

**Csaba Fazekas**

ORCID [0000-0003-0062-6671](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0062-6671)

University of Miskolc Faculty of Arts

Institute for Applied Social Sciences

(Miskolc, Hungary)

[fazekas@uni-miskolc.hu](mailto:fazekas@uni-miskolc.hu)

## The case of “a crow dressed in borrowed feathers”: Debate of the church historians on plagiarism in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungary

### Abstract

This paper presents a heated debate about plagiarism that unfolded between historiographers of the Catholic Church in the press in Hungary in 1841. It was only one special event with few participants, but this case offers an opportunity to study the development of the approach of historical science to plagiarism and the conditions of historiography in East-Central Europe, with special regard to church history, and contrasts these with the conditions in West European countries.

To interpret the plagiarism debate, the “court model” will be applied because the writings of the accused author, the victim,

<b>PUBLICATION INFO</b>		e-ISSN 2543-702X ISSN 2451-3202		 <b>DIAMOND OPEN ACCESS</b>
<b>CITATION</b>				
Fazekas, Csaba 2021: The case of “a crow dressed in borrowed feathers”: Debate of the church historians on plagiarism in the 19 <sup>th</sup> -century Hungary. <i>Studia Historiae Scientiarum</i> 20, pp. 789–820. DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.4467/2543702XSHS.21.023.14054">10.4467/2543702XSHS.21.023.14054</a> .				
RECEIVED: 31.10.2020 ACCEPTED: 10.07.2021 PUBLISHED ONLINE: 13.09.2021	ARCHIVE POLICY <a href="#">Green SHERPA /</a> <a href="#">RoMEO Colour</a>	LICENSE 		
<b>WWW</b>	<a href="https://ojs.ejournals.eu/SHS/">https://ojs.ejournals.eu/SHS/</a> ; <a href="http://pau.krakow.pl/Studia-Historiae-Scientiarum/archiwum">http://pau.krakow.pl/Studia-Historiae-Scientiarum/archiwum</a>			

and the witnesses remind us of the participants in a court trial, where for the court to pass the sentence mitigating and aggravating circumstances can be put forward, and there is also countercharging; and the committed act is also considered from the point of view of intellectual property rights, as well as from a moral and scientific standpoint.

**Keywords:** *plagiarism, historiography, church history, debate, press, Hungary, comparison*

## Przypadek „wrony ubranej w cudze pióra”: Debata historyków Kościoła na temat plagiatu na Węgrzech w XIX wieku

### Abstrakt

Artykuł przedstawia gorącą debatę na temat plagiatu, jaka toczyła się między historykami Kościoła katolickiego w prasie na Węgrzech w 1841 r. Było to tylko jedno szczególne wydarzenie, w którym uczestniczyło niewielu uczestników, ale ten przypadek jest okazją do zbadania rozwoju podejścia nauk historycznych do zagadnienia plagiatu i uwarunkowań historiografii w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem historii Kościoła, i porównania ich z uwarunkowaniami panującymi w krajach Europy Zachodniej.

Do interpretacji debaty na temat plagiatu zastosowany zostanie „model sądowy”, ponieważ pisma oskarżonego autora, pokrzywdzonego i świadków przypominają nam o uczestnikach procesu sądowego, w którym do wydania wyroku przez sąd można wskazać okoliczności łagodzące i obciążające, istnieje również przeciwdziałanie; a popełniony czyn rozpatrywany jest także z punktu widzenia praw własności intelektualnej, a także z moralnego i naukowego punktu widzenia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *plagiat, historiografia, historia kościoła, debata, prasa, Węgry, porównanie*

## 1. Introduction

This is a summary of the events of one of the first debates on scientific plagiarism in East-Central Europe. Miklós János Cherrier (1790–1862), an author relatively well-known at the time, published his Latin study on the universal history of the Catholic Church in four volumes at the beginning of the 1840s.<sup>1</sup> He was accused of having published under his name, to a considerable extent, work that was not his own, but of earlier monographs in a restructured and reformulated form. This triggered a passionate debate in the press. Cherrier rejected the charges. Yet, from the participants' arguments, it is clear that he had indeed committed plagiarism (“theft”, “poaching”). He did not consider it an act to be condemned, but to the contrary: a legitimate form of scientific publication. Since we do not know any similar scientific debate in the Central European historiography of 1830–1840s, it is very difficult to judge how representative this event was. Undoubtedly, it seems to be unique but it is available for a comparison with the later and the Western European examples. The debate is instructive in several aspects, offering general conclusions as regards the arguments and counterarguments, features and the style used as well as the contemporary attitude to plagiarism and copyright.

To interpret the Cherrier case and recall its lessons, a “court model” is applied with regard to the fact that the roles of a court trial, i.e., the prosecutor formulating the charge, the defendant (at the same time, an attorney undertaking to defend himself), the plaintiff (the injured party) and the witnesses can be identified.<sup>2</sup> In the model, it is only the judge, the sentence, and the execution of the sentence that cannot be identified as specific elements of a trial process, with the latter possibly identifiable with the positions of contemporary public opinion and posterity. It is of especial note that all the most important participants of the debate on plagiarism were highly positioned Roman Catholic clergymen, scholars of Canon Law and church history, who published a lot of works in Latin and Hungarian in these fields. Ignác Udvardy (1810–1874) was a clergyman at the episcopate of Veszprém,

---

<sup>1</sup> Cherrier [1840–1841](#). (The first two volumes were published in 1840, the next ones in 1841.) In this paper all Hungarian translation in quotations and titles are mine.

<sup>2</sup> The idea and roots of this model is erected: Hoffer [2004](#); Tóth 2000, p. 89–90.

Miklós Cherrier at the archdiocese of Esztergom in Nagyszombat (today: Trnava, Slovakia), László Vass (1780–1842) and János Szabó (1800–1857) were professors at the University of Pest, at the Faculty of Theological Sciences.

## 2. Historiography and church history in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Hungary

The development of the science of historiography underwent similar processes both in Hungary, belonging to the Habsburg Empire, as in other European countries.<sup>3</sup> After the prelude of medieval or early modern chronicles, we can recognize a “quest for a new historiography” in the 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>4</sup> starting with the exploration and publication of sources, and the foundations of scientific historiography becoming more and more observable. Hence, proper monographs began to be published, first only in Latin, and from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both in Hungarian and Latin. Similarly, as in most European countries, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the modern concept of the nation increasingly demanded the exploration and description of the national past. It was a concept of the nation as a unique whole in which spiritual forces bind things together and each element influences the others.<sup>5</sup> We can recognize the growing importance of social and economic history (“the industrial age discovers the ‘real force’ in history”<sup>6</sup>). From among the “three great national responses”<sup>7</sup> dominating the period, Hungarian historiography was closest to the German one, in all probability, with regard to the similar (but certainly not identical) political conditions and challenges of the time. The following applies not only to the German but also to the Hungarian scholars:

The attraction of ‘pure’ scholarship coupled with a moderate conservatism found many adherents but for decades this attraction had to compete with the pull of two other

---

<sup>3</sup> Deák 1983; Gunst 2000, p. 139–96.

<sup>4</sup> Breisach 1983, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup> Breisach 1983, p. 229.

<sup>6</sup> Breisach 1983, p. 270.

<sup>7</sup> Breisach 1983, p. 215.

concerns: national unity and constitutional government. Until 1848 the two concerns were still linked, but the failure of the 1848 revolutions gave priority to the cause of national unity.<sup>8</sup>

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the “scientific” or “academic” historical sciences characterized Hungarian historiography.

In Hungary, a special condition of church historiography regarding religious denominations is that the population was highly divided. In addition to the Roman Catholic majority, there was also a significant proportion of Protestants (Calvinists and Lutherans). The issue of the equality of religious denominations was considered to be an important political question in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which had an effect on historiography in a way that both Catholics and Protestants thought it important to present their respective past and present roles as the only positive religion serving the cause of the nation in comparison to others. The urges handed down from the period of Reformation as good as survived in church historiography.

