

QUO VADIS THEOLOGIAE?

Catholic Religion Teacher and Lay Theological Training between 1996 and 2016

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Abstract: Amidst a Europe-wide proliferation of the religious and esoteric market like never before, theology, as the scientific reflection directed towards the Christian faith, seems to be increasingly pushed into the background. Running counter to the European trend, several theological faculties were established within the universities of Romania following the 1989–90 regime change. This led to the 1996 establishment of the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology within the framework of Babeş–Bolyai University.

The paper at hand aims to present the relevance of studying theology. On the one hand, it briefly describes the legal situation of catechesis and religious education in Romania, while, on the other hand, it outlines the achievements of religious education by presenting the history of the first twenty years in the life of the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology and – with the help of a statistical survey – the first eighteen graduating classes who finished their undergraduate studies in this period of time.

Keywords: the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology at Babeş–Bolyai University, religious education in schools, theological education, graduating classes, further education, doctoral studies, migration, scholarship, dormitory.

Amidst a Europe-wide proliferation of the religious and esoteric market like never before, theology, as the scientific reflection directed towards the Christian faith, seems to be increasingly pushed into the background. Many faculties of theology – even in the traditionally strongly religious region of Bavaria – have

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seen divestment. These restrictions go far beyond what could be explained by the streamlining of resources triggered by the ever-persistent economic crisis.²

Running counter to the European trend, tens of theology faculties were established within universities of Romania at this particular juncture, in the past 20–25 years. As a matter of course, this is not owing to the renaissance of theological science, not even in the most religious East-Central European country,³ but rather a practical constraint issuing from an actual situation. On the one hand, the government prior to the regime change of 1989/1990 minimized both the number of theological faculties and that of the admissible candidates,⁴ whereas launching religious education in schools after 1990 made the organization of religion teacher training necessary, on the other hand.

Despite all contrary views,⁵ among the various disciplines, theology too – although in connection with a certain religion or denomination as a rule – is

² Cf. BECKER, Patrick – GEROLD, Thomas (Hrsg.). 2005. *Die Theologie an der Universität. Eine Standortbestimmung*, Münster–Hamburg–London, 3.

³ According to the 2008 survey results of the Fessel's Institute for Market Research in Vienna, Romania is the country with most people claiming to be religious, ahead of Poland and Moldavia. Cf. *Csökkent a hívők aránya Magyarországon* [The Number of Believers Has Decreased in Hungary]. At: <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20081008-csokkent-a-val-lasosak-aranya-magyarorszagon.html> (downloaded on: 20 July 2018). Also cf. GEREBEN, Ferenc – TOMKA, Miklós. 2000. *Vallásosság és nemzettudat. Vizsgálódások Erdélyben* [Religiosity and National Identity. Investigations in Transylvania]. Budapest.

⁴ In order to set limits to theological education, so-called numerical restrictions, or *numerus clausus*, had been in practice in Romania from the early 1980s. Under pressure from the Department of Cult and Religious Affairs, Bishop Dr Antal Jakab was forced to send away a few students from the Theological College of Alba Iulia following admission in October 1982 and to keep numerical restrictions in view starting from the following year's admission period. Cf. MARTON, József: *Imádkozzunk főpapjainkért* [Let Us Pray for Our High Priests]. In: Vasárnap, 14 March 2010. 1. l.

⁵ Some representatives of research in theory of science believe that when it comes to theology not only content but mentality and the applied methods are also determined by religious or denominational affiliation. Therefore, due to such constraints regarding theology, its scientific nature has been the subject of debates, and, at the same time, the *raison d'être* of the faculty of theology in the context of public universities receives much criticism. SCHERER, Thorsten. 2009. *Ein Bild von Welt. Glaube zwischen Physik und Metaphysik*, Norderstedt, 305. Also cf.: WETH, Rudolf – GESTRICH, Christof – LÜDER SOLTE, Ernst. 1972. *Theologie an staatlichen Universitäten?* Stuttgart–Berlin–Köln–

such a discipline that can be studied which is cultivated at universities within the framework of theological faculties. According to the self-definition of Catholic theology, theology in a broader sense is speaking and teaching of a self-revealing creator, saviour, and life-giving triune God. In its stricter sense, it is a discipline treating the foundations of faith (biblical and historical theology), its systematic analysis (systematizing theology: fundamental theology, dogmatics, moral theology, and social ethics), and its practice (practical theology: homiletics, liturgy, pastoral theology, pastoral psychology, catechetics, theology of charity, and ecclesiastical law).

Folk wisdom aptly puts it: Spirit, spirit, but how do I earn my living? Its meaning is obvious. The spirit is very essential, but one needs to make a living somehow. In olden times, the cultivation of theology – in its literal sense – could earn one a decent living, and every family with several children made an effort to steer at least one offspring towards a career in the priesthood or monkhood. Today, this has changed in that, on the one hand, with the marginalization of Christian, and within it Catholic, public opinion, the spiritual side of the vocation is not so attractive than it once used to be, while, on the other hand, the priesthood is no longer ranked among those few options offering an attractive living opportunity or an appropriate career that would be worth applying for. Thus, some may prognosticate with conviction that theology and theological education is presumably awaiting hard times. The following fact also seems to corroborate this prognosis: whereas the Theological College of Alba Iulia had about 120 students at the time of the 1989/1990 regime change, this number had decreased by approximately 50% (60 students) in twenty-five years, by 2016.

However, when we are viewing and showing the situation of theological education in such a poor light, we cannot fail to notice that during the twenty years between the mid-90s (1996) and 2016 724 lay theology students applied to the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology at Babeş-Bolyai University, out of which 481 students, 343 girls and 138 boys, finished their theological studies. Consequently, not only did the number of those studying theology not decrease but we can witness an outright increase and restructuring, while the training of the

Mainz; ROTERMANN, Stefanie. 2001. *Wozu (noch) Theologie an Universitäten?* Münster; BECKER, Patrick – GEROLD, Thomas (Hrsg.). 2005. *Die Theologie an der Universität. Eine Standortbestimmung*, Münster.

clergy was made complete by the religion teacher training successfully launched in the meantime.

The Prerequisite of Religion Teacher Training: Catechesis and Religious Education⁶

Religion, especially the classical Christian doctrine along the Jerusalem–Rome–Athens axis, constitutes an essential part of the European culture. Without that knowledge, we could hardly understand European culture, the exquisite creations of European architecture and of the various fine arts.⁷ The circumstances of launching catechesis and religious education in Romania – although commented by many – are surrounded by ideologically-laden disputes, and as such it is an area in the post-1989/1990 history of education policy that is the subject of relatively few studies.⁸ Therefore, when introducing the process below, we will mainly confine ourselves to the presentation of official ministerial decrees.

Following the changes, according to Governmental Decree No 521/1990,⁹ church education and minor seminary education could be relaunched in the language of both the Romanian majority and the Hungarian minority. Due to the Orthodox Church's efforts in this regard, religious education made its way into

⁶ After catechesis figured as religious education (*educație religioasă*) or religious and moral education (*educația religio-morală*) in the Ministry of Education decrees in the first half of the 90s, Decree No 10306/1993 of 17 August officially changed the designation of religious education to religion (*religie*). Cf. *Direcții prioritare în învățământul religios din România* [Priority Directions in Religious Education in Romania]. At: <http://www.seminararad.org/invatamantul-teologic-in-romania> (downloaded on: 30 June 2018).

⁷ Cf. HOLLÓ, László. 2006. *Az Európai Unió – értékközösség. Az európai integráció társadalometikai vonatkozásai* [The European Union – Community of Values. Socio-Ethical Aspects of European Integration]. In: *Erkölcsteológiai füzetek* 6, Rom: 38–39.

⁸ Cf. ENACHE, Smaranda et alii. 2007. *Educația religioasă în școlile publice. Promovarea interesului superior al copilului în educația religioasă. Monitorizarea educației religioase în școlile publice din România* [Religious Education in Public Schools. Promoting the Child's Best Interest in Religious Education. Monitoring Religious Education in Romanian Public Schools]. Târgu-Mureș. At: <http://www.proeuropa.ro/educatie.html> (downloaded on: 20 July 2018).

⁹ *Hotărâre de Guvern* [Government Decree] No 521/12.05.1990. In: *Monitorul Oficial* (hereinafter: MO) 71/1990 May 12.

the school. As a first formal step right before the 1990/1991 school year would get underway, the Ministry of Education issued Decree No 15052/1990, which gave the green light for catechesis and religious education in public elementary and high schools.¹⁰ Accordingly, religious and moral education (*educația religio-morală*) became part of the schools' curricula as a one-hour 'elective and optional' class to be held every other week. At the same time, the Decree also made it possible that teaching arrangements could be made according to denominations. This called for the training of religion teachers. Nevertheless, the double status of 'elective and optional' – a disturbing element from the very beginning – leaves much room for a dual interpretation and interferes with the status of religious education in the context of public schools to this day.

Interest towards religious education on the part of parents and children urged the Ministry of Education to issue Ordinance No 9176 of 1 February 1991 that provides for holding the class one hour per week. The following year, starting from the 1992/1993 school year, the Ordinance brought under control religious education for the first eight grades as well as teacher qualifications, job analysis, and salary for religion teachers.¹¹

Religious education gained a constitutional guarantee as well in the Romanian Constitution accepted on 21 November 1991 and ratified by referendum on 8 December. Paragraph 32. §. 7) of the new constitution provides as follows: 'The state provides for the freedom of religious education according to the specific needs of each cult. Religious education in public schools is guaranteed and organized by law.'¹²

Introducing religious education in public schools consequent upon pressure exerted by the Romanian Orthodox Church and through the intercession of the Romanian Patriarchate seemed to be a useful measure for the other recognized denominations and thus for the Roman Catholic Church as well, a church only tolerated in terms of law at that time but still well respected as a result of the regime change. However, education in and of itself was initially uncoordinated due to the lack of human resources as well as the tolerated status of religious educa-

¹⁰ Cf. NEGRUȚIU, Florin. 2010. Statutul religiei în școala românească [The Status of Religion in Romanian Schools]. In: *Dascălul creștin. Revista a profesorilor de religie din județul Bihor* 1. (2010), pp. 5–7, here: 6.

