his family, he resettled in Hungary, but always had pangs of conscience, considering that he had "betrayed" his native land by leaving. Most of his poems deal with Nature.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ARANY JÁNOS!

By: Olga Vállay Szokolay

The monthly meeting of the Editorial Board of Magyar News Online happened to fall on March 2nd, the 200th birthday of our beloved national poet, Arany János. We decided to throw him a party.



The inspired meetings of our Editorial Board typically take place during the first week of the month, where we discuss and decide the next month's issue. We also comment on the current publication, share eventual communications from readers, etc.

In our March, 2017 issue we published an article on Arany János, commemorating his 200th birthday on March 2nd. It so happened that our monthly Board meeting fell on the same day.

We certainly could not miss the opportunity to throw him a birthday party! We had bubbly, some paté with crackers and of course, a birthday cake with the number "200" lit on top. Hopefully he smiled on his cloud as he listened to our unrehearsed rendition of "Happy Birthday"!...



Members of the Magyar News crew

March 15th Remembrance

By: Zsuzsa Lengyel

Unveiling of the 1956 Memorial in Riverside Park, New York took place last fall. Now, on March 12th, it was dedicated officially.

Since there was a big celebration planned in New York City for the March 15th remembrance, combined with the dedication of the memorial to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, nothing was planned locally. Despite being one of the coldest days this winter, quite a few people gathered in Riverside Park, where a statue of Lajos Kosuth is located. (The statue was funded by American citizens of Magyar origin, dedicated on March 15, 1928 before a crowd of 25,000 people.)

The Hungarian government was represented by Hon. Szilágyi Péter, Deputy Secretary of State for National Policy. Several other dignitaries were present: Ferenc Kumin, Consul General of Hungary, Ambassador Réka Szermerkényi, former governor of New York State George Pataki and the president of the Hungarian

American Memorial Committee László Papp. A welcome speech was delivered by John Herold, Park Administrator and President of the Riverside Park Conservancy.

Afterwards there was a reception and a program at the Hungarian House. There were a couple of speeches, recital of poems and folk dancing by the Délibáb Népi Táncegyüttes.

Zsuzsa Lengyel is the Assistant Webmaster Magyar News Online



László Papp, president of the Hungarian American Memorial Committee, Imre Szakács, Consul of National Cohesion



Left: Statue of Lajos Kossuth; Top right: 1956 memorial; Bottom: Péter Szilágyi, Deputy Secretary of State for National Policy, George Pataki, former Governor of New York State

Széchenyi Booklet Now Available

The 11 articles on Count Széchenyi István published in Magyar News Online for the Memorial Year are now available in booklet form.

The 11 articles on Count Széchenyi István published in Magyar News Online last year for the Memorial Year are now available in booklet form.

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Széchenyi István Memorial Year 2016

Erika Papp Faber



1781-1860

Arany János, Freeman of Montgomery, Wales, United Kingdom

By: Olga Vállay Szokolay

Observing the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Hungarian poet Arany János, Eric Fairbrother, the Mayor of Montgomery, Wales posthumously gave him the Freedom of the Town.



*Montgomery Castle today.
Sic transit gloria mundi!*

The Hungarian poet, Arany János was born on March 2nd, 1817. His proud motherland is dedicating this year to his celebrations all over the country. The honor surrounding him is crowned by being recognized not only at home but outside of the Continent – in Montgomery, Wales.

How did this all happen? How would a 19th century Hungarian poet get involved with that faraway land?

The answer is a bit indirect.

The defeated 1848-49 freedom fight left Hungary in devastation, and hatred against its oppressor, Austria, and the Habsburgs. In the wake of the tragedy, the young emperor, Franz Josef I visited Buda in 1857 and, for the occasion, "quasi poet laureate" Arany János was asked to write a celebratory greeting poem to His Majesty.

Arany, having lost his property, his job and his best friend, Petőfi in that ill-fated, all-consuming war, circum-

vented the task by claiming ill health. But he did write a ballad "for the desk drawer" that was first published six years later only. It was disguised as a translation of an old English ballad, to evade censorship, but in essence it was an encoded resistance to the repressive Habsburg politics (known as the Bach Era) of his own time.