Church historians throughout the sixteenth and most of the seventeenth century, then, viewed the church’s past in terms either of orthodoxy or heresy. In Catholic thought, the crucial idea of development was present; but in the polemical atmosphere [...] it was vitiated by a providential view of superintendence that allowed for little or no error in the past.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the historians of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Hungary were clergymen. Paradoxically, it is connected to the fact that the modern church historiography, critical and not theologically inspired (“first, a greater scientific concern for the analysis of original documents, and second, the freedom to interpret these sources in a way that did not lead to a predetermined, or at least predictable, goal”), started in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Western Europe, arrived in Hungary with some delay.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Breisach 1983, p. 234. Similar processes in German and Hungarian church historiography appeared in the contemporary press, see e.g. [N.N. 1842] p. 395.

<sup>9</sup> Bradley, Muller 1995. pp. 11–12.

<sup>10</sup> Bradley, Muller 1995. p. 13.

Most were good historians when they wrote public history, collected and published the medieval sources etc. – but they were often prejudiced in the direction of their own denomination.

### 3. The “indictment”

The main point of Ignác Udvardy’s keynote article (“*Authorial theft*”<sup>11</sup>) was that to a considerable extent, Cherrier’s monograph was the adaptation of the text of two books on church history that had been published earlier.<sup>12</sup> Cherrier did not copy the texts verbatim but deleted, rewrote or reformulated certain words and sentence parts leaving the structure and content of the original texts well recognizable, though. According to Udvardy, Cherrier had simply appropriated the intellectual products of other church historiographers, that is, he had plagiarized. He had not created his own historiographic work; he had not used the works by Vass and Rutenstock as sources, but rather as the “starting-point for reprinting”. Although he indirectly hinted that Cherrier’s practice raised legal issues, he chose to emphasize the ethical problems. He showed that Cherrier had rewritten the text of the works mentioned paragraph by paragraph and chapter by chapter and “reprinted it with numerous identical citations of the real authors, having a good knowledge of their sources”.<sup>13</sup> As he established, there were only a few paragraphs and linking parts that could be regarded as the “fake author’s” own text.

Udvardy noticed the little time it had taken Cherrier to write his large scale church history, although such work usually required several years of research and processing, and that in the meantime, Cherrier had even written a monograph on canon law.<sup>14</sup> If he had rewritten the

---

<sup>11</sup> Udvardy 1841a, pp. 188–191.

<sup>12</sup> The works mentioned by Udvardy as sources of Cherrier’s plagiarized volume: Vass 1828; Rutenstock 1832–1834. László Vass could publish only the first piece of his multivolume monograph, he could give one copy to Pope Gregory XVI, that’s why Vass became a nominated member of the academy of Rome. Jacob Rutenstock (1776–1844) was an Austrian church history teacher at the University of Vienna, provost of the Klosterneuburg Abbey.

<sup>13</sup> Udvardy 1841a, p. 189.

<sup>14</sup> According to the preface in Cherrier’s book and his manuscript, the author finished the first volume in 1836, and he needed only less than one year for the second, during which he also published a two-volume work on canon law. – National Széchényi Library of Hungary (Budapest). Manuscripts. Oct. Lat. 490.; Cherrier 1836–1837.

special literature available as a school textbook and not as a monograph on church history, perhaps his method would have been acceptable, Udvardy reasoned, but to copy others' work this way "was not a really laudable act". The precise indication of sources and references was an essential part of a historiographer's work, but Cherrier had failed to do so, although he had also written "a lengthy and digressive preface" to his work. In fact, Udvardy had been Vass's student at the University of Pest, but this was not the reason why he published the criticism of Cherrier's plagiarism. Rather, he felt that every insulted person was entitled to a defense of their rights.

In Udvardy's view, plagiarizing Ruttenstock's work was a serious case also because doing so Cherrier discredited Hungarian historiography abroad as well. Interestingly, he did not want to settle the case in a limited debate (e.g. private correspondence), because as he said the issue of such a "theft" had to be made known to the widest public. His statement that "there was no other tribunal" was both typical and true, and furthermore, the exposure of dishonest practice served the real interests of both the injured author and the Catholic Church, Hungary, and Hungarian science.

#### 4. The "pleading speech"

The "defendant" Cherrier responded to the charge of plagiarism in a lengthy essay entitled "*Authorial Defamation*" in September 1841.<sup>15</sup> (It is important to mention that others did not openly support Cherrier's practice, so he was forced to serve as his own defense counsel.) Cherrier chose bad tactics to maintain his position, which was hard to defend. In the first instance, he said that upon return from his research trip abroad, he was shocked to learn about the criticism, the author of which he consistently labelled "my enemy, lacking any fraternal love". He returned several times to addressing his critic, whose identity he was not aware of at that time, by referring to him as "an anonymous attacking gentleman" and "a slanderer" and promised to give a thorough, crushing response to the accusation.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Cherrier 1841.

<sup>16</sup> Cherrier 1841, p. 1.

His most important argument was directed at the fact that starting with the wise men of ancient times, every author had drawn on the works of scholars living earlier, and therefore, everybody could be charged with “authorial theft”. With respect to the similarity of the texts, he formulated the principle that you could not speak about plagiarism if “the words were not all identical”, and he thought that he had not exceeded the level of choosing similar titles or having a similar logical line of thought. (According to Udvardy, the problem had been much larger than this.) He often mentioned that other historiographers had used a similar division into chapters as he had, and the similarity of texts could not be regarded as “verbatim plagiarism”. He called upon his critic to show exactly identical parts in the texts. “I can only respond to your slander that there is not a single structure in my work that would be copied word for word.” This was undoubtedly true as Udvardy had stated that Cherrier had reformulated Vass’s and Rutenstock’s texts primarily by relocating parts of sentences and using synonyms. Thus, Cherrier either misunderstood, or (more likely) wanted to misunderstand the nature of the charge of theft. He also called upon the impartial reading public several times to compare his work with Vass’s and Rutenstock’s books and underlined that whoever would do it would realize that the charge of plagiarism was unfounded.

Cherrier tried to pass on the charge of plagiarism alleging that László Vass had applied a similar method when he had published his work entitled *Introductio*. In this context, he repeated:

Or perhaps you allege that it is forbidden to use the works of other authors? Then you also condemn Mr. Honoured Canon Vass and every historiographer as undoubtedly, each of them used other authors’ books according to his own style.<sup>17</sup>

He presented in detail how different the division of his work into chapters was from that of the former monographs, and added that because of this, Udvardy’s charge would dissolve “as mere slander, and an apparition built on delusion or haughtiness and malevolence”.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Cherrier 1841, pp. 3–4.

<sup>18</sup> Cherrier 1841. p. 7.

With this, he dismissed the charge of plagiarism on merit as the main point of it was that Cherrier had thoroughly restructured Vass's and Ruttenstock's texts, that is, the differences in the division into chapters did not prove the originality of his work. He listed paragraphs including some 70 historical events not mentioned by Vass or Ruttenstock but mentioned by him, with which he intended to divert attention from the remaining hundreds and, on the other hand, gave no response whatsoever to the problem of the restructured texts.