¹¹ Cf. NEGRUȚIU, 6.

¹² *Constituția României* [The Constitution of Romania] 1991, 32. §, 7). In: MO233/1991 November 21.

tion.¹³ It was only after much commotion that paragraph 9 of Education Act No 84, drafted by 1995, somewhat normalized the situation of religious education in schools. Still, the law, in its initial version, made religious education a compulsory subject for elementary schools alone, determining it as an elective subject for gymnasiums and an optional subject for lyceums and vocational schools.¹⁴ During the month of December 1996, the Romanian Patriarchate, backed up by supporting signatures from one million citizens, asked for a modification of the relevant paragraph (9 §) in the Education Act. This amendment was adopted by Government Emergency Ordinance No 36 of 10 July 1997, whose Paragraph 9. 1) specified the following: ‘Religion is included as a school subject in the curricula of elementary schools, gymnasiums, lyceums, and vocational schools. Pupils shall opt for the religion and denomination to be studied with the approval of the parents or the legally assigned guardian.’¹⁵ With this government decree, religious education was introduced starting from the school year 1998/1999 on institutional level as a compulsory subject in every pre-university education level, with due respect of the pupils’ freedom in their choice of religion. In the revised Act, reissued in 1999, this changed in that the new Act – although religious education became part of the common core in the curricula of elementary schools, gymnasiums, lyceums, and vocational schools – emphasized its elective nature in order to promote respect for the freedom of thought. Indeed, since according to Paragraph 9. 1): ‘The curriculum framework of education in primary schools, gymnasiums, lyceums, and vocational schools includes religious education as a school subject, as part of the common core. With the approval of the parents or of the legal guardian, the pupil shall choose the religion or denomination to be studied.’¹⁶ In this context, listing it among the common core subjects indicates

¹³ Cf. STAN, Lavinia – TURCESCU, Lucian, *Educația religioasă în România* [Religious Education in Romania]. In: *Altera* 32(2007): 39–61.

¹⁴ *Legea 84 din 24 iulie 1995. Legea învățământului* [Act No 84 of 24 July 1995. Education Act]. In: MO167/1995 July 31.

¹⁵ *Ordonanța de Urgență a Guvernului* [Emergency Government Ordinance] no 36/10.07.1997. In: MO152/1997 July 14.

¹⁶ *Lege Nr. 151 din 30 iulie 1999 privind aprobarea Ordonanței de urgență a Guvernului nr. 36/1997 pentru modificarea și completarea Legii învățământului nr. 84/1995* [Act No 151 of 30 July 1999 concerning the Approval of Emergency Government Ordinance No 36/1997 on the Amendment and Supplementation of Education Act No 84/1995]. In: MO 370/1999. August 3, reissued in: MO 606/1999 December 10.

the compulsory nature of religion classes. For the purposes of safeguarding human rights, however, the Act further sets out that the pupil can give up on religious education at the written request of the parents or of the legal guardian. Here, just as when, for objective reasons, a pupil was not given the possibility of attending religion classes, the calculation of their learning outcomes does not take religion classes into consideration. Paragraph 9. 1) of the Act allows the recognized denominations to request the permission of the Ministry of Education to organize theological studies suitable for the theological and social training of their church personnel, in accordance with their proportions. In addition, 4) gives permission to denominations to establish private educational institutions.¹⁷

Consequently, the 1999 amendment brought total confusion once again, leaving room for the interpretation of religion both as part of the common core of the curriculum framework, as a compulsory subject, and as a subject with an optional character since the pupil had the possibility to give up on attending religion classes. What is more, it could also be treated as an elective subject because in case of rejecting the choice of taking up religious education the law does not foresee any obligation for choosing another optional subject. That is how the research team of the *Liga Pro Europa* civil organization, established under the leadership of Smaranda Enache, looking into religious education could conclude that the Education Act considers in fact religious education as merely an elective subject in the curriculum. At the same time, they went at great lengths to put forward all arguments to sow doubt into readers' minds regarding the legal nature of 'compulsory' religious education posing a threat to human rights.¹⁸

Notwithstanding, the further relevant legal provisions confirmed the compulsory nature of religious education. Thus, Decree No 3670/2001 of 17 April on the adoption of the curriculum framework for lyceums regarding the school year 2001/2002, issued by the Ministry of Education and bearing the counter-signature of Minister Ecaterina Andronescu, eliminated the optional character, its paragraph 5 providing that if a pupil does not attend religion classes based upon the written request of their parents or legal guardian, they are required to

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸ Cf. ENACHE, Smaranda et alii. 2007. *Educația religioasă în școlile publice. Promovarea interesului superior al copilului în educația religioasă. Monitorizarea educației religioase în școlile publice din România* [Religious Education in Public Schools. Promoting the Child's Best Interest in Religious Education. Monitoring Religious Education in Romanian Public Schools]. Târgu-Mureș.

choose another optional subject instead of religion.¹⁹ In the same spirit, the Ministry of Education issued Decree No 5718/2005 of 22 December, which provided for the adoption of the upper secondary school curriculum framework for the school year 2005/2006.²⁰

Following a long-drawn search for a compromise, the issuance of Law on Religion no 489/2006 was finally enforced by the will to create the conditions of entering the democratic world and the European Union as well as by the necessity of establishing compatibility with the European Union legislation, the *Acquis communautaire*. Hence, while the laws are in compliance with European norms, their implementation oftentimes leaves a considerable room for improvement by the very reason of the involuntary nature of their adoption and due to the individual interpretations.²¹ In this manner, although paragraph 32 §. 1) of the Law on Religion ensures religious education for the recognized denominations in private and public schools alike, unfortunately, paragraph 7 of Decree No 3412/2009 of 16 March on the adoption of the curriculum framework for lyceums regarding the school year 2009/2010, issued by the Ministry of Education and bearing the counter-signature of the same minister, Ecaterina Andronescu, reinforced once more the elective nature of religious education. In its second point, it provides yet again that any pupil who does not attend religion classes at the request of the parents or of the legal guardian shall have their school records considered without

¹⁹ *Ordin nr. 3670/17.04.2001 cu privire la aplicarea planurilor-cadru de învățământ pentru liceu în anul școlar 2001–2002* [Decree No 3670/17.04.2001 on the Adoption of the Curriculum Framework for Lyceums regarding the School Year 2001/2002], 5. §. At: <http://oldsite.edu.ro/index.php/articles/312> (downloaded on: 20 July 2018).

²⁰ *Ordin nr. 5718/22.12.2005 cu privire la aprobarea planurilor-cadru de învățământ pentru ciclul superior al liceului* [Decree No 5718/22.12.2005 on the Approval of the Curriculum Framework for Upper Secondary Education]. At: <http://oldsite.edu.ro/index.php/articles/3576> (downloaded on: 20 July 2018).

²¹ Cf. Holló, László. 2010. A vallásszabadság és a vallási diszkrimináció diszkrét formái Romániában [Discreet Forms of Religious Freedom and of Religious Discrimination in Romania]. In: NÓDA, Mózes et alii (eds), *Ideje az emlékezésnek. Liber amicorum: A 60 éves Marton József köszöntése* [It Is Time for Remembrance. Liber amicorum: Laudation of József Marton at his 60th Birthday]. Budapest–Cluj-Napoca. 298–312.

this subject.²² So, any alternative of ethics education is ruled out again that would at least confirm the optional character of religious education.

Finally, a particular situation arose when in the new Education Act drawn up with great difficulty and having a vicissitudinous history, issued on 5 January 2011, this elective character became final under pressure from the Romanian Patriarchate itself. After a series of drafts, the government submitted a new draft, unlike the previous ones, to the Parliament on 14 April 2010. According to this motion, with respect to religion classes: ‘upon request, instead of religion classes, pupils may take up history of religion, culture and art history or other useful subjects shaping ethical, social, or community behaviour’. In its transcript no 2455 issued on 27 April 2010 and submitted to the National Assembly, the Patriarchate expressed its dissatisfaction with this provision of the Law, considering that the relevant section of the draft diminishes the importance of religion classes and might lead to abusive practice. Therefore, the National Assembly accepted the draft on 19 May, keeping in view the remarks made by the Patriarchate.²³ Although its paragraph 17 – later on changed to 18 – reiterates the position of religion as part of the common-core syllabus, its point 2) provides that based on a written request formulated by the child of full age or either the parents or the assigned guardian in the case of underage children, attendance of religion classes is not obligatory, but their school records shall take no consideration of this subject. Point 3) of the Law also provides for the staff that may be employed in religious education. Pursuant to that provision, a religion teacher can be a person who possesses appropriate qualifications under the present law and has been empow-

²² *Ordin nr. 3412/16.03.2009 privind aprobarea planurilor-cadru de învățământ pentru: clasa a X-a, școala de arte și meserii; clasa a X-a, ciclul inferior al liceului, filiera tehnologică, ruta directă de calificare; clasa a XI-a, anul de completare; clasele a XI-a - a XII-a și a XII-a / a XIII-a, ciclul superior al liceului, filiera tehnologică, cursuri de zi și seral* [Decree No 3412/16.03.2009 on the Approval of the Curriculum Framework for the 10th Grade, Arts and Vocational School; the 10th Grade, Lower Secondary Education, Technical Path, Direct Qualification Route; the 11th Grade, Additional Year; 11th, 12th and 12th/13th Grades, Upper Secondary Education, Technical Path, Full-Time Attendance and Evening Classes], 7. §, 2). At: <http://oldsite.edu.ro/index.php/articles/11503> (downloaded on: 20 July 2018).