According to legend, "Edward I of England sent 500 Welsh bards to the stake after his victory over the Welsh in 1277 to prevent them from arousing the country and destroying English rule by telling of the glorious past of their nation." (Internet)

Fact or fiction, the event was immortalized in Arany's ballad *The Bards of Wales (A walesi bárdok)* taking place at Montgomery castle and is still being taught in 6th grade in the schools of Hungary. The best-known English translation is by Watson Kirkconnell. (A lesser known translation was written by our Editor, Erika Papp Faber, as included in her "Sampler of Hungarian Poetry".) Since the legend has been presumably not popular with the Brits, it was not officially promoted in Wales. Yet it created a significant abstract connection between the Welsh and the Hungarians.

The Arany bicentennial prompted the



*Arany János painted by
Barabás Miklós*

Mayor of Montgomery, Wales to promote the recognition of the legend by posthumously giving the poet of its ballad *Freedom of the Town*.

Olga Vállay Szokolay is an architect and Professor Emerita of Norwalk Community College, CT after three decades of teaching. She is a member of the Editorial Board of Magyar News Online.

It's a Small World!

By: Zsuzsa Lengyel

My husband and I were visiting in Vienna. One day as we boarded the tram, a young mother came right behind us with a beautiful little blond boy in a stroller.

I told my husband, in Hungarian, to take a picture of this beautiful little Austrian boy. Then the mother said, "Mosolyogj szépen a bácsinak!" (Smile nicely for the man).

Just proves you never know where you will run into Hungarians. Because ...

Zsuzsa Lengyel, Assistant Webmaster of Magyar News Online.

Magyar News Online

242 Kings Hwy Cut-off
Fairfield, CT 06824
www.magyarnews.org

Editor: Erika Papp Faber
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My Recollection of Easter Traditions

By: Judit Vasmatcs Paolini

Here is a personal remembrance of what it was like to experience a Hungarian Easter. Judy's father probably recited something like this:

*"Szép virág a piros pipacs, szép a gyöngyvirág is,
szép virág a rezedá, szép a tulipán is.
Am a legszebb virág, az itt áll előttem
Soha nem fog elhervadni, ha én megöntöztem."*



My earliest recollection of Easter is as a very young child living in Budapest in the early 1950s. I really tried to behave and be *very* good for I knew that the Easter bunny would visit and bring Easter eggs. Little did I know that the appearance of the Easter bunny originated in Germany, not in Hungary. It is a more modern tradition. However, it's not a piece of knowledge a young child needs to know, is it?

No, for this young child the arrival of the Easter bunny would mean receiving Easter eggs and chocolate treats! I eagerly counted the days until Easter. Day after day, upon waking up, my first question was, "Máma van húsvét?" (Is it Easter today?). Anyu (Mom) or Apu (Dad) would reply, "Nem máma." (not today).

Finally, one morning I was exhilarated to discover that it *was* Easter! My little eyes searched the house but spied no Easter eggs or candy. So, I enthusiastically ran and searched outside to see if the Easter bunny had hidden them in the yard; but there was absolutely no sign that he had come to our house at all! I was terribly disappointed; after all, I had been really very good!

Apu explained that Easter was celebrated for two days. On the first day, Easter Sunday, people went to church and prayed. In my child's eye, I understood that going to church and praying was a serious thing and not a playful thing. As I got a little older, I gained a better

understanding of this religious holiday — fully appreciating that Easter is a Christian holiday which celebrates Jesus Christ's resurrection.

Apu cheered me up when he clarified that Easter Monday was also a holiday and surely the Easter bunny would come to our house the next day. Wow! The next morning, my eyes discovered colorful eggs and sweet treats which I had greatly anticipated! Oh, they were so yummy. Living in Budapest in the '50s, such delights were not something on which my parents could splurge their hard-earned money. The Easter bunny's gifts were absolutely scrumptious.

Today in Hungary children can participate in an Easter egg hunt. Eggs may be hidden in the house or outside. Children may even receive Easter baskets!

We left Hungary in 1956. My brothers, sisters and I grew up in Connecticut. One Easter, Dad very quietly, almost whispering, called all of us into the living room. He asked the girls to give him a bottle of cologne. Of course, we were a little surprised and asked why he wanted it, for his request didn't make any sense to us! We knew finding Mom's cologne without her noticing would take a little effort. Without an explanation, he persisted. Furthermore, he asserted that we must be extra quiet because it was a surprise for Mom. When he had the bottle of cologne in hand and was ready we called Mom into the living room. She

was reluctant for she was busy with preparations for dinner. Boy, was she surprised when Dad sprinkled her with cologne, reciting something in Hungarian which we, children, didn't understand! Unexpectedly, Mom started to cry, and we wondered what was wrong! However, our concern was quickly alleviated when she said that she was crying because she was happy. Then Mom and Dad enthusiastically shared pleasant memories of *locsolkodás*.

