

## Habilitation thesis summary

### INTRODUCTION

The habilitation thesis has two parts. The first part describes the candidate's teaching and research activity through her publications, lectures and responsibilities at the Faculty of Reformed Theology at the Babeş–Bolyai University. The second part is a study in which the candidate approaches the concept of time interdisciplinarily, which is a research method applied consequently in the candidate's many works.

The teacher who lectures theology seeks methods to transmit the divine message, to bring it closer to the students or the audience of her lectures, to offer an adequate interpretation of the abstract concepts. Theological problems cannot be approached in a hermetic environment, they should be researched contextually and beyond the limits of disciplines. Theology can have considerable social impact only if theologians step out of their ivory tower, and are ready for a dialog with other disciplines, with the common people, if they try to elaborate a public theology accessible for every individual and community.

### CHAPTER I: PRESENTATION OF THE TEACHING AND RESEARCH ACTIVITY

#### I. 1. Publications: In dialogue with different branches of science and theological disciplines.

The first short publications of the author appeared during her student years. Her studies based on scientific research were published as her didactic career began. The candidate has consequently sought open topics for dialogue both with other humanities and natural sciences and with different theological disciplines other than her own field of study.

#### *Theology and philosophy*

##### *Doctoral thesis*

The candidate's doctoral thesis, *Sören Kierkegaard teológiájának súlypontjai*, (*The Focal Points of Sören Kierkegaard's Theology*), which was defended in 2009 at the Reformed Theological University of Debrecen, is presented at the beginning of the habilitation thesis.

##### *Research of Kierkegaard's reception*

The international research on Kierkegaard's work has led to the publication of a series of volumes about the international reception of his work. I contributed to this project with 3 studies. [1]

#### *About dialogue through the prism of Philosophy*

The study seeks to answer the question: what are the preconditions of a dialogue (Habermas, Kreiner), and what kind of risks and advantages does it bring (Gadamer, K. Popper). [2]

#### *Theology and religious studies*

##### *Religions, mythologies, tendencies in the Philosophy of religion*

The candidate teaches *History and Philosophy of Religions* since 2000 and in 2012 her course was also published in a printed book format. [3] The first chapter answers the question: why is it important to be familiarized with religious diversity, and describes the correct behaviour towards other religions. The definition of the introductory notions is followed by the presentation of several ancient religions. An important chapter is devoted to the ancient religions known from the Bible, the polytheistic religion of Canaan and mystical religions. The broadest chapter contains the presentation of the most widespread religions of the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Islam and Judaism.

##### *About confirmation through the methods of religious science*

Confirmation is an important event in the life of the reformed individual, because it confirms the reality of baptism. In addition to the theological significance of the sacral event, the research based on the pattern given by Gennep concerning the rites of passage is also very interesting. [4]

##### *The temptation of Abraham*

Genesis 22 belongs to the well-known biblical events and yet there are less known/important details. The biblical text firstly demonstrates that the Patriarch was the hero of faith. [5]

##### *Criticism of the cult at the minor prophets*

Cults always present small or even large deflections from the theoretical definitions. The message of the prophets can be classified into three broad categories: criticism on the rites, on

pagan priests and on idols. This classification and the detailed description is to be found in the e-book published by the author. [6]

### *Aspects of Practical Theology (Pastoral Psychology and Pedagogy)*

At the Faculty of Reformed Theology of the BBU, the formation of religion teachers is a major goal, so all university teachers are involved in the development of teaching methods and enrichment of the curriculum through advanced knowledge in Psychopedagogy. Several publications have been prepared with the topics mentioned.

#### *About anxiety[7]*

In this study, the topic is approached from a philosophical perspective, based on the philosophy of P. Tillich and S.A. Kierkegaard and from the perspective of Psychopedagogy. As an example for the relief of anxiety a Biblical text has been processed.

### *Theology and literature*

#### *The poetry of Ady Endre*

The dialogue between Theology and literature is an interesting research topic. Endre Ady is one of the most well-known Hungarian poets. His poems dedicated to the topic of faith are beautiful parables about the human seeking a meeting with God and give eloquent examples for worship. [8]

### *Theology and natural sciences*

#### *The interplay of Theology and natural sciences*

The dialogue between Theology and literature is an interesting research topic. Endre Ady is one of the most well-known Hungarian poets. His poems dedicated to the topic of faith are beautiful parables about the human seeking a meeting with God and give eloquent examples for worship.