²³ Cf. HOLBEA Gheorghe – OPRIS Dorin – OPRIS Monica – JAMBORE George. 2010. *Apostolat educational. Ora de religie – cunoaștere și devenire spiritual* [Educational Apostleship. The Religion Class – Spiritual Knowledge and Becoming] Bucharest. 47–48.

ered to become involved in education, based on agreements concluded between the Ministry of Education and the appropriate denomination.²⁴

Subsequently, paragraph 18 underwent further changes. A plea of unconstitutionality was raised against it on the grounds that the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of thought is infringed if the parents need to request their school child's exemption from attending religion classes. The Constitutional Court provided that the law should be amended in such a way that those parents should submit an application to the school who wish their child to attend religion classes. The decision of the Constitutional Court was codified as Law No 153/2015 by the Parliament on 18 June 2015. Accordingly:

Pupils' enrolment in religion classes takes place upon the written request of the child in the case of pupils of full age and upon the request of the parents or of the legally assigned guardian in the case of underage pupils. If the pupil does not take part in religious education, their school records shall take no consideration of this subject. The procedure is similar for pupils who for objective reasons were not ensured the conditions of attending the classes of this subject.²⁵

Consequently, the education curriculum framework includes religious education as a school subject, wherefore it appears to have a compulsory character, but attendance must be applied for by submitting a specific declaration of intent or a written request on the part of either the pupil or the parent.

The Necessity of Religion Teacher Training

The introduction of catechesis and religious education in elementary schools on a mandatory basis, in post-primary education occasionally on an elective or optional and later – at least on an institutional level – on a mandatory basis has made the organization of religion teacher training necessary already since the beginning of the nineties. Due to the constraints of the situation, the Archdiocesan Authority of Alba Iulia was trying to take stopgap measures. Therefore,

²⁴ *Legea educatiei nationale* [National Education Act]. Act No 1/2011.01.05. 18. §. In: MO, 18/2011] January 10.

²⁵ *Legea nr. 153/2015 pentru modificarea art. 18 din Legea educației naționale nr. 1/2011* [Act No 153/2015 on the Amendment of Art. 18 of National Education Act No 1/2011]. In: MO, 445/2015 June 22.

in 1990, the Theological College of Alba Iulia launched religion teacher training in several centres in the form of distant learning, so-called correspondence training.²⁶ Since this form of education was not recognized by the state, religion teachers prepared and entrusted with teaching religion under these conditions found themselves at a disadvantage without an official teaching certificate. To put an end to this adverse situation and, at the same time, to enforce the possibility of catechesis and religious education in schools more efficiently in professional terms as well, an independent Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology was established besides the already existing faculties of Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Reformed theology at Babeş–Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.²⁷ The newly established faculty began its activities starting from the academic year 1996/1997 based upon the agreement concluded between Babeş–Bolyai University and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia on 10 July 1996,²⁸ although it had not yet entered the list of provisionally approved specializations issued by the Ministry of Education.²⁹ The soon-to-be-launched faculty was allocated enrolment

²⁶ Such satellite campuses have functioned in Miercurea Ciuc, Deva, Cluj-Napoca, Târgu-Mureş, Sfântu Gheorghe, and Odorheiu Secuiesc since 1990. Further satellite branches were launched in Timișoara in the year 1991 and in Gheorgheni in 1992. Although the education programme in Oradea and Satu Mare was launched independently from the Theological College of Alba Iulia, the latter also one joined the College in 1993 – by courtesy of József Marton, 6 December 2012.

²⁷ Cf. MARTON, József. 2010. *A Római Katolikus Teológia Kar* [The Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology]. In: *A gyulafehérvári főegyházmegye millenniumi sematizmusa* [The Millennium Register of the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia.] Cluj-Napoca. 30–31.

²⁸ Cf. Gyulafehérvári Érseki és Székeskáptalani Levéltár [The Archiepiscopal and Cathedral Chapter Archives of Alba Iulia] (hereinafter: GYÉKL) – 2624. d. 19. cs. 596/1996. – *A Babeş-Bolyai Tudományegyetem és a Gyulafehérvári Érsekség által Kolozsváron 1996. július 10-én megkötött egyezmény egy Római Katolikus Teológia Kar létrehozásáról* [Agreement Concluded between Babeş-Bolyai University and the Archbishopric of Alba Iulia on 10 July 1996 about the Establishment of a Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology].

²⁹ *Hotărâre de Guvern Nr. 1371 din 3 decembrie 1996 cu privire la acordarea autorizării de funcționare provizorie, în conformitate cu prevederile Legii nr. 88/1993 privind acreditarea institutiilor de învățământ superior și recunoașterea diplomelor* [Government Decree No 1371 of 3 December 1996 on the Granting of a Provisional Operating Authorization, in Conformity with the Provisions of Law No 88/1993 on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and the Recognition of Diplomas]. In: MO 340/1996 December 11.

number for 20 students in its first, 1996/1997 academic year. The launch attracted much attention, sixty applicants applying for the twenty available places. The Faculty started its activities with two double specializations. One of them was Roman Catholic Theology combined with history and the other one was theology and a foreign language and literature of choice (English, German, French, or Hungarian).³⁰

Starting from 1999, once Professor Dr József Marton had been granted the right for conducting doctoral studies and the Hungarological Studies Doctoral School had accepted it within its academic framework, the opportunity was created for the Faculty's graduates and those interested in Roman Catholic theology to obtain a doctoral degree as well.

Organization of the Faculty of Theology

The Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology commenced its activities in Cluj-Napoca starting from the academic year 1996/1997 within the framework of Babeş–Bolyai University, based on the agreement concluded between the University and the Archbishopric of Alba Iulia on 10 July 1996.

The mission of the Faculty of Theology as formulated on its website: 'Didactic theology aims at the theological training of the responsible laity. We wish to strengthen the sense of Catholic identity in our students. Our further objective is to convey true values. We would like our graduates to find their place in the world and become valuable members of the Church and of the society.'³¹

³⁰ Provisional approval: *Hotărâre Nr. 294 din 16 iunie 1997 cu privire la funcționarea instituțiilor de învățământ superior, în conformitate cu prevederile Legii nr. 88/1993 privind acreditarea instituțiilor de învățământ superior și recunoașterea diplomelor* [Decree No 294 of 16 June 1997 on the Functioning of Higher Education Institutions, in Conformity with the Provisions of Law No 88/1993 on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and the Recognition of Diplomas]. In: MO 130/ 1997 25 June.

³¹ *Babeş-Bolyai Tudományegyetem, Római Katolikus Teológia* Kar [The Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology at Babeş–Bolyai University]. At: <https://ersekseg.ro/hu/templom/1349> (downloaded on: 30 August 2018). Also cf.: MARTON, József. 2002. *A Gyulafehérvári Római Katolikus Teológia helyzetének alakulása 1990 után* [The Evolution of the Roman Catholic Theological Institute of Alba Iulia after 1990]. In: TÁNCZOS, Vilmos – TÖKÉS, Gyöngyvér (eds), *Tizenkétév. Összefoglaló tanulmányok az erdélyi magyar tudományos kutatások 1990–2001 közötti eredményeiről* [Twelve Years. Comprehensive Studies about

Besides the powerful support of Archbishop Dr György Jakubinyi, the Ordinary of the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia, and the former rector of Babeş–Bolyai University, Professor Dr Andrei Marga, in organizing the Faculty, Dr József Marton, professor of theology in Alba Iulia, László Csintalan, Headmaster of Majláth Gusztáv Károly Gymnasium, and Professor Dr István Csucsuja also played a substantial role. As a result of their organizing work, the four-year undergraduate programme was launched in the autumn of 1996 in a small way with 20 students and three full-time teachers. Then, theology teacher in Alba Iulia József Marton was appointed professor, Secretary of the Romanian Episcopal Conference Dr Ferenc Tankó was appointed Dean, and curate of Cluj-Mănăştur and university chaplain of Cluj-Napoca Mózes Nóda was appointed Assistant Lecturer. Vicar of Floreşti Dr Gábor Köllő and vicar of Sts Peter and Paul Parish of Cluj-Napoca Dénes Oláh were invited to teach the biblical subjects, while Professor Dr Katalin Szegő was offered a position to teach philosophy. In what followed, further full-time teachers were employed annually by the Faculty, proportionally with the increase in the number of students. Thus, from the autumn of 1997, curate of the Braşov downtown parish Dr László Holló was employed for teaching ethics subjects, from the autumn of 1998, theologian – also with neurological qualifications – Dr Korinna Zamfir for taking charge of biblical subjects, and from the autumn of 2000 Jitianu Liviu – who, at the same time, was pursuing his doctoral studies at the University of Freiburg – was offered a place to teach dogmatics and philosophy. Additionally, from the autumn of 2002, Árpád Lászlóffy received a request to lecture on religious music, while from the autumn of 2003 Judit Oszváth to teach catechetics and didactic subjects – both of them PhD students of the Faculty. For instruction in fundamental theology, spirituality, and logotherapy, vicar of Căpleni and logotherapist Dr János Vik was invited to begin his activity from the spring of 2008, while from the autumn of the same year Magda Robu, PhD student of the Sapientia College of Theology of Religious Orders, Budapest, was engaged for teaching psychology-related subjects.

