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English Financial Aid for the Reformed College of Debrecen in Light of Hungarian Archival Sources

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ABSTRACT
At the end of the seventeenth century, following the retreat of the Ottoman Empire from the region, the whole of the Kingdom of Hungary came under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Habsburgs, who introduced a number of measures that restricted the rights of Protestants. One of these measures affected the city ministers and the professors of the Reformed College in Debrecen, when they were forbidden by the Chamber of Szepes to have their salaries financed by the city. In such a situation, the leaders of the college had to seek financial help from Protestant-friendly countries such as Switzerland, the Netherlands, and England. Drawing on primary sources available in the Archives of the Reformed Church District of Tiszántúl, the aim of this paper is to present the history of the financial aid the Reformed College received mainly from England (and to some extent Ireland and Scotland) from the seventeenth century to the end of the twentieth century with a focus on how the money was collected and how it was transferred to Hungary. (RB)

KEYWORDS: Chamber of Szepes, English financial aid, Reformed College of Debrecen, salary of the professors

Introduction

Located at the crossroads of important trading routes, Debrecen embraced the Protestant Reformation movement quite rapidly in the first half of the sixteenth century. A college was established in 1538 and from that year on, the school was under the leadership of the Protestant "Reformers." From the 1540s onwards, the city and the school became a site for the Helvetic branch of the Reformation. At the end of the seventeenth century, following the retreat of the Ottoman Empire in Hungary, the Hungarian Kingdom was reunited under the rule of the devoted Catholic Habsburg dynasty, which led to conflicts between Catholics and Protestants. In 1752, the Chamber of Szepes, a financial management body in Early Modern Hungary, forbade the City of Debrecen to finance the salaries of the clergymen and the professors

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at the Reformed College. In this situation the professors turned to their Protestant brothers in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and England for financial support. The professors commissioned two students of the Reformed College to contact Swiss, Dutch, and English Protestants. All Dutch and Swiss aid received in the eighteenth century was mostly used to pay the professors. In England, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Canon of Salisbury helped to collect money for Debrecen. English aid also came in the eighteenth century, but it was not transferred on a regular basis and was used for other purposes than paying the salaries. With shorter and longer interruptions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (due to wars, political causes, and the negligence of partners), English aid continued arriving till the end of the twentieth century. Financial support from Protestants abroad was of cardinal importance from the point of view of church policy, because on the one hand it drew the attention of foreign brothers and sisters to the difficult situation of the Church and the Reformed College of Debrecen, and on the other hand it provided the College with a substantial and continuous income for decades or even for centuries.

English-Hungarian relations in the Middle Ages: A brief overview

It is worth taking a closer look at the rather complex set of political, educational, and cultural relations in the framework of which aid from England could materialize.

English aid, established in the eighteenth century, was an important part of the connections between Hungary and England, but this relationship dates back to much earlier, to the eleventh century. It was under the reign of King Stephan I of Hungary (1000–1038) that Hungarians became an integral part of European Christianity. The pilgrimage route to Jerusalem through the country was opened under the first king of Hungary (Laszlovszky, *Angol–magyar kapcsolatok* [Anglo–Hungarian Relations] 8). Two English princes came to Hungary at the time of the struggle for the throne after St. Stephan's death. Edward the Exile, the son of King Edmund Ironside and of Ealdgyth, with his brother Edmund, was sent by Canute to the Swedish court after the Danish conquest in 1016. From here they fled to Kiev in 1028. Prince Edward married Agatha, the niece of Henry III, Holy Roman Emperor (1046–1056). The princes came to Hungary with Andrew of Hungary, a descendent from the younger branch of the ruling Árpád dynasty of Hungary (Laszlovszky, "Angolszász hercegek" [Anglo-Saxon Princes] 53). Andrew's son, Solomon, King of Hungary (1063–1074), married Henry III's daughter Sophia, Agatha's niece (Laszlovszky, "Skóciai Szent Margit" [Saint Margaret

of Scotland] 73). Edmund might have died in Hungary, but Edward was recalled to England in 1057 as a possible heir of King Edward the Confessor (*Angol–magyar kapcsolatok* 33). One of Edward's daughters, Margaret (Saint Margaret of Scotland) married Malcolm III of Scotland ("Angolszász hercegek" 42). After the Battle of Hastings, the Anglo-Saxons who did not accept the Norman rule (*Angol–magyar kapcsolatok* 60) settled in the Black Sea region and the Crimea and came into contact with the Transylvanian bishopric in the Eastern part of Hungary (Laszlovszky, "A keleti Új-Anglia" [Eastern New England] 123–24). In the second half of the twelfth century King Béla III of Hungary (1172–1196) sought new political contacts in the West and married Margaret, the daughter of Louis VII of France (1137–1180), the widow of Henry the Young King, the son of King Henry II of England ("Angol–magyar kapcsolatok" 153). The marriage of Béla III and Margaret of France was of decisive importance for the strengthening of Franco–Hungarian relations, but it was also an important milestone in Anglo–Hungarian relations, fostered by the Hungarian clergy, who appeared in Lincoln and Oxford in the 1190s after having previously studied with Englishmen in Paris, and many of whose masters were English. As a result of the wars of Richard I and Philip II, they left Paris with the English and sought out England's new and increasingly famous centers of learning. Their choice may have been helped by their knowledge of the country's dynastic connections as well as their attraction to its ecclesiastical community, whose illustrious representative, Thomas Becket, was particularly well respected in Hungary. (Laszlovszky, "Magyarországi Miklós" [Nicholas of Hungary] 193). In the second half of the thirteenth century, a couple of citizens of London and of rural England are mentioned in historical sources as being of Hungarian origin (Papp 228–31). The English public was also well informed about the Tartar invasion (1241–1242) from letters extracted by Matthew Paris and from his *Chronica Majora*, and Vincent de Beauvais' *Speculum historiale* (Bárány, "A tatár veszély" [The Tartar Threat] 115–19). The idea of an English participation in a crusade against the Mongols on the territory of Hungary was raised in the 1250s (121). In the early 1290s, the Hungarian Andras III also offered 1,000 knights and mounted crossbowmen and planned to join the crusades led by Edward I of England (149–50). In the second half of the thirteenth century, on several occasions, Hungary and England were on the same side in the German alliance systems. In many cases, the perception of German imperial relations and membership in German parties determined the foreign policy stance of the kingdoms. English politics were very active in the Holy Roman Empire in the 1270s and