On Easter Monday, especially in small villages, it was a custom for groups of young men to visit young women and splash them with a bucket of water! This tradition is known as *locsolkodás*, "sprinkling". This sprinkling of water is connected with fertility and cleansing. The purification of water in Christianity is associated with the christening celebration.

During *locsolkodás*, young men visited young women in one house after another. Upon arriving, the young man would recite a poem in which he asked permission to sprinkle the young woman. When permission was granted, the sprinkling commenced. In return, the young man received painted red eggs and some food (perhaps some ham or sausage). In time, it became customary for men to sprinkle women with cologne or perfume instead of dousing them with a bucket of water. This is still a popular tradition today. In cities it is more customary to sprinkle women with cologne, but in some villages the art of dousing women with a bucket of water still brings lively merriment. An

excursion to Hollókő (a UNESCO site in Hungary) will certainly delight visitors wishing to observe this tradition.

The Hungarian Easter meal is very special, featuring ham, colorful hard boiled eggs, pickled horseradish and *fonott kalács*, a bread milk loaf. Some homes also serve sausage and other goodies. Though we didn't grow up in Hungary, our family always had a traditional Easter meal which Mom lovingly prepared. We had colorful dyed hard boiled eggs perched nicely on a dish. The ham was always tasty as was the sausage. However, the poppy seed rolls, walnut rolls and the *fonott kalács* were an absolute pleasure!

Much work went into preparing the *fonott kalács*. There were the flour, eggs, yeast... Mom mixed these ingredients and others in her large enamel bowl which she used especially for this purpose. No, she didn't use an electric mixer! Then, of course, there was a waiting time for the dough to rise, which seemed to take forever. When the dough was finally ready, Mom gingerly rolled out several long pieces and braided them together! If my recollection is correct, she brushed the *fonott kalács* with some egg yolks, and finally it was ready to be baked. Though my brothers, sisters and I waited eagerly for the *fonott kalács* to come out of the oven, we knew quite well that it would not be served until Easter Sunday!

Making the poppy seed rolls and walnut rolls took even greater preparation. Mom's simple reward was knowing how much we loved these tasty treats and how dearly we appreciated her baking them for us.

The practice of dyeing Easter eggs red is a tradition Hungarians have enjoyed for a thousand years. Eggs were primarily colored red for in the Christian practice it symbolizes Christ's blood and the egg represents everlasting life. Also, the designs on the eggs had a special meaning. Though colorful red eggs have remained popular, other colors were eventually intro-

duced. Today eggs are also painted by hand and contain detailed folklore motifs. Like the ancient Magyars, it is endearing for Hungarians today to give decorated eggs as gifts.

For years, we received postcards from relatives in Budapest which pictured ornate Easter eggs. The ones I especially liked were a deep red with traditional Hungarian folklore designs. The flowers or geometric patterns were so intricate. Then, one year with great determination, we set out to paint eggs like that. What a challenge it was! Only Mom was able to puncture two holes in an egg so that its contents flowed out without breaking the shell! After my sisters and I broke a few in our eager but cautious attempt, Mom laughed and announced that we won't have any left to decorate if we continue breaking the shells! So we left that task for her.

Mom, using hot wax, drew floral designs on the eggs, explaining that that's where the egg would remain white and the flowers would appear while the rest of the egg would be red when it was dyed. Well, we had other colors; but we especially looked forward to seeing the red ones like the ones on the postcards. After a few hours of illustrious effort and intense concentration our painted eggs did reveal floral patterns, but the eggs themselves were a pastel pink! Not one had that beautiful vibrant red pictured on the postcards from Hungary!

On Good Friday, Christians observe the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It is a day of solemnity as people remember the religious significance of the day. The churches are unadorned; and there is a purposeful absence of flowers. Countless partake in fasting. It is common for people on this day to forego eating meat. They often also forego chores.

On Holy Saturday afternoon, some people partake in a solemn procession in celebration of the Resurrection. Lent is considered to be over after the procession, and celebrating Easter can begin.