In these years, the teachers of the Faculty made gradual progress in climbing the academic ladder based on meeting the academic requirements. Of the teachers hired as PhD students, Lászlóffy was succeeded by choirmaster Vilmos Geréd in the capacity of external lecturer after the latter had left the institution.

the Results of Transylvanian Hungarian Scientific Research between 1990 and 2001] vol. I. [Sapientia Könyvek 8–9], Cluj-Napoca. 269–282, here: 276.

As for Ozsváth, upon finishing her doctoral studies, went on with her academic activities at the Faculty as a visiting teacher in her capacity of Senior Lecturer at the Department of Methodology for the Human Sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences within Babeş–Bolyai University. So, by the end of the period under investigation, the seven teachers remained in the Faculty's employ formed the teaching staff and occupied the following positions in the academic hierarchy: one university professor, three associate professors, two senior lecturers, and one assistant professor.

Following the sudden illness and then death (14 December 1997) of the first appointed dean of the Faculty, Dr Ferenc Tankó, Chief Pastor Dr József Marton was invited to accept the deanship. He accepted this appointment and assumed the direction of academic affairs at the Faculty and carried them on for two further mandates until 2008, with the collaboration of Vice-Dean Mózes Nóda, who was then simultaneously pursuing his doctoral studies at the Faculty of History within Babeş–Bolyai University. In 2008, Dr Mózes Nóda took over the duties of deanship for a four-year period.

In the meantime, the permanent academic staff of the Faculty was completed by several part-time and external lecturers as follows: theology teachers Dr Ferenc Ágoston, Dr Lajos Molnár, Dr László Kerekes and PhD students of theology Lajos Fehér and József Nagy from the Theological College of Alba Iulia; Dr Enikő Albert-Lőrincz, Dr István Angi, Dr Csilla Gábor, Dr Judit Robu, and Dr István Szamosközi from various faculties of Babeş–Bolyai University. As visiting professors, Dr György Fodor from Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest, Dr Endre Gaál from Vitéz János Catholic College, Esztergom, and Dr Joseph Favazza from Stonehill College (USA) lectured for extended periods of time. As PhD students of the Faculty, Dr James McMahon (USA) and Dr Zsolt Tamási also delivered lectures.

Initially, the living space of the Faculty was merely limited to the so-called 'upper hall' above the sacristy of the Piarist Church – also used by the university chaplaincy –, two smaller-sized chambers set up as a library, and the religious education hall of St Michael's parish. At the request of the Archdiocesan Authority of Alba Iulia, St Michael's parish set up in the palace – of the onetime Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania, found in the provisional administration of the Parish – at Szentegyház St [in Romanian: Iuliu Maniu] nr 5 a headquarters for the Dean's Office, the secretariat, and an accommodation unit to serve as the Dean's apartment. At the same time, they started to build up two larger lecture halls,

two smaller seminar rooms, and a teachers' lounge in the basement of the three-storey building occupied by tenants, while in the mansard a dormitory was to be set up for the Faculty of Theology with accommodation for 24 students. According to Ordinance No 918 of 2 December 1998 issued by the Archdiocesan Authority, the supervision of construction works was taken over by the Archdiocesan Corporation and subsequently managed by the Economic Chamber, entrusted to the care of a steward.³² In the early 2000s, the institution was gradually gaining more space on the different levels of the building with the tenants moving out or having arranged for their rehousing. Thus, a six-room library and a guest room on the first floor, two lecture halls and a seminar room on the second floor, and a chapel on the third floor were successfully handed over ready for use.

Following the establishment of the Foundation succeeding the onetime Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania, bearing the same name as the latter and officially registered in November 2005, the administration of the building was taken over by this new legal entity. Under this renewed management, the second half of the 2000s saw the completion of a computer room and a new kitchen for the dormitory on the third floor as well as a service apartment on each of the second and third floors.

After the successful graduation of three generations from the undergraduate programme of religion teacher training combined with history and Hungarian or a foreign language, the academic year 2003/2004 set afloat a study programme made up of didactic theology combined with social work, that is, the dual specialization of Roman Catholic Theology and Social Work (*Teologie romano-catolică – Asistență socială*) as well as a master's programme in patristic theology, while from the academic year 2003/2004 a master's programme in pastoral psychology was also added to the options students could choose from. If we take into account the first ten generations of the Faculty's graduates and focus on the master's programme in the period between 2004 and 2009, then we can point out that of all master's graduates (139 students in total) 74 were the Faculty's own graduates, while the remaining 65 were mainly the graduates of the Theological College of

³² Cf. Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus Levéltára [Archives of the Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania] (hereinafter: ERKSL), dossier for year 1998: *A Kolozsvári Szent Mihály Plébánia és a Gyulafehérvári Főegyházmegeyei Hatóság közötti 1998. december 11-ei átadási-átvételi jegyzőkönyv* [Delivery and Acceptance Protocol of 11 December 1998 between St Michael's Parish of Cluj-Napoca and the Archdiocesan Authority of Alba Iulia].

Alba Iulia and of the previously operated correspondence course and in a small number students applying from other faculties of Babeş–Bolyai University.

Following the academic year 2005/2006, the reorganization of the master's programmes took place necessarily. Instead of the former one-year master's programmes and for the first generation of graduates from the Bologna system, two new, two-year master's programmes were launched under the names of *Pastoral Counselling* and *Theology–Culture–Society*.³³

The academic year 2009/2010 witnessed the launch of the first religious studies specialization at the national level. Consequently – as from the academic year 2007/2008 the Theological College of Alba Iulia was also integrated into the framework of the Faculty³⁴–, education is presently carried out in four undergraduate study programmes: besides the *Pastoral Theology* and *Didactic Theology* specializations, there are now the specializations of *Roman Catholic Theology – Social Work* and *Religious Studies*.

The integration of the Theological College of Alba Iulia into the framework of the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology within Babeş–Bolyai University received widespread media coverage due to the perceived loss of autonomy. We may rightly stress upon this perceived loss of autonomy since the Faculty of Theology in Cluj-Napoca has largely retained its autonomy within the framework of Babeş–Bolyai University, given that from its establishment it has been function-

³³ *Ordin nr. 4.644/30.06.2008 privind completarea și modificarea ordinului ministrului educației, cercetării și tineretului nr. 3628 din 31.03.2008 privind aprobare a programelor de studii universitare de masterat evaluate de Agenția Română pentru Asigurarea Calității în Învățământul Superior* [Decree No 4.644/30.06.2008, Completing and Amending Decree No 3628 of 31.03.2008 Issued by the Ministry of Education, Research, and Youth regarding University Studies Leading to Master's Degree Evaluated by The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education], Annex No 1, 18. At: <http://oldsite.edu.ro/index.php/articles/10297> (downloaded on: 30 August 2018).

³⁴ *Hotărâre de Guvern nr. 676/28.06. 2007 privind domeniile de studii universitare de licență, structurile instituțiilor de învățământ superior și specializările organizate de acestea* [Government Decision No 676/28.06.2007 regarding the Undergraduate Fields of Study, the Structures of Higher Education Institutions, and the Specializations Organized by Them]. In: MO 481/2007 July 8 At: <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/geydmrvgu/hotararea-nr-676-2007-privind-domeniile-de-studii-universitare-de-licenta-structurile-institutiilor-de-invatamant-superior-si-specializarile-organizate-de-acestea> (downloaded on: 30 August 2018).

ing in a church-owned facility, in a building found under the management of the Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania Foundation, which largely guarantees the possibility of upholding the right to self-determination. Retaining effective autonomy is even more so the case in relation to the Theological College of Alba Iulia. Remaining in a church-owned building, theological training has been integrated from an educational point of view into the framework of the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology within Babeş–Bolyai University, but the Seminary continues to operate in the immediate subordination of the Archdiocese. The seminarists, as students of the university owing to the integration, receive state aid and are allocated publicly funded enrolment places from the academic year 2007/2008.³⁵

The First Eighteen Generations of Students in the Life of the Faculty

In the following, we will present the results of investigations regarding the first twenty years between 1996 and 2016 of the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology at Babeş–Bolyai University as well as regarding the situation of the first eighteen generations graduated in this period.³⁶ The collection of data took place between June 2016 and August 2018, its deadline being set on 31 August. Our ambition was to follow up the situation of the first eighteen generations of the Faculty from their admission to university through their graduation and up to considering employment options and starting a family. Based on the work performed, we have found a rather interesting and diverse picture that reveals certain tendencies despite the brevity of the period under review.

As indicated earlier, the first academic year (1996/1997) in the life of the Faculty started out in quite a small way. There was a great demand anyway as, although a correspondence course had already been available since 1993 at the Theological College of Alba Iulia, sixty candidates applied for the twenty places approved for the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology at Babeş–Bolyai University, which means a triple oversubscription of applications for the available places. Albeit the Extraordinary Conference of the teaching staff of the Roman Catholic

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁶ Given that the ambition of our study is to present lay theological and religion teacher training in Transylvania, our collection of data did not include the graduates of the Pastoral Institute of Alba Iulia, who gradually entered our Faculty starting from the academic year 2007/2008.

