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Ungarische Perspektiven

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Introduction of text:

The text I have chosen is unique in many ways. First, it is not a current theological statement from the Reformed Church of Hungary, but it was written in 1931, therefore in a very complicated political and sociological situation for Hungarians. The second interesting thing is that only the last paragraph of text talks specifically about the church and the church role in minority situation. Nonetheless I chose this text because it has a very positive attitude towards minority situation. The writer of this article, Dezső László, went against many of his contemporaries in the way he talked about the Hungarian minority living in Romania. While everyone else was still bitter, angry or utterly sad about the historical events which have caused the Hungarian diaspora, he accepted it and even more, wanted a peaceful solution where Hungarians and Romanians could live together, respecting each other's culture and country. He himself lived in the Hungarian diaspora and wrote a lot about the situation and the possible solutions for the problems of his time. As I wrote this article is not a theological statement, but at the same time it is very much theologically driven. Dezső László was educated in philosophy and theology, and among others we can find the influence of Karl Barth and neo-orthodoxy in his writings. Another important thing is that he is not just writing to Hungarians, but Hungarian Christians. The Hungarian diaspora was at the same time a religious diaspora, a protestant diaspora. Nationality and faith are entangled and closely connected, and it is our job to separate which principles apply to only to one or both of these.

At last it is important, that I chose this text not as a statement but as an exercise, as a question. Can we find useful elements for our theology of diaspora in Dezső László's view about the blessings of diaspora? I think we can. Let's look at his opinion with these things in mind.

Dénes Damásdi

Questions for the text:

1. How would you summarize the text? What are the main statements?
2. How can we apply this statement for the Christian minority/diaspora? What kind of questions does it raise towards us?
3. Do you agree with the statement? Why, or why not?

Dezső László: “The blessings of living in minority”

(excerpt)

This title can be seen as a bold challenge or as betrayal.

I wrote it as life-seeing, victorious exclamation, as an encouragement and as a judgement. We hear it every day that minority life is a course, a suffering and road what leads to the death in the Hungarian nation. Talking about the Hungarian minority is the same as talking about all the injustice and violent interventions. These are all true. Minority fate can really mean that the nation will disperse, will be torn apart, will perish and die. But it will only mean death, if the people in minority can't see anything but death, if they can't work out the strength what can keep them in these circumstances. The fate of the Hungarian minority depends on whether in the mirror of Death or in the mirror of Life they see themselves, their destiny and their function. I dare to say that these branches of the Hungarian tree, although they are destined into minority, are breaking under rich, ripe fruit. Although it is true that talking about these fruits is not the most rewarding job. They say you are an opportunist, bad Hungarian, if you see life, promising future and free life choices where officially only crying and mourning is allowed.

But let everyone judge by their own faith. My faith is this: powers bigger than us brought this fate on us. This minority fate has come, we live in it, but why would we die in it, why would we only see its monsters threatening to swallow us, when it has life sustaining gifts. Should we be fools and reject the compensations of life, with which gives healing to our bleeding wounds? Why shouldn't we see life where others smell death? The long suffered Hungarian minority deserves to discover the precious pearls which grew in a pain stricken oyster body for the joy of all Hungarians and the whole world. (...) On one side of the scale of minority fate is Death, on the other side Life is dancing. Minority life is more Death and more Life. More Death can be defeated by even more Life.

1. Over the world - even if it is torn and spread into many countries - there is only one Hungarian nation. There is one kind of human, millions and millions individuals who are forced by some unexplainable power to call themselves Hungarian even if it means disadvantage for them. Common destiny, common calling, common spirit holds together millions in this statement: I am Hungarian. Those who really confess this statement, who are really part of the Hungarian race, don't even know why, but they confess because they can't do any other way. (...)

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This Hungarian race lives in many countries, and has to stand against many different inner and outer circumstances to be able to protect its united spirit, destiny and calling. One of the biggest challenges of the Hungarian spirit today is that it is exposed to many changing effects and its unity is on stake.

Out of these unity breaking effects the biggest are those we define by minority life. Minority fate has taken away many Hungarians from the framework of the Hungarian state and blocked them from the free interaction with the Hungarian culture. Hungarians living in minority are under the influence of other nations in an intensified way.

This state of being torn apart is a given reality. How can we maintain the unity of Hungarians among these deeply restricted circumstances?

(...) Hungarians living in majority and minority has to keep a clear eye on whole spectrum of Hungarian life. It will be the real reason for secession if the different parts of Hungarians neglect to get to know each other. For example many people in the main country are very misinformed about the Hungarians who live in minority. Their eyes are set to only see death in the life of the Hungarian minority. If the unity of Hungarian spirit and destiny is really precious for us then the whole body of Hungarians have to self-consciously pay attention to the fruits which has been grown by the minority Hungarians for the nourishment of the whole Hungarian nation.