1290s, and their Habsburg relations go back to earlier decades, as did the Habsburg relations of the Hungarian crown (Bárány, "Magyarország Anglia kontinentális politikájában" [Hungary in the Continental Politics of England] 255). From the fifteenth century onwards, relations were strengthened between England and Hungary. English envoys attended the Council of Constance. In the English *natio*, Sigismund of Luxemburg, King of Hungary (1387–1437) and Holy Roman Emperor (1433–1437), found valuable allies in the fight against the heretics (Bárány, "Magyar-angol kapcsolatok a konstanzi zsinaton" [Hungarian–English Relations at the Council of Constance] 8). During the Council of Constance in 1416, Sigismund even visited England (Bárány, "Zsigmond király 1416-os" [King Sigismund's Visit] 73). The kingdom of Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490), and even the kingdom of the Jagellos (1490–1526), were on a par with the Christian princes of the West. Matthias aimed primarily at establishing Central European (imperial) alliances, but if these relations did not provide sufficient stability, he inevitably turned to Western Europe. Matthias sought to make the country an inescapable power, and as part of this, his Western, English, Burgundian, Neapolitan leagues were necessary for him to be able to resist Ottoman aggression (Bárány, *Magyarország nyugati külpolitikája* [Hungary's Foreign Policy in the West] 2). Later Henry VII, who initially distanced himself from the 1500–1502 Franco–Hungarian alliance against the Turks, sent a draft treaty and financial aid to Ulászló II of Hungary (108). British envoys regularly reported on Hungary's preparations for war against the Turks in the period before the Battle of Mohács (1526) (285). From the sixteenth century onwards, educational relations between universities were revived (Gömöri, *Angol–magyar kapcsolatok* [Anglo–Hungarian Relations] 8), and, from the seventeenth century onwards, Protestant Hungarians regularly visited English universities (84).

Reformation in Debrecen: A historical background

Debrecen features among the main municipalities of the Hungarian Kingdom in medieval documents already in the thirteenth century. The Franciscans founded a monastery school in Debrecen in 1322. Around the same time, the Dominicans also arrived in Debrecen and took possession of the St. Andrew Church and its parish in 1324–1325 with the support of the secular landowners of the city. One year later the Dominicans were expelled, and a municipal school was founded in the former building of the order. While the Franciscans offered mainly religious education, the municipal school trained the boys for offices in the city administration (Bölcskei 9).

Although endowed with the rights of a market town from 1361 (Orosz 28), Debrecen was not allowed to build a city wall and fell under the jurisdiction of its landlord. However, from the fifteenth century onwards, the town was exempt from customs duties throughout Hungary (Bölcskei 11).

Located at the crossroads of important trading routes, Debrecen rapidly became the center of the Protestant Reformation movement. According to archival sources, in as early as 1529, the first Peregrinus from Debrecen, by the name of Gregorius Johannis Debrecinus, was registered in Wittenberg, while a new landowner of Debrecen, Bálint Enyingi Török, proved to be a great patron of the Reformation; he invited the first reformed preacher to settle in the city in 1536 (Bölcskei 11). The Reformed College of Debrecen was established in 1538. From that year on, the former municipal school was under the leadership of the Reformers. From the 1540s onwards, the city and the school became a site for the Helvetic branch of the Reformation (Bölcskei 12).

At the end of the seventeenth century, after the retreat of the Ottoman Empire from Hungary, the Hungarian Kingdom was reunited under the rule of the Catholic Habsburg dynasty. Over the interpretation of the patronage right, as well as the resulting obligations, there was a long dispute between the city, the state, the Reformed, and the Catholic Church. The city wished to preserve its Calvinist character, while the royal power insisted on reopening the city's doors to Catholics. In 1693, Emperor Leopold I elevated Debrecen from the status of a market town to the status of a royal free town on the condition that Catholics could settle again in the city. In the middle of the eighteenth century, it was prescribed that one third, and later even half, of the senators in the city self-government had to be Catholic. Furthermore, the city was expected to fulfill its patronage obligations and was required to pay for the renovation of the Catholic Church, as well as to secure the accommodation of priests and teachers. These demands, however, were refused since even in 1780 only 2.5% of the city's inhabitants were Catholic as opposed to 97.5% Calvinist (Rácz 131–32).

