

SUMMARY

Dezső Bonczidai (Szilágyballa, [Borla] 1902 – Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca], 1946) served as the Calvinist minister of Kide (Chidea, Romania) from 1928 to 1946. Between 1932 and 1935, he regularly penned an eight-page handwritten congregational newspaper titled “Pastoral Letter” for his Calvinist community. The primary aim of these was to promote an active, vibrant Christian life as envisioned by the Protestant Home Mission and to encourage its practical application, while also fostering a missionary spirit and advocating for ‘true’ Christian conversion and righteous living. Neighboring families received copies of the letters, which were then circulated to appropriate recipients according to a formula provided at the end of each letter “When you have read my letter, pass it on...”

The main objective of this sourcebook is to compile and publish Bonczidai’s collected Pastoral Letters. It also includes significant documents from his written legacy, such as his short autobiography, official and personal correspondence, presbytery minutes, and extracts from interviews with individuals from Kide conducted by the editor in 2009–2010.

In the introduction, Emese Ilyefalvi analyzes the minister’s motivations, the practical realization of these motivations, and the contexts and expectations that gave rise to this hybrid genre—a newspaper written in the form of a letter. Additionally, the introduction explores the reception of this new mode of communication by the villagers, which contributed to the rural writing and reading culture of Transylvania. To comprehend this alternative medium, the book examines the phenomenon in three contexts: firstly, the distribution of religious publications among evangelical movements in Transylvania between the two World Wars; secondly, the state and role of the Hungarian press in Romania following the Trianon Peace Treaty; and finally, the complex relationships among various evangelical groups and the Home Mission.