

**„Babes-Bolyai” University**

**Faculty of reformed theology**

**17<sup>TH</sup>-18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MANUSCRIPTS OF CATECHISM  
EXPLANATIONS WRITTEN IN TRANSYLVANIA**

- abstract -

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**Cluj Napoca 2019**

**Keywords:**

Catechism, Confessions, 16th-17th- century, Reformation, Protestantism, Transylvania,  
Zacharias Ursinus, Heidelberg Catechism

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During the preparations of this thesis – as it discusses manuscripts of catechetical explanations – I have found material only sporadically and rarely; therefore, I consider it necessary to include a longer preliminary study, presenting the sources of catechetical explanations, in which I will hopefully shed light upon this topic. In order to talk of hand-written catechetical explanations, first we must discuss about the author of this creed, the Heidelberg Catechism and its reception in Transylvania; about the catechisms not yet available in Hungarian, and the only credible catechetical explanation written by Zacharias Ursinus, as well as the methods and instances of the doctrine of Catechism in our Transylvanian Reformed Church.

Thereafter we will discuss about hand-written or printed explanations that can be found in Transylvania and the conclusions that can be drawn from them. In the remainder of the discussion, I will try to point out some of their main characteristics and summarize the entire thesis in a conclusion.

I also found it necessary to attach a complete bibliographical description of catechetical explanations and a list of foreign ones I have found in libraries, as these have clearly influenced the interpretation of our church over time. Attached is also – what we consider – the primary source of all catechetical explanations, written by Ursinus Zacharias, but also the transcript in Latin and Hungarian of two catechisms of his hitherto unknown in Hungarian.

The First Chapter of this paper deals with the ancient sources of catechetical manuscripts; the first part of which presents the life and work of Zacharias Ursinus, for his theological work was most influential in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century's handwritten catechetical literature. Research on these explanations suggests that later catechists mainly relied on the Ursinus Volumes published

by David Pareus and Quirinius Reuter. An even closer examination also suggests that the commentators favoured the sources of Heidelberg Catechism, especially the two creeds of Ursinus; his own notes on catechism or student transcriptions of them; his apologetic speeches and theological studies and dissertations; or his speeches and writings on various occasions. On the other hand, they also favoured Calvin's Catechism, Institution and other Reformation papers, which were published in various collections that were available for preachers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

There has been, and still is, a great deal of controversy over the authorship of the Heidelberg Catechism, although it seems that the 'backbone' of the creed is Ursinus' two earlier catechisms for school and church education: *Catechismus Minor*<sup>1</sup> and *Catechismus Major*<sup>2</sup>; and a shorter creed, *Summa Theologiae*.

There is another debate among researchers about which edition should be treated as the *textus receptus* of the Heidelberg Catechism. I firmly believe that if the above mentioned two sources of the Catechism were Latin, and if the same can be said about the Church Order (*Kirchenordnung*) adopted in November 1563 – of which the Catechism was part of – we should clearly consider the Latin version. Although the Preface<sup>3</sup> of the Elector Prince, written for the Catechism, refers not only to the Latin version but also to the German version, in the period from January to November 1563, the creed began to 'live'. The result is the Order written in Latin, in which the Elector Prince states that: "[...] through the counsel and cooperation of our entire theological faculty, all of our superintendents and distinguished pastors, we have structured and compiled a comprehensive textbook or catechism of our Christian religion based on the Word of God."

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<sup>1</sup> The first questions in his *Catechesis Minor Perspicua brevitate christianam fidem complectens*, from 1562:

(1) Qua tua est consolatio, qua tam in morte, quam in vita, cor tuum se sustentat? Quod omnia peccata mea Deus mihi propter Christum certo remisit, vitamque æternam donavit, in qua ipsum perpetuo celebrem. (2) Unde hoc tibi constat? Testatur hoc in corde meo Spiritus Sanctus per Verbum Dei & sacramenta: & inchoatam erga Deum obedientiam. (3) Quid docet verbum Dei? Primum nobis miseriam nostram ostendit: deinde, quo ab ea liberemur modo: & quæ Deo pro hac liberatione gratitudo sit prestanda. (4) Unde miseriam nostram agnoscimus? Ex lege divina, quæ in decalogo comprehensa est. (5) Unde liberationis modum discimus? Ex Euangelio, sive articulis fidei Christianæ, & sacramentis. (6) Ubi de gratitudine, quam Deo debemus præcipitur? In Decalogo, & doctrina de invocatione Dei.

<sup>2</sup> Printed summary of Ursinus' theological teachings and works before and after the Heidelberg Catechism: *Opera Theologica tributa in tomos tres*. Heidelberg 1612.

<sup>3</sup> Fekete Károly: *A Heidelbergi Káté magyarázata*. Kálvin Kiadó, Budapest, 2013, 525

The main source of inspiration for the structure of the catechism, divided into three main parts – sin-grace-thanksgiving or misery-redemption-thanksgiving, was Calvin's 1542 Geneva Catechism. His teachings on God and the Church clearly show Melanchthon's influence, while the questions and answers on the Sacraments are in many ways consistent with those in the Consensus Tigurinus.

What is remarkably original is the way in which the HC emphasizes above all the teaching of the covenant that this is the basis of Christian life. This teaching of the covenant by Ursinus later played a decisive role in the Heidelberg School of Theology. His main conveyor was Pareus David, a renowned Heidelberg theologian at the turn of the century, a student of Ursinus and the publisher of his theological legacy.

But the Heidelberg Catechism was barely printed, and many attacks were already underway, especially from the strict Lutherans. He was most severely attacked by Flacius Illyricus, the eminent personality of the Lutheran Party of the Emperor. In attacking the Christological doctrine of the Heidelberg Catechism, he rebuked the Reformed Church for reviving Nestorian heresy, which denied the unity of both natures in Christ.