Likewise, Cherrier also tried to emphasize his sense of fairness by calling upon – in a rather theatrical style – “the instructors of church law not only in our dear homeland and in our monarchy, but also throughout Europe” to come forward if they dared to declare a charge of plagiarism similar to the one made about his historical monograph regarding any detail in his volume on canon law entitled *Enchiridion*. In this case, he declared, he himself would burn his volumes on a pyre.<sup>19</sup>

In the last section of his defense, he shifted to passionate, personal argumentation. He doubted that Udvardy was a “man of mature reason”, for example, when he mentioned that Cherrier's large scale historical monograph had been written in conspicuously short time. Cherrier responded to this proudly, saying that he had joined the “theological faculty ten years earlier”, and: “I usually devote not 3–4 but 12, and in some cases, 13–14 hours to my work”, inviting his close colleagues and students to testify to this fact. To sum up, he attempted to refute the charge of plagiarism with the following: his work was longer than Vass's and Ruttenstock's, and had a different structure, and listed several new elements unknown to Hungarian readers. He objected to the “slanderer, lacking any human affection” by calling him a fake author and a “crow adorned with other birds' feathers according to Aesop's tale”.<sup>20</sup> He tried to capitalize morally on the fact that Udvardy had not published his keynote article under his own name, from which Cherrier concluded that the “accuser” had a bad conscience. The conclusion was similar to the beginning:

But you should know that if you attack me again in the future, either in disguise or under your own name, I will

---

<sup>19</sup> Cherrier 1841, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Cherrier 1841, p. 8.

put out your fire with mental weapons and destroy your petty charges even more heroically.<sup>21</sup>

The most conspicuous element in Cherrier’s argumentation was, however, the fact that he failed to refute the most important charge – that he had copied or restructured lengthy texts by Vass and Ruttenstock and presented them as his own, under his name, and his counterarguments had completely missed the direction of the originally formulated criticism.

## 5. Continuation of “indictment”

The author of the original critique did not wait long before responding. He finished his essay, this time not included in a newspaper article but published as a separate pamphlet (“*Defense Writing*”), on 4 December 1841.<sup>22</sup> He revealed his identity, thus repelling Cherrier’s moral criticism concerning his critic’s anonymity. But as regards the personal and passionate tone, Udvardy wanted to match his interlocutor:

I felt worthy and justified wrath again when I was reading the bickering and the outbursts with mean accusations, unusual from a teacher of theology, that he had made public. I could not have even imagined that such anger could be formed in a Christian soul. I gave a sigh and started to feel sorry about the frenzied author for his wrath and supercilious challenge.<sup>23</sup>

He wrote in a similar style about the unfounded presumption and sarcasms of Cherrier, “who is only a crow deprived from disguise”.

In addition to the romantic figures of speech, it is worth noticing that in relation to the case Udvardy made an attempt to define the phenomenon of plagiarism in science, and thus also proving Cherrier’s practice unacceptable.

I regard the author’s property like any other property, and its integrity is as sacred for me as that of any other

---

<sup>21</sup> Cherrier 1841, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Udvardy [1841b](#).

<sup>23</sup> Udvardy [1841b](#), p. 1.

property. Therefore, if it is appropriated either wholly or partly without the owner's knowledge and consent, and published under somebody else's name, I consider this actual theft. And it is the duty of every honest man to expose this in the moral world just like theft in the physical one and recover the things stolen for their real owner. And behold, this is the duty I have fulfilled.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, he rejected Cherrier's accusing him of lovelessness and malevolence. He compared Cherrier's situation to thieves making accusations against the policemen that arrested them. He turned to the readers in a cumulative rhetorical question asking them to judge to which one of them the negative attributes referred.

Although the debate started to get gnarly, he emphatically reminded readers of the main question circumvented by Cherrier, namely whether he had plagiarized Vass's and Ruttenstock's works or not. Udvardy adopted Cherrier's tactics and asked the reader to compare the work suspected of plagiarism with the "original" ones. To publish the full texts next to each other would have filled several hundreds of pages but Udvardy published lengthy excerpts from the works concerned in two columns, which clearly supported his original statement: these were obviously rewritten sentences and restructured texts. On the basis of this, he confidently stated that the impartial reader would say he was right and would "condemn" Cherrier for "the serious theft committed by him".

After clearly proving plagiarism, Udvardy responded to the attacks against his own person in detail. He denounced it passionately that Cherrier had not only committed plagiarism but he had also aggravated his sin with slander. Udvardy made a thorough use of his victory due to the obvious similarity of the texts, dwelling long on Cherrier's "mean and cunning method", with which he had reformulated others' works. Furthermore, he gave crushing criticism of Cherrier's attempts to divert attention. "Blush, cowardly boaster, and scrutinize your conscience," he called on his interlocutor. He also warned Cherrier that the next time he should study what exactly he was accused of. According to Udvardy, Cherrier simply did not understand the essence of the critique, the

---

<sup>24</sup> Udvardy [1841b](#), p. 2.

accusation of plagiarism and was carried away by his emotions like “someone shouting in booming wind”. He dwelled on how Cherrier had prevaricated defending himself against allegations that the keynote article did not even contain. What he admitted was that there indeed were original parts in Cherrier’s work, linking the sentences adopted from Vass and Ruttenstock, although due to their childish simplicity, they obviously stood out from the plagiarized parts that Cherrier had tried to sell as his own “with childish functional grammatic and syntactic word replacements and clumsy dissection”.<sup>25</sup>

Udvardy sharply rejected Cherrier’s insults against László Vass. In the end, he analyzed Cherrier’s argument concerning his own resilience, remarking that for any intellectual being aware of the nature of scientific research, it was evident that it was impossible to write such an ambitious monograph on one’s own in such a short time. He closed his commentaries with poetic images:

Although you are roaring like a lion feeling its doom, having been hit with an arrow, I am going to watch you in silence as an impotent struggler and someone bitterly scoffing until you start scrutinizing your conscience. When you have sown your wild oats, and your fever ceases, you will become silent like a child who has got tired of crying.<sup>26</sup>

## 6. “Testimonies”

János Alamizsnás Szabó, another priest and historian, contributed to the case of Cherrier’s plagiarism in an anonymous pamphlet entitled “*Shameless Denial*”.<sup>27</sup> This work is at the same time both an attack on Cherrier’s plagiarism and an attempt to defend it, and, what is more, in an extremely passionate style, devoting almost the same attention to the ethical issues as to the scholarly debate.

Right at the beginning of his piece, he denominated Cherrier a person “breaking the seventh commandment” and called it a conduct characteristic of thieves that did not only look for excuses but outright

---

<sup>25</sup> Udvardy [1841b](#), pp. 5–6.

<sup>26</sup> Udvardy [1841b](#), p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Szabó [1841](#).

denied their exposed sin. Cherrier, he wrote, became the professor of church history and canon law as a simple burglar, “started a scholar’s career but has not remained free from the methods and weaknesses of thieves, oh dear!, and could not resist the temptation of the benefits that could be gained, or at least, hoped to be gained through a writer’s reputation.” He had broken God’s commandment and boasted about the things stolen until Udvardy exposed him in his article. Cherrier behaved as if he had stolen “the treasures of Mr. Vass and Mr. Ruttenstock” like an ordinary pickpocket. If a poor man steals money or any valuables, and denies committing his crime, his deeds may be judged more leniently because he is ignorant and uneducated and because he “is unaware of the monstrosity of lying, and is disturbed by the fear from physical punishments. However, a scholar’s denial is hardly forgivable.”<sup>28</sup>

It is an aggravating circumstance if all this is done by a clergyman, whose duty is telling the truth and educating others to tell the truth with his example. He cited several verses of the Bible to make Cherrier – who not only tried to deny his obvious lies but also rudely attacked the benevolent person that had revealed his wrongdoings – tell the truth, and become aware of his grave lies. Szabó often applied the device of illustrative opposites, contrasting, for example, a thief and an honest person, a liar and a truth-teller, etc. when presenting the case of plagiarism. He also encouraged Udvardy to hold out saying that the lying and stealing plagiarist would be persecuted until he gave satisfaction. He used the biblical parable of the good Samaritan and identified the participants: the plagiarist, the revealer and himself as the Samaritan’s supporter.

