

*Laudatio*  
for Professor Gerd Theissen,  
on the occasion of awarding him the title of *doctor honoris causa*

Gerd Theissen was born in Rheydt (today Mönchengladbach), in Germany, on 24 April, 1943. He studied theology and Germanistics at the University of Bonn, where in 1968 he also earned his doctorate in the research area of the Letter to the Hebrews. He was an assistant of Professor Philip Vielhauer. He made his habilitation in Bonn in 1972 treating the theme of the early Christian miracle stories. From 1976 to 1978 he worked as a secondary school teacher, teaching religion and German language. Between 1978 and 80 he was professor of New Testament studies at the University of Copenhagen. Since 1980 he has been professor of New Testament studies at the University of Heidelberg.

He is an ordained pastor in the Church of Baden („Landeskirche“). Alongside his teaching work he often preaches. Five volumes of his sermons and meditations bear witness to his preaching ministry.

His wife, Dr. Christa Schaible, is a psychologist and psychotherapist. They have two children.

The work of Professor Gerd Theissen covers wide fields in New Testament studies. He has published 15 books, is co-author of 3 books, and has published more than 110 chapters or essays in books and journals, numerous articles in lexicons, and a great number of reviews. Taken together, these writings deal with practically all the important issues of the discipline. These writings have an interdisciplinary purview, summarizing the results of the research of Professor Theissen in such a way that representatives of other disciplines can also join in the dialogue with theology – scholars from the field of psychology, of sociology, and even of evolution. His ability to build up systems of ideas is a rare achievement in today’s scholarship. We can confidently affirm that Professor Theissen belongs to the most outstanding scholars of the New Testament of our day. This is also signaled by the fact that his works are translated into more than ten languages, both European and Asian languages. Several of his writings have appeared in Hungarian. An example would be *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion* (2000). Professor Theissen has particularly excelled at studying the life of the early Christians from a sociological perspective: his work from 1977 entitled *The Sociology of the Jesus Movement* has become influential across the spectrum of contemporary scholarship. In 2004 he published a completely reworked version of this book, covering the generation-long history of research in this area, *Die Jesusbewegung: Socialgeschichte einer Revolution der Werte*

(„The Jesus-Movement: the Social-History of a Revolution of Values”). The Hungarian translation of this book will be published soon.

Professor Theissen is the member of the Academy of Sciences in Heidelberg. He has given guest lectures in Chicago, Cambridge, Oxford and Hongkong. He holds the honorary doctoral degree from the Universities of Neuchatel, Glasgow, St. Andrews, Lund and Aarhus.

He also stands in an active working relationship with our University: he gave guest lectures at our Faculty of Theology in 2003. He supports the research of our New Testament Department in various ways; for example, he took part in the evaluation of a habilitation, he supports research projects, and he is „hosting professor” at the Humboldt scholarship of one of our lecturers.

On the basis of all these, I propose that for his outstanding work in New Testament scholarship, Professor Gerd Theissen be awarded the degree *doctor honoris causa* from the Faculty of Theology of the Károli Gáspár Reformed University.

Prof. Dr. Peter Balla  
Chair of New Testament Studies  
Faculty of Theology  
Károli Gáspár Reformed University