

## Gergely Antal Sárközi

### *The history of Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary between the two world wars*

#### *– With special regard to the History of Education –*

#### **Theses of the dissertation**

1) The most important question of the dissertation is: should we really consider the era between the two world wars among the great eras of the Seminary? Based on the research, we can say that this great era did not cover the entire period between 1918 and 1939, only part of it, the time between 1931-1938.

2) For the Transdanubian Church District, the presence of Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary was unquestionable. For many people the Pápa Reformed College – including the Seminary – provided an opportunity to develop, to create an existence, and the learn. This circumstance also meant a continuous supply of students. Due to its small size and the pastoral attitude of the professors, the Seminary was characterized by familiarity.

3) In the period under examination the decisions made by the faculty and the superior church authorities in relation to the Seminary were not always appropriate. Factors that make work difficult were among others: departments vacant for many years, frequent professor changes, the many substitutions, and the „dual education” appearing in the era. Difficulties were also caused by the lack of a boarding school, and the workload of professors performing additional duties.

4) Even though Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary was the smallest theological seminary in Hungary, but professors of national and European renown were teaching here. As a maintainer, the Transdanubian Church District made sure that former students of the Seminary returned there to teach. This strict order began too loosen in the late twenties.

The lecturers of the Seminary were: in the Philosophical Department Dr. József Horváth and Dr. Dezső Trócsányi, the Old Testament Studies Department Dr. Lajos Tóth, the New Testament Studies Department Dr. József Pongrácz, the Dogmatic Department Dr. Vince Vass and Dr. István Török, the Church History Department Dr. Endre Tóth, and in the Practical Theology Department Lajos Csizmadia and Dr. Endre Tóth, and later Dr. Sándor Benedek. Their work was very beneficial for the Seminary and the Church District.

Upon examining the work of several professors, we can conclude that some/many of them specialized in more than one theological discipline.

5) The academic quality of the Seminary is well indicated by the fact that the achievements of the professors in Pápa have been recognized abroad. In addition, the series of publications launched in 1931 increased the recognition of the Seminary, and at the same time highlighted Pápa among other theological faculties in Hungary.

6) The theological professors in Pápa also actively participated in the tasks of the public church. The recognition of the staff is indicated by the fact that the new theological curriculum introduced in 1940 was developed by the professors of Pápa. This curriculum was accepted and introduced by the Egyetemes Konvent (the supreme governing and executive body of the Hungarian Reformed Church) after minor modifications.

7) The new theological curriculum published in 1924 included more space for seminary work. In Pápa, the seminar-system was integrated into the work of the „Ferenc Tóth” Self-Educational Society. In the seminar-system, Dr. Endre Tóth’s practical theological work is outstanding, he placed emphasis on preparing the students for church life. His work represented the height of practical theological education in Pápa.

8) An active „internal mission” life also characterized the Seminary in Pápa. It seems, this was most spiritual characteristic of Pápa among other hungarian tehological faculties. Professors representing Anglo-Saxon pietism (Lajos Csizmadia, Dr. József Pongrácz) introduced the students to missionary life, who then propagated it in their respective parishes.

9) The good relations with the other Hungarian theological faculties were maintained for example through exchange student programs. These relations and the equal scientific standard are also indicated by the joint publications that appeared during the period.

10) The Seminary primarily tried to help its students with its foreign relations. These relations were one-sided, and it can be concluded that the Seminary needed them more than the external partner institutions. Many students of Pápa went abroad to study, but no foreigners came to Pápa to study. Many foreign professors received the title of honorary professor in Pápa, but – to our knowledge– no professors of Pápa received such an honour abroad.

### **The theme and aim of the dissertation**

The dissertation deals with the History of Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary between the two world wars, especially from the point of view of educational history. The objective of the dissertation was to answer the question whether the period between the two world wars can really be considered among the great eras of Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary.

### **Applicability of the dissertation and its relation to the history of research**

In total, three comprehensive monographs dealing with the history of Pápa Reformed College have been published. In addition, databases, memoirs, and several shorter and longer articles and studies related to the history of the institution were published.

The most recent of the monographs (1981) treats the comprehensive history of Pápa Reformed College from the beginning to 1951-1952, but this work provides little information about the theological education.

The theme of the dissertation was influenced by Dr. Gábor Vladár’s 2006 study; in fact, this is what gave the impetus to the research. The purpose of this dissertation is to present the most productive period of the theological education of Pápa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and to point out results that have received little or no attention so far.

### **Methodology of the dissertation**

Our most important primary sources were those of the Transdanubian Reformed Church District Archives (Dunántúli Református Egyházkerület Levéltára): faculty minutes, contemporaneous documents of theology, church district minutes, convention minutes, central theological curricula; articles published by the official journal of the Transdanubian Church District, and other journal articles.

In addition, among the main sources were manuscripts and printed works from theological professors, as well as evaluations and reminiscences.

With the help of these sources, the dissertation presents the educational history of Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary, also touching upon the life of the brother-theologies.

## Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of five main chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, in which the hypothesis is established.

The second chapter presents the framework of theological education. We find an organizational structure, the characteristics of education, the impact of the central theological curricula that appeared in the period under review of the theological education of Pápa. This chapter is auxiliary for reading the main chapters of the dissertation.

The third chapter is the most extensive, in which we find the history of the theological departments of Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary. This section contains descriptions of the works of theological professors and their evaluations, through which it is possible to assess the theological education from a scientific historical point of view. This is the core of the dissertation. The account of each department ends with an overview.

The fourth chapter presents the other areas of student training. Here we can read about the seminary work within the framework of „theological self-educational society”, and the „dual training”, which dominated the theological education for only a short period.

In the fifth chapter the foreign relations of the Seminary are discussed, mainly from the viewpoint of the history of education: the students' visits to universities abroad, the honorary teachers of the Seminary, enthusiastic supporters who supported the Seminary with their material or immaterial assistance.

After the individual chapters we find excursions which are helpful in elucidating the history line of Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary.

## Publications of the author connected to the theme of the dissertation

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