

# EPISCOPALIST CRISIS IN THE HUNGARIAN EPISCOPATE (1639)

One of the significant elements of the occurrence of the papal *primatus* in Western Latin Christianity was the Roman control of the *successio apostolica*. The *institutio canonica*, which was necessary for the legitimate consecration and authority of the successors of the apostles, the bishops, became the sole privilege of the pope from the end of the Investiture Controversy. The observance of the precisely expressed thesis in the decrees of Gregory IX (1227–1241) was wholly helped by the spread of the papal reservations at the price of the capitular elections. From the fifteenth century, the Holy See was to yield the right of bishop nomination to the monarchs in certain countries, either in the form of concordats, or privileges, like for the first time in Hungary, in 1417. However, the papal right of “*electio ad consecrationem*”, of the apostolic provision was not in danger. While the Protestant confessions, which were evolving in the sixteenth century, refused the total papal *primatus* and the doctrine of the *Sancta Romana Ecclesia*, the Council of Trent, which gave the program of Catholicism in the early modern period, established the most intensive papal centralisation ever. Apart from the papacy, the bishops played a key role in the execution of the Council’s program. The details of the bishop appointments were highly debated in Trent (namely the capitular, royal and papal rights related to the nomination of the successors of the apostles), besides, the traces of the early episcopalism could also be detected. Yet, in the history of Catholicism after the Council of Trent, there is no example of questioning the right of the vicar of Christ on earth – who is mostly mentioned as the successor of Peter, nowadays – neither on moral, nor on a practical level that he should provide for the canonical filling of the bishoprics in a secret consistory; despite the fact that the papal ecclesiastical authority became intensive due to the developing network of the nunciatures, which resulted in manifold conflicts with the local churches. Although Episcopalism, which placed the episcopal office into the centre of church life, had grown into a systematized ideology by the eighteenth century owing to Febronianism, the idea and practice of the consecration of bishops without the approval of the Apostolic See did not come to light. The same can be told of Gallicanism, which attacked the papal authority from a state, national and traditional direction. The consecration of the bishops which broke the fellowship with Rome spread in the nineteenth-twentieth century, like the establishment of the old-Catholic church, the movement of Marcel Lefebvre, or the so-called Chinese national church. The consecration of

bishops without papal bulls was considered as the definite rejection of the papal *primatus*, as a *par excellence* schism, namely it meant to be a Rubicon in the jurisdictional, ideological strife whose crossing was avoided in the early modern period. This can hardly be separated from the manifold, complex interactions of the Protestant confessions, their criticism and further gaining ground, or from the possibility that the eventual catholic “schismatics” would be on the same platform with them resulting the final/extreme break with Rome.

Given the knowledge of this introduction, are particularly exciting the lines of Francesco Ingoli, the actual “founder” of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, who wrote a lengthy memoir after the death of Urban VIII (1621–1644) in 1644, concluded his church administrative expectations from the new pope. He wrote the following:

«Questi due officij [cioè la *Dataria e Cancelleria*] per il rigore... sono stati di gran pregiudizio alla Sede Apostolica... e se non rimedia, non solo bisognerà concordar con Spagno, mà anche seguiranno de scisme di Provincie, come è stato per succedere da vescovi ungari sotto Urbano 8°».

The international research has been familiar with the source for a long time; Joseph Grisar published it in the fifth issue of the *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* in 1967 with the title of *Francesco Ingoli über die Aufgaben des kommenden Papstes nach dem Tode Urbans VIII*. Next, we will look for the answer as to what schism-attempt was indicated by Ingoli. The case could not have been insignificant, otherwise it would not have been written in such an important analysis of a famous curial prelate.

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The beginning of the indoctrination of Catholicism after the Council of Trent in Hungary fell to the first decades of the seventeenth century. There were some other noteworthy attempts earlier. The councils of Miklós Oláh, archbishop of Esztergom (Strigonium) (1553–1568); the activity of György Draskovich – who participated on the council –, bishop of Zágráb (Zagreb) then Győr († 1587), in his dioceses (as an ordinary, he ordered and started the execution of the council’s decrees); the temporary then permanent settlement of the Jesuits in Nagyszombat (Trnava) and Znióvár (Kláštor pod Znievom) (1561, 1586); in Transylvania, István Báthory’s Jesuit college-establishment in Kolozsvár

(Cluj-Napoca) (1581) with the assistance of Gregory XIII (1572–1585); in the territory under Turkish rule, Bishop Boniface of Ragusa, Apostolic visitor, conducted missionary surveys.