He approached the unreliability of Cherrier’s defense from several standpoints. On the one hand, he found it amazing that Cherrier considered his readers so stupid that they would not recognize plagiarism, and furthermore that Cherrier thought that with the rude accusations in his response to Udvardy’s article and with its lecturing style “he would beguile the reading public and convince them with the multitude of reproaches and with mere denial that he had not stolen”. Szabó supposed that Cherrier must have known about the charge of plagiarism well before the keynote article so he found Cherrier guilty

---

<sup>28</sup> Szabó [1841](#), p. 1.

of one more lie. Cherrier said that he had only received the article at the beginning of September 1841 but his defense was published as early as on 18 September. According to Szabó's calculations, it was impossible in such a short time to verify the allegations of the charge of plagiarism, compare his own work with his “sources” and write his *Authorial Defamation*, even if – as he sarcastically remarked – Cherrier worked for 14 hours a day.<sup>29</sup>

Szabó made many ironic remarks about the militant tone of Cherrier's defense. For example, about the fact that Cherrier had attempted to attack a church historian in person of László Vass, who is well-known in Hungary and much more respected than him. “Don't be so vehement, Mr. Cherrier! Consider who you're dealing with!” He suggested that Cherrier should instead flee from the battlefield envisioned by him, “and sing an honest song of repentance or a palinode that everyone can hear”. Since he would not have been able to win in a scholarly debate with the kind of style he had used, he resorted to a “sling of mouth and arrows of tongue”. Szabó analyzed the content and form of all Cherrier's defensive statements in detail. For example, it made him outraged that the plagiarizer called upon the readers to compare the works: “It is unprecedented indecency that makes you rightly angry, the like of which has never been found in either the collections of whole ecclesiastical or lay stories!” It was completely clear that “he publicly proclaimed the stolen property, the owners are well-known people so everybody can become convinced of the theft with their own eyes.”<sup>30</sup> And Cherrier “is not ashamed of this as he has denied stealing but aggravates his sin with another one.” It was clearly revealed by the detailed comparison that Cherrier had “completely plundered” Vass's book

(...) guiltily appropriating it idea by idea and concept by concept, and our boasting and arrogant crow has stuck

---

<sup>29</sup> Miklós Cherrier was sent into West European countries by the head of Hungarian Catholic hierarchy, József Kopácsy archbishop of Esztergom for collecting ecclesiastical data about the problems of mixed marriages. There was a hectic church policy debate at the beginning of 1840s in Hungary between the Roman Catholic clergy and the liberal reformer politicians who wanted legal equality for the Protestants. See e.g. Fazekas 2006; Šoltés 2015. Newest important volume about Hungarian church history: Bischofslexikon 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Szabó 1841, pp. 5–6.

the peacock's feathers in his own tail by adding fragments extracted from other works, replacing words with others, removing parts of minor importance, merging some paragraphs, or pulling them apart, and moving citations in other places.<sup>31</sup>

He meticulously exposed Cherrier's rewriting and "synonymizing technique", from which he drew the conclusion that this practice had inflicted severe damage to the cause of church historiography. Szabó even revealed in great detail that Cherrier "had been suffering so much from the infection of replacing words" that he had even replaced the listed Latin book titles with his own words. From this, he reached the sarcastic conclusion that Vass had far exceeded Cherrier not only in historical knowledge and ethical approach to science, but also in the knowledge of Latin.

Szabó often loosened the detailed comparison of the texts taken from the two volumes by drawing sarcastic conclusions. For example, as regards the rewriting of Vass's texts, his impression was that Cherrier "must have either broken up the text into bigger chunks because he has bad teeth and he cannot chew let alone digest bigger pieces, or being generous, he does not spare paper to make his work heavier." In another place, he used the simile that Cherrier had cut a piece of text out from Vass's book "like a child from its mother's uterus", and he pondered that Cherrier should rather write a book on anatomy than on history as he had dissected Rutenstock's works so much. According to the summary of Szabó's evaluation, Cherrier "is not an author but only a writer, and not even a good writer as there are countless errors in his work".<sup>32</sup>

Szabó also became involved in a professional debate with Cherrier, saying that the latter had a wrong interpretation of the concept of church history, had been unable to select among the data and sources remaining from the past, and had basically copied and rewritten everything that he could lay his hands on, and Szabó could not detect even the smallest indicator of independence in the four-volume monograph. Szabó indignantly rejected Cherrier's concept of plagiarism (according to which only verbatim copying can be regarded as theft) and clarified

---

<sup>31</sup> Szabó [1841](#), p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Szabó [1841](#), pp. 14–15.

this with a simile that stealing gold coins still remained an offence although the thief later exchanged them for banknotes. Szabó thought that instead of spending so many hours working, it would have been better if Cherrier had gone back to school. Even more so, he considered, because while replacing the words, Cherrier had not noticed that by using synonymous expressions, he had essentially changed the content of the original text in several places. Still, Szabó could find examples where Cherrier copied texts word for word. He showed that in contrast to Cherrier’s charge, Vass had made proper citations referring to former historiographers by indicating the sources, so Vass did not plagiarize. Szabó presented the parts independently added by Cherrier, indicating that he had recognizably “picked” elements from others’ works, too, in addition to those of Vass and Rutenstock so not even those things were original in his work, which Udvardy had considered to be such.<sup>33</sup>

In spite of the sarcastic attributes and qualifications towards Cherrier, Szabó also tried to find mitigating circumstances for him, e.g. when he wrote that Cherrier was not a hardened criminal, only “his mind and memory were terribly weak” so he simply forgot from which source he had copied text fragments. He regarded the books he had read earlier as old dreams and “as his dream was really lively, it also disturbed his mind and later he believed the dream to be reality.” To this he added that Cherrier had made a long journey abroad, and the inconveniences of the journey “had made his body tired and weakened his soul”. These excuses rather presented the “defendant” as an infantile swindler than a historiographer who could be taken seriously.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, he also analyzed Cherrier’s work on canon law entitled *Enchiridion* in detail and concluded that it was a copy to a great extent, too. As Cherrier in his *Authorial Defamation* offered to publicly acknowledge plagiarizing if anybody discovered it, Szabó remarked:

Therefore, if Mr. Cherrier is honest, he should have a bon-fire made on the market of town Nagyszombat and the copies of his *Enchiridion* and church history put on it, and should light it with his own hands.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Further “source” of Cherrier’s book according to Szabó: Klein [1828](#).

<sup>34</sup> Szabó [1841](#), p. 40.

<sup>35</sup> Szabó [1841](#), p. 46.

In his lengthy conclusion, Szabó said that it would be better for Cherrier to leave the intellectual career forever as he had only discredited both his church, the Archdiocese of Esztergom and Hungary. He wrote:

Behold, I have done more now than Cherrier has done in all his works as he has not written as much out of his own mind as I have done in this exposure. If a university lecturer did not write anything, it would even be better than what Cherrier has done. Such a teacher should be chased away not only from his department but from the country, as well. At least, that is what I think.<sup>36</sup>

He accounted for the length of his writing, referring to the compulsive situation saying that if Cherrier had remained silent, there might have been no scandal about his plagiarism but as he denied stealing, he compelled every public person to express their opinion publicly, particularly among the priests-historians responsible for the prestige of the church.

In addition to the pamphlets, the press also started to deal with the plagiarism case. “We cannot remain silent,” Ferenc Toldy (1805–1875) started his article, being a well-known Hungarian writer and editor of the period, who also thought that “it would have been better if Cherrier had hidden and remained deeply silent in awareness of his sin,” instead of attacking his critics in response.<sup>37</sup> Toldy remarked that in their editorial office several people had compared Cherrier’s work with the plagiarized books, and “had a lot of fun” reading the re-written texts,

(...) if they hadn’t felt shame that somebody would do such a thing as the fact that instead of ‘Imperator’ Cherrier wrote ‘Caesar’ or instead of ‘obiit’ wrote ‘mortuus est’ did not diminish the plagiarism but rather aggravated it because of the malevolence. Let this case serve as a deterring example for everybody.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Szabó [1841](#), p. 51.

<sup>37</sup> Toldy 1842.

<sup>38</sup> Toldy 1842, p. 640.