Ursinus felt the need to respond<sup>4</sup> to his challenger and his unfounded slander<sup>5</sup>, as he was convinced that Melanchthon and Calvin agreed on this principle. In his reply, he expressed that it was not them but the Lutherans who upset the balance in Christology when they emphasized and preached the ubiquity of the resurrected body of Christ. The same has been debated at the Theological Colloquium in Maulbronn, where Ursinus quarrelled with theologians at the University of Wittenberg, to no avail, and where Ursinus was the chief leader and protector of Reformed teaching. Additionally, this was a constant theme in Ursinus' work, for example, in the second volume of *Opera Theologica*, nearly twenty independent treatises discuss Christology and its projection on Communion<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Once again, Ursinus' first defense and explanation of the Catechism proves the main Ursian authorship of the Heidelberg Catechism. It would be incomprehensible otherwise; if Olevianus had been the author of the Heidelberg Catechism, he would have been best qualified to respond to the attacks or to first explain the creed in the Palatinatus. Although they were both in Heidelberg at the time, Ursinus is first to do all of these.

<sup>5</sup> Ursinus: *Apologia catechismi ecclesiarum et scholarum electoralis Palatini*; in: *Opera Theologica II*. p. 1-54.

<sup>6</sup> Ursinus: *Opera Theologica*, II. 81-350.

An approach to theology that we can see in Zacharias Ursinus' main work is rare not only in Hungarian but also in international theology. It is safe to say that today's theology is no different, it doesn't speak of God, but rather the self-explanation of the world in theological terminology, or a mere pretext for the age and the habits its people who live in it. Today we have to fight again with theological distortions and heresies that have been already condemned in the old days, in this sense, the *Corpus Doctrinae Christianae* can be of great help. Not only because the author is one of the greatest scholars of the second generation of the Reformation, but also because this work teaches the reader about the nature of true religion on the basis of pure, straightforward Scripture.

One year after Ursinus' death, in 1584, Jungnitz published the philosophical collection *Organi Aristotelis... per quaestiones expositii*<sup>7</sup>. Here is also a passage of Ursinus' writings<sup>8</sup> against the philosophical and rhetorical teachings of Petrus Ramus, written at the request of Frederick when Ramus visited Heidelberg in 1569.

It is worth mentioning here a curiosity that James I. Good highlights in his volume published at the beginning of the last century in relation to Ursinus' theological orientation. In his work, (*The Heidelberg Catechism in Its Newest Light*) he devotes a special chapter to Petrus Ramus and his significance to Catechism. Ramus established a new philosophical and logical school in the face of 16<sup>th</sup> century scholastic Aristotelianism, which later, through Amesius, became the origin of European Puritanism.

When Ramus visits Tremellius in Heidelberg in 1569, he is invited as a teacher to the same school where Ursinus taught. The fact of the matter was that Ursinus could not accept Ramus' principles, but Olevianus became a fervent believer. In a letter to Camerarius (July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1975), Ursinus writes<sup>9</sup> of Ramus's 'shameful, arrogant sophistication and gibberish.' Later, with the help of Quirinius Reuter, another student from Silesia, two volumes of *Scholastic Exercises*<sup>10</sup> are published, intended as textbooks for students of the restored Collegium Sapientiae. David

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<sup>7</sup> The volume is dedicated to Wroclaw city superiors, most probably for future support.

<sup>8</sup> Bedencken ob P. Rami *Dialectica und Rhetorica in die Schulen ein zufuhren, in: Organi Aristotelis libri quinque priores per quaestiones expositi*, Neustadt, 1584

<sup>9</sup> Good, James I.: *The Heidelberg Catechism In Its Newest Light*, Philadelphia. Publication and Sunday School Board, 1914. p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> *Scholasticarum in materiis theologicis exercitationum liber. vol. I-II. Neustadt 1584.*



Pareus, a later famous Heidelberg professor who was also from Silesia, prepares and publishes it in 1589.

Unfortunately, no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't find anywhere Ursinus' complete bibliography. Not in the Transylvanian scientific libraries (Library of the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca, Library of the Romanian Academy in Cluj-Napoca, Teleki-Bolyai Documentation Library, State Archives in Târgu Mureș and Cluj, Bethlen Documentation Library in Aiud). You can find the following works of Ursinus: *Thesaurus verae et orthodoxae fidei*. Auctt. Zacharis Ursinus, Hieronimus Zanchius, Theodore de Beze, Johann Jacob Grynaeus ecc., Basileae, 1587. Ursinus, Zacharias: *Explicatio Catechetica* (according to the book cover; first pages are missing). Neustadt, 1598. Ursinus Zacharias: *Corpus doctrinae orthodoxae, sive catecheticae explicationum d. Zachariae Ursini. Opus absolutum d. Davidi Parei opera extrema recognitum*. Heidelbergiae, 1606. Ursinus, Zacharias: *Opera Theologica tributa in tomos Tres*. Heidelberg, 1612 Ursinus, Zacharias: *Corpus Doctrinae Orthodoxae, sive catecheticae explicationum; opus absolutum D. Davidis Parei*. Heidelbergae, 1616. Ursinus, Zacharias: *Corpus Doctrinae Christianae ecclesiarum a Papatu reformatarum continens Explicationes Catecheticae D. Zachariae Ursini*. Heidelbergae, 1621. Ursinus, Zacharias: *Corpus Doctrinae Christianae Ecclesiarum a papatu romanu reformatarum; ex ore quondam Magni Theologi D. Zachariae Ursini in Explicationibus Catecheticis rudi Minerva exceptum*. Hanoviae, 1634. Ursinus, Zacharias: *Explicatio Catechetica*.