Theological College of Alba Iulia held on 30 April 1996 regarding the organization of the religion teacher training section saw prospects for the allocation of 40 places (25 for Theology–Hungarian/Foreign Languages and 15 for Theology–History),³⁷ the Rector of Babeş–Bolyai University asked for only 30 places (20 for Theology–Hungarian/Foreign Languages and 10 for Theology–History) to complete enrolment numbers,³⁸ of which the Ministry of Education approved 20 places altogether.³⁹

The realistic requests for launching the Catholic religion teacher training undergraduate programme were well proven by the fact that in the beginning the number of students admitted and graduated showed an almost exponentially increasing tendency – together with the increase in the number of approved places as well as that of the applicants (*Figure 1*).

As shown in the above figure, 18 generations⁴⁰ graduated in the course of the first twenty years in the life of the Faculty of Theology. In this period, altogether 724 students, 462 boys and 262 girls, gained admission. Girls are overrepresented by almost an exactly two-thirds majority (63.81% girls – 36.18% boys). Of the students who had gained admission, 481 successfully finished their university

³⁷ Cf. GYÉKL – 2624. d. 19. cs. 596/1996. – *Jegyzőkönyv a Gyulafehérvári Római Katolikus Hittudományi Főiskola tanári karának 1996. április 30-án a hittanárképző tagozat szervezésével kapcsolatos rendkívüli konferenciájáról* [Proceedings of the Extraordinary Conference of the Teaching Staff of the Roman Catholic Theological College of Alba Iulia Held on 30 April 1996 regarding the Organization of the Religion Teacher Training Section].

³⁸ Cf. GYÉKL – 2624. d. 19. cs. 596/1996. – *A Babeş–Bolyai Tudományegyetem 5797/1996. július 2-ai felirata a Tanügyminisztériumba* [Application No 5797/1996 of 2 July of Babeş–Bolyai University Submitted to the Ministry of Education].

³⁹ Cf. GYÉKL – 2624. d. 19. cs. 596/1996. – *A Tanügyminisztériumnak a Babeş–Bolyai Tudományegyetem Rektorátusához intézett 6700/1996. július 30-ai leirata* [Ordinance No 6700/1996 of 30 July of the Ministry of Education Addressed to Babeş–Bolyai University].

⁴⁰ At the Faculty of Theology that started out with a four-year training, the period between 2000 and 2016 made the graduation of eighteen generations possible since, due to the Bologna system introduced from the academic year 2005/2006, in 2008, the graduates of two different classes finished their university studies at the same time (the graduates of both the last four-year study programme, admitted in the academic year 2004/2005, and those of the first three-year study programme, who gained admission in the academic year 2005/2006).

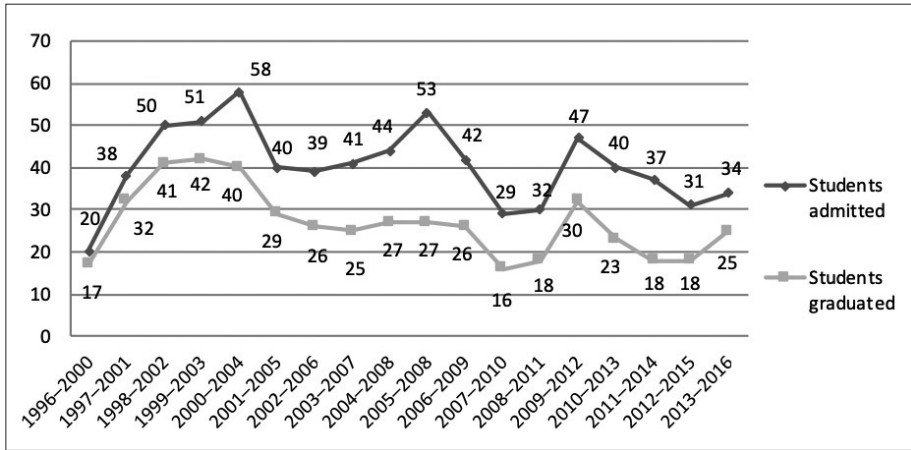


Figure 1. Changes in the numerical ratio of students admitted to the Faculty of Theology between 1996 and 2013 and of students graduated from the Faculty between 2000 and 2016

studies considering the first eighteen generations of graduates between 2000 and 2016, which accounts for 66.57% of the category concerned. In the years of the university studies, girls proved to be more hard-working and showed more steady results since girls and boys each had a nearly fifty percent share in the drop-outs' category made up of 243 students (119 girls – 48.97 %; 124 boys – 51.02 %), thus girls having improved their numbers by 7% considering the students who finished their studies – of the 481 graduates, 343 (71.30%) were girls and 138 (28.69%) were boys.

The years between 2000 and 2004 meant the golden age in the history of the Faculty of Theology. In this period of time, an average of 45 students gained admission to the four-year undergraduate studies, and in the year 2004 a total number of 58 students were admitted to the Faculty (*Figure 1*). Thus, including the students applying for the master's degree programmes launched from the year 2003, the annual student headcount of the Faculty was over two hundred at the time.

Consequent upon education restructuring following the Bologna concept,⁴¹ putting an end to the era of dual specializations (Theology–History, Theology–

⁴¹ The Bologna system derived its name from the so-termed Bologna Declaration signed in the Italian city of Bologna on 19 June 1999 by the ministers responsible for higher edu-

Hungarian/English/German/French Language and Literature) had almost fatal consequences for the Faculty of Theology. In the three-year undergraduate programme following the Bologna system and starting from the academic year 2005/2006, besides the single specialization of *Didactic Theology*, only the so-termed *Roman Catholic Social Theology* was left as a minor specialization.⁴² This latter one, set afloat as the renamed version of the *Roman Catholic Theology – Social Work* specialization, was not of long continuance for even though it made every effort to ensure a training of a quality substantially unchanged as compared to its predecessor despite time frames reduced to three years, because of its designation, *Social Theology*, students graduating with a specialization under this name faced insurmountable obstacles while trying to find employment in the helping profession. This may partly account for the almost fifty percent drop-out rates (27 drop-outs of 53) of the students admitted in the year 2005 (*Figure 1*). From the academic year 2009/2010, this specialization too regained the earlier, more comprehensive denomination of *Roman Catholic Theology – Social Work*.⁴³

Dropping Out

As can be seen from *Figure 1*, the drop-out ratio of students commencing their university studies is relatively high, and there is an ever-widening gap between

cation in the then twenty-nine participating countries (with seventeen further countries joined in by now), with the aim of creating a single European Higher Education Area. The three cornerstones of reforming the education system were institutional interoperability, student and teacher mobility, and the massification of higher education. For a critique regarding the System, see: LACZKOVICH, Miklós, *Bologna és a tanárképzés* [Bologna and Teacher Training]. At: <http://www.cs.elte.hu/~laczk/bol.pdf> (downloaded on: 20 July 2018).

⁴² Albeit Government Decree No 916 issued on 11 August 2005 regarding the accredited or provisionally approved higher education institutions and specializations includes the specializations of pastoral and didactic theology alone, the relevant government decrees issued in the following years, in addition to the abovementioned specializations, also comprise the specializations of sacred art and of the so-termed social theology that can be organized by denominations. Cf. Government Decree No 916/11.08.2005. In: MO 766/2005 August 23; Government Decree No 1175/6.09.2006. In: MO 769/2006 September 11; Government Decree No 676/28.06.2007. In: MO 481/2007 July 18; Government Decree No 635/11.07.2008. In: MO 467/2008 July 24.

⁴³ Cf. Government Decree No 749/24.07.2009. In: MO 465/2009 July 6.

the number of students who gain admission and those successfully graduating from university. Taking a look at the generations under discussion, a small share of the students left the Faculty of Theology based on individual decisions, a good part of them had to be sent down from the Faculty due to their poor academic results, and one student passed away during their university studies.

Table 1. *Statistical summary of students who were admitted, excluded or quit their studies, and graduated*

Year of admission	Student status				
	Admitted	Quit/excluded		Graduated	
		Number	%	Number	%
1996/97	20	3	15.00	17	85.00
1997/98	38	6	15.79	32	84.21
1998/99	50	9	18.82	41	82.00
1999/2000	51	9	17.65	42	82.35
2000/01	58	18	31.03	40	68.97
2001/02	40	12	30.70	28	70.00
2002/03	39	13	33.33	26	66.66
2003/04	41	16	39.02	25	60.98
2004/05 ⁴⁴	44	17	38.64	27	61.36
2005/06	53	26	49.06	27	50.94
2006/07	42	16	38.10	26	61.90
2007/08	29	13	44.82	16	51.17
2008/09	30	12	40.00	18	60.00
2009/10	47	15	31.91	32	68.09
2010/11	40	17	42.50	23	57.50
2011/12	37	19	51.35	18	48.65
2012/13	31	13	41.94	18	58.06
2013/14	34	9	26.47	25	73.53
Total	724	243	33.56	481	66.44

⁴⁴ Owing to the introduction of the Bologna system, two classes finished in the same year in 2008. This was the last class with a four-year study programme.

There is a clear increasing tendency of students who gained admission and dropped out in the first years of their university studies (*Figure 2*). In this regard, the first Bologna generation (2005–2008) reached historical peak values. In the preceding years, the first classes were launched with 40 students on average, while the average number of graduates was 27. Compared to this, there was an exceptionally high number of applicants, 53 in number. Since, however, the number of applicants was so high, altogether 27 graduated from their studies, which is 50.94% of the applicants. A highly promising student – who passed away in the meantime – could have also finished their studies, but even so the outcome would have been a graduation rate of merely 51.85%.

Emigration

While we are grieved about the fate of dropout students, we may be very pleased with the low number of graduates from the Faculty of Theology who have emigrated from their homeland. This can probably be explained, on the one hand, by the fact that there are relatively few voluntary (proactive) migrants among the students – that is, persons actively contributing to the migration trend –⁴⁵ due to a family- and homeland-oriented upbringing, and by that a high percentage of the graduates, especially of the first generations, could find employment based mostly on their minor, occasionally their major, or sometimes both specializations, on the other hand (*Figure 5*).