What is more, the case started to become known abroad, too, in a German theological periodical it was written that Cherrier “had compiled” his work “from other publications with striking carelessness.”<sup>39</sup>

## 7. The “victim’s testimony”

One of the persons concerned, Canon László Vass, professor of church history at the University of Pest, contributed to the plagiarism debate in a lengthy piece of writing (“*A Few Words on a Pamphlet*”<sup>40</sup>). Interestingly, from among the historians exposing Cherrier’s “theft”, it was Vass who spoke in the most conciliatory tone, although he was also outraged by the plagiarism. It was especially Cherrier’s tone in *Authorial Defamation* that made him make a public statement. It reminded him of Napoleon’s proclamations:

(...) when he had attacked the different countries and empires. Who is this menacing author almost spitting fire? Who has insulted him? Who is he so angry with and why? Somebody must have told him the truth and struck a sensitive nerve.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time, he made it clear that he had had no personal conflict with Cherrier whatsoever, whom he mentioned politely but whom, in fact, he did not consider a serious historiographer. Vass rather tried to regard the plagiarism case as an opportunity to conduct a professional debate.

However, he reported that he had been notified of Cherrier’s act earlier, namely that “to put it in the mildest way, the author has almost completely processed my work entitled *Introductio*, and has stolen it by copying it”. He said that it was not such an important case, but he could not ignore criticism of Cherrier’s *Authorial Defamation* against him.

---

<sup>39</sup> [N.N. 1841] This critique was focused not only on the question of plagiarism, but also on Cherrier’s inaccuracy in relation to the rationalist theology of a German clergyman, Georg Hermes (1775–1831). The “hermesianism” was denounced by Pope Gregory XVI in 1835, but Cherrier simply did not understand the essence of the theological approach because of his copy technique.

<sup>40</sup> Vass 1842.

<sup>41</sup> Vass 1842, p. 1.

He rejected Cherrier's charges with collegial politeness but firmly, he wiped the "dirt flung at his work", and sometimes he used the device of sarcasm, too. Regarding Cherrier's use of words, he, for example, sarcastically remarked that he should not have returned from his trip abroad with such a style and "even the title of" the response pamphlet "shows what kind of soul is behind it", that is, he pounced on the fact that Cherrier had spoken about "slander" in relation to the criticisms. Cherrier had utterly different ideas about academic discourse, or at least, this was the conclusion he drew from the sarcastic, supercilious manner in which he had responded to the charges against him:

Don't be polite, Your Eminence and Wise Professor! If you can find errors in my works, expose them. Authors need not be felt sorry for. Albeit gently, but attention should be called to all their errors. If you do not like this, you should not write. There are so many bad writers anyway. The academic world always benefits from good criticisms and reviews.<sup>42</sup>

He found fault with Cherrier's double standards, sarcastically exposing his technique of defense, that is, that he had strayed off the subject and digressed:

How much he spoke and how little he said! He used many words for something for which one or two would have been enough. He follows the ancient gods who hid in clouds from their enemies so as to become invisible.<sup>43</sup>

He also made jokes about Cherrier having worked 14 hours a day because, he said, he had been so tired that he fell asleep and that was why he had written so many unfounded silly things. Then he seriously declared that in contrast to Cherrier, he had precisely followed the rules of citation and referencing.

Vass wrote that he would have been happy if Cherrier had found at least one serious error in his work, "because it is not a very great honor for a warrior if he returns from the fight unwounded, which indicates

---

<sup>42</sup> Vass [1842](#), p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Vass [1842](#), p. 6.

that he had a weak enemy.”<sup>44</sup> He always received criticisms with pleasure as remarks promoting the progress of science. Vass also penned a two-column summary from which it could be seen well that Cherrier had really rewritten his text. What is more, he also showed that Cherrier had stolen the bibliography from him, too, so he had not read the original publications of sources.

Overall, he had a devastating opinion about Cherrier’s practice but warned against attaching great importance to the plagiarizer:

This is an easy way to be an author. It is not necessary to devote 14 hours a day to work. Such scribbling is just a pastime. Hence, anybody can publish any scholarly work without any difficulty even if he has never learned it, it is enough if he knows the language in which it was written, and may churn out volume after volume.<sup>45</sup>

He contrasted arduous research and creative work, humbly serving the cause of science, with such “theft” with vivid colors but rather shrugged off the case with superiority instead of making a moral judgement. He did not regard Cherrier as a serious perpetrator, but rather as a ridiculous thief.

## 8. “Prosecutor’s closing argument” and the missing contemporary “judgement”

After the publication of Vass’s and Szabó’s pamphlets, the church historiographer starting the plagiarism debate, Igánc Udvardy spoke again in a paper (“*Answer to Miklós Cherrier?*”), briefly summarizing and repeating his arguments included in his former work entitled *Defense Writing*.<sup>46</sup> “Where speaking is in the interest of honesty, you behave cowardly if you remain silent,” he accounted for his new contribution, adding that as Cherrier had not admitted plagiarism but had responded with a rude counterattack and defamation, he thought it made no sense to continue the debate. Udvardy dwelt at length on the issue of publicity and called it a moral duty for everyone who had become aware of such

---

<sup>44</sup> Vass [1842](#), p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> Vass [1842](#), p. 28.

<sup>46</sup> Udvardy [1842](#).

a theft to speak about it. He also obeyed the moral command derived from his religious faith when he made the plagiarism case public.<sup>47</sup>

He passed a moral judgment about Cherrier: he not only found fault in his behavior because he had stolen others' scientific results achieved with arduous work and chosen the easier way, but also because his interlocutor belonged to those "who have a one-sided approach to the heavenly commandment of love, only mentioning it if they can benefit from obeying it".<sup>48</sup>

Udvardy decided to discontinue the debate with Cherrier, "who violates the rules of sincerity and conscientiousness necessary for scholarly debates, misleads readers with lies and strives in a mean way to find excuses for himself and gain cheap popularity." He proved the plagiarism with further quotations and declared that similar practices of former authors (other "coward thieves") were no excuse for Cherrier. Although he himself was also a clergyman, Udvardy made a mention of his church having stayed silent, the cause of which could only have been "either ignorance or laziness".<sup>49</sup>

At the time, only one element of the public "trial" concerning plagiarism was missing: passing some kind of "judgement". Although guilt was clear on the basis of the statements of both the "victim" and the "witnesses", Cherrier did not admit his sin, and no committee consisting of theologians was set up to investigate the case of plagiarism, either. (This was what Udvardy had asked the church to do.) Two circumstances may have played a decisive role in this. On the one hand, Cherrier had high-ranking church patrons for whom the publicity of the case was embarrassing, anyway. On the other hand, László Vass, one of the major persons involved, died in March 1842 so he could not get satisfaction for the appropriation of his work.

## 9. Conclusion and an attempt for a subsequent "judgement"

Johannes Alzog stated in his church history of 1843 that the exposition of the church history from the age of Reformation is the least acceptable

---

<sup>47</sup> Udvardy [1842](#), p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Udvardy [1842](#), p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Udvardy [1842](#), p. 4.

in Cherrier’s work. He added that Cherrier’s book “mainly follows Rutenstock and Klein” and “conspicuously resembles the way certain facts are specified and certain chapters elaborated”.<sup>50</sup> Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Cherrier’s work was mentioned as one of the less important volumes in church historiography and it was put into the same line as Klein’s and Rutenstock’s monographies.<sup>51</sup> One of the newer analyses on the 19<sup>th</sup> century church historiography states only similarities and “connections” between Cherrier and the former authors (Klein and Rutenstock).<sup>52</sup> Undoubtedly, this is another approach to answer the question: was Cherrier’s case a plagiarism or did the critiques only exaggerate the importance of same parallels between different texts because of their envy or ethical perceptions, and that is why they used a very emotional tone? In conclusion of evidence, it was much more than similarity, as it was described in detail by Cherrier’s Hungarian Catholic Church historian colleagues, Udvardy, Szabó and Vass.

