

István BOGÁRDI SZABÓ:¹

Pathfinders. István Török (1903–1996) in the Church – Against the Church – For the Church²

Abstract.

The life and theological work of István Török (1903–1996) clearly illustrate the alternations of Protestantism in the 20th century and at the same time reflect the changes in the circumstances of the Hungarian Reformed Church. From the beginning of his career, first as a teacher at the Papal Reformed Theological Academy and then as a professor at Tisza István University of Debrecen, he participated in the theological debates. These reflections helped the orientations of the Church. During the years of communism, his publishing activities were limited, and after 1956 he was suspended from his teaching position. Nevertheless, he delivered many lectures

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² The sentence is originally from Hermann Kutter. (KUTTER, Hermann (1938): Vallásosliberalizmus–keresztény szabadság. In: *Protestáns Szemle*. 47, 5. 249. See also: TÖRÖK, István (1943b): Az egyházkritika. In: *Theológiai Szemle*. 19, 4. 200. The present study was carried out within the framework of the *Challenges and Wayfinding in the History of the Hungarian Reformed Church in the 20th Century* research project (No. 66001R800) of the Church History Research Institute of the Faculty of Theology at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary.



to his former students at the so-called “black conferences”. In the period around the regime change (1989–1991), he rejoined the public life of the Church with several writings. Significant theological turns require freedom, when the Church paves the way for the eternal, even at the cost of conflict or self-restraint.

Keywords: Protestantism in the 20th century, dialectical theology, ethical dimensions of Christian life, freedom of the church

The metaphor of “path” and the associated “pathfinding”, as well as the “loss of path” are key terms in Christianity (*communio viatorum*) – in the narrower sense: history of the church and theology (even) in the 20th century. István Török’s (1903–1996) life and theological work demonstrate this because his academic and public work kept track of the alternations of the entire 20th-century Protestant (and to a lesser extent the Roman Catholic) theology (its pathfinding, new ways, and wrong turns) on the one hand, and his life and fate also reflect the changes in the circumstances of the Hungarian Reformed Church on the other.³

István Török was born on 1 December 1904 in Tiszaeszlár, graduated from high school in Karcag (1923), started his theological studies in Debrecen (1924), and later, as a scholarship holder, completed his studies in Berlin, in Münster, and then in Marburg (1926–1928). In Debrecen, Sándor Csikesz had a decisive influence on him. In Münster, he joined Karl Barth’s circle of students and also listened to the representatives of the dialectical theology – which was then in the developing phase and branching out in many directions –, in particular to Karl Barth’s fellow theologian and friend, Eduard Thurneysen, and the Roman Catholic Erich Przywara. In Berlin, he attended Adolf von Harnack’s lectures, and in Marburg, Rudolf Bultmann’s. In addition, he could attend the lectures delivered by the so-called social gospel’s representative, the elderly Hermann

³ The life and the theological work of István Török was comprehensively discussed by HOTORÁN, János Gábor (2019): “...A kinél pedig az igém van, beszéljeazz én igémet igazán”, Török István, az igeteológus. Hittudományi doktori értekezés a rendszeres teológia tárgyköréből. Debrecen. 239. <https://dea.lib.unideb.hu/server/api/core/bitstreams/bfa2ac08-f7c6-4ed2-be02-c93c98ad7503/content> (accessed on: 11/30/2023).

Kutter, and the religious socialist Paul Tillich, who later became the proponent of the so-called correlative theology.⁴

In 1929, after his homecoming, he became a substitute teacher of religion in Pápa. From 1931, he became an associate lecturer and then, from 1932, a tenured teacher at the Reformed Theological Academy in Pápa. In 1932, he got his Ph.D. in theology at Tisza István University of Debrecen, and then he obtained a private teaching qualification (habilitation) at the same university in 1940. A year later, István Török was nominated as an extraordinary professor, and in 1945, he was promoted to professor, with tenure at the Ethics Department of the Faculty of Theology. Between 1950 and 1967 (actually until 1957), he worked at the Debrecen Reformed Theological University, by that time teaching dogmatics as well. In the academic year 1957–58, as a consequence of his statements during the 1956 Revolution, he was “sent on sabbatical leave” (in fact, forced into silence), and his ethics lectures at the faculty were entrusted to someone else. He retired in 1968. He died in Debrecen on 11 April 1996.⁵

István Török, as an academic and university lecturer, was already involved in various theological debates (pathfinding) in Hungary since the beginning of his career, which had been going on in the Hungarian Reformed Church between 19th-century liberalism and the so-called confessional orthodoxy, cultural Protestantism and the so-called historical Calvinism, as well as between confessional Christianity and dialectical theology.⁶ He was an active writer and a beloved lecturer. Between the two world wars, he published several articles in various periodicals such as *Igazság és élet* (Debrecen), *Dunántúli*

⁴ István Török himself wrote about this in 1994, in the volume in which his doctoral thesis, a lecture, and his habilitation thesis were published together in reprint form. In: TÖRÖK, István (1994): *Barth Károly teológiájának kezdetei*. Debrecen.