First, it is necessary to place Catechetical Explanations in the greater system of theological disciplines. According to today's systematization, I find that theologians might classify it as a field of practical theology, perhaps because it is most often discussed in relation to teaching sermons. There is some truth to this, but it being a symbolic book of the Church, it belongs to systematic theology as it is intended to deal with the teachings of the Church in its creeds.

Ursinus' explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism in the 16th century is a very widespread and popular discipline, it is one of the most significant works belonging to the so-called *Theologia Cathetica*, up until the point in which catechesis started to develop as an independent theological discipline separated from dogmatics. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, István Szilágyi

is aware of this Catechetica Theologia, which has its own place or is closely related to the Systematica Theologia. He says that “Systematica Theologia is no different in its inner reality (quo ad essentiam interiorem) from Catechetica Theology, except for the fact that Catechetica Theology is occupied by people who have more practiced sensibilities in the realm of Faith. I will create an explanation (Commentarius) for Catechismus, which in the Hungarian Language will be like a Systematica Theologia.”<sup>11</sup>

Among Ursinus' theological works, apart from his colossal share in the creation of the Heidelberg Catechism, the Catechetical Explanations are the most important, on which he worked for almost twenty years, and presented both from the cathedra and on Sunday afternoons. But unfortunately, he didn't write them himself. In his foreword<sup>12</sup> to the Corpus Doctrinae Orthodoxae, Pareus explains how the explanations were written down: “Ursinus did not write or dictate the Catechetical Explanations, nor were they ever published, they were written down by diligent students, sometimes even taking credit for them (because Ursinus wanted everything written in the souls and not on paper), eventually multiplying<sup>13</sup> in many different ways<sup>14</sup>.” As Pareus says, the first edition of the Catechetical Explanations in 1585 was immethodical and had many parts that were probably not of Ursinusian origin.

As I have already mentioned, the extraordinary nature of Ursinus' explanations lies in the fact that, as a scholar who has contributed to the successful spread of the Heidelberg Catechism through his previous work, talents and authority - no one is more worthy and credible in explaining the Heidelberg Catechism; on the other hand, in our commentary on the doctrine we get answers to many of the questions that today's creed exponents have always missed. It is impossible to imagine what it would have been like if the preachers had known the most authentic explanations of Catechism since our Hungarian Reformed Church had rediscovered them. As an example, I would mention the persistent objection that the Catechism does not speak

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<sup>11</sup> Szilágyi István: Az vallásról és az igaz hitnek némely ágazatiról való tracta. H. n. 1746; 1–129. kérdés; 730.

<sup>12</sup> Dating of the Foreword: Heidelberg, August 12<sup>th</sup> 1592

<sup>13</sup> ...explicationes Catecheticas a D. Ursino ipso neque scriptas, neque dictatas, nedum editas unquam: sed in catecheticis multorum annorum repetitionibus plerunque cursim effusas; a discipulis vero diligentioribus raptim ... calamo exceptas, tandemque varie a variis congestas fuisse. Quis vero non intelligat, in tam dispari compilatione tum discipulis aliis, turn mihi quoque diligentiae amplissimum relictum locum? Corpus Doctrinae 3.

<sup>14</sup> Between 1585 and 1614 more than 7 versions of the Catechetical Explanations have been published, out of which 3 have been 'pirated'.

of ordinance or that the teaching of the double covenant is not sufficiently developed. Well, they are all there... one just had to read the explanations to Catechism. In the thesis, we devoted a separate chapter to Ursinus' commentary on the Catechesis, giving its structure from which it is easy to infer how wide the spectrum of this theological work is.

Ursinus never published his explanations on catechism. It was collected and published in 1612 in Heidelberg<sup>15</sup> by his distinguished colleagues, especially David Pareus, Quirinius Reuter, and Johann Ursinus, the son of a scientist. The impact of this collection (previous editions and final, full editions) on contemporary or later Catechists is clearly immense. Already in its first 50 years after the publication of HC, Ursinus' work was translated into many languages. Copies found in the Carpathian Basin, as well as lists of surviving acquisition registries or private collections, prove that they have been read, used and taught in the Hungarian Language Area. So much so, that most 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Catechists made reference to it as one of the most credible sources of explanations of the Heidelberg Kate.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the fact that the Heidelberg Catechisms' 400th and 450th anniversary gave rise to great and thorough scholarly works, none of Ursinus' works were ever published in Hungarian. Nowhere in the Hungarian Language Area. For all reasons listed above, in hopes of a future publication, in the following chapters of my thesis I will share two theological treatises written by Ursinus, most importantly, the two that have never been published in Hungarian.

Thus, the following chapters: the Catechesis Minor (1562); Catechesis, Summa Theologiae<sup>17</sup> (1564); and Miscellanea Catechetica<sup>18</sup> – works so far available only in Latin and now written down for the first time, in Hungarian.

Given that the Small Catechism, written in 1562, and the Large Catechism, published in the winter of 1563-1564, can be found as sources in the Hungarian Language Area for catechetical explanations, and since they have not yet been read in Hungarian, this will be the

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<sup>15</sup> D. Zachariae Ursini theologi celeberrimi Sacrarum literarum olim in Academia Heidelbergensium et Neustadiana doctoris et Professoris fidelissimi, [...] Opera Theologica Tributa in Tomos Tres. Edita studio et opera Quirini Reuteri s. th. D. et professoris in Academia Heidelbergensi Heidelbergae, Typis Johannis Lancelloti Acad. Typog. Impensis Ione Rosae Anno 1612.