On the basis of the above-mentioned “court model”, how can we judge the case of Cherrier’s plagiarism, and how can we place it among similar cases in the history of science? It is right that “plagiarism is a slippery subject because, while almost everyone agrees what it is, few agree where it is to be found”, plagiarism is “a pragmatic category”, “a matter of opinion, and, as such, it usually be found to exist – or not to exist – where the most influential opinions claim it to be, or not.”<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless it can be said that the history of science has explored the interpretation and emergence of the modern concept of plagiarism from many aspects.<sup>54</sup> The legal and ethical definition was created in the

---

<sup>50</sup> Alzog [1843](#), p. 33. The references of Rutenstock and Klein are left over in the Hungarian edition of Alzog’s work – as a matter of curiosity: Nagy [1857](#), p. 38.

<sup>51</sup> Kurtz [1853](#), p. 33.; Hergenröther 1876, p. 29–30. Their books were defined as compendia, which “were bare summaries of facts; others, like [...] Alzog are lengthy narratives, critical and thorough.” Kirsch [1910](#), p. 378.

<sup>52</sup> Steinhauß 1999, p. 78., 80. Steinhauß analyzed Cherrier’s methodology in details, with special regard to the church history as a theological discipline and to the interests of Roman Catholic church. In this sense, it is right, that Cherrier’s book was a “representative work of the traditional church history”. Steinhauß 1999, pp. 7, 78–88.

<sup>53</sup> Randall [2001](#), p. VII.

<sup>54</sup> From the general definitions and approaches on plagiarism: Anderson 1998; Maruca [2003](#). The used “classic” works in scientific plagiarism with ethical and practical issues in general: Mallon 1989; LaFollette 1992; Stearns [1999](#); Kewes 2002.

18<sup>th</sup> century, and it forms the base of today's modern interpretation, too. (For example, according to Samuel Johnson's Dictionary of 1755, plagiarism is "a thief in literature; one who steals the thoughts or writings of another."<sup>55</sup>) This concerns not only the "cut and paste" technique, but the appropriation of the sense, the message and the train of thought in the text, too.

The problem of copyright was formulated in Hungary in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the same way as in the West European countries. There was a scandal in Hungary, the so-called 'Iliad case' in the mid-1820s between two poets about the Hungarian translation of Homer's epic, one clearly accusing the other of plagiarism.<sup>56</sup> It was quite a well-known case, but remained on the level of private correspondence for literary scholars. The Cherrier case was a debate on scientific plagiarism with printed publicity. In Hungary, in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century there were no copyright laws to protect the authors not only against plagiarists but against publishers, too, "stopping the dead-of-night authorial theft of a passage here and a paragraph there."<sup>57</sup> At the turn of 1830s and 1840s the first bills were drafted. Publishing houses were concerned with unauthorized reprints, and intellectuals – with copyright attached to literary and scientific texts in the press.<sup>58</sup> In his paper written in 1840, Ferenc Toldy, mentioned above, stated that authors should get protection in relation to their works concerning their historical, moral and commercial aspects.<sup>59</sup> Cherrier had clearly violated these in the cases of Vass's and others' works at the same time.

Cherrier's case brought up the relation between historical science and plagiarism, and in this respect, the following conclusions can be made.

1. We are *not* concerned with *post-plagiarism*, which means that the plagiarizing authors were exposed short after the publication of their books, during their lifetime, and in connection with the plagiarism,

2. The case of the "theft" *became public*. Thanks to the press, the debate did not remain confined in the narrow circle of private correspondence of intellectuals.

---

<sup>55</sup> See e.g.: Introna [2014](#), pp. 43–5; Lynch [2002](#).

<sup>56</sup> Dienes, Ugrai [2013](#), p. 116.

<sup>57</sup> Mallon 1989, p. 24.

<sup>58</sup> See in details: Mezei [2019](#).

<sup>59</sup> Toldy 1840.

3. It is important that both in the case of contemporary and modern historical science we are concerned with a *different type* of plagiarism than, for example, in literature. Literary plagiarism commonly means an appropriation of specific texts or parts of texts, or probably ideas forming the base of literary works. On the other hand, the essence of scientific work is constituted by independent research, on the basis of which the author creates his/her own synthesis, and even a partial appropriation of it or the absence of references can be regarded as a primary case of plagiarism.

Cherrier did not proceed this way but the following mitigating and aggravating circumstances can be considered to pass the “judgement”.

4. Cherrier did not copy the texts of others verbatim but *reformulated* them with his own words. He did not regard his practice as an ethical offence in science but as a legitimate historiographic practice. He wanted to indicate himself as a type of “unwitting plagiarists”, who “have at first claimed that they were overly influenced by what they read; they played it all back verbatim, as if they had unconsciously recorded the words in their heads.”<sup>60</sup>

5. *The changed role of historiography* can be discovered underlying his behavior. Cherrier considered the model of medieval historiography valid in his own age as well. He took no notice of the fact that in the 1830s the methodological processes and publications of sources considered to be modern by contemporary standards were available for historiography in Hungary, too (similarly to other European countries). At the time of popularization of print and through print, the interpretation of academic publications, having changed in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a simple inclusion of a former historical text in some kind of an upgraded version was no longer as acceptable as in the case of handwritten medieval chronicles.<sup>61</sup> In the Middle Ages, the person of the historiographer was hardly or not at all important in view of demand for recording some kind of historical past. Similarly, for Cherrier, the important thing was to present the history of the church

---

<sup>60</sup> LaFollette 1992, p. 50.

<sup>61</sup> Just an example: In the 13<sup>th</sup> century it was an available technique for historians: “Roger’s ‘successor’ and fellow monk, Matthew Paris simply used the whole of Roger’s work as the first part of his own Greater Chronicle”. Breisach 1983, p. 145. See more: Richardson 2002.

again in as great detail as possible, and not to enrich science with his own research results. This was why he could not understand the severe criticisms formulated in connection with his work. He did not regard the “stolen goods” somebody else’s property but something having no owner that could be taken by anybody else. For modernizing historiography, former publications were no longer considered to be primary sources that could be freely copied but secondary sources that could be used. Cherrier simply did not perceive the essence of the change in his attitude concerning the citations between quotation marks and the indication of the sources in notes. Cherrier undoubtedly felt his “soul of thought” similar to the former authors, and that is why he did not compare the differences in using other works.<sup>62</sup> The professionalization appeared in the field of church historiography in the 18<sup>th</sup> century especially in Johann Lorenz von Mosheim’s (1694–1755) work (*Institutes*). “Mosheim not only went to the original documents for information, but he was very careful to cite his sources in order to aid his readers in evaluating his work.”<sup>63</sup> This attitude was very far from Cherrier, although his Hungarian contemporaries had already got used to it successfully.

6. It can be considered as a mitigating circumstance that Cherrier was not even aware of the *historiographic methods* of his own age. It is indicated by the fact that essentially, he was not involved in any independent research, he never wrote any important case studies, only thick monographs. He simply could not cope with “narrower” topics than the universal or minimum Hungarian history of Christianity.<sup>64</sup> He was probably a late anachronistic follower of the medieval chroniclers’ tradition, their works were always “universal chronicle, spanning all of time and all people [...] had access to sufficient knowledge about the past of the entire realm of Latin Christendom, not to speak of the areas and peoples beyond it.”<sup>65</sup> Cherrier thought that the task of historiography was to show the positive past role of the Catholic

---

<sup>62</sup> See for these terms: Mazzeo [2007](#), p. 103.

<sup>63</sup> Bradley, Muller 1995, p. 14; Breisach 1983, p. 180.

<sup>64</sup> See. e.g. his main monograph: Cherrier [1856](#).