The operation of the Calvinist Church and the Calvinist College, however, was severely affected by an ordinance set forth by the Chamber of Szepes, the financial management of the eastern parts of the Kingdom of Hungary in territories far from Pozsony (Pressburg/Bratislava in today's Slovakia) in January 1752. Established in 1567 with residence in Kassa (Košice, Slovakia), the Chamber of Szepes extended its jurisdiction to the counties east of Liptó, Hont, and Nógrád, and ensured that royal income should be used for the wars against the Ottomans, while it was also to finance

the political and military administration of that part of the country.[1] As the letter of the Chamber declared, the city was forbidden to pay the salaries of the clergymen of the Calvinist Church and the professors of the Reformed College of Debrecen (Balogh, "Debrecen város segélye" [The Aid of the City of Debrecen] 684). According to the ordinance, the clergy had to be paid by members of the congregation, whereas the professors' salaries were to be covered by the College foundations. The letter made it clear that if the city did not pay the Catholic priests, then the salaries for the Calvinist professors and pastors could not be paid by the city either (Rácz 131–32).

Providing a regular income for the gradually increasing number of professors at the Reformed College of Debrecen was difficult for the city. From the year of its foundation in 1538 to 1636 there was only one chaired professor, while between 1636 and 1660 there were two such positions (Bölcskei 31). Until 1704 there were three chairs (Bölcskei 52), whereas in the eighteenth century, except for a period of 27 years, (*A Debreczeni Református Főiskola alapítványi törzskönyve* [Documents of Foundations] 403), there were four (Tóth 74) chairs at the College. Although Prince of Transylvania György Rákóczi I established a foundation in 1636 to support the establishment of the second professorship, from 1658, the chair was financed by the city. For the third professorship, the Transylvanian prince Mihály Apafi donated 300,000 kilograms of rock salt, which was supplemented with money, natural resources, as well as a flat offered by the city. The money from Apafi's foundation, however, flowed so irregularly that the responsibilities to fund this chair had to be undertaken by the City of Debrecen again. The regulations of the Chamber put the College in a difficult situation because the salaries of the four professors, the nine teachers (praeceptores), the librarian, and the other staff of the institutions of the College amounted to a total of 2,000 Forints per year, which had to be provided by the city (Tenke 45). The College had little capital, from which salaries and other expenses could not be financed. It was calculated that if the salaries were to be paid by a foundation, they would need a capital of 33,000 Forints (Rácz 131–32).

The city tried to restore the original financial situation on all sorts of forums but did not succeed. The parish of Debrecen introduced a kind of church tax, the so-called "salary of the minister," which ensured the pay of the parish priest; however, it was much more difficult to collect money for the professors of the College. The board of the College could count on the support of the townspeople and the patrons, yet the help from private individuals was insufficient in this case. They also tried to collect money in Transylvania, but the commissioners came back empty-handed (Rácz 133).

Finally, the Reformed College of Debrecen was able to borrow money from the College in Enyed (Aiud, Romania) to pay the professors. In addition, the administrator of the Reformed Church Sámuel Szeremley together with his wife, as well as Pastor István Sződi, established a foundation to support a chair financially (Rácz 685).

Foreign support

Evidently, the College could not survive on domestic support, therefore on 28 July 1753, the Debrecen Church Council made a decision to seek assistance abroad. The Churches of Protestant countries including England, Switzerland, and the Netherlands were contacted with the request to provide financial aid to Debrecen. The Peregrinatio Academica of College students in the previous centuries allowed for establishing good relations with the Churches of these countries. Hungarian and Transylvanian students visited English universities, although they did not enroll at the universities in the Early Modern Period. First, because they could not pay the enrollment fee, and secondly, they would not take an oath of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. Despite this, Hungarian students regularly received financial aid from the universities according to account books. (Gömöri, *Magyarországi diákok* [Hungarian Students] 6–7). It was only in the nineteenth century that regular university contacts were established with Scotland. During the nineteenth century the Scottish Presbyterian Church had undergone a revolutionary transformation, strengthening its external relations and seeking cooperation with universities abroad. In 1862, the Church of Scotland decided to establish scholarships for Czech and Hungarian Reformed theological students to further their studies at New College, Edinburgh. Four endowments of £50 each were set up to pay for the education of two Czech and two Hungarian students a year (Hörcsik 167). Between 1865 and 1914, eighty-two Hungarians were given scholarships to study in Scotland (Sárközi 120–21). A special scholarship opportunity for Unitarian ministers from Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) was offered by the Manchester New College in England. Eighteen students studied at the college between 1860 and 1918, seven of whom later became bishops, eighteen of them became theological professors at the Unitarian College of Kolozsvár, while three students pursued their careers as priests and writers respectively (Sárközi 124–25). To complement the Manchester New College Foundation, in 1911 Emily Sharpe established a second such foundation in memory of her father, Samuel Sharpe. For many years, the Sharpe Hungarian Scholarship provided financial security for Transylvanian clergymen to pursue their

education in England at the annual cost of £110. The opportunity to study in England was further extended by the Unitarian Home Missionary Board, founded in 1854, now known as the Unitarian College, Manchester (Sárközi 126).

In the Early Modern Period, Protestant countries had already supported Protestant churches in Hungary; for instance, the Reformed College of Enyed was rebuilt with English help (Csűrös 207). Interestingly, no German Churches were contacted for help, although the number of Hungarian, among them Debrecen, Peregrini at German universities was considerable. Moreover, the Reformed College of Debrecen, like Protestant Colleges in Hungary in general, followed German examples in their organization and in the charters of the College. Foreign policy issues and conflicting interests between the Habsburg Empire and Prussia explain why this was the case. During the War of the Austrian Succession, the Habsburgs turned against the Prussians and the Saxons. After the loss of Silesia in 1748, tensions increased between Queen Maria Theresa, the ruler of the Habsburg dominion, and the Prussian King Frederick the Great, and their allies, which ultimately led to the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). There were also cultural differences between the two warring states. Frederick the Great forbade his subjects to study at foreign universities in 1749 and 1751. This was mainly directed against Maria Theresa, who in response disallowed her subjects to attend German universities. Studying abroad for Hungarian Protestants was bound to a corresponding royal permit in 1725, reissued in 1742 (Klein 6). The royal authorities issued passports only to non-belligerent or allied countries (Klein 9). Most of the German territory was hostile territory from a Habsburg point of view. The Debrecen Church Council would have committed treason if it had sought support from German principalities in school or church matters. However, there is no evidence in the archival sources whether Debrecen had seriously considered seeking financial support from Germany (Rácz 135).