<sup>16</sup>I will prove this later when examining manuscript explanations!

<sup>17</sup> Catechesis, Summa Theologiae per quaestiones et responsiones exposita: sive capita religionis Christianae continens. 1564.

<sup>18</sup> Miscellanea Catechetica head word, covers all the writings that in Pareus' reading, is part of the Catechetica Theology, but is not a close part of the Catechetical Explanations given by Ursinus.

first opportunity. We added the Latin version as a control text in the note, especially for major issues (justification, communion, etc.) The *Miscellanea Catechetica* phrase contains all the writings that in Pareus' reading are part of *Theologia Catechetica* but not an integral part of what Ursinus' explanations.<sup>19</sup>

In the second part of the dissertation we move closer to manuscript explanations. Explaining the Heidelberg Catechism in a pulpit or cathedra is no longer practiced in our Reformed Church here in Transylvania, nor in Hungary. Since the middle of the 20th century, it is no longer used to give an explanation of the HC, although it was barely rediscovered at the beginning of the last century. Nowadays there are hardly any examples catechetical explanations or catechetical sermons in our publications; one hand would be enough to count how many have appeared in the last hundred years. In that time and age many have been copied and distributed by hand; pastors and teachers alike have demanded for centuries the publication and dissemination of new and more catechetical explanations.

Theological literature on CE does not make up entire libraries; perhaps it wouldn't even fill an average shelf (True explanation of the doctrine, as I said, is no longer practiced in many Reformed churches) Church History has done most in this regard accounting for more or less all works published over time.

The most important work in the Hungarian context is the study in the first volume of the *Studia et Acta Ecclesiastica* series, published in 1965 under the title of *The History of Heidelberg Catechism in Hungary* (orig. *A Heidelbergi Káté története Magyarországon*), edited by Tibor Bartha, in attention of the Press Department of the Reformed Church of Hungary.<sup>20</sup> This volume contains three papers of interest to us: Sándor Czeglédý's "The History of HC in Hungarian

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<sup>19</sup> 1. *Theses de officio et persona unici mediatoris inter Deum et homines, Domini nostri Jesu Christi Tétélek a mi Urunk, Jézus Krisztusnak, mint az Isten és az emberek között egyetlen Közbenjárónak tisztjéről és személyéről. Miscellanea catechetica seu collectio eorum, quae catecheticis explicationibus prius sparsim intexta fuerunt [...]* Opera extrema Davidis Parei D. Heidelbergae, Sumptibus Ioanne Rhodiu, Anno MDCXVI. [A továbbiakban: *MiscellaneaCatechetica*] Lásd ebben: *Theses de officio et persona unici mediatoris inter Deum et homines, Domini nostri Jesu Christi*. In *Academia Heidelbergensi pro Doctoratus disputata a D. Zacharia Ursino, anno 1562*. 113 (842).

2. *De Sacramenta* (1567) – About Sacraments

3. *De Baptismo* (1567) – About Baptism

4. *De Coena Domini* (1575) – About communion

<sup>20</sup> Bartha Tibor (szerk.): *A Heidelbergi Káté története Magyarországon*. In: *Studia et Acta Ecclesiastica*. I., Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztálya, Budapest, 1965.

Explanations until 1791", Mihály Bucsay's "The HC's Explanations since 1791 until the Present Day" and László Modis' "The Bibliography of HC Hungarian Literature since 1563 until 1964". The first two are about printed explanations, while the latter study provides bibliographic information for catechism publishers and explanations. Apart from this volume, there have been many valuable studies published in the last century, but one of the main shortcomings of these is that they only refer to works published in the post-Trianon Hungary, and few mention manuscript explanations. Here are just a few names: Erdős József,<sup>21</sup> Nagy Géza,<sup>22</sup> Enyedi Andor,<sup>23</sup> Csémy Lajos,<sup>24</sup> Imre Lajos,<sup>25</sup> Juhász István<sup>26</sup>, Fekete Károly.<sup>27</sup> Erdős József,<sup>28</sup> Nagy Géza,<sup>29</sup> Enyedi Andor,<sup>30</sup> Csémy Lajos,<sup>31</sup> Imre Lajos,<sup>32</sup> Juhász István<sup>33</sup>, Fekete Károly.<sup>34</sup> In addition to these studies, theological literature has been and is mentioning some of the catechetical explanations. Specifically in Church History as well as in Homiletics (we will discuss the homiletics of catechization later on); however, they are usually no longer than a page or two and only provide an introduction to the topic.<sup>35</sup>

It is also important to note that nobody (as far as I know, anyone in Transylvania) has undertaken to map the manuscript versions of HC's explanations, although in the aforementioned studies of *Studia et Acta Ecclesiastica* they refer to copies of the manuscripts in Transylvania. This is all the more flawed because for almost two centuries, because of the high cost of printing or because of the pressures of political power, catechetical explanations were copied by hand, both by pastors and theological students.

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<sup>21</sup> Erdős József: *A Heidelbergi Káté története és irodalma a külföldön és hazánkban*. Protestáns Szemle 1891/394-406.

<sup>22</sup> Nagy Géza: *Fejezetek a magyar református egyház 17. századi történetéből*. Ráday gyűjtemény, Budapest, 1985.

<sup>23</sup> Enyedi Andor: *A magyar református kátéirodalom*. Debrecen 1928.

<sup>24</sup> Csémy Lajos: *Kéziratos kátémagyarázatok*. Kálvinista Szemle 1964/1.

<sup>25</sup> Imre Lajos: *A Heidelbergi Káté magyarázata templomainkban*. Református Szemle 1939/36.