<sup>65</sup> Breisach 1983, p. 128. The medieval Europe appeared maybe a “plagiarist’s paradise” because “plagiarism was such a common phenomenon in medieval Europe that more than one scholarly article appeared on the topic. It’s worth noting, however, that lax attitudes toward plagiarism were not a universal part of the ancient and medieval world.” Kennedy [2019](#).

church and thus to justify its truthfulness in the present. This was much more important for him, to the extent that he treated the reformulation and republication of former works as “the means that the end justifies”. (This is confirmed by the fact that he later published his criticized work in a revised version in Hungarian translation as well.<sup>66</sup>) The historian Peter Harrison ironically observes in reaction to the “defenders of Christian revelation” that “plagiarism, in the Enlightenment and the preceding century, was virtually an axiom of historical research”.<sup>67</sup> That was right for Cherrier:

History, in other words, has always been recognized as having some importance for the identification of truth, but only in recent times has history been recognized as having an importance in itself as the embodiment of a kind of truth.<sup>68</sup>

7. However, it should be taken into account as an aggravating circumstance that he *did not admit* his offence, and his belief in his innocence carried him away so much that he took offence and responded in a passionate, personal tone. What is more, he counterattacked and regarded as slander the way Udvardy (and others) had criticized him as being a graver offender. At most, it can be regarded as a kind of repentance on his part that in his later works he was a bit more careful with references and attached lengthier bibliographies to his volumes. We cannot speak about an “apology” from his side, but “condemnation” happened.<sup>69</sup>

8. The specific moral dimension of the debate was provided by the fact that the plagiarizer and his strictest critics were all *Catholic priests*. This can also be interpreted in the way that the demand for modern historiography and the critical approach were ever more clearly articulated among ecclesiastical intellectuals as well. However, moral issues were raised with greater and greater weight in the debate, especially the “thou shalt not steal” from the Ten Commandments.

---

<sup>66</sup> Cherrier [1853–1854](#); Cherrier 1844.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted by Eigen [2009](#), p. 377. (Same: Eigen [2018](#), p. 127.)

<sup>68</sup> Bradley, Muller 1995, p. 56.

<sup>69</sup> These categories: Randall [2001](#), p. 3.

9. To pass a judgement we can use the examples from *precedents* / *leading cases*". Several case studies are known about historians accused of plagiarism, for example from the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>70</sup> but also from the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>71</sup> Cherrier's case in Hungary can be aligned with their line of argumentation. If we compare it with the so-called Robertson's case, we can establish that the case was not concerned with independent research but with translation, however in both cases the issue was raised in the press, and Cherrier was not "lucky" with regard to the uncertainty concerning the authorship of the translation.<sup>72</sup> But the context is remarkably similar:

Scholars have, however, recently focused on the eighteenth century, especially in Britain, where plagiariers' practices intersected with early forms of copyright legislation, the expansion of the reading public and the growing success of literary magazines that offered new arenas for, as well as fed off, plagiarism scandals. Plagiarism episodes have thus been carefully historicized and put in relation to contemporary developments in the definition of the modern author, be it literary genius or critic.<sup>73</sup>

Cherrier's method concerning early and medieval church history may have had a similar underlying dilemma as in Robertson's case, namely how a "modern" (18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century) historian could write the history of the ancient past when only a large and widespread narrative was available to him.<sup>74</sup>

The Cherrier's case in Hungary in the 1840s was similar to the phenomena of British "Romantic" plagiarism, described by Tilar J. Mazzeo:

Early nineteenth-century British writers and readers talked about plagiarism. They debated particular instances and its aesthetic implications in both private correspondence and public print media. The critical tradition, however, has analyzed the topic without considering how the historical

---

<sup>70</sup> See the e.g. the "Sokolow affair": Mallon 1989; and case studies: Wiener 2005.

<sup>71</sup> Ceserani 2005; Eigen 2009.

<sup>72</sup> Ceserani 2005, p. 419.

<sup>73</sup> Ceserani 2005, pp. 422–433.

<sup>74</sup> Ceserani 2005, p. 426.

deployment of the term has evolved. One of the specific ways in which the picture of British Romanticism remains incomplete is in respect to the question of plagiarism – a question that shaped not only how these writers responded to each other but also how the critical tradition of scholarship, from the nineteenth century until the present, has constructed its literary past.<sup>75</sup>

It is not easy to decide the theoretical question “that plagiarists should be brought to justice” or “the pursuit of plagiarists is a ‘no-win situation’”.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, taking the above into account, it can be stated that Miklós Cherrier can be regarded guilty of the “offence” of plagiarism in both the 19<sup>th</sup> century and current sense of the word. He was the *forerunner* of modern plagiarizers because he did not want to cause damage to any publisher or make financial benefits this way but presented the intellectual product of other historiographers as his own academic achievement, even though he himself was not aware of the real weight of his deed. It can also be considered a modern phenomenon that there was a public debate about plagiarism triggered by the criticism of his contemporaries. Randall marks: “two fundamental claims would be: first, the plagiarism in the eye of beholder, and, second, the plagiarism in power”.<sup>77</sup> We can recognize in Cherrier’s case that the contemporary commentaries did not bear false or prejudiced testimonies, and it is possible to base the judgement on their standpoints.

## Bibliography

### ARCHIVE SOURCES

National Széchényi Library of Hungary (Budapest). Manuscripts. *Institutiones historiae ecclesiasticae a Nicolao Cherrier. Tirnaviae, 1836–1837*. Oct. Lat. 490.

### PRINTED SOURCES

Alzog, Johannes 1843: *Universalgeschichte der Christlichen Kirche. Lehrbuch für akademische Vorlesungen*. Mainz: Florian Kupferberg.

---

<sup>75</sup> Mazzeo [2007](#), pp. XII–XIII.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Mallon’s and Dennis Baron’s opinions were analyzed and quoted by Howard 1999, p. 88.

<sup>77</sup> Randall [2001](#), p. VII.

- Cherrier, Nicol.[aus] Joan.[nes] 1836–1837: *Enchiridion juris ecclesiastici cum singulari ad alienas confessiones attentione, Tom. I–II*. Pestini–Budae: Trattner.
- Cherrier, Nicol.[aus] Joan.[nes] 1840–1841: *Institutiones historiae ecclesiasticae N.[ovi] F.[oederis], Tom. I–IV*. Pestini: Hartleben.
- Cherrier, Miklós 1841: *Írói rágalmazás, az az czáfólása az [...] „Írói orzásnak”*. Nagyszombat: Spanraft. [‘Authorial Defamation or Refutation of the ‘Authorial Theft’]
- Cherrier, Miklós 1844: *Köz egyház történet*. Pozsonyban: Belnay. [‘Universal Church History’]
- Cherrier, Nicolaus J.[oannes] 1853–1854: *Epitome Historiae Ecclesiasticae N.F. Tom. I–II*. Viennae: Wallishausner.
- Cherrier, Miklós 1856: *A magyar egyház története*. Pest: Heckenast. [‘Church History of Hungary’]
- Hergenröther, Joseph 1876: *Handbuch der allgemeinen Kirchengeschichte*. Bd. I. Freiburg: Herder.
- Klein, Antonius 1828: *Historia Ecclesiae Christianae, a Nativitate Salvatoris, usque ad obitum Pii VII pontificis maximi. Tom. 1–2*. Graz: Christophori Penz.
- Kurtz, Johann Heinrich 1853: *Handbuch der allgemeinen Kirchengeschichte*. Bd. I. Mitau: Aug. Neumann’s Verlag.
- [N.N. 1841] Dr. Cherrier über den Hermesianismus. *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und katholische Theologie* 2(3), p. 248. Available online: <https://books.google.pl/books?id=wEEEEAAAQAAJ&pg=RA1-PA248>.
- [N.N. 1842] Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche [...]. *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und katholische Theologie* 3(2), pp. 395–396. Available online: <https://books.google.pl/books?id=8EEEEAAAQAAJ&pg=RA2-PA395>.
- Nagy, Zsigmond 1857: *Egyházi történelem Dr. Alzog után*. Egerben: Érseki Lyceum. [‘Church History according to Dr. Alzog’].
- Ruttenstock, Jacob 1832–1834: *Institutiones historiae ecclesiasticae N.[ovi] T.[estamenti] Tom. I–III*. Viennae: Wallishausner.
- Szabó, A. János 1841: *Írói orzásnak szemtelen tagadása az az czáfólata az írói rágalmazásnak*. S.l.: s.n. [Pest: ?.] [‘Shameless Denial of an Authorial Theft or Refutation of the Authorial Defamation’].
- Toldy, Ferenc 1840: Az írói tulajdonról. *Budapesti Szemle* 1(1), pp. 157–237. [‘On the Authorial Property’].
- Toldy, Ferenc 1842: Nem lehet hallgatással mellőznünk [...] *Athenaeum*, 3 April 1842, p. 640. [‘It is impossible to ignore with silence...’]