The petition letters requesting financial aid were written jointly by the City and the College, while college students—István Weszprémi, a medical student then studying in Switzerland, later a famous physician in Debrecen and Ferenc Kalmár, later minister of Halas—were entrusted with the delivery of the letters. The envoys received strict instructions. They had to act with great care and were authorized to speak only to those who were involved in their case. During their meetings, they were prohibited from portraying the situation of the College better or worse than it was. Neither were they allowed to take the collected donations, but had to lodge them to a not-yet-specified

place which ensured the collection of interest annually. The order stated that the money should not be stored in England, but either in the Netherlands or in Switzerland so that the interest could be transferred to a not-yet-identified Viennese merchant. The representatives were instructed to accept a receipt confirming the amount of money collected. A most interesting detail of the mandate was that the envoys should write encrypted messages in their correspondence with the professors, so that their letters, should they fall into the wrong hands, would remain incomprehensible to the reader. For further precaution, the letters had to be addressed to a Debrecen merchant instead of the professors (Nagy 42–43).

The first sum of financial support arrived from Switzerland. In his letter of 21 May 1757, the Zurich secretary Salamon Hirzel reported that the Reformed orders had decided at their meeting the previous summer to send 400 Swiss forints to Debrecen every year for six years.[2] The money transfer was reconsidered every six years until 1781 when it was discontinued,[3] yet, the archival sources preserved in Debrecen do not reveal why it was terminated after 1781.

In the Netherlands, Willem van Irhoven, Dean of the Faculty of Theology in Utrecht, promised to support the cause of the Reformed College of Debrecen.[4] In his letter to Professor Sámuel Szilágyi, Van Irhoven reported that he had presented the request of Debrecen to the faculty as well as the provincial Synod of Utrecht on 7 September 1756, and could raise one hundred and ten forints.[5] The money, each year a different amount from the Netherlands, was transferred regularly to Debrecen till 1792 with the assistance of Dutch merchants Raymond and Theodor Smeth, Frederik Hendrik Wetsteen, and Abraham Clemens and his sons.[6] Unfortunately, no documents about the reasons for the suspension of payment are known. But as long as the money was paid, the Synod of Utrecht, the Deanery and the Council of Churches of Amsterdam, and the Synod of North Holland were the most generous benefactors.[7]

With regard to the English support, Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Herring was addressed by the Church Consistory in a letter dated 2 October 1753 to deal with the financial aid to the Reformed College of Debrecen. Weszprémi and Kalmár, who were also commissioned to handle this matter, often commuted between the Netherlands and England. On 12 July 1755, Archbishop Herring wrote in a letter of recommendation that two Hungarian students had called upon him and had described to him the miserable state of their academy. The archbishop expressed his hope that the Hungarians would get help from people they ask for financial support. On

12 August 1755, Weszprémi was already in Utrecht, from where he sent a letter home to merchant Albrecht Gerstenfeld and informed him about financial matters and local markets. In his letter of 17 November 1755 to John James Majendie, the Canon of Salisbury, the archbishop promised to promote the cause of the Hungarians and asked the representative of the College to return to England. Weszprémi complied and wrote a letter from London to Kalmár in Utrecht on 8 December. He mentioned that he visited Majendie and enclosed Majendie's letter to Kalmár. Weszprémi planned to visit the archbishop in the following days.

Although the College initially assigned Weszprémi and Kalmár the duty of seeking financial help for the College, Miklós Sinai, a student from Debrecen, and János Mező, a Hungarian in service of the Duke of Cumberland, visited the Archbishop of Canterbury. No further relevant information can be traced about this visit than what we know from a letter from Weszprémi addressed to the Debrecen merchant, Albrecht Gerstenfeld, on 8 March 1756. This letter reveals that Weszprémi resented Sinai's and Mező's involvement in this case because he thought that they would harm the cause and further help for the College was hopeless. His misgivings, however, are contradicted by the fact that a large sum, 261 pounds and 15 shillings (2626 forints), was raised on 14 March from the donations of the archbishops of Canterbury and York and another twenty-four bishops.[8] According to the agreement, the amount was not sent to Debrecen, but it was deposited at 3% interest in a bank in London, which yielded a significant sum (Balogh, "Az angol alapítvány története" [History of the English Foundation] 578).

Weszprémi reported to Gerstenfeld on 25 April 1756 that 113 and a half pounds had been raised at Cambridge University, but no money was gathered at Oxford. Meanwhile, Miklós Sinai informed his professor Sámuel Szilágyi in a letter from late March or early April that he had been granted admission to the bishop of Oxford through the help and advice of János Mező. The bishop accepted his letter of recommendation, tested him in language and theology, and recommended him to the members of the university so that Sinai would learn English.[9]

In his letter of 28 June 1756, Weszprémi wrote to Gerstenfeld that he would return to Utrecht five-six weeks early, planning his trip back to Hungary. He asked Sinai to try to collect money at Oxford, and therefore Sinai received a recommendation from Majendie. The Canon wrote in his letter of 27 June 1756 to Sinai that Kalmár had asked for two confirmations of the amount of the collected money. These should then be sent to

