

A RESTORATION CAREER IN LONDON: PAUL P. JÁSZBERÉNYI

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During my research on the vast cultural-literary subject of friendship books or *alba amicorum*, I recently came upon an intriguing piece in the 1829 issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. According to this the Leeds polymath Ralph Thoresby had in his library a seventeenth-century album filled with inscriptions of English and foreign personalities, mostly theologians. This album (now lost) had belonged to Paul P. Jászberényi, a Transylvanian Hungarian who succeeded in forging an extraordinary career in Restoration London. As most British researchers of the period seem to know little about Jászberényi, it may be useful to provide some background information about him and his various publications.

As the letter "P" (Parson's, i.e. son of a Minister) indicates in his full name, Paul P. Jászberényi came from a family of Transylvanian Hungarian Calvinist ministers. Born around 1635, he was educated at the College of Sárospatak, and then studied at Alba Julia (Gyulafehérvár) under the Royalist exile Isaac Basire quickly achieving such good results that soon after graduation he was entrusted to be tutor to the young Prince, Ferenc Rákóczi I. He was so proud of this appointment that he repeatedly referred to it, even entering the information after his name in the Matriculation Book of Franeker University.¹ In the Netherlands Jászberényi attended at least three universities, in addition to Franeker he also matriculated in Utrecht and Groningen, offering theological disputations at each university. It was in 1659 that he decided to sail over to England where – after a spell in Oxford –, he found employment with the family of Cecil Tufton, from Kent who – judging from his London address – was most likely a lawyer or a judge. Tufton picked up the Transylvanian in Oxford and hired him as Latin tutor to his sons. He must have been very successful, for it was the "generous Maecenas" Tufton who above all encouraged and possibly financially supported Jászberényi into establishing his own school of Latin at Charing Cross. This happened in 1662 when the theologian turned linguist published his first book *Examen Doctrinae Ariano-Sociniana*,² an anti-Trinitarian tract, partly translated from German into Latin, that concluded with an imaginary debate on the doctrine of the

¹ *Album Studiosorum Academiae Franekerensis* (Franeker, 1870), 170.

² Paul P. Jasz-Berenyi, *Examen Doctrinae ariano-sociniana* (London: Sumptibus Samuelis Brown, 1662).

Holy Trinity between “Orthodoxus” and “Adversarius.” Because the roots of “Socinianism” i.e. Unitarianism lay in sixteenth-century Poland and also in Transylvania, a large number of Hungarians from the latter region produced theological dissertations at Dutch universities on this subject throughout the seventeenth century and apparently Jászberényi, considered an expert on Socinianism tried, together with his publisher Samuel Brown³ tried to capture with this publication the market for religious books in English.

Examen... was commended to English readers of Latin by at least one Oxford scholar, Henry Wilkinson (probably “Long” Harry, Professor of Divinity between 1652 and 1662) and was dedicated to Mihály Apafi, then ruling Prince of Transylvania, as well as to John Frederick, “Praetor”, i.e. Mayor of London in 1661–1662. Five Hungarian theologians studying in the Netherlands or staying at the time in England also wrote poems welcoming the work which appeared at a time when few theologians cared to pay much attention to it. The reason for this was that the Savoy Conference ending with the Act of Conformity, rocking the foundations of the English church, took place in the same year when Jászberényi’s book appeared. As a result of the Act many dissenting ministers (including the above mentioned “Long” Henry Wilkinson) were either deprived of their living or resigned, and someone, like Jászberényi with a strong Calvinist background could not have appealed to the Episcopalian majority in the Church of England. This is how we can pinpoint late 1662 as the date when the resourceful Transylvanian launched his Latin-language school, perhaps on the advice of John Durel, a fellow-Royalist and Minister at the Episcopalian (“French”) chapel of the Savoy in the Strand.⁴

The Latin school at Charing Cross proved an immediate success and it helped make Paul Jászberényi fairly rich. Some of his English patrons (including Charles II and some Court personalities)⁵ who enabled him to acquire rich pupils as well as to publish a substantial textbook, were listed under the “testimonies” in the first edition of *Fax nova Latinae Linguae / A New Torch to the Latine Tongue* published in 1664. These include the

³ In 1662 Jean Durel published *A View of the Government and Publick Worship of God in the Reformed Churches Beyond the Seas*, a work with a strong episcopalian message quoting amongst others Hungarian sources provided by Isaac Basire and Paul Jászberényi.