(...) With this life practice we can find the new way of Hungarian unity.

For Hungarians before the world war the most important protector of the Hungarian nation was politics. The builders of Hungary looked always at the Hungarian nation and Hungarian state. (...) They believed that the structure of the state, the most external appearance of our race was the most important. If the external frame, the state is strong, then the content will stay and grow stronger. The world war showed very clearly that the structure wasn't good, and when it met stronger structures it crumbled.

(...) The place of this external political unity has to be replaced by a unity based on our Hungarian ancient past, a unity of race and spirit. Today only that person can be a real Hungarian who is ready to reexamine his or her whole world and isn't afraid to go back to the roots of our destiny. Today, the real Hungarian builders look into the deep, look for the roots and for the ancient basis of Hungarian life. They are looking for the unique marks, the values and the problems of the Hungarian tree. In this searching and finding where all Hungarians have to be one.

The political unity of Hungarians is broken. In its place we have to create a unity of Hungarians in the spirit. This unity is more eternal, deeper, self-serving, and clearer; therefore it's fuller of life than the political unity. Hungarians should have realized this even if Trianon wouldn't

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have given us this hard lesson. (...) This spiritual unity doesn't mean that we won't have different worldviews in the Hungarian culture, but that we look for specifically Hungarian values to place them in front of us and others. (...)

2. We can only create the living unity if we go back to the roots of Hungarian life. Next to the search for unity there are other factors which are drifting all Hungarians towards the ancient entities of Hungarian life. Today in Hungary it comes with a lot of privileges to be Hungarian, therefore even people from other backgrounds wish they would be Hungarian. But where Hungarians live in minority it is the complete opposite: there, being Hungarian means carrying scars and being pushed down. Which of these is more true, more instinctive and fuller of life: the one where it comes with privileges and advantages to be Hungarian, or the one where your individual success is being challenged because of it? The answer is easy: Hungarians living in minority are truer Hungarians, because if they took on their destiny they had to sacrifice for it. Even if minority life took away the power of the Hungarian state and nation from a lot of people, it awakened the identity of the Hungarian race in a major way and strengthened the Hungarian community in a common fate. (...) Discovering the Hungarian minority identity has a huge significance for the life of the whole Hungarian nation. It urges us examine ourselves: am I Hungarian because it is an advantage, because it is in my best interest, or am I Hungarian who is unwavering, who sacrifices and is self-serving?

In the place of an outward Hungarian identity, has to come an identity which is full of life and focuses on the inner Hungarian qualities.

In the life of every nation and race, symbols which are representing their uniqueness have a huge significance. National self-identity produces symbols out of itself which represent the essence of the nation. Through this the national self-identity becomes more secure and grows stronger. These symbols, like mirrors, always warn the nations about themselves. (...) (A Hungarian boy or man) is always surrounded with Hungarian symbols, and they warn him about his Hungarian identity. There is a big danger in all these outward symbols, because their viewers see the fate of the Hungarian nation as strong and secure, they get use to them and they don't look for deeper roots, for more ancient and vital symbols. Hungarians living in minority are left with very few outward Hungarian symbols. (..) For them the national culture and national language are a lot more significant and vital symbols, than for the Hungarians living in the mainland. (...)

The life of the Hungarian minority is an important warning for the whole Hungarian nation: we cannot be satisfied with outward and material symbols, because over signifying these

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could result in an opposite outcome, shifting our attention from the deeper, more vital and creative symbols. However the big danger for the minority might be that because they are limited by the law they can't create strong and captivating spiritual symbols for themselves, which could balance out the over amplified symbols of other nations.

3. One of the most obvious changes we see in the Hungarian minority is a more democratic spirit. This democracy doesn't mean a kind of rule of the people, but it means a more organic community; it means that the framework of society loses its importance and the different classes of society unite and work to help each other. In simple words, it means a healthier, more productive and truer Hungarian identity. It is interesting to examine what circumstances caused the development of this democratic spirit. These circumstances will show that this change was necessary and natural. *(Here the author writes about the changes that went down in society.)*

Hungarians have to pay a big price for the development of this democratic life in the minority. It was a huge loss for us but why can't we see the blessings next to it: the unity of Hungarians working and serving each other, and the chance for individual values and strengths to grow. When living in minority you can't just live for yourself, you can only find meaning and the right to live in serving each other. We have to keep count of every Hungarian value and we cannot allow any Hungarian talent to vanish. I repeat my point: the whole Hungarian nation should strive in hunger for these gifts, on this side of the border or the other, because life demands the prevalence of a more democratic spirit. Let's be careful as on this point the difference may be the biggest between Hungarians who are divided by the borders. This is also the point where we might be the ones who are raising the walls which are causing this sharp separation and are ruining unity.

