

Tradition von der Alten Kirche bis hinein ins 20. Jh. Es folgen dann zwei kleinere Teile: der eine ist der alten und frühneuzeitlichen englischen Literatur gewidmet, während der andere vermischte Texte enthält, unter anderem zum Thema „heilig und profan“ hinsichtlich der Kunst.

In Pilisszaba entsteht eine neue Universität auf dem Gelände, wo früher die Baracken der sowjetischen Armee standen: ein schönes Symbol dafür, wie aus den Ruinen des Alten etwas ganz Neues entstehen kann! Daß das gemeinsame Forschungsprogramm in Hermeneutik es erlaubte, alte Trennungen durch stimulierende Begegnungen und Gespräche zu ersetzen, ist eine erfreuliche Tatsache, die in dieselbe Richtung weist. Es bleibt zu hoffen, daß die in die Wege geleitete Zusammenarbeit sich weiterhin entwickeln kann und weitere Früchte wie diesen Sammelband hervorbringen wird.

University of Zürich

CONFERENCE ADDRESS

September 3, 1998

Tibor Fabiny

Dear Participants,

Thank you for the greetings of the Vice Rector of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, and for the opening words of Professor Hans Weder. Let me extend my warm welcome on behalf of the organizers and the hosting institution, i.e. the Centre for Hermeneutical Research in Budapest and the Faculty of Arts of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University.

The Centre for Hermeneutical Research is a relatively new institution. After the collapse of totalitarianism in Eastern Europe, the new political climate in Hungary made it possible to create church affiliated universities. Pázmány Péter Catholic University was refounded in 1992 and it was followed by the formation of the Károli Gáspár Reformed University in 1993. The idea of creating a Centre for Hermeneutical Research was the initiative of the professors of the Faculty of Theology of the Reformed University and the Centre was founded as an interdenominational and interuniversity institution by the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Arts of the Károli Gáspár University, the Lutheran Theological University. It was also firmly supported by the Faculty of Arts of the Eötvös Loránd University and indeed its idea is envisaged as a collaboration of theologians and literary scholars. The Centre is located in the Faculty of Arts of the Károli Gáspár Reformed University in the city of Budapest.

In Hungary Gáspár Károli (1529–1591), the 16th century Reformer and Bible translator, became a metaphor of Protestantism while Péter Pázmány (1570–1637), the leading figure of 17th century Counter Reformation, is now a metaphor of Catholicism. In the public opinion, “Pázmány and Károli” strikes one as a strange oxymoron. However, at the end of the 20th century, these two universities of so different traditions are happy to exist and work together and the academic freedom creates a bridge of cooperation where denominational prejudices erected walls. Several academics in Hungary, including myself, teach at both institutions. And a Centre for Hermeneutics is especially a link or a bridge after the long period of division and separation.

A sign of co-operation and of the manifestation of "the bridge" is that within three years it is already the second international conference on hermeneutics that is hosted by the Pázmány Péter Catholic University but organized by the Centre for Hermeneutical Research. The first conference that took place in Pilsescaba in July 1995 was about "Teaching 'Bible and Literature' at the Universities".

The idea of this conference was conceived when the Swiss National Fund generously supported the mutual project of the Institut für Hermeneutik und Religionsphilosophie of the Theological Faculty of the University of Zürich and the Centre for Hermeneutical Research in Budapest. The Zürich Institut für Hermeneutik founded by Gerhard Ebeling in 1961, has been a model of our Centre from its foundation in 1993. Before the idea of the collaboration was conceived, the Centre had already published the Hungarian translations of several Swiss theologians like Gerhard Ebeling, Walter Mostert or Ulrich Luz. Hans Weder and myself launched the project "Literary Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics" with participants Ingolf Dalferth from Zürich and János Bolyki from Budapest. Within the past two years we have organized several lectures and workshops both in Zürich and Budapest on myth and metaphor, time and apocalypse or the history of interpretation. We have begun to publish the series "Zürich-Budapest Project": The "First fruits", i.e. Hans Weder's lectures on "Metaphor, Parable and Hermeneutics" are now available for you in English. It is our hope that we continue the project including those Zürich scholars who are interested in the literary approach of theology like Pierre Bühler or those who are engaged in the history of hermeneutics like Paul Michel of the German Department of the Zurich University. I have just returned from a conference on the history of hermeneutics organized by the theologian Hans Weder and the philologist Paul Michel in Zürich. And I was most impressed to see how productive such a mutual enterprise can be.

When we envisaged this conference with Hans Weder and Ingolf Dalferth about a year ago, it was our agreement that we should open the doors as widely as possible. Though the project was based on the collaboration of scholars in Zürich and Budapest, we wanted to invite anybody interested in "Interpretation of Texts. Sacred and Secular, History and Theory." We were most happy to see that theologians as well as literary scholars quickly responded to our "Call for Papers", so scholars decided to come from the USA, England, Ireland, Denmark, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Romania and, of course, from Hungary.

It is not going to be a conference of "purists" by any means: lectures will be delivered in German and in English on biblical, theological, literary or art historical issues. What binds us is the dialogue with, and the interpretation of texts. It is our hope that these historical and theoretical dialogues will end up in a dialogue with one another.

As you have heard, you are on the premises of former Russian barracks. Something totally new is being built here out of the ruins of the old. In the past decades we were separated from one-another by curtains, walls or prejudices. In a totally new context we are challenged to open our minds and imaginations to understand the otherness of the other.

It is my hope that we shall have a most stimulating and creative climate of interpretation and dialogue in the following three days to come.

I would like to thank for the support of the Swiss National Fund, and the Faculty of Arts of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University for providing the premises, and last but not least my assistant Ms Nóra Kuntz whose help was indispensable in the organisation of this international conference.

I wish all of us a most successful conference!

Pázmány Péter Catholic University
Pilsescaba Hungary