⁴ Samuel Brown was a Royalist publisher who worked in the Hague but returned after the Restoration and set up shop at the Queen’s Arms in St Paul’s Churchyard. He also printed books for Heidelberg, cf. E. Weil, “Samuel Browne, Printer to the University of Heidelberg, 1655–1662,” *The Library* 5, no. 1 (1950): 14–25.

⁵ This is mentioned by Berta Trócsányi in the *Yolland emlékkönyv (Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok 5–6: Yolland-emlékkönyv [1944])*, 128 and confirmed by the fact that it was Jászberényi who introduced Miklós Bethlen in Court in January 1664, cf. *Kemény János és Bethlen Miklós művei*; eds., Endre Illés, Gyula Illyés and Ferenc Juhász (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1980), 584.

eminent orientalist Edmund Castell, the Chelsea scholar Adam Littleton and the schoolmaster of St Paul's Samuel Cromlehelme. A number of congratulatory poems were also written to the author by fellow-Transylvanians, including historian János Nadányi, author of *Florus Hungaricus*, the learned Swedish mathematician Johannes Megalinus, and a minister from Southwark, one William Platt who composed short poems both in Latin and English. Let me quote Platt whose verse sounds like a modern advertising jingle: "Loe here a Stranger lights his Torch to show / Our English, through the Latine paths to go; / Follow this light it is a certain Friend / And will conduct you to your Journeys end."⁶ Jászberényi, or as he calls himself on the title page of *Fax nova...* without diacritics "Paul P. Jasz-Berenyi", freely admits in his preface that he is but a stranger (*Tyranculus*) while pointing out that he is following the method of the revered Comenius⁷ and completes the colloquialisms of the *Medulla Latinitatis* by M. F. Wendelinus in a long section called "Idiotismi verborum." He claims moreover in the English preface: "I can produce those of my Scholars, who having learned over my Book twice or thrice in one Year, according to the Method and Order prescribed, have been able to understand most Classick Authors." The first and all successive editions of *Fax nova...* in 1666, 1667 and 1670 also include a supplement entitled *Institutionum Grammaticarum Pars prima* dated differently from the grammar book itself (1663 by R.W. in the case of 1664 edition, 1666 by J. G., 1667 by B. W. in the 1666/67 edition and 1669 by E. T. in the case of the last posthumous edition) which altogether show the huge contemporary impact of the Transylvanian schoolmaster on the English textbook publishing scene.

Apart from these publications Jászberényi wrote poems in Latin, one of which appeared in a little anthology – in fact a broadsheet – mourning the death of the famous military commander and Hungarian poet Count Miklós Zrínyi, already well-known in Restoration England. Zrínyi defeated the Turks in several battles and campaigns and merited a separate biography, a compilation from foreign sources by someone hiding under the monogram O.C.⁸ This book *A Conduct and Character of Count Nicholas Serini...* was published by Samuel Speed in March 1664 and must have sold exceedingly well, for there are hardly any copies extant in most English libraries. As for the broadsheet mourn-

⁶ Paul Jasz-Berenyi, *Fax Nova Linguae Latinae* (A New Torch to the Latine Tongue) (London: R. Wood and to be sold by Nath. Brooke, 1664), D/2.

⁷ It was in Amsterdam that Jászberényi visited Comenius who signed his album. Several textbooks by Comenius were published in England in the 1650s and 1660s, one of them in the same year as *Fax nova Latinae Linguae*.