The pleasure of Easter Monday was not simply the yummy treats but the extra time we had with Mom and Dad who were off from work! Mom's Easter dinner was truly a labor of love which we always enjoyed especially as adults. She did not have a set time for dinner then and encouraged us to arrive whatever time was convenient for us. My brothers, sisters and I, along with our spouses and children in tow often managed to arrive just about the same time!

Now our family gathering has changed some. Mom and Dad are no longer with us, and we also miss Rozika. Nonetheless, family time during the Easter celebration is still very precious. In my mind's eye, Dad is sprinkling Mom with cologne; and she is crying happy tears!

**Kellemes Húsvéti Ünnepeket!
Happy Easter!**

Some Ancient Trees with a Story

By: EPF

When looking at a tree, there is sometimes much more than meets the eye. Here are a few trees in Hungary that have their own story.



Basafa

Some 114 miles southwest of Budapest, along Route 7 at Szőkedencs, (Somogy County) near the town of Marcali, there is an old **linden tree** in the Lutheran cemetery estimated to be **700** years old. With a circumference of 11 meters (about 33 feet), it is one of the largest in Hungary.

When a retaining wall was built several years ago to support it, the ruins of a church from the time of the Árpáds (9th to 14th century) were discovered beneath it.

*

An **oak tree** at Nagykőrös is not quite that old, but is also estimated to be **400-500** years of age. Known as **Basafa**, there is an interesting story dating back to the Turkish occupation attached to it.

It seems every year, the Turkish pasha had 200 wagon loads of oak wood taken from the forest here for his fortress in Buda. Around 1653, when the pasha's representative was on his way home, he was thrown from his horse which had stumbled and fell on top of him. He was taken to the nearest farm, where the farmer's beautiful daughter Juci nursed him back to health. The man took a great liking to her, and said he would return and make her his wife. Juci became very frightened, and she and her whole family wondered how she could be spared this fate.

When the representative was due to return the following year, Juci's father dressed as a beggar and sat under the oak tree. As he saw the Turk approach with his troops, he began to lament loudly. He asked for help in the name of Allah. A rascal, he said, had thrown his crutch up into the tree and he begged the Turk to bring it down for him. The man could not refuse this request. He climbed the tree, and was already on the way down, when a branch broke under the rather heavy official and he fell and broke his neck. He was buried under the oak tree, which since then has become known as the Basafa, or Pasha tree.

*

Another **linden tree**, this one near the town of Felsőmocsolád (Somogy County), is **400** years old. According to legend, lightning struck the area, and the whole forest burned. Only this one linden tree survived. Its seeds were spread by ravens, giving rise to the present forest.

In 2011, it was the Hungarian Tree of the year, and in 2012, the European Tree of the Year. It stands on the property of the Bánó-Kaskovics family, and it is their tradition to introduce the youngest member of the family to it.

*

A **field pear tree** in Gödöllő is estimated to be **at least 280** years old. Supposedly planted by Count Grassalkovich Antal after he found refuge in a field pear tree when a wounded wild boar chased him. In gratitude, he ordered that a thousand field pear trees

be planted on his estate. Of those, this is the only one still surviving.

It is said that it was under this tree that Kossuth Lajos composed the declaration of independence following the victorious battle of Isaszeg.

The well-beloved consort of Emperor Francis Joseph, Queen Elizabeth, loved to rest in its shade. Supposedly, this is where she met Count Andrassy Gyula, Hungarian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary.

*

When the plague swept through the country in 1739-40, the owner of a brewery in Budafok by the name of Knoll János made a vow that if his family survived the epidemic, he would build a chapel in honor of Sts. Peter and Paul. He and his wife did not survive, but their daughter had the chapel built the following year. In front of it is the cemetery, where Knoll and his wife were buried, and a **field maple** called the "Tree of Ancestors" (**Ősök fája**) stands guard. It is over 250 years old. The inhabitants place a wreath at the *kopjafa* (carved grave marker) located next to the tree every June 29th, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul.

*

These are just a few ancient trees with a history.



Top: Budafok, Tree of Ancestors; Felsőmocsolád, 400 year old linden tree; Bottom: Szőkedencs, 700 year old linden tree; Gödöllő, a field pear tree

The Protestant Reformation in Hungary

By: Charles Bálintt Jr.

This is Charlie's second article dealing with the Protestant Reformation. See last month's issue for the introduction.

The Protestant Reformation officially began on October 31, 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses ("Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences") to the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg, Germany (then part of Saxony in the Holy Roman Empire). Martin Luther may have done this merely to announce a discussion on the topic of indulgences at the university, but soon news and copies of the 95 Theses swept across large areas of Europe. Eventually the official name of Wittenberg became Lutherstadt Wittenberg.