4. We live in the time of a competition between states. Maybe never before did countries work so hard to make themselves stronger in opposition to other countries. In this competition of states our attention is shifted from the competition of races. Every thinking person clearly sees the signs that the time will come when country borders will fade away and a global state will be established or at least a confederation of European states. Global life requires this process of globalization. None of the crisis of this age can be solved but only in a global framework. But in this global framework there will come a biological, intellectual and spiritual competition of nations, it will be a test of strength without any weapons, for individuals of different races.

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While in the mainland Hungarians are getting stronger as a state, and comparing themselves with other states as a state, Hungarians in minority are competing as a race with other races, or in other words: over there an organization against organization, and here, life against life. In the life of the Hungarian minority the competition is fought on a biological and intellectual level. This competition requires a greater gathering of self-power, a more intensified self-consciousness and self-strengthening. Hungarians in minority are fighting as individuals, therefore they getting stronger as individuals. In the case of mainland Hungarians, the uniting state power represents the individuals on the stage, and the enemy is also represented as an organization not as individuals standing for themselves. Therefore this competition doesn't result in a stronger self, or in individual growth as much as it is in the life of the minority. We can say that the Hungarian minority is already fighting the biological, intellectual and spiritual battles of this weaponless future war. While other nations are forging weapons of past ages for this future war, the ones who are preparing for the real war are the minorities. The whole Hungarian nation should accept this view. Furthermore it is necessary to strengthen the outward structures but we should shift all of our focus on this kind of preparation. Only those races have a future, who - in their biological temperament and in all areas of intellectual and spiritual life - can truly be themselves. (...)

5. Another gift of minority fate is opportunity for an unbiased view of the whole Hungarian life. From the towers of minority life any manifestation of the universal Hungarian life can be judged more honestly, more clearly, more self-servingly and more lively, than from any place in the motherland. The minority Hungarian life is without interest; therefore it is a free Hungarian life. Hungarians living in majority are hindered by thousands of interests, thousands of connections, thousands of personal ambitions and inhibitions, to see clearly and to speak honestly. (...) We need to work on an unpolitical but biological, intellectual and spiritual unity so that Hungarians living in majority can see and revise the true questions of life in the light of the minority fate. Barley ten years of minority life has already showed thinkers living in minority are the ones who pointed to the real questions of Hungarian life. We needed the minority fate to understand the importance and significance of some Hungarian geniuses and their ideas, which were only accepted by few in the majority.

6. It is an interesting thing to compare the life of the churches among the Hungarians in minority and in majority. Minority life brought weakness on the outside but a huge spiritual strength inside. (*Churches lost a lot of their agricultural land, the church members became a lot poorer,*

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churches had to fund their school without government support etc...) It was by the grace of God that right after the disaster, He gave a vision to leaders of the church that in the spiritual sense He wants not only to compensate them, but give them gifts which are overflowing. Those who are not just looking at the church from the outside, but are living in it can see clearly that there are great spiritual awakenings starting all over in the lives of the Hungarian minority. The breaking down of outwardly foundations was necessary so that the real foundation, Christ, can shine even brighter. Lives who are rooted in Him will not just mean spiritual richness but sacrificial lives, burning enthusiasm, stronger will, more schools, and more money for the minority Hungarians.

While Hungarian churches living in majority can allow themselves the luxury, to fight with other denominations “for the greater glory of God”, the churches in minority, even if they can't find the common way in everything, at least mutually keep the law of peace towards each other.

Churches in minority more and more realize the tasks of this time, through which we have to build this and the coming world. Their development in the future points towards a prophetic Christianity. Instead of a theology that is showing the eternal and the temporal worlds as opposites, their task is to first show life's questions in the light of the eternal God, in the light of Life. Second to speak clear judgement in a blurred, foggy world; and last to build up this decaying world with the power of God so that it's eternal values would prevail. Instead of the separation of the eternal and temporal world, the prophetic reuniting of the two is the new task of the churches. It will be the triumph of this concept if the needed reality of a Christian Hungarian nation and Hungarian Christianity would be born.

The blessings of Hungarian minority fate show us this rejoicing view, that the Hungarian nation is a living reality, a flexible unity, a growing vine and it can react to the conditions threatening its life. Even more its reaction has produced strength, which can mean an increase of values and life, not just for itself, but for the universal human life.