⁸ In my view this stands for "Ortelius Continuatus", a continuation of Ortelius chronicles of Europe published in Germany in the first half of the 17th century.

ing Zrínyi's death in November 1664, published a month or two later,⁹ it was Paul Jászberényi who must have persuaded his publisher, Nathaniel Brooke to print it; apart from his own verses it contains poems by three foreigners (the Swedish Megalinus, the Austrian Catholic priest Father Florentine Schilling and the Danzig-based Humanist Joachim Pastorius) as well two Calvinist Hungarians residents at the time in London, both friends of the editor. In fact, this anthology can be called the result of fruitful international networking, if not collaboration.

As far as we know the Latin school at Charing Cross survived for only seven years, for in May or early June of 1669 Paul P. Jászberényi passed away. He was rumoured to have been "poisoned by people jealous of him" just at the time when he got an invitation to return to Transylvania to take up a Chair at the Protestant College of Enyed (today Aiud in Romania).¹⁰ This grim story was told soon after his death, but it is possible that he died simply of food poisoning which was fairly common in the unhygienic pubs and eating houses on the Strand – this was the fate that some years earlier befell the famous physician Sir Theodore Mayerne who allegedly "drank bad wine."¹¹ The approximate date of Paul Jászberényi's death can be established on the basis of a document found in the Guildhall Library, a request for a licence signed by Robert Boreman, Rector of St. Giles-in-the-Fields for "Samuel Samareus who was usher to ye late famous Paulus ye Hungarian, interred in my Church."¹² The request for the multilingual Hungarian „ludimagister" Samarjai / Samareus is dated 2nd July 1669 and indeed, four days later he is granted a licence to teach by Thomas Exton. Subsequently Samareus disappears from the record: he was probably unable to run the school as successfully as Jászberényi, gave it up perhaps the following year, departing for the Netherlands or back to Hungary.

The "Jászberényi model" attracted many more Protestant Hungarians to Restoration England and it may have influenced the similarly successful compiler of Latin and Greek textbooks, Georgius Sylvanus a decade later.¹³ The last reference to the Transylvanian

⁹ *Lacrymae Hungaricae in luctuosum satum [...] D. Nicolai comitis a Zeremy*, ed., Nat. Brooke, (London: [n.d.]) There are two copies extant, one in the British Library, the other in the Herzog August Library, Wolfenbüttel, Germany.

¹⁰ *The Autobiography of Miklós Bethlen*, trans. Bernard Adams (London / New York / Bahrain: Kegan Paul, 2004), 196 and Péter Bod *Magyar Athenas*, eds., Matolcsy Ildikó et. al (Budapest: Magvető, 1982), 332.

¹¹ E. Beresford Chancellor, *The Annals of the Strand* (London, 1912), 327.

¹² Teaching licences, Guildhall Library, Ms 10116/6.

¹³ Information on Sylvanus who began his publishing career in 1677 to be found under entry 41, György Gömöri, ed., *Magyarországi diákok angol és skót egyetemeken 1526–1789 / Hungarian Students in England and Scotland, 1526–1789* (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Levéltára, 2005), 33.

schoolmaster occurs in *The Royal Grammar Compiled formerly by Mr. William Lilly now modestly endeavoured to be rendered Plain and Obvious to the Capacity of Youth...* published by R. C. for Awncsham Churchill in 1688. The anonymous author/publisher compliments his predecessors in the preface, explaining the reason for the cheap republication of Lilly's grammar: "commending the more curious to that incomparably learned and most exact Dictionary of the Rev. and Judicious Dr. Littleton; or that useful piece of Jasberenyus (!) called *Fax nova*. Which Books being dear, and not as yet in every hand [...]"¹⁴ The voluminous bilingual *New Torch...* was not forgotten, though it was replaced a few decades later by cheaper, more accessible Latin/English grammar books. None the less, its story reminds us of the unusual opportunities for talented, multi-lingual foreigners in the London of Pepys, Wren and Charles II.

¹⁴ *The Royal Grammar Compiled Formerly by Mr William Lilly Now Modestly Endeavoured to Be Rendered Plain and Obvious to the Capacity of Youth by a Supplement of Things Defective, and Alteration of Things Amis. Together with a Poetical Index by R. C.* (printed for Awncsham Churchill, 1688), AV-A2.