⁵ See his obituary in BARCZA, József (1996): Dr. Török István emlékezete. In: *Confessio*. 20, 3. 75–78. See also KOVÁCS, I. Gábor (2014): *Török István*. In: Kovács, I. Gábor (ed.): *Hit – tudomány – közélet*. Budapest, Eötvös Kiadó. 136–141.

⁶ István Török himself provided an encyclopaedic summary of the trends and debates in Reformed theology in Hungary (and with some forays into Transylvania [now Romania] and Upper Hungary [now Slovakia]). *A mai magyarországi református teológia helyzetképe*. In: *Theológiai Szemle*. 18, 1. 28–37. In his introductory note, he indicates that his article was written for the information of German church circles and that he translated it into German himself. I have not been able to find out whether it was published in German.

Protestáns Lap (Pápa), *Protestáns Szemle*, or *Theológiai Szemle*. He did not publish but a few minor articles during the years of communism (before 1956), and after his suspension from his teaching position, he was no longer allowed to publish in Hungary.⁷

His main works are: *Barth Károly theológiájának kezdetei* [The Beginnings of Karl Barth's Theology] (Pápa, 1931, doctoral thesis), *Egyház és politika* (Pápa, 1935, essay), *Az Ószövetség értékelése Kálvin Intitutiójában* [Evaluation of the Old Testament in Calvin's *Institutes*],⁸ *A lelkész, mint etikus* [The Pastor as Ethicist] (*Igazság és Élet*, 1937. 9–15.), *A házasság keresztyén jellege* [The Christian Aspect of Marriage] (Pápa, 1940, habilitation thesis), *Dogmatika* [Dogmatics] (Amsterdam, 1985, completed in 1971 according to the foreword), *Etika* [Ethics] (Amsterdam, 1988), *Határkérdések szolgálatunkban* [Borderline Issues in Our Service] (Budapest, 1990). The last booklet is a selection of his lectures (thirty-six lectures, letters, and drafts of studies) given after his retirement among his former students at the so-called “black conferences”, and it can be considered a special ecclesiastical “samizdat” because, on the one hand, as István Török stated in the introduction, he gave these lectures in an “atmosphere of fear”, and, on the other, he sent some of them to the official church leadership. In the period around the regime change (1989–1991), he got involved in the public life of the church with several writings, mainly published in *Reformátusok Lapja*, *Confessio*, and *Református Tiszántúl*.

His extensive correspondence, manuscript articles, and studies are preserved in the Library of Sárospatak, and some of them are kept in the Archives of the University of Debrecen.

Many of his eulogies unanimously emphasize the critical nature of his theology.⁹ The labels “critical”, “ecclesiological”, and “theological critique” require, nevertheless, careful

⁷ It is characteristic that the representative works on the history of the Church and theology published during the party-state period neglect his work. Cf. BARTHA, Tibor – MAKKAI, László (1983): *Studia et Acta Ecclesiastica V., Tanulmányok a magyarországi református egyház történetéből, 1867–1978*. Budapest, MRE Zsinati Irodájának Sajtóosztálya.

⁸ TÖRÖK, István (1936): *Az Ószövetség értékelése Kálvin Intitutiójában*. In: *Kálvin és a kálvinizmus. Tanulmányok*. Debrecen, Debrecen sz. kir. város és a Tiszántúli református egyházkerület könyvnyomda-vállalata. 121–138.

⁹ It can be considered a kind of rehabilitation that the solemn synodal resolution (2009) issued on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Barmen Declaration published the text of the Declaration in the translation of István Török. He prepared the translation for the 20th anniversary in 1954, but

consideration. Throughout his whole activity, István Török followed the concept determined by the so-called dialectical theology, according to which the special task of theology is a critical (differentiating) examination of all life activities of the Church, with regard to the foundational and maintaining functions thereof, its primary task and service being above all: preaching. In this sense, theological criticism also has a specific ecclesiastical function in church government.¹⁰ Because of his statements and evaluations made during and after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, this Church and theological criticism conflicted with the assertions, decisions, and theological pretensions of the Church leadership of the time. All these led to his silencing.