In the last decades, in Western theology polemical texts against natural sciences are no longer to be found, creationism is no longer presented as an antithesis of evolution as it has been clarified that science seeks to answer the question “how was the world created?” while

Theology seeks to answer another question: “who is the creator of the world?” The study investigates the reciprocal influences between Theology and natural sciences, and presents interesting parables discovered by American authors. [9]

#### *Social impact through publications*

Theology has a social impact through short publications spread through various church magazines and newspapers. This chapter presents the candidate’s publicistic activity.

#### **I.2. Lectures at national and international conferences and events organized by scientific organizations and church-related institutes**

Scientific conferences provide an opportunity to present one’s own research and results and for exchanging experiences with experts of the profession.

At events organized by Church institutions theologians share the results of their scientific activity with laymen, thus the lectures have a didactic, guiding nature. The candidate has held nearly 100 lectures since the beginning of her career, therefor their presentation appears only selectively and in a summarized version in the thesis but the full list can be found in an annex. [10]

#### *At the events organized by the Faculty of Reformed Theology of the BBU*

From the conferences organized by the host Faculty, the 2011 international conference “*A vallásos nevelés kihívásai a XXI. század Európájában*” (*Challenges of Religious Education in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*) should be underlined.

The candidate has participated as a co-organizer and lecturer at this conference, which was, at the same time, the evaluation of the project that offered - in partnership with the institute for religion teacher training in the Netherlands, the Gereformeerde Hogeschool Zwolle - offered an exchange of experiences and continuous training for teachers.

#### *At conferences organized by the Protestant Theological Institute*

The Protestant Theological Institute has one specialization, Protestant Pastoral Theology, and it is a partner institution of the Faculty of Reformed Theology, which offers the formation of reformed religion teachers. The candidate is a graduate of the Protestant Theological Institute, this way she participated at several conferences as a teacher and as an alumna.

#### *At interdisciplinary conferences organized by the Bolyai Association*

The Bolyai Association annually organizes an interdisciplinary conference where teachers from both the humanistic sciences and the exact sciences meet. The topic of these conferences is broad, hence different approaches are possible.

#### *At the conferences of the Collegium Doctorum of the Hungarian Reformed Church*

The Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary supports a professional organization for teachers and priests who hold a Phd in Theology. This organization co-opts scientists who are recommended by colleagues in the same area of research. The candidate was received into the Systematic Theology section and has been an active member since 2009.

#### *At the conferences organised by the ESWTR (European Society of Women in Theological Research)*

This scientific organization is significant in the life of the European women who are active in theological research. The official languages are: English, German and Spanish. Large and regional conferences are held every two years.

#### *At the conferences organized by GET and other professional organizations*

In Protestant Theology *Gesellschaft für Evangelische Theologie* belongs to the most prestigious professional organizations, participation at the conferences organized by the GET is very important for every researcher.

#### *At the meetings organized by the Reformed Clergy Conference in Transylvania*

In the Reformed church constant self-development is a requirement for all priests, but the number of conferences is great, so the priests are called to various conferences (at regional and national level) on a regular basis.

#### *At events organized by the Association of Reformed Women in Transylvania*

The Women's Association is the most active reformed church-related organization with three areas of mission: the preaching of the Gospel, diacony and promoting Christian culture. The regional conferences usually have over 300-400 participants, therefore such lectures, presentations on religious topics require a great training in terms of communication as well.

#### *At the International Ethnographic Camp of the Reformed Church of Vésztő in Hungary*

The camp held annually offers a theological lecture once a week. The topic of the lecture belongs to public theology, it presents a broad-interest issue (over 200 participants are present), so the interdisciplinary approach is an appropriate method.

### **I.3. Teaching and education activities at the BBU's Faculty of Reformed Theology**

#### *Taught disciplines*

The candidate started working at the BBU's Faculty of Reformed Theology between 1996-1999 with hourly payment, and full-time since 1999. The subjects taught at undergraduate level are: Dogmatism, Ethics, Apologetics, History and Philosophy of Religions, Biblical Studies (History of Sacred Art, History of Philosophy and professional practice). At master's level: Christian Anthropology, The problems of teaching Biblical concepts and Systematic Theology.