The Reformation spread to Switzerland, beginning with the sermons of Ulrich Zwingli in 1519. Although very similar to Luther's 95 Theses, Zwingli's 67 Conclusions were apparently formulated independently. The two eventually met in 1529 at the castle of Philip of Hesse. This meeting, later called the Colloquy of Marburg, did not go well. The main disagreement was over the sacrament of the Eucharist. While the Catholic Church believed (and still believes) in transubstantiation (that the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ during the Mass), Martin Luther preached consubstantiation (that Christ was present at the sacrament, but the bread and wine were not transformed). Zwingli, on the other hand, looked at the Eucharist as just a memorial, where Christ was not present.

The first signs of Lutheranism appeared around 1520 in the northern parts of Hungary among the German



The Reformed Church in Debrecen

population of what is present-day Slovakia and in some larger urban areas. But the main thrust of the Protestant Reformation came to Hungary during the next generation, mainly emanating from the teachings of a Frenchman born in Noyon, Picardy, France on July 10th, 1509, who later moved to Switzerland. John Calvin published his "Institutes of the Christian Religion" in 1536 and became prominent in Geneva after 1541. His main variance from Martin Luther was his belief in predestination, that God has already chosen those who will enter into Heaven and no amount of good deeds will change that. It is possible that those who perform good deeds throughout their lives do so because they are among the ones already chosen.

More than anything else, the major historical event that advanced Protestantism in Hungary was the Battle of Mohács in 1526. This greatest of Hungarian military defeats had a number of consequences. First, the young king and a large number of the leaders of the Catholic Church were killed in the battle. Second, the country was divided into 3 parts: the northwest was controlled by the Habsburgs, the central portion by the Turks and Transylvania to the east paid tribute to the Turks to remain semi-independent. Third, unlike the Catholic Habsburgs, the Turks did not force anyone to adopt their Muslim religion.

Although a synod at Erdőd accepted the Lutheran Augsburg Confession in 1545, a later synod in Debrecen in 1567 embraced the Reformed Heidelberg Catechism along with the Second Helvetic Confession, which more closely followed the teachings of John Calvin as opposed to Martin Luther. The dominant Protestant Church in Hungary and Transylvania became the Calvinist "Reformed Church".

The early leaders of this movement were Sztárai Mihály, Szegedi Kis István, Dévai Bíró Mátyás and the bishop of Debrecen, Méliusz Juhász Péter in Hungary, and Apáczai Csere János (see Erika Papp Faber's article in this issue) and Dávid Ferenc in Transylvania.

Unlike the others who were Calvinists, Dávid Ferenc was Unitarian, and founder of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church. Contrary to the Catholic Church and the two major Protestant denominations of the time, the Unitarians did not believe in the Holy Trinity because they considered it anti-biblical. The major figure who was converted by Dávid Ferenc was the Prince of Transylvania, Szapolyai János Zsigmond (he was also the infant King of Hungary at the time of the first Siege of Buda in 1541). Their collaboration resulted in the first proclamation of religious freedom in Europe, the Edict of Torda in 1568. This basically gave freedom to the Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed and Unitarian religions to practice their beliefs as they wished, but tolerated others as well.

Although there were many problems in the Catholic Church at the time, which made it possible for the Protestant Reformation to take hold and become popular among many people in Europe, there were many battles within the ranks of the Protestants as well. For example, the founder of the Unitarian Church, Michael Servetus (a theologian, physician, cartographer and mathematician

among other things; born in Spain as Miguel Serveto), was burned at the stake atop a mound of his own books near the city of Geneva. Both Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon denounced his teachings. And one of the main persons who submitted evidence against him at his trial, although not in person due to health reasons, was John Calvin, who asked that he be beheaded instead of burned at the stake. So even those who were against the harsh authority of the Catholic Church did not always behave much like Christians themselves. Michael Servetus' last words were reportedly: "Jesus, Son of the Eternal God, have mercy on me."

During the first century of the Protestant Reformation, the large majority of Hungarians became Protestants, with the largest group joining the Reformed Church. It has even been said that becoming Protestant was considered patriotic because it was a form of protest against the Catholic Habsburgs!