First of all, as a specialist, teacher, and publicist, when talking about *times*, the particular periods of the history of the Church, or about theological periods, he insists on necessary distinctions. In this respect, his main work, *Dogmatika*, mostly its outlook on Church history and the chapter(s) on eschatology should be analysed separately.¹¹ This carefully established and discriminating effort has particular significance for his complex critique of the so-called “theology of the serving Church” because the representatives of this theology constantly celebrated a “new world era” (communism, socialism) as the motivating factor of a new theological era. He formulates it in his *Dogmatika* as follows:

A particular question in church history is: how has the church in the alternating epochs understood and responded to God’s revelation? This response has been different in the Reformation, in the Age of Enlightenment, and different again today, according to the degree of understanding of revelation and changing circumstances. Sometimes the church obeyed, sometimes it resisted, sometimes it sought to serve and sometimes to rule. So, the life of the Church is not repeating itself in some eternal cycle but is moving towards its conclusion during the different eras. In its course, the Church reveals newer and newer features, not only in its missteps, failures, and sins but also in its virtues, blessings,

it could not be published at that time. https://www.reformatus.hu/documents/348/2009.11.19_A_75_éves_barmeni_nyilatkozatról.pdf (accessed on 11/28/2023). Earlier on the Barmen Declaration: TÖRÖK, István (1938): Protestáns Hitvallás. In: *Protestáns Szemle*. 47, 3. 353–359.

¹⁰ The many uses of the term “criticism” are also explained in detail in several chapters of his *Dogmatika*. Cf. TÖRÖK, István (1985): *Dogmatika*.

¹¹ Op. cit. I. 2: *A teológia protestáns jellege*; XII: *Az eszkatológia*.

and brilliant works. It is precisely in the critical study of history that the future-shaping influence of Christ's life is revealed in newer and newer ways.¹²

In a presentation on 29 May 1958 (*Our Christianity in the Historical Epoch of Socialism*), which was published (in print) after his death,¹³ he also formulates several reservations regarding the expression “epoch” (era). He did not choose the title of this lecture himself, but he deals with the subject almost out of necessity, as a kind of reckoning; he has to give a clarificatory statement because of his utterances in 1956. In December 1956, at a church meeting, he gave a lecture titled *Dissolution and Resumption*, in which he explained the duties of the National Reformed Administrative Committee, established in October 1956, and initiated new elections in the Reformed Church after the former leaders who had compromised themselves with the Stalinist government had resigned.¹⁴ In the first part of the lecture, he demonstrates the necessity and legitimacy of the initiative of the Administrative Committee, and in the second part, he analyses the radio statement made by László Ravasz during the revolution.

In early 1958, on the threshold of the restoration of Stalinist ecclesiastical policy, the church government of the time asked him “thematic” (in fact, interrogatory) questions about how he viewed the “historical era” of socialism, questions of chauvinism and patriotism, cosmopolitanism and internationalism, and about the difference between *corpus christianum* and *corpus Christi*. Even before 1956, but especially during the period of ecclesiastical restoration after the suppression of the 1956 revolution until the change of regime in 1989-90, these were constant topics of the church government's celebratory declarations, official theological theorizations, sample sermons, and statements.¹⁵ In

¹² Op. cit. 237. [The translations of all, originally non-English quotations belong to Augusta Szász.]

¹³ TÖRÖK, István (2000): Kereszténységünk a szocializmus történelmi korszakában. In: *Egyháztörténelmi Szemle*. 1, 2. 88–97.

¹⁴ TÖRÖK, István (1996): *Felszámolás és újrakezdés*. Ed. by József Barcza. In: *Confessio*. 20, 2. 78–83. For how the renewal movement of 1956 worked, see KISS, Réka (ed.) (2007): *Kelt mint fent. Iratok a Református Megújulási Mozgalom történetéből. (1956–1957)*. Budapest, Dunamelléki Református Egyházkerület.