Switzerland and Holland to encourage the other benefactors to enter a small competition so that they would donate a little more money to the Hungarians. According to Majendie, no further funds could be expected from England.[10]

These letters demonstrate that in England a certain sum of money was collected, yet it failed to reach Debrecen. Therefore, in a letter dated 15 March 1758, the professors in Debrecen requested the professors in Utrecht to forward the College's petitions to the Canon of Salisbury and ask him for his help to transfer the money raised in England to Utrecht and then to Debrecen.[11]

The same request was reiterated in the professors' letter dated 20 January 1761 to Dutch merchant Wetsteen. They explained that they had asked for the support of the English clergy five years before and they knew that four years before some money had been collected for Debrecen, which they did not receive. Therefore, they asked Wetsteen to send a letter to London as a matter of urgency.[12] On the same day, in a letter the professors at the College asked the Canon John James Majendie about the amount of money raised at Oxford and asked him to send a certain sum from the interest of the money via the merchant house Wetsteen to Vienna to their representative.[13]

There was also concern about the management of money, which can be concluded from Sinai's letter to the Oxford Canon Edward Bentham dated 7 December 1762. A few days before this letter was dispatched, the professors were informed by their London friends that Viennese merchants had warned a member of the Debrecen City Council that the money collected for the Reformed Church of Debrecen in England was in danger, therefore the capital or its interest had to be taken urgently. In order to remedy this problem, Sinai asked Bentham if the money could be deposited in the name of the Reformed Church of Debrecen instead of the name of the Reformed College of Debrecen, which was independent from the Church. The deposited capital had paid £108 in interest since the last payment six years before. He trusted Bentham to transfer this sum of money as well as the interest earned to Debrecen directly via Vienna to Sámuel Szeremley, the curator of the College. Interestingly, the Amsterdam merchants' assistance was not mentioned in the letter. Furthermore, Sinai asked Bentham to send a receipt in English or in French to the four Debrecen professors to sign and return. He also wished to know the name of the bank where the money was deposited and requested a confirmation of the deposit.[14]

A reply came quickly from London. The secretary of the Russian envoy, Ludovicus Sontag wrote to Professor György Szathmári Király that

600 pounds (5,400 Rhenish guilders) had been collected for the Reformed College of Debrecen and deposited at 3% interest at the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.[15] On the recommendation of its President and the Bishops, in 1761 the Society in accepted the trust of the fund, undertaking "to remit the dividends upon it from time to time to the professors of the University in such manner as they shall desire and direct" (Pascoe 735). If the College wished the money to be paid, which Sontag recommended, the secretary would send them an authorization form. The secretary's letter did not seem to reassure the professors. In a letter dated 11 April 1763, Sinai asked Oxford Professor Nathanael Bliss to approach Edward Bentham about the previously sent letter and to ask Majendie about doctor Coverath, who was in charge of managing the money of Debrecen. On 28 June 1763, the Debrecen professors requested Majendie to send 18 pounds via Amsterdam and Vienna to Debrecen and to capitalize the rest of the money.[16]

Debrecen presumably needed more money, thus Mező, who was in the service of the Duke of Cumberland, was instructed to talk to the Archbishop of Canterbury with the purpose of seeking financial aid in Scotland and Ireland. It was settled that Mező would inform the College and in case of the archbishop's disapproval, the College would take no further steps in this matter. In the end, the College addressed the Archbishop of Canterbury directly with a request to raise money in Scotland and Ireland and deposit it in the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Letters were also enclosed to Hugo Percy, Duke of Northumberland and viceroy of Ireland, to John Stewart, Count of Bute and Chancellor of Aberdeen, and to Samuel Chandler, Presbyter of the Scottish Church. It was stated that the money collected should be given to Mező.[17]

Arguably, Mező continued to play an important role in these transactions. In a letter dated 19 January 1765, the professors at Debrecen asked Majendie to provide Mező with a portion of the money and to send the rest to Debrecen. Five years later, on 31 March 1770, the professors asked Majendie to pay 60 pounds to Mező for a purpose not identified. The fate of this money is unknown; it probably remained with Mező. On 23 July 1776, 54 pounds and 6 shillings arrived in Vienna through the mediation of the British envoy, as a copy of an invoice issued by the professors of Debrecen proves.[18]

As William Morice, the secretary of the Society informed the professors in his letter of 21 July 1779, the money under the supervision of the Society was regularly paid to the English bank: 1,200 pounds of capital

yielded 36 pounds of interest annually. According to a receipt dated 18 September 1779, 130 pounds came to Debrecen via the British envoy in Vienna.[19] According to the report of 5 February 1780, this sum earned 918 Rhenish guilders and 20 kreutzers.[20] The interest on the capital was not drawn annually, as stated in a letter to William Morice dated 28 March 1780. If not notified otherwise from Debrecen, the interest had to be added to the capital. In the letter to Morice, the professors also ordered books from England. The book list was sent by Morice, and he reported that on 16 July 1781, he had bought government papers in value of 100 pounds. Only six years later, books bought by Morice came along with a record of interest between 1782 and 1786, which amounted to 39 pounds annually. The last letter pertaining to the financial aid from England dates back to 5 December 1787. The professors of the College wrote to the head of the student government of the College that from the interest of the money that arrived on 5 July 1786, 1,000 Rhenish guilders should be paid for the salaries of the professors and 766 Rhenish guilders and 20 kreutzers should be devoted to covering the expenses of the books.[21]