Although at the time of the survey 91 persons (19.91%) of the 457 responding graduates were outside the country borders, the rate of those looking for a permanent settlement was altogether 7.98%. Obviously, migration today is considered a rather protracted process involving several temporal phases due to the fuzzy boundaries between permanent emigration and temporary stay abroad,⁴⁶ and experience has shown that even individuals gone abroad, in principle, only for the period of their studies will stay there due to the difficulties of returning, absence of sufficient employment opportunities tailored to highly qualified

⁴⁵ Cf. GÖDRI, Irén – KISS, Tamás, *Migrációs hajlandóság, tervek és attitűdök az erdélyi magyarok körében* [Migration Tendency, Plans and Attitudes among Hungarians in Transylvania]. In: SPÉDER, Zsolt (ed.), *Párhuzamok. Anyaországi és erdélyi magyarok a századfordulón* [Comparisons, Hungarians from the Motherland and from Transylvania at the Turn of the Century]. Budapest, 2009/2: 183–215, here: 185.

⁴⁶ Cf. GÖDRI – KISS, 186.

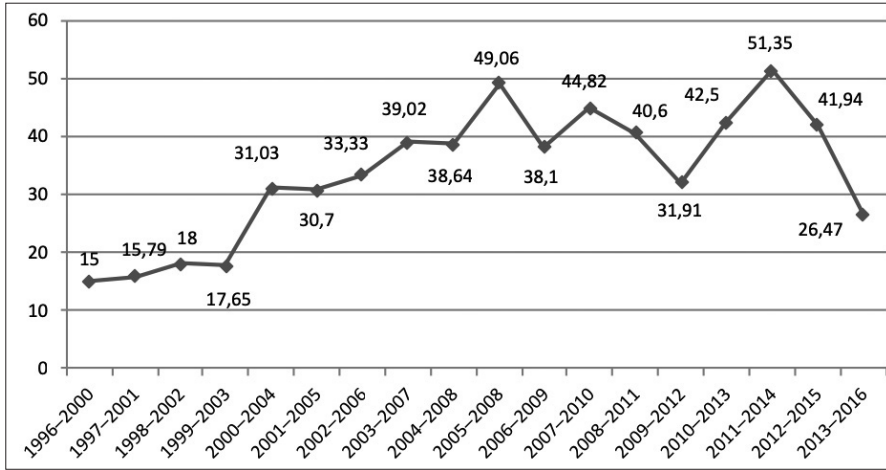


Figure 2. Changes in the percentage of students who either quit their studies or were excluded from the Faculty

persons, or the domestic salary levels far below the financial rewards that can be expected abroad.

By all means, concerning the tendency to emigrate, graduates of the Faculty of Theology do not show any significant deviation from the rest of the Transylvanian youths, but we can say that indices are somewhat below the average.

Consequently, despite that 91 individuals, i.e. 19.91% of the 457 responding graduates went abroad of the total 481 graduates making up the eighteen generations, by their own admission, altogether 69 persons – which is 15.10% of all graduates – left the country and settled abroad in Hungary, Austria, or other countries. The remaining 22 persons, i.e. 4.81%, left abroad with the intention of further education or temporary employment and, again by their own admission, plan to move back to their homeland (*Figure 3*).

We may regret that someone is forced or deliberately chooses to leave their homeland, but we are surely aware that there are no moral standards holding a person back from their search for happiness wherever they might think to find it. Not even the commandment to love one's parents, the duty of care for one's future aging parents are such norms that should keep anyone here, in their homeland.

Besides the numbers of those permanently established abroad, *Figure 3* also includes the persons who left for purposes of study trips as, although some of them have already returned home since the time of the survey, experience indi-

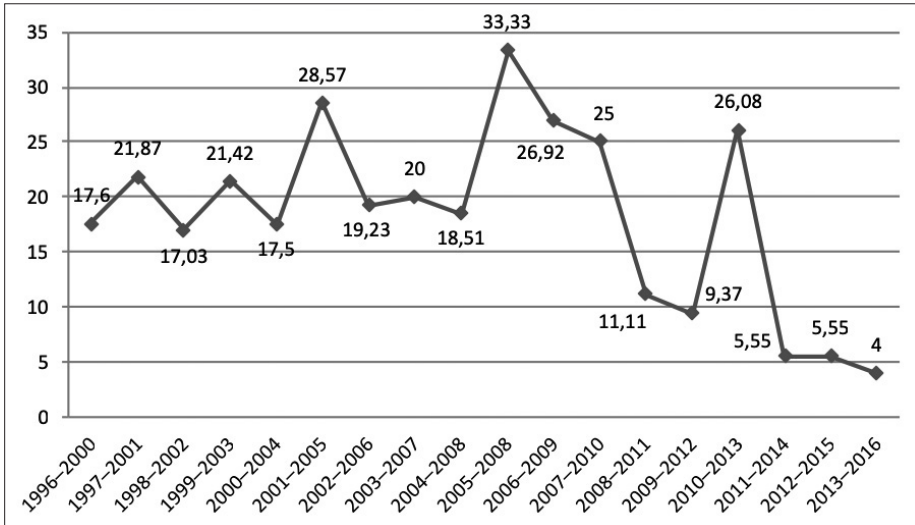


Figure 3. *Percentage of the graduates who left their country*

cates that an extended stay abroad, new social settings, or difficulties related to returning home and finding a job often make them change their previously flint-like determination to return home.

Yet, it can be concluded based on the figure that the practice of leaving for abroad fundamentally shows a decreasing tendency. This, however, in all probability, can be directly proportional, among other things, to the time elapsed since graduation from university. Many of the earlier classes and so far relatively few of the classes graduated at a later point of time left their homeland.

By a closer examination of how situation has changed for the graduates permanently established abroad or left for purposes of continuing their studies or finding short-term employment, we can see that while the rate of those leaving for abroad to further pursue their studies or find employment has been slightly on the rise over the years, the number of individuals intending to establish abroad permanently reveals a decreasing tendency.

The main country of destination for individuals leaving their homeland is Hungary. Thirty-seven of them have opted for this country as their place of emigration. In addition, 10 of our graduates left for Austria, 16 for Germany, 4 for Belgium, 13 for England, 2 each for Canada, Norway, Switzerland, and the United States of America, and 1 for each of the following countries: Spain, Poland, and Slovakia, Upper Hungary.

Career Positioning

Regarding the employment opportunities of students – in the profession they had studied – graduating from the Faculty of Theology, we must say that a twenty-year average of 60.08% may be considered a fairly good result. The golden age of the early years, however, was followed by a period of strong decline. Indeed, in the first years after 2000 marked as the starting year, when the employment index for getting jobs in correspondence with students’ profession-related qualifications was 70.58%, these figures maintained 66.16% in the first ten years until gradual decline pushed them down to 38.46% by the year 2010.

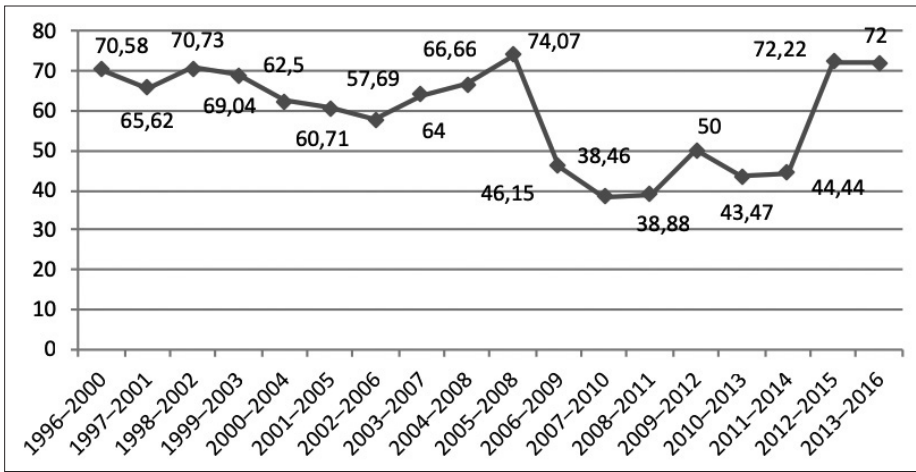


Figure 4. *Indices for the graduates’ employment within their own profession, expressed as a percentage*

Clearly, this tendency may be in interconnection with many things. On the one hand, higher mass education becoming consolidated in the nineties resulted in the gradual saturation of the labour market due to universities’ relentless production of generations of graduates on the assembly line of higher education. On the other hand, doing away with dual specializations, the Bologna system has considerably narrowed down employment opportunities, this way bringing about a general situation of instability.