¹⁵ Cf. BOGÁRDI SZABÓ, István (1995): *Egyházvezetés és teológia a Magyarországi Református Egyházban 1948 és 1989 között*. (Societas et Ecclesia 3). Doctoral thesis. Debrecen; HORVÁTH, Erzsébet: *History of the Hungarian Reformed Church through the Communist Era (1945–1989)*. <https://zsinatilevtar.hu/node/18> (accessed on: 11/30/2023); FÜSTI-MOLNÁR, Szilveszter (2008):

response to the questions, István Török clarifies his previous statements! He does not revoke anything from his 1956 lecture, and this is precisely due to his objections against the irresponsible incentive of periodization. In this statement, he denounces the theological trespasses and arrogance of the church governance, just as he did at the end of 1956.¹⁶ Also, instead of a declamatory naming of the ages (eras, epochs), he suggests a sober reflection on the church governance. In speaking of epoch, it is a thorny question what it is that we compare, e.g. socialism with capitalism, technical civilization with the nuclear age, liberal democracies with dictatorships, or some kind of period of peace with the time of war. He asks whether the exclusive use of “the historical epoch of socialism” is appropriate.

Kierkegaard argued that the church will inevitably fail in its work if it makes an absolute reference to the relative because then it will necessarily make a relative reference to the absolute. It wins the world, but it betrays God. Therefore, considering our faith and ministry, I cannot emphasize enough the need for sobriety among my brothers. As the words of the apostle state, “Therefore, be alert and sober-minded!” (1 Peter 4:7). The internal and external credibility of our ministry and the reality of our Church policies depend on our moderation and soberness. I’ve said a lot about this over the years, but it seems I’ve said little. Let me add another example to those I have given so far. I read this justification in regard to the harsh discipline of some of our fellow pastors: “It happened because of his disobedience to the Word of God.”¹⁷ Please let us not say that because the reality is that some of our fellow pastors have been in conflict with the order of our people’s democracy¹⁸ or with the rules of our Church government, which is the reason why they have been disciplined. No one asks us to identify the order of our people’s democracy with the Word of God. Yet, if we were to identify the decisions of our church government with the Word of God, we must consider that even a church decision as broadly and thoroughly biblically justified as the Reformation cannot be identified with

Ecclesia sine macula et ruga: Donatist Factors among the Ecclesiological Challenges for the Reformed Church of Hungary, especially after 1989/90. Sárospatak, SRTA; VAJTA, Vilmos (1987): *Die „diakonische Theologie“ im Gesellschaftssystem Ungarns.* Frankfurt am Main, Vrlg. Otto Lembeck.

¹⁶ István Török’s 1956 statements are presented in HOTORÁN 2019, 186–195.

¹⁷ It can be taken as a reference to the Reformed minister Lajos Gulyás (1918–1957), who was condemned on false accusations and executed after the crushing of 1956 revolution.

¹⁸ People’s democracy was an official term of the Marxist–Leninist state.

the Word of God. The requirement of sobriety in all aspects means: what is divine is divine, and let it remain divine, and what is human is human. Statement is statement, and church policy is church policy. If we confuse the divine with the human, by losing our sobriety, we are no longer in the camp of the reformers but of the fanatics, and we have taken false steps in our ministry. I acknowledge that the opposite temptation also exists, to torn apart or to circumvent the divine by the human. I hope it will be made clear from what follows that this is as far from me as confusing the two.¹⁹

However, in order to see István Török's utterances not merely as a criticism of the church politics of the time but as statements from a profound thinker, his critical work must be seen as a methodological element of orientation and "pathfinding".

In order to do this, we need to consider a variety of circumstances. First of all, István Török is extremely reserved when it comes to big words (epoch, age, etc.). This methodological suspicion can be observed in almost all of his publications. So, it is not just a matter of a kind of authorial or lecturing attitude or an inclination to speak out more courageously when the work cannot be published but also of thoroughness and methodical thinking when there is no obstacle to publication. In 1943, he published a long article, which originally was a lecture given at a pastoral training course in Tiszántúl, entitled *Korunk teológiai kérdései* [The Theological Questions of Our Age].²⁰ Its main aim was to help pastors in their orientation and their theological reflection.²¹ First, according to the encyclopaedic arrangement of theology (biblical research, church historical considerations, systematic theological subjects, religious pedagogy), he reports on the main movements of the 1930s and 1940s (mainly in the German-speaking area), indicating that there was a turnaround in theological research and church discourse compared to the previous decades, which, however, is neither an escape from scholarship nor the introduction of absolutely new theological topics but rather a reorientation of theological research, which places the theological studies that were previously considered important or insignificant into a new (special) context.

¹⁹ TÖRÖK 2000, 88.