The French Revolution (1789–1799) brought a longer interruption in the flow of English financial aid. On 17 January 1803, Professor Gábor Szilágyi asked the Society for the money to be transferred again.[22] Although it was transferred, according to the minutes of the faculty on 12 April 1804, the interest arrears since 1786 should have been 663 pounds, yet only 326 pounds and five shillings, amounting to 4,029 forints, were received.[23] Professor Szilágyi took action again, and in April contacted the Society managing the foundation, the secretary at the British Embassy in Vienna, as well as the Protestant agent in Vienna, József Vitéz.[24] Though the Society's reply arrived on 17 March 1808, no money was sent with it.[25] In 1817, the professors asked for the aid that had been overdue since 1803.[26] In 1824 another letter was sent to the Society,[27] but money—in this case 11,464 forints and 30 kreutzers—was transferred only in 1826.[28] Another letter, written in 1824, also explained the necessity of the interest arrears being sent so that the number of students that could travel abroad, as well as that of the professors would increase, along with the library collection enriched.[29]

Regarding the correspondence with the Society managing the English funds, in November 1826 the Royal Council of Governors ruled that if the Reformed College of Debrecen wished to receive the interest, it should first send their requests to the Court Chancellery.[30] Because the College did not receive the money, in February 1831 the professors asked the Viennese Protestant agent István Szűts to act on their behalf to that effect.[31] In April,

the professors informed the agent that 5,058 forints and 53 kreutzers had arrived from England, but the Society had not informed them how much the capital and interest were, so they asked the agent to check it.[32] The Society's treasurer, James Heywood Markland, wrote to the College in November 1832 that 150 pounds was the interest due on two years' arrears, which could be paid at any time in installments of 75 pounds within a year or even half a year.[33] In Debrecen, a letter of appreciation for the support was drafted in April 1833 and it was requested that the Society send the interest every three years from the end of 1833.[34] On behalf of the College, Baron Miklós Vay appealed to Archduke Joseph of Austria, the palatine (the viceroy) of Hungary so that the school could receive the money through a money changer,[35] which, following lengthy negotiations,[36] finally came from 1835 to Miklós Vay's father-in-law (Vay–Lévay 17), Baron Henrik Geymüller, a banker in Vienna,[37] who sent it further on to the wholesaler István Megyaszai.[38] In 1836, interest of 375 pounds was demanded, which in 1837, after the exchange of the money into 750 silver forints, was transferred to Geymüller, who, after deducting 3 forints 45 kreutzers as his fees, handed the money over to Megyaszai.[39] In February the following year, they were also expecting 75 pounds interest, but the superintendents' meeting a year earlier had failed to submit a bill of exchange, so they could not receive the money, and it was decided that the bill of exchange would be sent to Vienna.[40] According to the minutes of the church district in January 1842, Professor Mózes Kalós reported that the sum of 75 pounds for 1841 did not reach Debrecen in the usual way, so a proposal to transfer the money through the Sina [Szina] merchant house was accepted.[41] The merchant house accepted the order and sent the money to Debrecen.[42] In the same year, the bishop suggested that the interest on the money sent to Debrecen, which was already kept separate from the money raised, should be collected. Only the interest was used; the capital was not touched.[43] The history of the English aid is mentioned again only in December 1849 in the minutes of the professors' councils when bills of exchange were sent to England for 1848 and 1849.[44] In the following years the arrival of the money is rarely mentioned in the minutes. According to a receipt presented in February 1874, 850 forints and 50 kreutzers had been received in the previous year,[45] then 873 forints and 75 kreutzers in January 1879,[46] and 891 forints in 1883.[47] In 1889 the Society notified the College that the annual allowance had been increased to 87 pounds 8 pence, and for 1888 the professors could also claim 34 pounds 6 shillings 2 pence in income tax but the Society asked for a special receipt for

that.[48] In December 1895, and again in June 1896, semi-annual interest payments were received.[49]

In 1890, the idea of bringing the capital of the English aid to Hungary was first raised, thus the College director submitted a proposal to the economic council, but they did not yet find the time appropriate to adopt it.[50] In 1897, Ferenc Balogh, professor and archivist, contacted the Society managing the fund about transferring the money to Hungary. The Society did not oppose the export of the money, but as it was explained in their letter, the English High Court was authorized to make a decision in the matter. Balogh also contacted a Hungarian living in London, Theodor Duka, whose son was a lawyer. According to Duka Jr., starting the procedure would cost about 1,000 Hungarian forints, and in his opinion the court would not approve the money to be exported from England.[51] In the end, the College abandoned the plan to bring the money to Hungary. The interest rate on the capital was 3 ½% in 1838–39,[52] 2 ¾% in 1889, and 2 ½% before 1914, which was withdrawn every six months in April and October by means of English-language bills of exchange through the Debreceni Alföldi Takarékpénztár [Debrecen Great Plain Savings Bank]. The last interest payment was received by the College on 28 May 1914.[53]

No money arrived in Debrecen during and after World War I, but in April 1922, Sándor Karai, the director of the College, wrote a summary of the history of the money and the payments, and in December of the same year he sent a letter to the Debreceni Hitelbank [Debrecen Credit Bank], requesting a bill of exchange for three semesters' interest, which he addressed to the Society managing the English fund. The credit bank promised to notify the College when the money was received. There was some confusion afterwards, as the Hungarian Property Management Committee informed the Society on 17 January 1923 that it should not have transferred the 198 pounds 5 shillings 8 pence to the College and asked for the money to be returned. The matter was, of course, investigated, and it turned out that the claim against the British-owned Society under Article 231 of the Treaty of Trianon was legitimate. Thanks to the personal intervention of Consul General Henrik Cockburn, the sum did not have to be returned, while the aid, which was paid at an annual rate of 76 pounds 5 shillings and 4 pence, was sent in semi-annual cycles until 1940.[54]