#### *Responsible for organizing Bolyai Summer Academy*

Since 2003, the Faculty of Reformed Theology, the Reformed Church of Transilvania and the Union of Hungarian Teachers in Romania have organized the Bolyai Summer Academy for reformed religion teachers. The candidate is responsible for the program and contributes to it as a trainer too.

#### *Other activities of teaching and pedagogy*

UBB has four Faculties of Theology where beside the teaching of the disciplines an important activity of those teachers who are pastors too is coordinating the spiritual life at faculty level (religious services, biblical workshops). At the Faculty of Reformed Theology each group of students receives a tutor, a teacher who organizes various extracurricular programs and is also the vocational and pastoral adviser of the group. This activity is important for a credible example of faith which complements the knowledge acquired at the courses, hence there should not be any discrepancies between the life and preaching of theology teachers.

## **CHAPTER II: DIALOGUE ABOUT TIME**

In the second part of the dissertation, the candidate gives an example for the interdisciplinary approach of the topic for the working method, which analyzes the topic from several points of view. This study approaches the question of time from the following perspectives: Philosophy, History of Religion, Theology and science.

## II. 1. Time travel in Philosophy

For many centuries, the issue of time has been an important subject of philosophical study. This writing presents metamorphoses of the interpretation of time.

Aristotle was the first philosopher to define time and space as something uniform. He also emphasized the significance of movement. In Augustine's interpretation of time the observing subject has a main role. In Kant's philosophy time is a plain a priori contemplation. Kierkegaard approaches time from a whole new perspective, his key concept is *the Moment (øjeblik)* the paradoxical encounter of the ephemeral and the eternal. The physical time is not of interest to H. Bergson in a philosophical way. He introduces a new concept: *duration*. For Heidegger time has an importance as the essence of 'being-there', he defines time as anticipation.

## II. 2. Time in the light of the history of religion – The *homo religiosus* and Time

The historian of religion, M. Eliade points it out, that many religions determine time cyclically and believe in the eternal repetition of time. The *homo religiosus* strives for the repetition of the *illud tempus*.

## II. 3. Comparison of Greek and Hebrew approach of time – presentation of biblical conceptions about time

The Hebrew mindset considers time based on the content, while the Greek one determines it based on space. The biblical concept of time is linear, spread out from past to future and is a carrier of events.

Christian Theology adopts this linear concept of time, but this approach to time considers only those time units important, which belong to God's salvation plan.

## II. 4. The scientific research on time

The Greek approach of time has been the base of scientific thinking for centuries. Newton introduced the concept of absolute space and time. The major turning point was Einstein's theory of special and general relativity, as it demonstrated the relativity of the space-time continuum. The universe is a contingent reality both in the assessment of modern science and Theology (for example in the theology of Torrance and in the research of Maxwell, Einstein, Gödel and Turing as well). The two interpretations of eternity are remarkable. The classic

concept is that eternity is above time, the modern one considers eternity as an unlimited, endlessly extended time.



[1] PÜSÖK Sarolta: *Koncz, Sándor, Kierkegaard és a világháború utáni teológia [Kierkegaard and Post-War Theology]*, IN: Volume 18, Tome V: Kierkegaard Secondary Literature (Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian and Polish), Edited by Jon Stewart, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, Taylor & Francis/ London – New York, 2017, ISBN: 9781472477774, 63-67

PÜSÖK Sarolta: *Széles, László, Kierkegaard gondolkozásának alapvonalai [The Basic Lines of Kierkegaard's Thought]*, ibd, 99-102

PÜSÖK Sarolta: IN: *Tavaszi, Sándor, Kierkegaard személyisége és gondolkodása [Kierkegaard's Personality and Thought]*, ibd, 103-106

[2] PÜSÖK Sarolta: *A dialógus és feltételei a megbékéléshez vezető úton (Dialogul și condițiile lui în procesul de reconciliere) (Dialogue and its Conditions on the Way to Reconciliation)* – In. *Útközben (Pe drum)*, Cluj-Napoca - Ro, Ed. Egyetemi Műhely, 2016., 51-64.