²⁰ TÖRÖK István (1943a): *Korunk teológiai kérdései*. In: *Theológiai Szemle*. 19, 3. 151–162.

²¹ Already in his doctoral thesis, he expresses his view that the search for the path of "priest-theologians and theologian-priests" is the elementary task of theology. TÖRÖK, István (1931): *Barth Károly teológiájának kezdetei*. Doctoral thesis. Pápa. 3.

He then turns to so-called topicalities. Nevertheless, his choice of topics is not random. He brings up controversial issues that have played a significant role in the theological reflection and church life in the following decades. He presents and thoroughly criticizes Rudolf Bultmann's programme of demythologizing, pointing out that it can be seen as a return to 19th-century theological liberalism.²² He discusses Karl Barth's critical views on infant baptism.²³ He presents and comments on the relationship between Protestantism and Catholicism in the light of the changing reception of Luther, including a church political approach concerning Hungary. Here he discusses the thesis of Joseph Lortz (1887–1975), Roman Catholic Church historian in Münster, popular and controversial at the time, namely that if there had been a reform synod of the medieval church at the beginning of the 16th century, Luther would have been a reformer of the Catholic Church.²⁴ Therefore, Luther's effort must be regarded as a particular truth, and as such the pure ideals in partiality of the Protestant Reformation can be adopted into the whole of Catholicism.²⁵ Török declares this proposal to be an empty trick in the light of the Hungarian experiences, but he does not urge anyone to further fight over the

²² The Hungarian aspects of the philosophical and theological reception of Bultmann are presented by IGNÁ CZ, Lilla (2007): *Hermeneutika és teológia Rudolf Bultmann gondolkodásában*. Doctoral thesis. Budapest, ELTE BTK.

https://doktori.btk.elte.hu/phil/ignacz/ignacz_dissz_hun.pdf (accessed on: 11/30/2023).

²³ Török is referring to Barth's ideas in the late 1930s. Later, in *Kirchliche Dogmatik* IV/4 (1967), Barth set out his objections to infant baptism in detail. Partly with reference to Karl Barth, in the mid-1990s, there was also a debate in the Hungarian Reformed Church about infant baptism. Literature review and summarizing: FEKETE, Károly, ifj. (1995): A keresztséggel kapcsolatos tanulmányok kritikai összefoglalása. In: *Theológiai Szemle*. 38, 6. 363–370.

²⁴ Lortz's much-discussed thesis, alongside Toynbee's historical-philosophical comments, could have inspired István Bibó's famous *Uchrónia, ha a Zsinati mozgalom a 15. században győzött volna...* (1968).

²⁵ It is worth noting that such a presentation of the Reformation appeared as early as the 19th century, most notably in the apologetic work of the Spanish Roman Catholic Jaime Balmes (1810–1848), which was also published in Hungarian translation: BALMES, Jakab (1865–1866): A protestantismus és katholicismus vonatkozással az európai polgárisodásra I–II. In: *Magyar Egyházirodalmi Iskola*. 28–29 (1865–66). In the 1950s, Balmes's apologetic argumentation again became the focus of attention. Also, most recently: BRAD, Gregory (2015): *The Unintended Reformation*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

religion of children born in mixed marriages²⁶ or to engage in political and cultural struggles to assert the numerical representation of denominations, but he rather encourages to theological reflections. He says that the Reformation must be examined not for its external motives but for its internal reasons. Otherwise, while the unionist-Catholic propaganda is whitewashing Luther, it is still blackening today's Protestantism with the sins previously ascribed to Luther. The permissive proposal of Lortz may give the impression that Protestantism's separation is an outdated attachment to a historical mistake. This is how he summarized: "One thing is certain, if... instead of serious theological work, we respond to Rome with well-worded denominational peace declarations, this attitude, however unintentional and sincere, is a sign that we have taken the hook that has been carefully prepared for us without thinking. We have taken it, but we are not even a hair's breadth closer to the unity of faith we have longed for."²⁷

One other annotation further illustrates the methodological nature of the discretion (theological criticism). At the end of his lecture, he also discusses World War II and offers a warning about Hungary's involvement. He points out that the issue of war does not require "political pomposity" but theological testimony, and in this – he notes – Karl Barth, whom he admires, did not always find the "most appropriate word".²⁸ Nevertheless, he asks, whether the often-used term "crusade" just fell out of use after the outbreak of

²⁶ The question of the obligation to educate children in religion has been a major area of religious struggle for centuries. Although it was abolished in civil law in 1868, the refusal of a baptismal pledge continued to be a sign of religious loyalty in the 20th century, and the enforcement of a pledge was the subject of constant Protestant complaints. In his habilitation work on marriage, István Török addresses the question in several places (in: TÖRÖK, István (1940): *A házasság keresztyén jellege*. Pápa. 29–31, 69–74); he separately discusses a proposal to prohibit church members who have the pledge from communion (Török, István (1937): *Csak kárhozatot ennék és innék a reverzálist adó egyháztág az úrasztalánál?* In: *Dunántúli Protestáns Lap*. 48, 49. 235–236.