The foundation seems to have been forgotten for a few years, when Zoltán Péter, the director of the College started to explore the English aid again in December 1948. He wrote a letter to the Hungarian National Bank informing them that during his research he had found a document about an

English foundation which stated that the last payment to the Reformed College had been made on 30 June 1940, although the money should have been paid continually. He also added that he had contacted the Society managing the funds and was expecting its response. Lajos Sz. Gavallér, a lawyer acting on behalf of the Hungarian bank, suggested that the Hungarian National Bank should be asked to settle the amount in Hungarian forints, and that a surcharge could be applied. He referred the director to László Pap, professor of theology in Budapest for further clarification. He also informed Péter that the money could not be used abroad, only in Hungary. At the end of the year, the bank confirmed that the College could retain its right to claim payment.

In January 1949 a letter from the Society informed the College that the foundation was under the control of the Board of Trade at the Enemy Department. The Society requested the appointment of a representative who could be authorized to act in the matter. Also in January, Gavallér proposed to the director of the College, Péter that the money from the English aid should be used for setting up a hall outside the College in honor of Bishop Dezső Baltazár (1871–1936), who was one of the active supporters of the cause to establish a university in Debrecen, and who raised funds in 1924–25 in the US, which helped to establish a foundation for the reconstruction of the Reformed College of Debrecen after World War I. In the meantime, the College director received full authority from the College's governing board to proceed with the case. It was not until July 1954 that a letter from the Financial Services Center in Budapest affirmed that the Society acknowledged the claim, and it enquired about the time and method of payment. The director of the College, however, reported to the Center that the money had not yet been received. The Bishop of the Tiszántúl Reformed District János Péter was then asked to look into the matter and the director of the College, Endre Tóth, collected and sent the files to the finance office.[55]

The subsequent fate of the payments could only be reconstructed from the archival documents which suggest that the payments were only resumed from 1961 onwards.[56] Except for a few years, the Society transferred the money on an annual basis until 1990.[57] After 1961, the English aid is no longer mentioned in the College files, instead, it is listed both in the files of the Theological Academy and in the minutes of the Faculty Council, as preserved in the archives. The receipt of the money is carefully recorded here until 1967, while the income pages of the cash registers provide information about the subsequent years until 1983, and the receipts until 1990.[58] Little is

known about the further use of the money, except for one entry in 1984, when a Greek Bible was purchased with the English grant.[59]

Conclusion

Due to the severe measures introduced in 1752 by the Chamber of Szepes, which forbade the City of Debrecen to pay the salaries of the clergymen of the Calvinist Church and the professors of the Reformed College, an unprecedented effort was made by the Western European Protestant brethren to help the Reformed College of Debrecen. The College professors commissioned two students to contact Swiss, Dutch, and English Protestants and convince them to support the College financially. The Dutch and Swiss aid was specifically intended to finance the professors' salaries but could only partially cover them. The Archbishop of Canterbury was contacted by the students; with his support and with the help of the Canon of Salisbury, a considerable amount of money was collected in England. The English aid, however, failed to arrive in Debrecen regularly in the eighteenth century, nevertheless, the amount received during the following two centuries did not merely increase the professors' salaries, but also contributed to the enrichment of the library collection. The financial support from England was collected and deposited in a bank, while the money was managed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Due to diverse circumstances (wars, political issues, and the negligence of the partners), the money transfer was interrupted for several decades in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This notwithstanding, uniquely, the English aid was still disbursed to the Reformed College of Debrecen until the end of the twentieth century. In Debrecen no more information about the history of the fund after 1990 could so far be traced; future research in the archives of the Society may, however, reveal further details.

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Notes

1 Archive der Ungarischen Kammern (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára) [The Hungarian National Archives]. https://mnl.gov.hu/nemet/mnl/ol/archive_der_ungarischen_kammern . Web. 27 July 2022.

2 II. 22. a. Box 13, Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerület Levéltára [Archives of the Reformed Church, Trans-Tisza District] (hereafter cited as TtREL).

3 II. 16. a. Box 1, TtREL; II. 11. e. Boxes 1, 2, 3, 4, TtREL.

4 II. 22. a. Box 10. Nr. 157, TtREL.

5 Willem van Irhoven's letter to Sámuel Szilágyi without date, Ibid.

6 II. 11. e. Box 8, TtREL.

7 II. 16. a. Box 1, TtREL.

8 II. 22. a. Box 1, TtREL.

9 Miklós Sina's letter to Sámuel Szilágyi (end of Mar. 1756), Ibid.

10 Canon Majendie's letter to Miklós Sinai (27 July 1756), Ibid.

11 Letter of the professors of Debrecen to the professors of Utrecht (15 Mar. 1758), II. 22. a. Box 10. Nr. 157, TtREL.

12 Letter of the Professors of Debrecen to Merchant Wetsteen in Amsterdam (20 Jan. 1761), Ibid.

13 Letter of the Professors of Debrecen to Canon Majendie (20 Jan. 1761), II. 22. a. Box 1, TtREL.

14 Miklós Sinai's letter to Canon Edward Bentham (7 Dec. 1762), II. 22. a. Box 10. Nr. 157, TtREL.

15 The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) was chartered in June 1701 as the official overseas missionary body of the Church of England. It was founded by Thomas Bray, a former Ecclesiastical Commissary for Maryland, for promoting religious interests. The SPG was not an official agency of the Church of England, but "it had a quasi-official status owing both to its membership and to its purpose and activities. The Archbishop of Canterbury served as President" (Diffendal 4). The SPG's most important activity was to carry the Christian Gospel beyond England. During the 18th century the SPG's activities were confined to the British colonies of North America, and after 1823, to non-Christian regions of Asia and Africa (encyclopedia.com). Already in 1702, the Society had begun to communicate its good designs to other Protestant Nations in Europe with a view of exciting a "Spirit of Zeal and Emulation" among them. As a result of this fraternal correspondence, over forty eminent members of the Lutheran and other Reformed Churches in Holland, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, and other countries were admitted as members, some of them went so far that they accepted the English Liturgy in their churches.