[3] PÜSÖK Sarolta: *Vallások, mítoszok és vallásfilozófiai irányzatok/ Vallástörténeti jegyzetek, (Religii, Mitologii și Curente Filozofico-Religioase/Curs de Istorie și filozofie a religiei),( Religions, Myths and Religious-Philosophical Currents/Notes of history of religions)* Cluj-Napoca -Ro, Ed.Egyetemi Műhely, 2012. Pg. 226

[4] PÜSÖK Sarolta: *Szent és profán elemek keveredése a konfirmációban (Elemente sacre și profane în confirmare) (Sacred and Profane Elements in the Confirmation)* – In. *Református Szemle*, Cluj-Napoca -Ro, 2011, Nr.3., Ed.104., pp.252–261., pg.11

[5] PÜSÖK Sarolta: *Egy aranylap a Bibliából, avagy a történet, amely Kierkegaardot álmatlanná tette (Gen 22,1-14, a nagy próbatétel) (Gen 22,1-14 Încercarea lui Avraam - Opagină de aur din Biblie, sau întâmplarea care l-a făcut insomn pe Kierkegaard) (Gen 22,1-14 – Temptation of Abraham)* – In. *Az Írás vonzásában – (Teológiai tanulmányok) (Sub influența Scripturii - Studii biblice)* , Cluj-Napoca - Ro, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2017. Pg. 232, <http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/bd/ebooks/pdf/2104.pdf>, 13-63.

[6] PÜSÖK Sarolta: *Kultuskritika a kisprófétáknál, (Critica micilor profeți asupra cultului) – (Criticism of the Cult at the Minor Prophets)* In: *Az Írás vonzásában – (Teológiai tanulmányok), (Sub influența Scripturii - Studii biblice)*, 13-63.

[7] PÜSÖK Sarolta: *A szorongás és elidegenedés korunkban. A kommunikáció mint a segítségnyújtás lehetősége (Despre anxietate și îndepărtare. Comunicația ca modalitate de ajutor) (On Anxiety and becoming Estranged. Communication as a Way of Help)– Útközben (tanulmánykötet) (Pe drum),(Along the way)* Cluj-Napoca - Ro, Ed.Egyetemi Műhely, 2016. Pg. 363 pp.25–51.

[8] PÜSÖK Sarolta: *Az Istenhez hanyatló árnyék – Az Isten és ember kapcsolata Ady Endre költészetében (Închinarea umbrei în fața lui Dumnezeu - Relația dintre om și Dumnezeu în opera poetică a lui Ady Endre – Relation Between God and Man in the Poetical Works of Ady Endre)– In. Studia Univ. Babeș-Bolyai, Theologia Reformata Transylvanica, Cluj-Napoca - Ro, 2009, Nr.1., pp.29-51.*

[9] PÜSÖK Sarolta: *Interdiszciplináris kalandozás a kierkegaardi ismeretelmélet és hatástörténete világában James Loder elemzései nyomán (Epistemologia neobișnuită al lui Kierkegaard și influența sa în viziunea lui James Loder)– (Kierkegaard's Strange*

*Epistemology and his Influence in the Views of James Loder*)– In. Studia Univ. Babeş-Bolyai, Theologia Reformata Transylvanica, Cluj-Napoca -Ro, 2006, Nr.1–2., pp.80–100.

[10] Anexa este structurată astfel: I.5.1. Visiting professor/la conferințe internaționale, I. 5. 6. Comisii, activități bisericești: a.Cursuri, prelegeri în cadrul Taberei Internaționale de Etnografie a Bisericii Reformate din Vésztő-Ungaria, b. Prelegeri la diferite conferințe profesionale de prestigiu din țară; c. Curs de perfecționare pentru profesori de religie reformată (Academia de Vară Bolyai) – coordonator/expert formator (anual 2003-2016); d. Cursuri de perfecționare pentru Conferința Preoților Reformați din Transilvania; e. Cursuri, prelegeri pentru Asociația Femeilor Reformate din Transilvania (Programul de formare a laicilor); f. Cursuri, prelegeri pentru Asociația Tinerilor Creștini Reformați din Transilvania