²⁷ TÖRÖK 1943a, 160.

²⁸ Török refers not only to the fact that Karl Barth was constantly speaking out against Germany during World War II but also to his letter to Joseph L. Hromádka, published in 1938, when Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Germans, in which Barth described the fight of the Czech soldiers against the Germans as a fight for the Church of Jesus Christ. Barth's letter also caused a storm in Hungary. The letter is presented in Nagy, Barna (1938): *Barth Károly politikai teológiája*. In: *Sárospataki Református Lapok*. 33, 48. 238.

the Second World War,²⁹ or it was simply that the Church's use of the word was influenced by political discourse, that is, at the decisive moment (i.e. when Hungary entered the war), our eloquent Prime Minister was no longer talking about a crusade, but he said that we were participating in the war because we wanted to sit at the negotiating table during the future peace negotiations.³⁰

He continues:

If political leaders showed such sobriety, at least in the use of words, why did church leaders have to make a strange bid on them: to say something bigger at any cost with less sobriety? Why did they have to be more irresponsible than the “sons of the world”? But the church leaders, he adds, could have considered theological reflection. “For the crusade – if we dare to use that pretentious word – has spiritual preconditions. If we promote a crusade without a careful consideration of the spiritual presuppositions, we will not be “sanctifying” the “profane” but profaning the holy. The crusade is therefore not a political question but a theological one, and we should not try to avoid this theological question by saying that the Bolsheviks are slaughtering the priests, so the crusade against them is an *eo ipso* crusade. With this theological nonsense, we serve neither an ecclesiastical nor a national purpose but only gather burning coals on our own heads. The one who is called to be a guard must indeed be on guard, and the watchman's duty includes the vigilant and constant exercise of theological criticism, even in relation to our use of words beyond the pulpit.³¹

In the summary of his lecture, referring back to all the topics, he says, “If these questions, which have been taken only by way of example, had come to us during World

²⁹ It is worth noting that Pope Pius XI's anti-communist encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (19 March 1937) – at least in its English and French versions – uses the term “crusade” (*crusade, croisade*) in two senses: the crusade of communism against humanity (§9) and the crusade of prayer and penance against communism (§58). The encyclical was published five days after the anti-Nazi encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*. The term “crusade” took on a whole new dimension during the Cold War. Under communism, it became a buzzword of co-operative church politics. For instance, the editorial *Helsinki után, Genfelőtt* published in *Az Út* (10–16 July 1955) and HROMÁDKA, Jozef (1959): *Az egyház a hidegháború korában*. Paper presented at the 2nd session of the Christian Peace Conference in Prague. In: *Theológiai Szemle*. 2, 5–6. 181–182.

³⁰ Reference to statements made by Prime Minister László Bárdossy (1890–1946) (1942–42), who justified Hungary's entry into the war (11 April 1941) by saying that this would make it possible to revise the Vienna awards (1938, 1940–42).

³¹ TÖRÖK 1943a, 161.

War I, they would probably have caused greater confusion in our ranks than they do today. The significance of the theological turn that began between the two world wars is exactly that the Church turned our hesitant gaze to its Head and its Lord. In our responses, and in the whole post-turnaround settlement, there will be as much time resistance as there is respect for it.”³²

In his statements after 1945, but especially in the context of the 1956 Revolution and the church renewal movement (which were only made public after 1989), István Török always asserted this ultimate criterion, namely the Christological perspective. It is a different matter that, in asserting this, he was confronted with the church leadership and had to fight against the Church for the Church. It was in fact not during World War I that the “greater disorder” hit the church but after World War II, after the communist takeover and the suppression of the 1956 Revolution. Lasting theological turns require freedom; more precisely, when the Church makes use of its evangelical freedom, even at the cost of conflict or resignation, it opens the path to the abiding.

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³² Ibid.

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