Furthermore, the influence of the Society was enlisted with a view to ameliorating the condition of the Protestant galley slaves in France (1702, 1705), obtaining religious freedom for the Protestant inhabitants of the Valley of Pralegas (1709), securing the Church in the Palatinate from religious persecution by the Roman Catholics (1710), and befriending the Palatines who about that time had been driven out of their country. (Pascoe 734–35) The services rendered to the cause of education in Europe by the Society consisted of the support of a School at Constantinople, 1860–80, the holding of a Trust Fund for the Reformed College of Debrecen, the training of Missionaries at St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, Warminster Mission College, and at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and the education of Missionaries' children (Pascoe 774).

16 Letter of the Professors of Debrecen to Canon Majendie (28 June 1763), II. 22. a. Box 10. Nr. 157, TtREL.

17 The Letter of the Reformed College of Debrecen to the Archbishop of Canterbury (2 June 1764), Ibid.

18 The SPG's letter to the Reformed College of Debrecen (23 July 1776), Ibid.

19 William Morice's letter to the Reformed College of Debrecen (21 July 1779), Ibid.

20 II. 11. e. Box 2, TtREL.

21 Letter of the Professors of the College to the Senior (5 July 1786), II. 22. a. Box 1, TtREL.

22 Gábor Szilágyi's letter to the SPG (17 Jan. 1803), II. 1. d. vol. 2, TtREL.

23 Ibid. (12 Apr. 1804).

24 Gábor Szilágyi's letter to the SPG, the Secretary of the British embassy, and József Vitéz (26 Apr. 1804), Ibid.

25 The Letter of the SPG to the Professors of the College (17 Mar. 1808), II. 1. d. vol. 3, TtREL.

26 The Letter of the Professors of the College to the SPG (12 Mar. 1817), Ibid.

27 The Letter of the Professors of the College to the SPG (29 May 1824), Ibid.

28 Ibid. (9 Feb. 1826).

29 A Debreceni Kollégium angol alapítványa [The English Foundation of the Debrecen College], II. 1. c. Box 23, TtREL.

30 II. 1. d. vol. 3. (28 Apr. 1827), TtREL.

31 Ibid. (2 Feb., 2 Mar. 1831).

32 Curator Imre Péchy's letter to the Agent (25 Apr. 1831), II. 22. a. Box 1, TtREL.

33 James Heywood Markland's letter to the Professors (23 Nov. 1832), I. 1. b. Box 87, TtREL.

34 II. 1. d. vol 4. (15 Apr. 1833), TtREL.

35 Miklós Way's letter to the Palatine of Hungary (24 Dec. 1834), II. 22. a. Box 1, TtREL.

36 Agent Imre Barkasy's letter to the Professors (4 Aug. 1835), Ibid.

37 II. 1. d. vol. 4. (11 Oct. 1835), TtREL.

38 Ibid. (3 Apr. 1837).

39 Ibid. 40 Ibid. (3 Feb. 1838).

41 I. 1. a. vol. 17., 95–96, TtREL.

42 Ibid., 134.

43 Ibid., 394.

44 II. 1. d. vol. 11., 111–12, TtREL.

45 II. 1. d. vol. 32. (7 Feb. 1874), TtREL.
46 II. 1. d. vol. 37. (31 Jan. 1879), TtREL.
47 II. 1. d. vol. 41. (5 Feb. 1883), TtREL.
48 II. 1. d. vol. 47. (18 June 1889), TtREL.
49 II. 1. d. vol. 54. (6 Dec. 1895, 5 June 1896), TtREL.
50 II. 1. d. vol. 47. (21 Feb. 1890), TtREL.
51 Ferenc Balogh's letter to the Economic Council of the College (12 Nov. 1897), II. 22. a. Box 1, TtREL.
52 II. 15. b. vol. 196., 14, TtREL.
53 Summary of the College Director (11 Apr. 1922), II. 22. a. Box 1, TtREL.
54 Letters of the Royal Hungarian Clearing Office to the College Professors (17 Jan., 4 May, 21 June 1923), Ibid.
55 Az "Angol-alapítvány" akta tartalma [Contents of the "English Foundation" file], II. 1. c. Box 23, TtREL.
56 II. 2. a. Box 25. (4 Sept. 1961), Nr. 7, TtREL.
57 II. 15. c. vol. 104., 105., 107., 110., 111., 112, TtREL.
58 II. 15. o. Boxes 315., 326., 331., 339., 346, TtREL.
59 I. 1. bb. vol. 183, TtREL.

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II. 15. b. Pénztárkönyvek [Account Books]. Vol. 196, 1938–1939

II. 15. c. Pénztári naplók [Account Diaries]. Vols. 104, 105, 107, 110, 111, 112.
II. 15. o. Számadási okmányok [Documents of the Account Books]. Boxes 315, 326, 331, 339, 346.
II. 16. a. Kurátorok iratai [Documents of the Curators]. Box 1. Szeremlei Sámuel számadási iratok és okmányok (1742–1773) [Documents and Records of Sámuel Szeremelei's Accountancy]
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