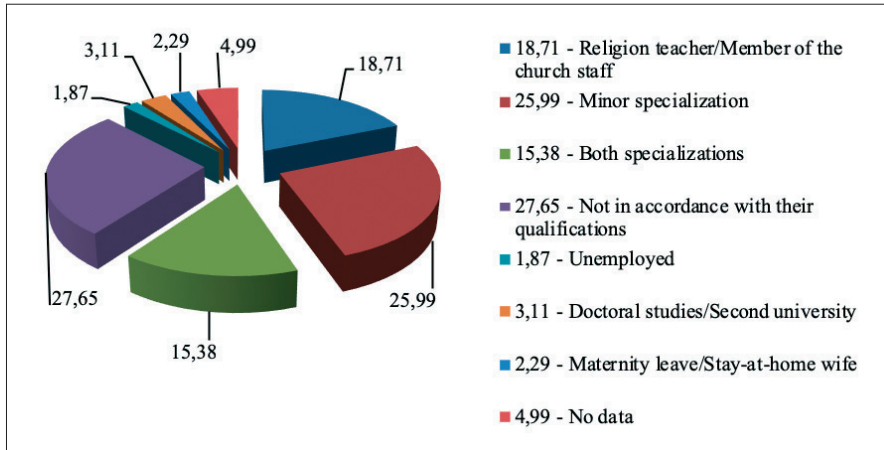


Figure 5. Career positioning indices expressed as a percentage

Numbers indicate that following the initial upswing lasting until the year 2008 a general decline set in, whereas the recent years have seen a significant consolidation again. This decline may be primarily connected with the elimination of dual specializations, whereas consolidation is due to the introduction of the private scholarship programme – to be presented later on in our study –, preparing the ground again for dual specialization. Finding employment as a religion teacher or as member of the church staff are the sole cases showing a stagnant, occasionally increasing tendency (Figure 6).

All things considered, it must be said that although the Bologna system adversely affected the Faculty of Theology and severely limited its prospects, the statistical data of the first twenty years reveal a story of success in the aggregate. Indeed, 60.08% of the graduated students, which is in absolute terms 289 alumni of the 481 students pursuing their studies, gained employment in the strict sense in their own profession as religion teachers, members of the church staff or with their minor specialization as teachers, social workers, or perhaps teachers of both subjects. The remaining 40% cannot be considered as lost graduates either since, though 24 alumni have an unknown place of work, 15 are not working yet as they are either pursuing doctoral studies (2.9%) or are enrolled in a second university, 108 found employment not in accordance with their qualifications, while 25 chose other careers/professions they got in connection with through additional trainings – and they did so successfully as altogether 9 individuals, 1.87% of the

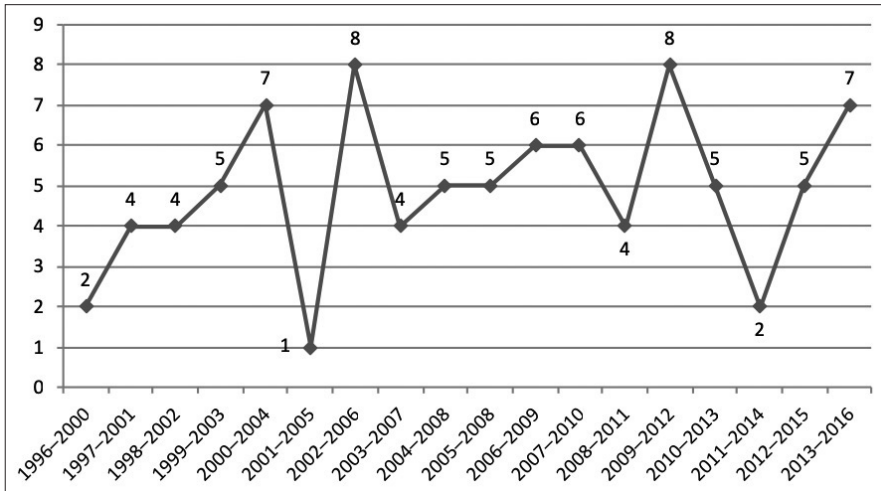


Figure 6. *Changes in the number of graduates employed as religion teachers or as members of the church staff regarding the twenty years under review*

graduates, admitted to being unemployed. The situation of our three graduates on maternity leave and eight further being stay-at-home moms/wives may professionally compromise these total numbers, but the importance of the family justifies them according to the feedbacks received.

It also cannot go without saying that among those alumni who have accepted employment outside their profession, not in line with their career path, we can find entrepreneurs just as mayors or persons working in the catering industry, the trade industry, or maybe in one of the au pair programmes of the Western countries.

Master’s and Doctoral Studies

48.35% of the respondents, that is, 221 received a master’s degree, eight of them even in two subjects. Altogether, 157 students earned a master’s degree in theology and 72 in other subjects as follows: social work – 16; Hungarian language and literature – 9; management – 8; history – 7; English and German language – 4-4; economics – 3; pedagogy, communication, psychology, mental hygiene, and tourism – 2-2; 11 further specializations – 1-1.

Our survey has also covered an investigation into doctoral studies. By mid-2018, when the collection of data had its closing phase, considering the graduates

of the first eighteen generations, twenty-four had already obtained a PhD degree and eighteen more had been pursuing their doctoral studies. Of the twenty-four students with a PhD degree, thirteen obtained their degree in theology and eleven of them in other subjects (Hungarian language and literature, German studies, Hungarian studies, psychology, history, law, and dentistry). At the same time, two of our former students have already completed their postgraduate training and are habilitated theologians, while another two are currently pursuing a habitation in Hungarian language and literature and history respectively. Of the thirteen doctors in theology, six obtained their degrees abroad and seven in our country, while of the eleven PhD graduates seven continued their studies abroad and four of them stayed within the country borders to pursue further training.

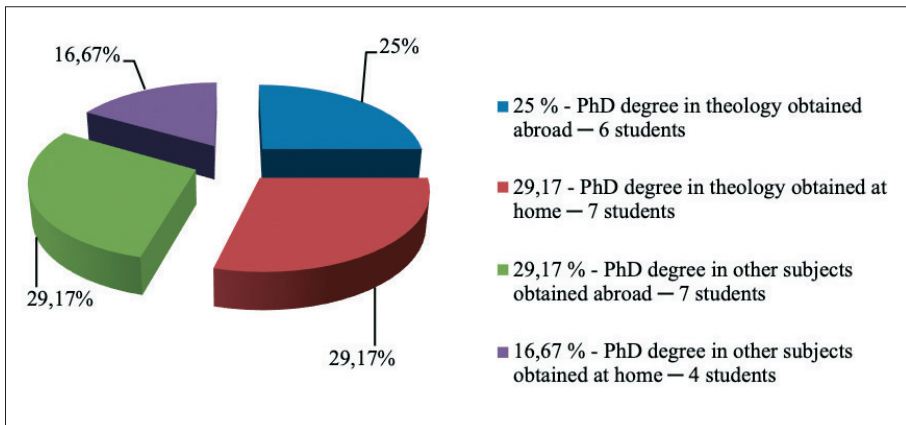


Figure 7. *PhD graduates expressed as a percentage*

In addition, eighteen more of our graduates are pursuing their doctoral studies. Among them, eight are studying for a PhD degree in theology – one abroad and seven at home –, while regarding other subjects three are studying abroad (Hungarian language and literature, sociolinguistics) and seven at home (history, philosophy, ethnography and anthropology, international relations), which gives a total number of ten PhD students pursuing their studies.

Considering the PhD graduates' gender distribution (18 girls [75%] and 6 boys [25%]), girls have improved their numbers by approx. 3.5% compared to their percentage in the gender composition ratio of students who completed their undergraduates studies at the Faculty of Theology (71.30% girls, 28.69% boys).

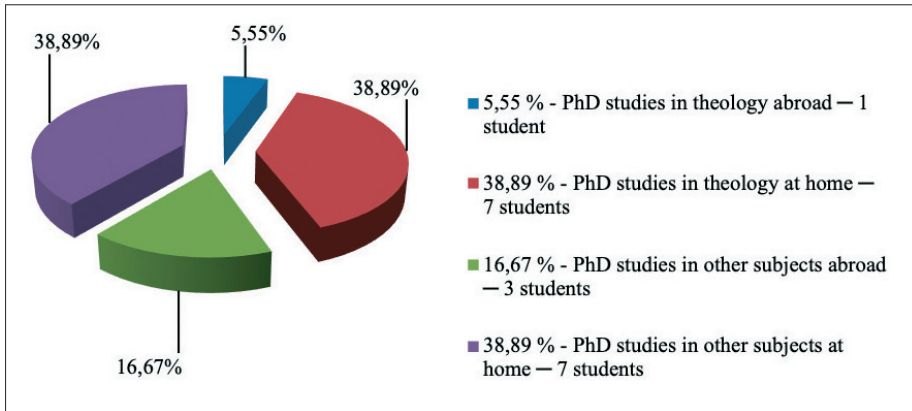


Figure 8. *PhD students expressed as a percentage*

However, the PhD students' gender distribution would tip the scales in favour of the boys should all of them successfully finish their studies, given their current ratio of 9 girls and 9 boys. This way, the gender distribution of the forty-two students to obtain a doctoral degree (27 girls [64.29%] and 15 boys [35.71]) would shift the ratio with approx. 8% in favour of the boys.

Further, in the case of candidates pursuing doctoral studies in theology, this ratio shifts somewhat more in favour of the boys due to the 8 female vs 5 male doctors in theology (61.54% girls, 38.46% boys) and the 3 female vs 5 male PhD students in theology (37.5% girls, 62.5% boys). As for PhD degrees obtained in other subjects – perhaps owing to the preponderance of female presence as a general characteristic of pedagogy –, the percentage of girls has reached values far beyond the ratio valid for the undergraduate studies, showing a 20 percent increase. Accordingly, there is a 10 girls: 1 boy ratio (90.91% girls, 9.09% boys), while in terms of the ongoing doctoral studies we get 6 girls and 4 boys (60% girls, 40% boys).

Interestingly, we can note that there is an exactly fifty-fifty distribution of the 42 PhD graduates and students/candidates in pursuing their doctoral studies in theology and other subjects. Should all 42 candidates complete their doctoral studies, 8.73% of the students finishing their undergraduate studies will have reached the highest level of university education.