Udvardy, Ignác 1841a: Írói orzás, *Athenaeum*, 27 July 1841, pp. 188–191. [‘Authorial Theft’].

Udvardy, Ignác 1841b: *Véd-irat [...] az „Írói orzás” czímű czikkem mellett*. S.l.: s.n. [Veszprém: Tóth.] [‘Defense Writing ... to my Article entitled ‘Authorial Theft’].

Udvardy, Ignác 1842: *Válasz Cherrier Miklósnak Udvardy Ignácztól*. Pest: Beimel. [‘Answer to Miklós Cherrier from Ignác Udvardy’].

Vass, Ladislaus 1828: *Institutiones historiae ecclesiasticae novi foederis. Tom. I. Introductio*. Pesthini: Trattner.

Vass, László 1842: *Néhány szó ezen Iratra: „Írói rágalmaszás az az czáfólása [...] „Írói orzásnak”* [‘A Few Words on a Pamphlet entitled ‘Authorial Defamation or Refutation of the ... ‘Authorial Theft’] Pesth: s.n.

## STUDIES

Anderson, Judy 1998: *Plagiarism, Copyright Violation, and Other Thefts of Intellectual Property: An Annotated Bibliography with a Lengthy Introduction*. Jefferson NC/London: MacFarland & Company. ISBN 978-0786404636.

Bischofslexikon 2020: *Die Bischöfe der Donaumonarchie 1804 bis 1918. Ein amtsbiographisches Lexikon. Bd. I. Hrsg. von Rupert Klieber*. Berlin: Verlag Duncker & Humblot. ISBN 978-3-428-15648-1.

Bradley, James E.; Muller, Richard A. 1995: *Church History. An Introduction to Research, Reference Works and Methods*. Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House. ISBN 978-0802874054.

Breisach, Ernst 1983: *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press. ISBN 978-0226072746.

Ceserani, Giovanna 2005: Narrative, Interpretation, and Plagiarism in Mr. Robertson’s 1778 History of Ancient Greece. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3(66), pp. 413–436. DOI: 10.1353/jhi.2005.0043.

Deák, István 1992: Historiography of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Hungary. *The American Historical Review* 4(97), pp. 1041–63. DOI: 10.1086/ahr/97.4.1041. Available online (01.06.2020): <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/97.4.1041>.

Dienes, Dénes; Ugrai, János 2013: *History of the Reformed College of Sárospatak*. Sárospatak: Hernád. ISBN 978-963-89817-4-5.

Eigen, Edward A. 2009: The Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected: John Wood, the Elder (1704–1754) on the Translation of Architecture and Empire. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3(70), pp. 375–397. DOI: 10.1353/jhi.0.0047.

- Eigen, Edward A. 2018: *On Accident. Episodes in Architecture and Landscape*. Edited by Chelsea Spencer. Cambridge MA/London: The MIT Press. ISBN 978-0262534840, pp. 124–153.
- Fazekas, Csaba 2006: The Lessons from the Past: The Church–State Relations and the Beginnings of Political Catholicism in Hungary from 1790 to 1848. *Central European Political Sciences Review* 6(19), pp. 99–115.
- Gunst, Péter 2000: *A magyar történetírás története*. Debrecen: Csokonai. ISBN 963-260-152-1. [‘A History of Historiography in Hungary’].
- Hoffer, Peter Charles 2004: Reflections on Plagiarism – Part 2: ‘The Object of Trials.’ *Perspectives* 3(42), pp. 21–25. Available online (01.06.2020): <http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/Issues/2004/0403/0403vie1.cfm>.
- Howard, Rebecca Moore 1999: The New Abolitionism Comes to Plagiarism. [In:] *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*. Edited by Lise Buranen and Alice M. Roy. New York: SUNY Press. ISBN 978-0791440803, pp. 87–97.
- Introna, Lucas D. 2014: Towards a Post-human Intra-actional Account of Socio-material Agency (and Morality). [In:] *The Moral Status of Technical Artefacts*. Edited by Peter Kroes and Peter-Paul Verbeek. Dordrecht/Heidelberg/New York/London: Springer. DOI: 10.1007/978-94-007-7914-3\_3 ISBN 978-94-007-7913-6, pp. 31–54.
- Kennedy, Amelia 2019: A Short History of Academic Plagiarism. Available online (01.06.2020): <https://www.quetext.com/blog/short-history-academic-plagiarism>.
- Kewes, Paulina 2002: Historizing Plagiarism. [In:] *Plagiarism in Early Modern England*. Edited by Paulina Kewes. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-0333998410, pp. 1–18.
- Kirsch, Johann Peter 1910: History, Ecclesiastical. [In:] *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. VII. New York: The Encyclopedia Press, pp. 365–380.
- LaFollette, Marcel C. 1992: *Stealing into Print: Fraud, Plagiarism, and Misconduct in Scientific Publishing*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press. ISBN 978-0520205130.
- Lynch, Jack 2002: The Perfectly Acceptable Practice of Literary Theft: Plagiarism, Copyright, and the Eighteenth Century. *Colonial Williamsburg Journal* 4(24), pp. 51–54.
- Mallon, Thomas 1989: *Stolen Words: Forays into the Origins and Ravages of Plagiarism*. New York: Ticknor & Fields. ISBN 978-0156011365.
- Maruca, Lisa 2003: Plagiarism and its (Disciplinary) Discontents. Towards an Interdisciplinary Theory and Pedagogy. *Issues in Integrative Studies* 21,

pp. 74–97. Available online (01.06.2020): <https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=englishfrp>.

Mazzeo, Tilar J. 2007: *Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Romantic Period*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. ISBN 978-0812239676.

Mezei, Péter 2019: A Development of Hungarian Copyright Law Until the Creation of the First Copyright Act (1793–1884). [In:] *Cambridge Handbook on Intellectual Property in Central and Eastern Europe*. Edited by Mira Sundara Rajan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/9781316661253.003 ISBN 978-1107156364, pp. 37–50.

Randall, Marilyn 2001.: *Pragmatic Plagiarism: Authorship, Profit, and Power*. Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press. DOI: 10.3138/9781442678736. ISBN 978-1-4426-7873-6.

Richardson, Lisa 2002: Plagiarism and Imitation in Renaissance Historiography. [In:] *Plagiarism in Early Modern England*. Edited by Paulina Kewes. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-0333998410, pp. 106–118.

Šoltés, Peter 2015: Confessionally Mixed Marriages. Legal Norms and Social Practice in the Kingdom of Hungary up to 1848. *Historický časopis* 5(63), pp. 813–45. Available online (01.06.2020): <https://www.cceol.com/search/article-detail?id=682898>.

Stearns, Laurie 1999: Copy Wrong: Plagiarism, Process, Property, and the Law. [In:] *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*. Edited by Lise Buranen and Alice M. Roy. New York: SUNY Press. ISBN 978-0791440803, pp. 5–20.

Steinhaus, Bernhard 1999: *Die Wahrheit der Geschichte: zum Status katholischer Kirchengeschichtsschreibung am Vorabend des Modernismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. (Bamberger Theologische Studien, 8.) ISBN 978-3631338964.

Tóth, Orsolya 2000: A Conversations-Lexikon-i pör és az írásos hagyomány. [In:] *A magyar irodalmi kánon a XIX. században*. Edited by József Takáts. Budapest: Argumentum. ISBN 963-9136-56-5. [‘The Conversations Lexicon Trial and the Written Tradition’], pp. 89–100.

Wiener, Jon 2005: *Historians in Trouble: Plagiarism, Fraud, and Politics in the Ivory Tower*. New York/London: The New Press. ISBN 978-1565848849.