

BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY - CLUJ-NAPOCA

FACULTY OF REFORMED THEOLOGY

Department of Reformed Theology and Musical Pedagogy

Habilitation thesis: Discipleship in Theology

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SUMMARY

My scientific research activity after obtaining my doctorate in theology (in 1999) during the last two decades has focused largely on the New Testament, the synoptic gospels, and especially on the issue of discipleship. I have received postdoctoral fellowships in Edinburgh, Scotland, Great Britain, Budapest, Hungary, Utrecht, the Netherlands, Belfast, Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, Oxford and Cambridge, Great Britain. All these scholarships helped me to research in detail with the help of appropriate bibliography the chosen topic.

In the first part of my thesis I made known the results of the original scientific research obtained so far, and in the second part I outlined the evolution of my academic, scientific and professional career, I mentioned that I am the director of the Biblical Research Center at Babeş-Bolyai University, and as such I lead a research team of theology professors.

My research started by the attraction exercised of this topic on me. After visiting several libraries in the country and abroad, I became suspicious that Hungarian New Testament researchers did not have enough time to devote due attention to the issue of discipleship, and within it the theme of vocation and mission. The lack of books on this subject in the Hungarian literature confirms this statement. At the same time, it should be noted that the Hungarian exegetes wrote countless articles and a few commentaries, which helped to find my path in regard of this topic.

I started from the realization that God initiated the reconciliation of the relationship that man ruined and therefore he elected and sent Jesus to the corrupted mankind. God tried to lead his people back to the right path by sending prophets, but these were despised, abused or killed. Still God did not want to renounce the man he created so he also sent his beloved Son.

The goal of Jesus' commission was to teach and preach that served salvation. In him the word of God incarnated and he preached the good news he received from the Father. The subject of his preaching and teaching was the coming of the kingdom of God. The call for repentance and faith resulted from the imminent reality of God's kingdom. Besides the service preaching and teaching Jesus also healed, cleansed the lepers, cast out demons and raised the dead. Jesus' whole life was service and suffering. As the end of his commission he allowed his people to kill him so he could secure them the possibility to be reconciled with the Father.

Jesus' calling and sending was chronologically followed by the vocation and election of the disciples. The call and election happened in accordance with Jesus' and the Father's sovereign will. The story of the disciples' vocation shows several resemblances with the call stories of the Old Testament prophets, especially the call of Elisha by Elijah. Jesus' disciples do not have to be on probation and live isolated as the followers of the Teacher of Righteousness in Qumran. The disciples of the Nazarene show several similarities with the Hellenistic disciples, especially with the cynics, but they cannot be confused with these.

In the lives of the Hellenistic and the rabbi disciples wisdom and the study and assimilation of the Torah played an extremely important role. Contrary to the latter Jesus' disciples received calling primarily for service. The rabbis taught and encouraged their followers to be faithful to the Torah. The Greek philosophers guided their disciples to passionately seek the truth. Jesus taught the message and love of the Father, lived it in front of his disciples in order that they may continue his mission. In those times the candidates could choose the master, but Jesus chose his disciples himself. The followers of philosophy and the disciples of the rabbis could surpass their masters, but for Jesus' disciples it was enough to be like the one that called. Some of Jesus' disciples followed John the Baptist earlier, who also had a well-defined group of disciples. The Twelve abandoned their occupation, home, relatives, in one word everything immediately after the calling. Above all these they had to give up their own lives, to share in the master's destiny.

The composition of the group of disciples shows a great variety: there were poor and rich, tax collectors and zealots. Jesus gathered the representatives of the different social and political categories and in spite of all their awkwardness and lack of understanding molded them into new persons. Their selection was done out of a larger circle of disciples. Some of Jesus' expectations were not compulsory for all of them. Jesus called his disciples so they could be with him. The disciples did not comprehend many things from Jesus' teachings, but they could be part of the privilege that meant Jesus' constant presence. They were together with Jesus and they were prepared by him, for he wanted them to preach, to heal, to drive out unclean spirits and to raise the dead. The mission –

which meant serving and teaching first of all – often went hand by hand with suffering, but that was just another opportunity for testimony to them.