Beginning in the middle of the 17th century, a strong Counter-Reformation push against Hungary came from the Catholic Habsburgs. This was very strong in the beginning, with the Austrian Emperor Leopold I even sending Protestant ministers to the galleys, but it diminished somewhat over time. Although it was difficult for Protestants in Hungary for quite a long period, it was much less so in Transylvania. It seems that there the different religious factions somehow got along much better. In fact, my Father's four grandparents, all born in Transylvania in the mid-19th century, belonged to 4 different Churches: Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed and Unitarian.

Today in Hungary the population is approximately 37.1% Roman Catholic, 1.8% Greek Catholic, 11.6% Reformed, 2.2% Lutheran, 1.9% other, 18.2% no religion and 27.1% not wishing to divulge their beliefs (although some sources list a majority of this group as Catholics).¹ Among the Hungarian population in Transylvania, about 47% belong to the Reformed Church, 41% to the Roman



Lutheran Church in Szentes, Unitarian Church in Torockószentgyörgy, with inscription "Egy az Isten" - God is One.

Catholic Church and 4.5% to the Unitarian Church. The much larger percentage of Protestants in Transylvania may very well have something to do with Transylvania's semi-autonomy for a few centuries and less Habsburg dominance, compared to the rest of Hungary.

¹ *Probably about half the people listed as "other" are Jewish. Although the religious Jewish population in Hungary is only about .5%, Budapest still has the largest Synagogue in Europe, the Dohány Street Synagogue.*

Charles Bálint Jr. is a working Customs Broker in Lawrence, NY and a member of the Magyar News Online Editorial Board.

Did You Know....

.. **that** this month we have items about storks (not bringing babies!), a custom that has been added to the official list of our cultural heritage, and some other items?

... **that** 20 storks which had recovered from their injuries were released from the Hortobágyi Madárkórház (Hortobágy Bird Hospital) on March 15th? They joined their friends who had just returned from Africa (Chad and Sudan) on their annual spring migration.

Length of the trip is over 7,500 miles (or 12,000 km), which they usually cover in about 49 days. The return trip takes less time, only about 26 days, on account of favorable winds and the scarcity of food and water.

... **that** in Hajdudorog (southeast of Miskolc) a troop of young men



called "Krisztus-katonaság" (Christ's Troops) stand guard in the Greek Catholic church from Good Friday until Easter Sunday? They wear traditional garb handed down from generation to generation, and hold old swords, many of them dating from the time of Kossuth.

This tradition was recently added to the national list of Spiritual Cultural Heritage (Szellemi Kulturális Örökség Nemzeti Jegyzéke).

... that Hungarian-born gymnast Keleti Ágnes, at 96, is now the oldest living Olympic champion? She had won the Hungarian national championship in gymnastics ten times, and was considered to have great prospects for the 1940 Olympics, but those games, as well as the following one, were cancelled on account of World War II. An injury prevented her from participating in the 1948 games.

When she finally did make it to the Olympics in 1952, at age 31, she garnered four medals in gymnastics, including a gold, and 3 more gold at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956. She remained in Australia after the games, and in 1957 emigrated to Israel where she worked as a physical education instructor at Tel Aviv University, and coached Israel's national gymnastics team.

She was inducted into the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in 1981, the Hungarian Sports Hall of Fame in

1991, and the International Gymnastics Hall of Fame in 2002.

...that a movie loosely based on the legendary racehorse Kincsem has just been released in Hungary? At a production cost of ten million dollars, it is the most expensive Hungarian film ever made. (But if you are interested in the **real** story of Kincsem, see Éva Wajda's article in the September 2015 issue of Magyar News Online.)

...that Hungarians never clink their beer glasses? Why? Because it is said that when the Austrians executed the 13 generals after the defeat of the Hungarian Freedom Fight of 1848-49, they clinked their beer glasses after each execution. Hungarians vowed not to do so for 150 years. Although time has passed, Magyars have long memories, and they still won't follow suit. They reserve clinking glasses for wine, one of their chief products of which they are proud.



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Balco
INTERIOR CONSTRUCTION LLC

Oscar Balogh, President
Plaster & Drywall Contractors
1925 Wood Ave.
Bridgeport, CT 06604
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Cell: 203.650.3531
Fax: 203.696.1076
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Cell: 203.650.3531
Fax: 203.696.1076
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BIRINYI ASSOCIATES, INC.

HUNGARIAN COMMUNITY CLUB OF WALLINGFORD
PO Box 1816
WALLINGFORD, CT 06492
HCCCW.ORG

