

**UNIVERSITATEA „BABEȘ-BOLYAI”
CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTATEA DE TEOLOGIE ROMANO-CATOLICĂ
ȘCOALA DOCTORALĂ „RELIGIE, CULTURĂ, SOCIETATE”**

TEZĂ DE ABILITARE

**CANDIDAT:
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DEPARTAMENTUL CLUJ**

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**Studiul Noului Testament: de la exegeză la
teologie și de la simbolica biblică
la arta creștină**

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2. Abstract

This habilitation thesis outlines the scientific results and academical activities which I had achieved during several years of work and research in theology. The focus of interest in my case is represented by the flourishing field of *Biblical Theology*, especially regarding the *New Testament*. The approach taken analyses closely the interpretation of texts from both the perspective of hermeneutics of faith and historical hermeneutics. Hence, I have been considering the evolution of my academic career between the years of 2005 and 2023, starting from the moment when I defended my PhD thesis on the matter of the *Ancient History (Christian Archaeology)* at the *Faculty of History and Philosophy* of the *Babeş-Bolyai University*.

The structure of the habilitation thesis, written according to the standards prescribed by national legislation, reflects the dominant themes of my research, displayed diachronically and grouped as it follows: *Christian Archaeology; Theology of the Pauline Epistles; Theology of the Gospels; Biblical Theology, Biblical Symbolism* and *Christian Art*. As the title of the thesis suggests, the path ‘from exegesis to theology’ was chosen as the highlight of the research because, from a methodological point of view, theological interpretation is in a continuous relationship with exegetical study, thus becoming an outlook that conveys first-hand access to the world of biblical writings. Furthermore, the link between *Biblical Symbolism* and *Christian Art* was emphasized in order to submerge into the reality of comprehending the language of the religious heritage, a language based on the reading of the Holy Scriptures.

First of all, at the doctoral level, the topic of *Christian Archaeology* - Christianity among the Daco-Romans, respectively among the Romanians in the VII - XI centuries (aspects regarding the ritual, worship and church organization) was treated, with special attention given to the former territories of the Dacian provinces (Transylvania, Banat and Oltenia). Moreover, the *Church of Late Antiquity* being also a subject of study, it was possible to delve into the sources of the first Christian Millennium. Prior to this, since the *New Testament* and the *History of Christianity* are inseparable, it has been taken into consideration that the encounter between the two registers, the theological and historical, is of highly importance for research in the field of *Biblical Theology*.

Second of all, but of great significance, is to be acknowledged that my articles and books of speciality were first written at a didactic level, within the courses taught at the *Department of the Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology of Babeş-Bolyai University* of

Cluj-Napoca. Thus, my initial aim was to publish pieces of writing that would yield bibliographic resources for the subjects of the university program (Bachelor's and Master's), intended to be adapted to the needs of students, keeping up with the progress of the domain.

Another key aspect of my research work is centered around the *Theology of the Pauline Epistles*. For that reason, I published several profile articles, emphasizing a renewal of the method, presenting Pauline ideas in the form of theological sketches or syntheses from biblical texts, bearing in mind the current state of research in the field at an international level. Later, in one of the volumes, I analysed the seven authentic or proto-Pauline epistles (1 Th, Ph, Phm, 1 Co, 2 Co, Ga, Rm), observing the role of Saint Paul in the establishment of the Church, as a missionary, thinker and theologian. I did the same for the works published on the *Theology of the Gospels* (the Synoptic tradition and the Johannine tradition). Pursuing the deepening of biblical texts in the form of commentaries, I encouraged the development of students' practical exegetical skills by teaching them to use critical editions based on an interpretive grid. I have considered that the study of the *New Testament* involves the art of reading the texts and interpreting them in their context in order to create a theology, that is, to have an overview of the fundamental claims of the various biblical authors.

In the framework of my research activity, I fortunately found myself in the position of dealing with interdisciplinary, frontier research themes, as a member of the team of some grants launched either by our faculty or by other faculties with a humanistic profile of *UBB*. Drawing on the themes of *Biblical Theology*, *Biblical Symbolism* and *Christian Art*, I strongly wished to capture those didactic and catechetical tools available in the service of evangelization by the Church: Christian images and symbols, liturgical texts and icons, frescoes, mosaics, stained glass windows and sculptures in places of worship. I relied upon the idea that *Christian Art* has its source in the Holy Scriptures and therefore art education can be a path to spirituality.

Thereby, the development of my career has been characterized by academic training and, at the same time, by the awareness of the role of the Catholic exegete in the Church. The theological studies at the *Babeş-Bolyai University* and in the French-speaking world (*Lumen Vitae Institute*, *Catholic University of Louvain*) that I have left their mark on my academic achievements. I wish to further promote a modern theological education, based on up-to-date methods of interpreting the Holy Scriptures and considering as a point of reference the documents of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. In this context, I would like to mention the teaching activities in the courses I have taught, the coordination of bachelor's and master's dissertations, the various national and international scientific events, with interventions and

communications published in volumes published by recognized publishing houses. Between years 2005 and 2023 I was involved in the activities of the *Centre for Biblical Studies (UBB)*, founded in 2003, and I supported the partnership of our faculty with *the Catholic Institute of Paris*, which helped us to organize a master's degree in biblical theology, launching a long-lasting collaboration.

My professional activity was carried out both in terms of acquiring teaching titles (preparator in 1997, assistant in 1999, lecturer in 2001, associate professor in 2013) and in terms of administrative responsibilities throughout the faculty and the levels of the university. As director of the biblical theology master's degree, I have provided a framework conducive to those who wish to widen their knowledge in the field and who later wish to specialize in a doctorate. As chancellor and then vice-dean, I had been assisting the dean of the faculty in all matters related to the coordination of teaching and research. In 2022, I began my work as a member of the *European Catechetical Team (EEC)*, a forum that brings together national catechetical leaders and professors of catechetical theology from universities in Europe.

As far as the plans for the evolution and development of my career, I have stated that I will continue to publish teaching works and, at the same time, I will capitalize on the results of my research by launching projects on biblical themes and by participating in national and international scientific events. Together with my colleagues and aided by the collaborations we currently have with other faculties within the country and abroad, I intend to participate in the establishment and support of a doctoral school in the field of theology, which will bring to the faculty not only a high level of research, but also a consolidated status among the *Babeş-Bolyai University*. After I will have had obtained the habilitation, I plan to coordinate doctoral works on topics that, additionally to current approaches in the field, emphasize the tradition of the *Greek-Catholic Church* in Romania, including the tradition of interpretation of the biblical texts.

Finally, the closure of my habilitation thesis consists of the bibliography used, including my own publications of relevance to my teaching and research activity, organized by categories of works.