The disciples' mission results straight from the fact of calling, which happened with a view to mission. The Father sent the Son, and Jesus sent the disciples to preach about God's kingdom, conversion and belief in the Gospel. The mission of the disciples reminds us the mission of the prophets in the Old Testament, who were sent by God. The disciples did not resist their mission, but later on during it they experienced the weight of internal tension and exterior suffering. Just the way God was sad because of his disobedient people; Jesus feels sorry for the crowd without a shepherd and sends his disciples to gather it. For this assignment he gives the disciples the same authority and power he got from the Father for preaching and healing. Jesus sends out the disciples two by two, as "yoke-companions," which on the one hand reminds us the witness-rule from the Old Testament, and on the other hand it provided security and protection for the disciples and for the message. After the spiritual authorization and the two by two sending out, we learn about the fact that in the totally defenceless situation, the disciples went out on their ways without the most necessary journey-equipment.

After presenting my main research theme and the obtained results I discussed the evolution of my academic, scientific and professional career. My teaching activity consists of teaching the subjects NT Biblical Theology (Gospels), NT Biblical Theology (Acts and Paul's Epistles), NT Biblical Theology (Catholic Epistles and Revelation), Biblical Theology 1 and 2 on master level, New Testament Exegesis and Symbol Review. I teach this subjects for the last 25 years.

My research activity materialized through the writing of books and studies published in publishing houses, respectively prestigious journals and volumes in the country and abroad. I mention the publication of the doctoral thesis at Presa Universitară Clujeană, the publication of my master's dissertation in English at Napoca Star publishing house, ten books, some edited and translated, chapters in 23 books, 4 studies in international databases, 5 studies in international volumes, 58 papers published in other journals, 9 studies published at national scientific events, 31 articles published in other Romanian journals. A number of my works are cited in the country and abroad. I participated in the coordination of national and international projects. I am the director of the Center for Biblical Studies at UBB. In this capacity I organized a Bible conference with international participation. I lead bachelors and masters theses, I participate in the doctoral commissions as mentor within the Ecumenical Doctoral School and I am invited in doctoral commissions abroad as an opponent. Lifelong preparation and training will continue to be a priority, given the exponential growth in the volume of studies in my areas of specialization. In this sense, I will continue to participate in trainings and specialization courses, at SNTS conferences in Europe, at the College of Doctors in

Hungary, as well as at the annual meetings of the Romanian Biblical Union. I plan the publication and re-editing of university courses and support materials. I will dedicate more attention to e-learning methods, the use of databases by students, respectively electronic and audio-visual support materials. In the first stage I will propose a course on biblical theology (New Testament) in English for master degree.

I will be collaborating with colleagues from the Károli Gáspár Reformed University, Faculty of Reformed Theology as part of the extensive international Commentary project based on the new Reformed translation of the Bible, initiated not too long ago. The main goal of this project is to develop a series of commentaries on the books of the New Testament, together with professors from Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine and Serbia.

In the next period, the training of young researchers will be one of my major priorities. In addition to paying more attention to the management of bachelors and masters theses, and of the papers at the scientific communication sessions of the students, I will focus on the collaboration with the Ecumenical Doctoral School and on the training of doctoral students.

A significant number of talented graduates opted for other careers, unrelated to their theological studies, due to the impossibility of obtaining jobs in the field they graduated. It is therefore necessary to take steps to facilitate the professional insertion of graduates.

The presence in society and the transmission of specialized knowledge to the social and ecclesiastical environment will continue in the next period.

Within the development of my academic career I formulated objectives that implies an intensive collaboration with colleagues from the Faculty of Reformed Theology, but also with colleagues and profile institutions from the country and from abroad. Thus, I will pursue a closer collaboration with my colleagues from the Center for Biblical Studies and the Center for Ecumenical Studies of UBB, from the other faculties (of theology, letters, history) of the university, with the Center for Ecumenical Research in Sibiu, and the realization of contacts and collaborations with the profile faculties from the University of Bucharest and Iași.

Last but not least, because pursue of an academic career is not a goal in itself, but must lead to community development, an intensive presence in society and in the Church is required, both through the dissemination of knowledge and through practical initiatives. In this regard, I will give lectures for priests, religion teachers and lay people. I intend to write a commentary on the Holy Gospel of Matthew to help those who want to better understand this New Testament book.

In the position of director of the Biblical Research Center within UBB, I lead a research team, with which I will continue the research on the chosen topic.