<sup>26</sup> Juhász István: *A Heidelbergi Káté XVI–XVIII. századi kiadásainak jelentősége egyházunk történetében*. RSz 1963/2.

<sup>27</sup> Fekete Károly: *A Heidelbergi Káté magyarázata*. Kálvin Kiadó, Budapest, 2013

<sup>28</sup> Erdős József: *A Heidelbergi Káté története és irodalma a külföldön és hazánkban*. Protestáns Szemle 1891/394-406.

<sup>29</sup> Nagy Géza: *Fejezetek a magyar református egyház 17. századi történetéből*. Ráday gyűjtemény, Budapest, 1985.

<sup>30</sup> Enyedi Andor: *A magyar református kátéirodalom*. Debrecen 1928.

<sup>31</sup> Csémy Lajos: *Kéziratos kátémagyarázatok*. Kálvinista Szemle 1964/1.

<sup>32</sup> Imre Lajos: *A Heidelbergi Káté magyarázata templomainkban*. Református Szemle 1939/36.

<sup>33</sup> Juhász István: *A Heidelbergi Káté XVI–XVIII. századi kiadásainak jelentősége egyházunk történetében*. RSz 1963/2.

<sup>34</sup> Fekete Károly: *A Heidelbergi Káté magyarázata*. Kálvin Kiadó, Budapest, 2013

<sup>35</sup> Since the publication of *Studia et Acta Ecclesiastica*, almost all works on church history in Transylvania or Hungary has been largely inspired by the volume.

Although researching the HC has been fashionable in the last nearly 100 years, there are still many unanswered questions about our creed writings today. And if in Hungary, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Catechism, much of the "debt" was paid for by theologians there, this is less true in Transylvania... even for the 450th anniversary.

In the next chapter we will discuss the beginnings of the Catechetical teaching, especially in the Hungarian Reformed Church. Teaching catechism and the preparation of catechumens for their "test" was already common practice in the early church, since candidates were trained and interviewed about the main branches of the Christian faith before being baptized. In the present thesis, we outline the methods of catechetical teachings through various ages starting from the Reformers' age. The appearance and spread of the Reformation opened a new era in the history of Christian catechesis. Still, the teaching method followed the old ways until the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, we are witnessing an evolution from automatized top-bottom teaching – learning method to actually taking time to "explain" catechism.

In an era when caring for members of the Church, "grazing", meant teaching (docere) them, not only preaching, but a teaching of Catechism that included a brief, concise summary of the creed. This is the "milk drink" that spiritual teachers use to nurture minor members to grow (1 Cor 3.2; 1 Pt 2.2) and is also the best weapon to defend oneself against misconceptions and temptations. According to Calvin, catechetical teaching is like sowing, as in planting further and further the faith, with the aim of creating a self-aware creed towards the church in the baptized children. According to István Geleji Katona, it is a demonstration of a healthy growth in the science of faith.<sup>36</sup>

Certainly, the Calvinist reformers had a bigger inclination (on a personal and interpersonal level) towards the Heidelberg Catechism than their successors. The very fact that between 1590 and 1660, the Károli Bible, due to its high price, was published only four times<sup>37</sup>, while the HC was published twenty-eight times in Hungarian, Latin and Romanian, speaks for itself.<sup>38</sup> Not that they converted to the Reformed faith and now they valued it more than the Bible, but because they were convinced, that on one hand, it was fully consistent with the teaching of

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<sup>36</sup> Imre Lajos: *Katechetika. A református keresztyén vallásos nevelés rendszere*, Budapest, 1942; 132.

<sup>37</sup> Vizsoly, 1590; Hannau, 1608; Oppenheim, 1612; Várad, 1660.

<sup>38</sup> Huszonnyolc Káté-kiadás

the Scriptures, and, on the other, because they could be distributed cheaply among the people and clergy. In this sense, Alsted also calls the HC the Little Bible.

Although Catechesis was most popular during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, only by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, did the different versions of the HC (as well as catechesis as a genre) become an important means of preparing for the Communion (confirmation). As an interesting feature of the teachings of catechism, from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> onward, records of church revealed that the HC and its various teachings have been closely monitored and controlled, by an order of the State. In schools, however, it continued to be part of the curriculum of religious instruction.

An important aspect of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century catechetical teaching is that most teachers used the explanations of Zacharias Ursinus himself, one of the authors of the HC. Ursinus says of catechesis: "Catechesis, the explanation and repetition of Christian science for the understanding of the less educated: compiled from the prophetic and apostolic writings compiled into certain questions, that is, the extract of the prophetic and apostolic teachings we give to the less educated, for we require them to know."<sup>39</sup>

In what follows, I will list the location of creed writings, especially catechetical explanations regarding the HC, in various synodic documents. All of this is because, in our study, it is essential to know when and how did the Transylvanian Reformed Church judge the Heidelberg Catechism, how did the Fathers of the Synod think it was better to teach it. Catechisation, as a vital and necessary act of the renewing Church, is constantly underlined in Council decisions. In this chapter, I record some of the Hungarian but mainly Transylvanian council decisions or contemporary records of their implementation from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. For almost two centuries, these decisions have regulated and settled the manner, place, time and content of the catechesis.

Before reviewing the CE printed in Transylvania, for the sake of clarity and future references, let's take the manuscript CEs I found in Transylvanian libraries.

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<sup>39</sup> Ursinus, Zakariás: *Corpus doctrinae orthodoxae sive. Catechetarum explicationum D. Zachane Ursini, opus absolutum D. Davidis Parei*. Heidelbergae, 1616. Ford. Szabó András, kézirat, 31.

Revealing the manuscripts was neither easy nor simple, as in most places librarians were not aware that there were manuscript CEs in their library, so I always got a negative feed-back to my first question, but after reviewing the manuscript files I found the exact opposite.

