

*Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem  
Hittudományi Kar*

*Katolikus restauráció a bécsi békétől a  
gyászévtizedig a Dunántúli és Felső-Dunamelléki  
református egyházkerületek területén*

*Angol nyelvű összefoglaló*

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## *Summary*<sup>1</sup>

Motto: „The measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you.” (The Gospel of Mark, chapter 4, verse 24).

### *Posing the theme*

During the course of my theological studies, in examining the events of church history in the 17<sup>th</sup> century it has been always conspicuous that while the Protestants successfully fought the Thirty Year War, and the following peace treaties in everyway strengthened the existence of the Protestant churches, yet they could not fully guaranty their survival. This was most noticeable in the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom, where special peace treaties, such as the 1645 Treaty of Linz secured for the Protestant churches their total freedom of religious practices. Yet, barely a quarter century following 1645, we are faced with one of the most pitiful and painful period of Hungarian Protestantism, called “the decade of mourning” (1671-1681). My basic question was, what could have happened in those 25 years, for the Protestant church to plunge from the apex to the depths, that is in what forms could the Catholics restore their previous strong position, in what form did the Catholic restoration took place.

This is why I focused on this period, in order to examine, whether the Treaty of Linz was indeed the apex, and if not, then where we can locate the strongest moment for the Protestant churches. Thus, I advanced backwards in time till I was successful to find the apex in the year of 1608. The following years depict the strongest Protestant church existence in numbers, in territorial expansion, as well as in the number of sponsoring high nobility. From this point forward we can observe the weakening of Protestantism, or from another point of view, the beginning of Catholic restoration. This time frame is also defined by an almost unseen special Catholic restoration process between 1608 and 1670, which we may call the age of the counter-reformation of the estate holders. This time frame, the 62 years, which I established for our consideration, allows us to overview these restoration activities of the estate holders.

The geographical area was important in addition to the time frame. The effects of the Catholic restoration – in this time period – were most noticeable in the Protestant congregations of the West Trans-Danube area, and in Northwest Hungary. Two Reformed Synods were established in those areas: the Trans-Danube and the Upper-Danube-Area Synods. Their borders more or less coincide with the borders of the Lutheran Synods, or with the former arrangement of the Roman Catholic districts, thus the territorial areas of all three denomination can be accurately determined. To me it was important to examine this period not only from a single denominational point of view, but consider both Protestant churches, that is the Reformed and the Evangelical, or as they were called that time, the Calvinists and the Lutherans, as well as the point of view of the Roman Church.

Within these time and geographical frames I have endeavored to describe those processes which facilitated the fortification of the Roman Church. I incorporate these processes and actions under the term “Catholic restoration”.

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<sup>1</sup> Az angol nyelvű összefoglaló elkészítésében nyújtott segítségért illesse köszönet Dr. Kálmán Szabolcs nyugalmazott Lelkipásztort!

## *Discussing the theme*

I divided this theme into four major sections. First, I shall present the external circumstances in discussing this theme, such as the historical antecedents, or the political and historical situations. Then I shall discuss the Catholic restoration in three aspects, such as the external elements of the restoration, the internal elements, and its methods.

### *The external circumstances*

Events in the Hungarian Kingdom were not independent from the events in the neighboring countries. Mainly, because most of our neighbors were under the authority of the Habsburg House, such as in the North (Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia), in the West (Austria), and in the Southwest (Croatia). Another significant reason for their interrelatedness is the existence of the independent Principality of Transylvania, which also influenced the period's political and historical formations within the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom. The Turkish Empire was a third acting principal that time in the Hungarian territories. Yet, their influence to religion was only secondary in comparison to their political weight, so that is why they are listed third. Finally, a similar influence arrived from the powers of Northern and Western Europe during the time of the Thirty Year War (1618-1648).

In addition to the above listed influences it was important to examine the events of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, since the ongoing processes of that age affected the events of the next century. I examined the events leading to the spread of the Protestant churches, as well as the counter measures taken by the Roman church, not only for the 16<sup>th</sup>, but also for the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Accordingly, I discussed the external circumstances in two chapters: first, the events for the years of the 1500s, then the historical and political situations which determined the life in the Hungarian Kingdom.

### *The external conditions for the Catholic restoration*

There were several factors contributing to the Catholic restoration. First, I examined those factors which gave external, or political influence to the main directions. The Turkish Occupation, the Principality of Transylvania and the Habsburg Empire played an important role, but only as to how far they aided or hindered the strengthening of the Roman church.

In investigating the external conditions of the restoration we examined the religious life under the Turkish Occupation, as well as how the religious life of the territories under the rule of the Habsburgs (Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Croatia) influenced religion in the Hungarian Kingdom. Special attention was paid to the peace treaties in response to the repeating attacks from the directions of Transylvania (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peace Treaty of Vienna, the Treaty of Nikolsburg, the Treaty of Pozsony, aka Pressburg or Bratislava, and the Treaty of Linz). I also investigated the minutes of the Parliaments whether they reflected any strengthening of the Catholics. Finally, I reviewed the procedures of how the Habsburg House applied the new laws into practice, or rather how far these laws were weakened and ignored by the different kings.