The systematic progress could launch due to the Protestant majority of the multiconfessional country (there were all in all 29 Protestant printing houses and only 1 Catholic by the end of the sixteenth century), due to Ferdinand I (1526–1564) and Maximilian I's (1564–1576) confessional "*Realpolitik*", later due to the long *Lunga Guerra Turca* and a lack of inner resources. The turning point was generated by the early events of the seventeenth century. The strengthening of the confessional front-lines, the seizure of churches by Rudolf II (as a Hungarian king the I, 1576–1608) and Catholic hierarchy in Upper-Hungary, in the so-called royal free cities (*Liberæ Regiæ Civitates*) – which were not based on the non-existing principle in Hungary, the "*cuius regio eius et religio*", but on the royal patronage and supremacy practiced over the royal cities' churches – led to a war of religion in 1604, which naturally absorbed numerous other political and personal interests. As the result of a total Protestant victory, the Treaty of Vienna (1606) declared the freedom of religion, namely the influence over the selection of confession was withdrawn from the hand of the central power and granted to the hand of the feudal orders. The diet of 1608, which enacted the treaty, almost completely destroyed the Catholic hierarchy's constitutional positions inherited from the Middle Ages.

The complete defeat resulted in a significant strategic turn, the emphasis fell on the building coming from below, namely on the "organic confessionalisation", on the provincial (quasi national) synod of Nagyszombat in 1611. The systematic adaptation of the program of the Council of Trent launched, in whose development a new ecclesiastical, regular generation played a considerable part, even though not in a great number; its most talented and symbolic character was Péter Pázmány. His major apologetic work of 1613 (*Isteni Igazságra vezető Kalauz / "Guide to Divine Truth"*) was a turning point in the mental battle against Protestantism; there were no answers or refutations on the merit for this synthesis written in Hungarian.

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The papacy paid significant attention to the Hungarian Catholic confessionalisation in this initial period. Already under Pius V's pontificate (1566–1572), an Apostolic visitor's sending occurred, which was also the central idea of the reform-plan of the nunciature of Prague in 1606. The sending of a visitor was replaced by Ferenc Forgách's, the new archbishop of Esztergom (1607–1615), immediate appointment as a cardinal in 1607 (since Tamás Bakócz [† 1521], he was the first cardinal of Esztergom). By the attitude of Forgách and his fellow-bishops, in the spring of 1609, the *Sanctum Officium* excommunicated Matthias II (1608–1619) – who signed and announced the anti-Catholic acts of 1608 – with the application of the bull, *In Coena Domini*. He

received his absolution only after giving it in writing: he would strive to "sabotage" the execution of the acts. The Jesuit Pázmány's appointment as a primate of Hungary (1616) assisted by Paul V (1605–1621) rivalled the diplomatic support of the Holy See for significance, even if the assurance of Ferdinand II's (1619–1637) succession to the Hungarian throne was more determining than that of the religious aspects.

The turning point in the relations of Hungary and the papacy in the seventeenth century can be connected to the already (since 1629) cardinal Pázmány's Roman imperial legation of 1632. His sharp clash with Urban VIII along Habsburg-policy in Habsburg legation, then the Roman prevention of his return as a permanent ambassador, or a cardinal protector, opened a short but intensively confrontational period. Pázmány, who was ostentatiously reluctant to support Ferdinand II's and his son's claims to the title of the "Apostolic King" of Hungary, in the middle of the 1630s methodized the ideology of the Hungarian State Church. Owing to the Barberini pontificate's rigid view of canon law, the notion, which put the successor of the church organizer Saint Stephen, the Apostolic King – instead of the Apostolic See – in the centre, was supplemented with the long-standing debates over the filling of numerous Hungarian bishoprics and bishoprics that were in some ways regarded as belonging to the Hungarian crown. The increasing mass of problems was further complicated, since an attempt to mend the negative balance of the Roman budget – owing to the dysfunctional proliferation of nepotism – was demanded by the raising of church incomes, moreover the complete payment of the annates, settled in the Middle Ages.

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In 1637, after the death of Pázmány, the papal diplomacy expected the relaxation of the strained relations, though, they had to be disappointed. After 1633, except for Primate Imre Lósy (1637–1642), the successor of Pázmány, none of the Hungarian prelates could obtain their bulls in the Roman Curia, and there were only six consecrated bishops in Hungary (out of whom, four had papal confirmation only on their previous diocese). It was "the last straw", when György Jakusith, the grandson of the Lutheran Palatine György Thurzó († 1616) personally travelled to the Eternal City and failed to obtain his bulls on the bishopric of Veszprém (whose filling was settled without any problems a couple of years earlier). With good reason, the Hungarian episcopacy took the view that while they were making notable sacrifices in the struggle against the Protestants and the Ottomans, the problems of the relations to Apostolic See not only threatened the function and spread of Hungarian Catholicism, but also its own identity.