Family Status

At the time of the survey, the graduates' willingness to marry and to have children were also placed under scrutiny. In terms of family status, it must be pointed out that the students graduating from the Faculty of Theology between 2000 and 2016 – except for a few rare cases – were born between the years 1978 and 1995, that is, they were in the age-group of 21–38 years. Of the 481 graduates, 270 individuals, i.e. 59.08% of the students entered a marriage. This data becomes interesting upon a comparison with the results of a Transylvanian-level survey carried out in the same period between 2005 and 2006, focusing on persons born between 1960 and 1984, that is, belonging to the age range of 20–44 years at the time of the survey.⁴⁷

Table 2. *Family status at the time of the survey: 20–44 years old, Transylvania; 21–38 years old, Faculty of Theology, 2010*

Family status	Transylvania 20–44 years old		Faculty of Theology 21–38 years old	
	No.	%	No.	%
Bachelor, spinster	784	33.6	154	33.69
Married ⁴⁸	1401	60.1	270	59.08
In a relationship ⁴⁹	–	–	23	5.03
Widow(er)	30	1.3	0	
Divorced	114	4.9	10	2.18
Total		3.7	457	100.00

⁴⁷ Cf. FÖLDHÁZI, Erzsébet, *Az első házasság felbomlása. Válás Magyarországon és az erdélyi magyarok körében* [The First Dissolution of Marriage. Divorce in Hungary and among Hungarians in Transylvania]. In: SPÉDER, 133–149, here: 136.

⁴⁸ For the sake of comparability of our statistical data with the Transylvanian-level numbers, the five persons married for a second time were also included in the category of married people, just as two friars who chose a sacrament of vocation.

⁴⁹ Supposedly, the 'registered partnership' option created some misunderstandings, as we included this alternative in our questionnaire with regard to our graduates living abroad, which is why we mark all answers that fall under this category as 'living in a relationship'

The above comparative table allows us to point out that the Faculty's graduates between 21 and 38 years of age give evidence of a fairly high marriage index when compared to the average scores of the 20–44 year olds at the level of Transylvania, claiming 59.08% compared to the 60.1% of the Transylvanian average. What is more, they offer the legitimate hope of going, with the advancement of age, well beyond the Transylvanian average.

Of the 457 respondents, 227 reported to have no children up to that time, whereas 392 children altogether were born in the wedlock of the remaining 230 students up to the closing date of the research as follows: 5-5 children were born in 2 families, 4-4 children in 6 families, 3-3 children in 24 families, 2-2 children in 101 families, and 1-1 child in 84 families.

Summary: There's Truth in Scholarship and Dormitories

The aim of our study was to present the situation of the first 18 generations who finished their studies in the period between 2000 and 2016 at the Faculty of Theology established within the framework of Babeş–Bolyai University in 1996 and to provide an insight into the evolution of religion teacher and lay theological training in Transylvania.

The paramount consideration was to examine whether studying theology (by itself or in combination with other subjects) pays off or proves its worth in today's Transylvania. The reviewed period revealed that theological education had the golden age of its first twenty-year history in the years between 2000 and 2004. Following this interval, besides graduating classes with numbers stagnating within the range of 25 and 29, there was a significantly increasing percentage of students leaving or excluded from the Faculty, i.e. 'switching careers', during their university studies.

As for the tendency to migrate abroad, the graduates of the Faculty of Theology by no means stand out significantly among the group of Transylvanian youths, but indices show a downward migration trend. This outcome becomes particularly interesting if we take a look at changes in the number of graduates permanently settled abroad and those who temporarily left the country either to continue their studies or to find temporary employment. In this context, we can see that facts point towards a declining tendency in the number of individuals permanently settled abroad, while the number of individuals who temporarily left the country to continue their studies or to find a temporary job shows a slight

increase. However, we must also note that experience shows that extended stays abroad, new social settings, or difficulties related to returning home and finding a job often make them change their previously flint-like determination to return home.

The eighteen-year average of finding employment in the chosen profession is highly satisfactory provided that we can put a stop to this downward trend in the future. Professional advance mental so shows an excellent overall picture. Besides that 48.35% of the students have completed their master's studies, 24 persons also obtained a PhD degree and 18 are currently pursuing their doctoral studies.

Concerning the students' family status, it should also be observed that 270 former students, amounting to 59.08%, entered a marriage, and a total of 392 children were born out these marriages.

All in all, we must say that the average indicators are not poor regarding lay theological training in Transylvania, and our students' situation most certainly does not fall short of the achievements of those graduating from other undergraduate degree programmes. Considering the general tendencies suggested by the survey, however, recommending a single specialization featuring theological training would be difficult to justify. Therefore, bearing in mind the benefit of both the institution of the theological faculty and of the students as well as in order to avoid a future without prospects and the already outlined ethical impasse, the teaching staff of the Faculty of Theology are looking for solutions. Offering to undertake any second specialization in combination with theology and providing scholarships for its students appears to be the most viable solution. Since legal framework does not ensure – at least for the moment – the launching of a dual specialization within the Bologna system, taking on the two specializations separately could be the key. On the one hand, this – although imposing an intensive schedule on students – makes possible the pursuing of university studies in two specializations at the same time. On the other hand, it allows for those who would otherwise have to give up on further educational opportunities due to financial considerations to take up any secondary specialization besides theological training.

Although not permitted under law for a Romanian citizen to pursue two specializations funded by the state, that is, free of tuition, if a student gains admission to a tuition-free place of any theological specialization (didactic theology, theology–social work, religious studies) and enrolls as a fee-paying student in any other specialization of Babeş–Bolyai University, they will receive a study grant

from the Faculty of Theology, with the support of the Roman Catholic Status Foundation of Transylvania.

The practice of pursuing a dual specialization backed up by a financial assistance termed as private scholarship was introduced by the Faculty of Theology with the awarding of 10 scholarships offered by St Michael's Parish of Cluj-Napoca at the request of the Committee of the Theological Faculty starting from the academic year 2008/2009. In accordance with the century-long tradition of the Roman Catholic Status Foundation of Transylvania, it also 'endeavours to motivate students by offering them a scholarship, to promote the cultivation of Christian intellectuals trained in theology as well, so that they can have a combined academic training by taking up a second specialization besides theology'.⁵⁰ Thus, the Foundation has been supporting the programme, increasing the number of scholarships over the academic years as follows: 2009/2010 – 5 scholarships, 2010/2011 – 10 scholarships, 2011/2012 – 15 scholarships, and 2012/2013 – 20 scholarships.⁵¹ Supported by further national and foreign allowances, by today, the number of students benefiting from such financing supports has reached 45–50. At the same time, the Diocese of Satu Mare supports its students awarding them the so-called Pax maintenance and study grants per class as a way of recognition of their learning outcomes, conduct, and activities performed in community building. Finally, students are entitled to apply for the scholarships – merit scholarships, study and maintenance grants – usually available at universities.

In addition to private scholarships, the Faculty of Theology, relying on the efficient support of the Roman Catholic Status Foundation of Transylvania, also provides accommodation in dormitories for all of its students who require it, this way trying to ease the financial burdens of parents having their children study at universities in Cluj-Napoca.

So, the Catholic intelligentsia of the future, while studying Hungarian language and literature, physiotherapy, law, economics, pedagogy, political science,

⁵⁰ ERKSL 170/2009, dossier for year 2009: *Az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus Alapítvány 2009. szeptember 12-én tartott második rendes közgyűlésének jegyzőkönyve* [Minutes of the Second Ordinary General Meeting of the Roman Catholic Status Foundation of Transylvania Held on 12 September 2009].

⁵¹ ERKSL, dossiers for the years 2010–2012: *Az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus Alapítvány 2010. április 24-én, 2011. március 26, 2012. szeptember 15 tartott közgyűléseinek jegyzőkönyvei* [Minutes of the General Meetings of the Roman Catholic Status Foundation of Transylvania Held on 10 April 2010, 26 March 2011, and 15 September 2012].

psychology, sociology, history, journalism, various sciences, or any other specialization, has the opportunity to acquire not only such professional knowledge but at the same time theological expertise and spiritual values as well. Thus, offering an opportunity for a development that integrates both science and spirituality is such an investment for the Faculty of Theology that can help achieve its stated objective: its students to learn the order of the created world and, upon finishing their university studies, to know they have God on their side in every moment of their life. This way, ‘they will be able to provide an answer as members of the intelligentsia for the existential questions of today’s people, will stand for Christian values in society, and will contribute to their implementation’.⁵²

Apparently, the objectives of religion teacher and lay theological training need to be revisited. Even though the theological considerations regarding the role of the laity might not be a compelling reason in and of itself, the clergy shortage gradually emerging in our Transylvanian dioceses as well should by all means raise the question of calling trained lay theologians into pastoral work. It appears desirable that we should not wait to act under exigent circumstances, as once was the case of the assistant priest, the so-called institution of licentiate,⁵³ but, while it is still an option, we should be the ones doing our best to shape the circumstances and, guided by the Spirit of God, to seek the will of his Holy Divineness in our community life as well.

⁵² *Babeş-Bolyai Tudományegyetem, Római Katolikus Teológia Kar* [The Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology at Babeş–Bolyai University]. At: <https://ersekseg.ro/hu/templom/1349> (downloaded on: 30 August 2018).

⁵³ Licentiatees were laymen somewhat more educated than the average population, who during the clergy shortage in the 17th century – on the basis of a temporary assignment – took upon themselves the performance of simple clerical tasks, such as the catechesis, and administered the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Matrimony. Cf. SÁVAI, János, *A csíksomlyói és a kantai iskola története* [The History of the Schools in Şumuleu Ciuc and in Kanta]. Szeged, 1997: 130, 141, 172–173, 270.

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