Our research covers the following libraries and collections: Library of the Protestant Theological Institute in Cluj-Napoca, Library of the Romanian Academy in Cluj-Napoca, Teleki-Bolyai Documentation Library, State Archives Offices in Târgu Mureş and Cluj, Bethlen Documentation Library in Aiud. Certainly my work is incomplete, though I think I have reviewed most of the remaining manuscripts; I have to say again that it would be useful - from the point of view of further researching the subject - to conduct a complete survey of the kind that was conducted in Hungary in 1963.

It is true that the subject of my thesis is the examination of manuscript explanations of the Heidelberg Catechism, but I think it is necessary that we also mention their printed counterparts. On the one hand, because it shows the reception of the HC in Transylvania at a given time; on the other hand, how time-consuming manuscripts replace print over time, as time and circumstances change.

The aforementioned studies, mainly from Hungary, have already dealt with these printed catechetical explanations. But these don't give us any Transylvania-specific details; showing who wrote them and how many of them were printed in Transylvania.

In the case of manuscripts, it would be risky to set up statistics, given the historical background, it would be difficult to believe that only so many CEs have been written or copied. However, on the basis of the printed copies, a few interesting observations can still be made with the manuscripts. But first, let's see both of them as they are (in brackets the total number of CEs published in the Hungarian Language Area):

- printed: 17th century = 5 (15)

18th Century = 1 (3)

19th century = 1 volume and 5 series in different pages (6 + 5)

20th Century = 5 (16 + 5)

- manuscripts: 17th century = 3



18th century = 19 – 3 have uncertainty regarding their age

20th Century = I didn't find any, probably still in private libraries, if any...

Looking at the register of printed CEs in Transylvania, we see that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century we have five variants, while three manuscripts survived. One third of all explanations published were printed in Transylvania. By the next century, this proportion will reverse: we know of only one print and nineteen (19!) manuscripts.

As I have already mentioned, the theological literature was not very generous with CEs, therefore, at least of what I am aware of, they have not been classified yet according to certain aspects and because of this, the literature does not yet have a generally accepted terminology. In what follows, based on the CEs I found during my research – of course following their specific processing methods –, I will attempt to establish a certain classification of them, otherwise we would soon get lost in this labyrinth of words.

As a result of my research, I can list the following:

1. Simple explanations based on the HCs 129 questions and answers
2. Simple explanations according to 52 days in Corpus Christi (so-called Dominicans)<sup>40</sup>
3. Simple explanations for children, with a general overview of the questions / answers
4. Partial explanations on various subjects, related to the occasion
5. Sermons based on Catechism, without text
6. Sermons based on Catechism, with Biblical text, these so-called “sermonibus explicata” have been mentioned by Phil. Lansberg in 1620<sup>41</sup>
7. Reflections and treatises on the lines of catechism<sup>42</sup>
8. Annotated explanations (with short, few lines of explanatory sentences)<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> This follows the best Ursinus' style of catechistical explanation.

<sup>41</sup> I have found already three examples of this in Transylvania libraries, Lansbergius Philipus: *Catechesis Religionis Christianae quae in Belgii et Palatinatus Ecclesiis docetur, sermonibus explicata*. Hanoviae 1620 – seems like it was popular in its day.

<sup>42</sup> Ld. pl. Sibelius Casparus.: *Meditationes catecheticae, in quatuor partes divisae, quibus capita religionis christianae in Catechesi Palatino-Belgica comprehensa et tradita, secundum theoriam et praxim, perspicue exponuntur, atque a calumniis et cavillationibus adversariorum ac inprimis a considerationibus Remonstrantium nervose vindicantur. Praemissa sunt Prolegomena et Paralipomena quaedam catechetica*. Amsterdam 1646. (First Edition)

<sup>43</sup> Vásárhelyi-Tőke István: *Annotationes in Catechesim Palatinam, in usum studiosae Juventulis*. Kézirat. h. n. é. n. 1–129. kérdés, 317 oldal. RAK Ms. R. 1113.

The “simple explanations for children” in the above division (3) is not closely related to our thesis, so I did not take into account in my dissertation the kind of work that Nagy Barna, in his above-mentioned writing calls "foundations." These are textbooks, in the strictest sense of the word, naturally divided into questions – answers. They are based on the Dutch shortened editions of the Heidelberg Catechism. In my opinion, these can be called explanations to the extent to which they expand; they possibly rephrase a question, bearing in mind the child's ability to understand. Such were also published, and even some manuscripts have survived. I do not know why these are collected in the bibliography of Nagy Barna only until 1828, but since they are not closely related to our paper, I will mention in the footnote section some of them which were not previously mentioned by him.<sup>44</sup> In the future, these should be processed as well, all the more so because both printed and manuscript versions of them are waiting in our libraries.

The basis and source of all these explanations is almost always Ursinus' CE, edited by David Pareus, which was published abroad by faithful “disciples” and other CEs published at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The overarching lesson of CEs from this era is that, by virtue of its function and content, the Heidelberg Catechism has been able to unite the otherwise often opposed orthodoxy and Puritanism. There was agreement on the merits in recognizing and explaining the Catechism.

The Biblicism of the Heidelberg Catechism was so factual in the eyes of those explaining it, that it could not be questioned by anyone. This is how the HC became in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, the go-to book of the Transylvanian Reformed Church, the creed uniting all theologians of different beliefs; for it was their goal and purpose to build up Christ's True Church on Earth, based on the HC and its various explanations.