### *The internal conditions for the Catholic restoration*

In addition to the external conditions I thought it was important to examine the internal life of the target churches (Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran), to see how the Catholic restoration influenced them. I was most interested to observe whether the inner weaknesses of the Protestant churches in any way contributed to such amplification of the Roman church. In other words, whether the inner life of the Catholics showed such growth which could be responsible to carry on the restoration.

For this reason for all three churches I applied the same methodology, so the inner lives of the churches would be comparable. I examined the major decisions made by the synods of this period, the flaws and strengths of ministerial life, and also of congregational life, and also the advantages and disadvantages contributable to the different types of church organizational structures. For all three churches, I separately checked the strengths and the weaknesses in order to make clear conclusions. I paid special attention to the Board of Elders (Presbyteriums) of the Trans Danube Reformed Synod, a novel development for that time.

### *The methods of Catholic restoration*

The restoration methods covered a wide range of actions. Some applied force, others were less violent, while some moved entirely on a spiritual level in order to regain the lost position for the Roman church. One basic characteristics in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Catholic restoration is the way politics and social factors are completely interwoven with the interests of the church, which grossly contributed to the restoration efforts. Furthermore, the desire by the Habsburg House for absolute power, and the Roman church's desire for reconstruction coincided. Both groups found support and alliance in each other. The Habsburg House and the Catholics fought together for defending the social structure and conquering Protestantism.

The Catholic restoration, due to several different methods, achieved quick results. In the 1625 Parliament one could feel that the strength of the Protestants is far from what it was at the beginning of the century. But the Catholic restoration gained its real strength after the death of reigning prince I. Rákóczi György, and after the Peace Treaty of Westfalia. On the one hand, no longer was there any external power to restrain the Habsburg House (neither from Western European powers or from the Principality of Transylvania), second, the Catholics reached their strength in the 1650s when they were able to take a strong stand against the Protestants. The really strong attacks by the Roman church began after I. Leopold stepped on the throne. In 1657, when the coronation took place, there was no hint of the events which took place in the years between 1659 and in the 1660s. This is when restoration appeared in a violent and open form. This would indicate that the Protestant churches had suffered major losses in the previous decades, in such scale that were unable to resist those violent attacks. The Catholic restoration in the 17<sup>th</sup> century seized every means to restore her lost positions, even if those means violated the laws of the country and the principles of Christianity.

In view of this I reviewed the employed methods. Reconverting members of the high nobility, or even of the lesser rank nobles was a basic method for the restoration. This greatly influenced Ádám Batthyány and Ferenc Nádasdy in reconverting to Catholicism. A particular Catholic interpretation of the law was another important method, which often resulted in the violation of the very laws. A characteristic example is the interpretation of the so called "estate owner's privilege" which allowed the Catholic estate owners to compel their serfs to change their religion. One of the chief applicator of this interpretation was archbishop Péter Pázmány, whose restoration activities are handled in a separate chapter. Filling important public office positions with Catholics were another method used. This could thwart the application of the written law, even if it was favorable to Protestants. A characteristic example is the activity of Mihály Althan, who demonstrated the effectiveness of a devoted Catholic when empowered with appropriate positions used for the benefit of his church. The mission work by different religious orders, among them the Jesuits, was another important role played in the Catholic restoration. The Jesuits had an important role not only in the field of mission, but also in politics, which I also demonstrated. Intellectual/spiritual warfare was also a part of the Catholic restoration, evident in the debates of the Parliament, but also in the literary style of religious debates of that period. I had to call attention to some of the direct or indirect techniques of violence applied in these methods. There are many examples to demonstrate this: obstructing religious freedom for the soldiers serving in the fortresses; persecuting

Protestant civil servants; imprisoning, beating and threatening lay leaders of Protestant congregations; or using the military to threaten non-Catholic congregations. I conclude this chapter on methodology of Catholic restoration by a rather subtle scheme that is the involvement of the inquisition to help the Catholic cause. After describing this method I shared some statistics showing the effectiveness of Catholic restoration between the years of 1608 and 1670.

### ***Conclusion***

In investigating the Catholic restoration between 1608 and 1670 I can conclude that the general circumstances, the historical and political situation, and the closeness of the Turkish Occupation gave no advantage to either side in their struggle. I can state the same regarding the internal factors of the restoration. Neither the weakness of the Protestant churches, nor the strength of the Roman church were so prominent that would explain the earthshaking changes that took place on the religious map.

The situation becomes quite different when the external factors are examined. There the king's attitude becomes quite prominent in diminishing the favorable articles of the law and of the peace treaties which might have favored the Protestants. The examination of the external factors made it obvious to me that the balance shifted in favor to the Catholics was due to the increasing power of the Catholics in the religious life of the Habsburg territories.

The examination of the restoration methods made it clear that the attitude of the emperors unabashedly favored the Catholics tipping the balance to benefit the Roman church. The Protestant churches were denied the opportunity to defend themselves by their own leaders, thus the benefits of the peace treaties totally disappeared. The Catholics were not bashful in applying unlawful, even violent methods. The Protestants were defenseless against such tactics.

In reviewing this period I came to the conclusion: the Roman churches inner sources were insufficient to regain their former positions of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. For this reason they needed to apply force and external support. This was willingly provided by the Habsburg House between 1608 and 1670, and even in the following years for the progression of the Catholic restoration.