



15
57

Evangélikus
Hittudományi
Egyetem

EVANGELICAL UNIVERSITY OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
DOCTORAL SCHOOL

THESES OF THE Ph.D. DISSERTATION

*The motivations and leadership challenges of religious organizational cultural change in the
light of the joining of members of the Christian Advent Community to the Seventh-day
Adventist Church*

Written by: Ernő Ósz-Farkas

Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Károly Hafenscher,
EHE Head of the Department of Practical Theology
and
Prof. em. Dr. János Tomka
PTF Head of Management Sciences

Budapest
2023

Theses

On 23 April 2015 the incumbent leaders of Keresztény Advent Közösség (hereinafter KERAK) and Hetednapi Adventista Egyház (hereinafter HNA) signed the reconciliation document titled „Comprehensive settlement proposal of the negotiating delegations.” This resulted in more than seven hundred people deciding to join, which is considered an extraordinary event in the life of a domestic small church with five thousand adult members, from a spiritual, sociological, and management perspective as well. In the forty years that have passed since the schism, at least eight large unification attempts conducted with the help of international mediation have failed. Based on the above case study, the purpose of the dissertation is to examine the specifics of organizational cultural change within the church, its motivations and leadership challenges in the various stages of the process. The methodology of the research combines the analysis of the relevant literature with a qualitative analysis based on focus groups, the use of group interviews, and the practical theological approach suggested by Osmer.

The dissertation raises six questions and six hypotheses, for which six theses are formulated (more details in Chapter VI of the dissertation).

1. What motivations started the accession process in 2015 after forty years of continuous failed experimentation?

Hypothesis: Religious identity crisis can be the basic motivation for joining.

The first thesis can be formulated in accordance with the hypothesis: **the process of settlement, reconciliation, and healing of religious units torn apart for any reason is initiated by an identity crisis realized in the bitter experience of internal disappointments, referring to a principled conviction centered on the Word. Disappointment within the group overrides identity.**

2. Is there a connection between the motivations that cause separation and the motivations that cause joining?

Hypothesis: Separation from the church and joining the church are opposing religious sociological processes, therefore there is basically no connection between the basic motivations that trigger the two processes.

Second thesis: **There is a close correlation between the basic motivations for religious schism and joining.**

3. What internal and external dynamics drive church processes?

Hypothesis: The processes that tear apart church frameworks and hold them together are fundamentally driven by different religious convictions and trends in religious life.

Third thesis: **Religious schisms follow the same sociological, social, psychological and management technical regularities, even though their spiritual leaders always explain their necessity with theological and spiritual reasons. Due to the coincidence of the root causes of separation and joining, joining is also a multifaceted process, in which sociological, social, psychological and management technical regularities have a specific role. A split occurs when most of the reasons listed in the analysis (external: socio-political; internal: different theological trends, dissatisfaction, unsatisfied needs; power: power field tilts, power games, legitimation crisis; identity: desire for independence, identity deficit or crisis; action of a charismatic leader: repressed leadership ambitions, personal grievances of leaders or potential leaders) come together and thus form an explosive mixture. At the same time,**

it can be stated that the unity is restored when the causes of the connection come together into a healing mixture.

4. To what extent can the changing of religious culture be explained by business models?

Hypothesis: The driving forces of the business and religious worlds are different; therefore, the religious cultural change cannot be explained by the cultural change models set up in the business world either.

Fourth thesis: **The main features of the religious cultural change are the same as the business cultural change, but due to its specificities, a combined model is needed.**

5. What specific additional management tasks does religious cultural change entail?

Hypothesis: The management challenges of religious cultural change are not fundamentally different from the challenges accompanying corporate change processes.

Fifth thesis: **The management challenges of religious cultural change are not fundamentally different from the challenges accompanying corporate change processes, but additional tasks appear in the spiritual dimension. As a result of the biggest challenge of religious cultural change: change sometimes requires getting past a leader who wants to stop time; for a successful cultural change, it is necessary to build on previous managerial experiences.**

6. What processes ensure the internal unity of the church in a period of cultural change?

Hypothesis: Preserving the internal unity of the church is primarily a management issue.