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<sup>44</sup> Keresztúri Bíró Pál: *Keresztyéni Hitnek fő Ágazatinak Fundamentomi: mellyek az Öreg Catechismusból rövid Kérdésekbe és Feleletekbe bé-foglaltattak és elsőben Belga nyelven ki bocsáttattak; mostan pedig a Kisdedek épületekért Magyar nyelvre fordítottak. Váradon, 1654-ben.*;

Bevezetés a Hitvallás fundamentominak esméretébe, melyet írt egy atya szeretett fiának számára. Kolozsvárt, 1827, 1835.;

Fundamentomi a keresztyéni hitnek fő ágazatinak, mellyek az Öreg Catechismusból rövid Kérdésekbe és Feleletekbe bé-foglaltattak és elsőben Belga nyelven ki bocsáttattak: annak utána, a kis-dedeknek épülésükre Magyar nyelvre fordítottanak. Kolozsvárt S. Pataki József által, 1753.;

Látzai József: Kisdedek katekizmusa, az-az a keresztyén hit s kegyességnek fő ágazatai. Együgyű kérdések s feleletekbe szedve, kisded tanulók számára. Kolozsvár 1829 (5 kiadást ért meg), Marosvásárhely 1843.

In a separate chapter, I explore how polemical single explanations can get, and how much does the issue of faith protection come up. Since the main purpose of the explanations is to provide clear and effective communication to the people of the Reformed doctrines, it was inevitable that some articles of faith would also explain distinctions between the Reformed and other churches. "Against whom should these questions be pointed against?" Or a broader formula: "Who would object what the Scripture has to say if live by it?"

Some catechists are more ironic, while others write and speak with a warlike tone. I found Gergely Kiss the "most peaceful" in that he points to the Reformed teaching only against Roman Catholics, and is even the only author of the CEs who repeatedly refers to Luther and his writings, especially in the explanation of Our Father. Although Ursinus had already raised voice against Catholics in his explanations and sometimes against the Lutherans as well, for reasons that need no explanation, in Transylvania, this happened against Unitarians, Romanians, Russians, sometimes even Greeks. Most catechists took a polemical tone against the decisions of the Trident Synod, but sometimes even Ferenc David, Blandrata and others were criticized as well. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, ecumenism as the embodiment of inter-denominational tolerance is a wild concept. If there was any sympathy for other denominations, it would be exhausted by the Lutherans.

In the next chapter we examined how the question of Hungarian National Consciousness arises in the CEs. We often find examples of Hungarian people, Hungarian customs and proverbs or famous figures of Hungarian history. It is interesting to note that while the authors have sought to conform to the "reformed ecumenical spirit" by explaining the Catechism, but they often applied<sup>45</sup> them to the Hungarian people; this application is tailored to the target audience, helping them to better understand what is contained in the Articles of Faith.

In the chapter Pedagogy in CE we do not explicitly look for pedagogical methods that can be recognized in the explanations, as this topic is worthy of a doctoral dissertation, but we will

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<sup>45</sup> Czeglédy Sándor megfogalmazása. In: Czeglédy Sándor: A Heidelbergi Káté magyarországi magyarázatainak története 1791-ig = Bartha Tibor (szerk.): A Heidelbergi Káté története Magyarországon. Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Irodájának Sajtóosztálya, Budapest 1965

mention a few pedagogical "catches" that in my opinion, helped that better understanding of CEs.

Undoubtedly, CEs (both cathedral and pulpit) were intended to give students the best religious education. School catechists and pastors made sure that everyone knew that they were doing their work to build the Church of the Holy Mother, so the CEs had a serious, almost solemn feeling to them. Statements like "If I don't teach, I don't learn, I don't work, oh my!", or "White wool does not get tainted by paint easily, neither does the dry earth drink up rain water as fast as Disciples do the morals and nature of their Teacher."

Ars Concionandi, belonging to the Preaching of Catechism – Special Rhetorical Requirements in the Catechistical Explanations –, is the chapter title of the Protestant rhetoric that deals with the preaching of Catechism. We have to deal with this now because the pulpit explanations (and all sermons) have always been built on some sort of principle. In the world of rhetoric, the *ars concionandi* discusses the rules for making sermons.

The Catechist at the pulpit always has a dual function of listening to the Word to ensure that everything he says is verbatim and reflects the will of God, and secondly to present it to the audience as clearly as possible.

In examining the literature of Hungarian and Transylvanian rhetoric in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, besides the often mentioned Anglo-Dutch orientation, it is also worth noting the Ramism that came to us on a shorter way. Beside the Paris-Cambridge-Franeker-Sárospatak axis, the Paris-Heidelberg-Herborn-Gyulafehérvár axis also existed and not only geographically. By studying theological thinking in Hungary and Transylvania, we need to refine our views on the sharp opposition of followers of Heidelberg Orthodoxy and English Puritanism. According to the Hungarian compendium, the most important works of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century contain elements of Heidelberg-Herborn syncretism. Thus, in the 1630s and 1640s, German professors at the Collegium Academicum in Gyulafehérvár contributed to the diversity of European intellectual life in Hungarian theological thinking.

From the nineteenth century onwards, theology in the Hungarian Language Area has been averse to rhetoric and even to the word itself. Based on the above, we may ask, what does the preacher need rhetoric for? The answer can also be given from the above: as an auxiliary science,

it can be called upon when the preacher wants to give a well-structured, logical, speech. This does not mean craftsmanship at the level of Cicero's rhetoric, but simply the use of a tool to structure the text that has already been prepared. This in turn greatly contributes to the understanding and inclusion of what is said. It helps to authentically convey the content of speech; To understand and correctly pass on the doctrine of the Church, it was necessary in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to use rhetoric, and in my opinion, today as well.