At the peak of the increasingly growing obvious crisis, on 25 September 1639, the bench of bishops gathered on Imre Lósy's demand and by the permission and support of Ferdinand III (1637–1657) in Nagyszombat (Trnava), the archdiocese of Esztergom's residence of that time, exclusively to discuss the problems accumulated under the pontificate of

Pope Barberini. On the basis of the reports and suggestions of the Roman imperial ambassador, the concrete material of the negotiation was compiled by the Hungarian Court Chancery of Vienna, in person by György Lippay, bishop of Eger, royal chancellor, later the archbishop of Esztergom. From the beginning, the event was prominently followed not only by the nuncio of Vienna, but also by the papal Secretariat of State.

There are no verbals remaining about the meetings, which lasted for a few days, however, we are familiar with the resolutions which were drafted in the form of a petition written to Ferdinand III. The content of the “*reunione*” can be restored on the basis of this crucial document and its appendices, attachments.

[...] [...] [...]

The most remarkable innovation we can find not in the resolutions of the meeting, but in the changes accomplished in the attached Pázmány treatise of 1635. While the cardinal allowed the pope to deny the canonical institution of the unsuitable nominees, and in harmony with the Roman Curia, he considered the omission of the bulls’ obtainment within the required three months – which, as he admitted, often did not happen even within three years in Hungary – as an abuse, the conference annulled these terms. The influence of Primate Lósy is presumable here; he believed that the geographical distance from the Curia provided enough canonical exemption from the overstepping of the deadline, moreover, on the basis of the royal nomination, also from taking over the administration of the diocese (*in temporalibus*, and – *horribile dictu* – *in spiritualibus*).

Pázmány concluded his paper on the defence of the royal patronage and supremacy with conceiving his idea against those in Rome who opposed the Hungarian privileges – though, “*sine ullo derogamine auctoritatis pontificiae*”, namely “without the slightest offence of the papal authority”. Yet, the attached document to the conference’s petition also lacked this. As a replacement, the Hungarian bishops interpolated their view, according to which the pope’s right of confirmation for the valid consecration of bishops in Hungary was only based on the Hungarian monarchs’ extraordinary respect towards the Apostolic See. As they wrote, namely, the former monarchs

*“could have executed the Early Church’s practice such as that after the royal election, the bishops of the country would have been consecrated by their own archbishop with the assistance of two bishops; yet, they transferred and reserved the confirmation of the royal election to the supreme pontiff of Rome, though, with the consent of the Holy See, they could have introduced the practice of the Early Church... from the beginning of the Hungarians’ conversion”.*

In this early Episcopal thesis, the theoretical possibility of establishing such a national catholic church, which was independent from Rome, was drafted and had no equal in the period. The canonical establishment of the royal rights over the church in such an exaggerated form seems unique, since the

Hungarian bishops stated clearly that not only the appointment of the prelates and the bestowal of the benefices, but also the *institutio canonica* was originally the right of the secular monarch, as the organizer of the church, and this could be practiced by Rome – at least in the Hungarian relation – only through a royal favour! With a rather surprising determination the prelates evoked the theory of *caput ecclesiae*, which was effective in the age of King Saint Stephen (1000–1038) but rejected by the Gregorian era. And on the basis of a historical tradition continuing from the late Middle Ages (from the time of the Council of Constance), they excessively defended the state prerogatives against the Holy See.

On the meeting of the bench of Hungarian bishops in 1639, not only the resolute, corporative espousal, but the royal control over the Hungarian church and its holistic interpretation were remarkable moments. In the resolutions of the conference, in connection with the repeated mention of the officials of the Holy See and their unfavourable presentation, a certain anti-curial atmosphere was palpable which could be seen neither previously nor later in Hungary.

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The fact and remarks of the meeting was expressly taken amiss in the Curia. In the imperial court, the papal diplomacy took measures to neutralize the resolutions of the conference, which drew more radical ideas than that of Pázmány, almost Episcopal (like the consecration of bishops without the confirmation of the pope). This ambition, however, did not succeed. Urban VIII was compelled to make concessions concerning the canonical institutions of the royal bishop appointments as well as the *annates*.

The papacy acknowledged, though, that more increased ecclesiastical actions were needed in the area. So, although the form of a State Church strengthened, the Episcopal tendencies were not continued in the long run. By 1645, after further negotiations, already under the pontificate of Pope Innocent X (1644–1645) a partial agreement was made on the question of the annates. The Hungarian hierarchy did not support the continuation of the Jesuit Melchior Inchoffers’ work (*Annales ecclesiastici Regni Hungariae*) published in 1644, either. Originally, its purpose was to historically substantiate the extraordinary legal claims.

Whether the Episcopal crisis, despite its quick conclusion, left lasting traces in the papal court, Francesco Ingoli’s previously mentioned note is rather convincing evidence.

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