Sixth thesis: **The preservation of the internal unity of the church in a cultural change process is directly proportional to the intensity of the conversion experience.**

7. Additional findings

According to the findings of the research, the following can play a role in promoting reconciliation:

- clarifying the main pillars of religious identity, which can create a common platform between opposing groups
- the processing of the past, burdened with conflicts and traumas, can be effective not with the need for objectivity, but with the respect and acceptance of different experiences
- the restoration of an atmosphere of trust is possible only through credible leadership, who is accepted by the majority of groups within the organization
- illustrating and teaching the spiritual dimensions of reconciliation is more important than trying to permanently eliminate differences
- recognition of the external, social conditions can be important in working on internal changes. External circumstances cannot be created, but their positive effects can be noticed and used
- cultural changes proceed from the top down, rarely from the bottom up, therefore management has an active role in the change

- transformational leadership style is the most important factor in the cultural change process, and the support of knowledge sharing can be the most important leadership task in religious environments as well
- when groups with different cultures meet, integration is a process that cannot be avoided, because the fixation of the double bond undermines the unity of the organization.
- when groups with different cultures meet, integration is a process that cannot be avoided, because the fixation of the double bond undermines the unity of the organization.
- when groups of different cultures meet, integration is a process that cannot be avoided, because the fixation of the double bond challenges the unity of the organization. It is not possible to be attached to the previous identity for a long time and live in the new one, because identity disorder arises at the individual level and conflict at the organizational level

Publications:

Peer-reviewed publications related to the topic of the dissertation

1. *Promoting the Birth of New Leaders In the Church Based on Barnabas' Example*
In: Béla Levente Baráth; Gábor Kiss; Alexandra Mikó-Prém. THROUGH YEARS AND DENOMINATIONS: English Volume of the Conference of Junior theologians and Doctoral Students 2018-2021, Debrecen: Debreceni Református Hittudományi Egyetem, pp 287-302 (2022)
2. *Egyházszakadások mintázata a kommunizmus idején*
In: Kajos Luca Fanni, PTE/DI/Egészségtudományi Doktori Iskola; Bali Cintia, PTE/DI/Pszichológia Doktori Iskola; Puskás T; Szabó R (szerk.)
XI. Interdiszciplináris Doktorandusz Konferencia 2022 Tanulmánykötet: 11th Interdisciplinary Doctoral Conference 2022 Conference Book
3. *Egyházszakadást követő csatlakozási folyamat motívumai a Hetednapi Adventista Egyházban*
In: Kajos Luca Fanni PTE/DI/Egészségtudományi Doktori Iskola; Bali Cintia, PTE/DI/Pszichológia Doktori Iskola; Preisz Zsolt; Szabó Rebeka (szerk.)
X. Jubileumi Interdiszciplináris Doktorandusz Konferencia 2021 tanulmánykötet = 10th Jubilee Interdisciplinary Doctoral Conference 2021, Conference book
4. *Practical Theological Interpretation on Burnout*
In: Kiss Gábor (Kiss Gábor egyházjog) (szerk.) Fiatal Kutatók és Doktoranduszok X. Nemzetközi Jubileumi Teológuskonferenciájának Tanulmánykötete: Volume of the 10th Jubilee Conference of Junior Theologians and Doctoral Students. Budapest. Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége (DOSZ), pp 426-442 (2020)

Other professional publications:

5. *A Sátántangó intertextuális kapcsolata a Jelenések könyvével*
ATF Szemle / Adventista Szemle (1787-0178): XIV 1 pp 67-83 (2021)

6. *Korszakváltás a misszióban: A Covid előtti időszak tanulságai a DET gyülekezeteiben*
ATF Szemle / Adventista Szemle (1787-0178): 2022 1 pp 135-151 (2022)

7. *Aszkézis és eszkaton*
ATF Szemle / Adventista Szemle (1787-0178): 2020 2 pp 89-101 (2021)

Other publications

MTMT - <https://m2.mtmt.hu/frontend/#view/Publication/SmartQuery/1127/>