In the last chapter of my thesis, I will present a 20<sup>th</sup> century manuscript CE. The extraordinary nature of this is that, to our knowledge, this is the only attempt in which the translator – in this case András Szabó – fully translates the 1616 version of Ursinus' CE.

András Szabó translates the 1616 edition of *Corpus Doctrinae Orthodoxae...* in *Odorheiu Secuiesc*. By that time, translations of the great Greek and Latin classics (Plato, Virgil, etc.) were already behind him. The date of translation is probably between 1935 and 1940. The typewritten manuscript was probably transmitted to the Theology of Cluj during his lifetime, as it was used by the competent professors (István Juhász and later Tamás Juhász) to write their university notes and various studies<sup>46</sup>. Prior to his death in 1957, he re-checked the manuscript he owned and repaired it in many places. Where necessary, he added in Greek or Hebrew terms, which, of course, could not be typed with his type-machine. In some cases, a phrase has been adjusted according to the theological terminology used in that time; if necessary, he reconstructed whole passages. The manuscript of the translation corrected and adjusted by András Szabó is currently in the Main Library of the College of Debrecen; I thank the Library for giving me access to the manuscript.

The translation of CE of the Heidelberg Catechism is extraordinary in many aspects: on the one hand, what most 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century catechists had at their disposal, can be read here in Hungarian; on the other hand, we can find a translation that is almost as old as the translation of Sándor Tavaszy, but was born independently of it and for other reasons with different backgrounds. In the language of translation, one feels that the translator was not always sure of

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<sup>46</sup> The manuscript of the CE of András Szabó can be found in 4 volumes; I have been able to identify two known copies of it up until now: one copy, which is the complete and improved version, is owned by the Debrecen College Library, which was purchased by the library; and a copy, also in 4 volumes, owned by Tamás Juhász, a retired professor of theology in Cluj-Napoca.

theological terms; nevertheless, it is interesting to see how the creed text we are familiar with is toned down and beautified by a Latin expression, a different expression or a cognate one. *Corpus Doctrinae Orthodoxae...* is a complex job. It combines almost all the answers to the controversial issues that have emerged since the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and it provides the most credible source of confirmation that by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Reformed teachings have been clarified. Ursinus' reasoning is clear and consistent. The explanations given to each question and answer give full guidance to the preachers. Not only then, at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but also now, for the people of today; since the explanations of the doctrine give us such clear answers and precise guidance, without the knowledge of them our creed wouldn't be neither credible nor thorough.

At the end of my thesis, I will explain how difficult it is to deal with this subject, as it is hard to choose a theological discipline to which the explanations could belong to. After all, they offer an explanation of our creed in the interior of the Reformed Church, so it belongs to the Systematic Theology. On the other hand, since they are sermons and, in a sense, textbooks, we could classify them as Practical Theology. Third, as sources from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, they characterize their age they come from and give us an invaluable glimpse in the past, as manuscripts important from the theological-historical point of view, we could classify them as Church History as well.

In my dissertation, I have tried to point out the characteristics of CEs, especially those dealing with church history theology. But I could not avoid going through some others as well to study other disciplines. I feel this way my thesis had become more complete. In any case, my thesis may provide new perspectives for the evaluation of the theological thinking and catechetical practice of that era.

As you can see, this paper did not want to address each manuscript CE separately for a number of reasons. On the one hand, because of the interdisciplinary "blending" above, and, on the other hand, because it would have taken much more time and space, and thirdly, because many manuscripts would have taken a long time to translate from Latin. I have to mention again the lack of sources and relevant reference works, which is why I will only touch on a few things in this dissertation.

The appendix contains important documents relevant to this thesis, which are essential for studying and understanding of manuscript explanations. First, as stated before, we present two creeds of Ursinus: Catechismus Minor (1562) and Summa Theologiae (1564). As the ancient sources of the Heidelberg Catechism, studying these is essential not only to understand the explanations of Ursinus but also in understanding the system and theology of the Carpathian Basin of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The first document in the appendix is a comparison in which I note along the 129 questions and answers of the HC those ones that can be derived from the Catechismus Minor and the Summa Theologiae. The three catechisms undoubtedly provide a fine cross-section of the pure theological vision of the second generation of the Reformation. In addition to András Szabó's translation of the HC, there are 108 unnumbered questions and answers in the Small Catechism and 323 in the Large Catechism, each showcasing the theological clarity of the Heidelberg Reformation. For better traceability, the comparison of the three 'columns' is followed by a section in which I align the Heidelberg Catechism and Summa Theologiae with the Catechismus Minor and later, the Summa Theologiae with the other two.

After this, as it has never appeared in Hungarian in any translation, I publish the full Hungarian and Latin texts of Catechismus Minor and Summa Theologiae with line numbers, differing from the original. For the Hungarian translation we also used the English versions of the two creeds. The Latin control text for translations was the text published by Lang, A.: *Der Heidelberger Katechismus und Vier Verwandte Katechismen mit einer historisch-theologischen Einleitung*, Darmstadt 1967.

Finally, in the last part of the appendix, we present the introductory study of Ursinus, published in the *Corpus Doctrinae Orthodoxae sive Catecheticarum Explicationum...* (1612) and translated by András Szabó, together with the complete catechetical explanation. It is extraordinary because it is organized in a systematic way and on the basis of pure Reformation teachings: how the Church teaches and how it should be further deepened. Practicing pastors and theologians would be particularly encouraged to study this introduction.

Looking back at the world of manuscript explanations – because this is a strange world with its own beauty – we can say that these manuscripts are from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries'

theological thinking and practice. Most are not original because they do not want to teach or tell new theological propositions, but they are wholeheartedly devoted to those in the Church and school benches, willing to understand what is possibly the only consolation in a man's life and death.



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