

Book Reviews

Matthias HARTMANN and Vasile STANCIU (eds.), *Das Leben als Geschenk Gottes. Christliche Verantwortung im Angesicht des Todes*, *Seria Biblioteca teologică germano-română*, Schiller Verlag, Bonn-Sibiu, 2018, 216 pp.

The Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca hosted the 4th Theological Consultation, with the theme: *Life as a gift of God. Christian responsibility in the perspective of death*, in a bilingual edition: German and Romanian, as evidenced by the volume with the above title. It is a collaboration in the field of social assistance between the Diaconia of Neuendettelsau - Germany and the philanthropic activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

As the editors of this volume mention, the purpose of the Theological Consultation from Cluj-Napoca was to

“develop fundamental reflections and ethical support, which would center this fundamental character of the gift of life in a social and economic environment that it is oriented, above all, towards the profit and utility of all things and even of life itself. Knowing that all the participating Churches and Diaconia face these challenges, the participating theologians sought, starting from the interpretation of Holy Scripture and on the basis of their own theological tradition, the norms for a responsible approach and way of acting, in the perspective of the horizon of the border of death. Thus, it was concluded that it is the duty of Christians in this world to provide assistance and protect life at this time as well” (p. 12).

Thus, beyond the theological dialogue existing between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Church in Germany, starting from

1979, another kind of dialogue is taking place between these Churches, namely, in the field of social assistance or Christian philanthropy.

The IV theological Consultation from Cluj was preceded by three others, starting from 2008, when the series of these Consultations began. Therefore, the first Theological Consultation between representatives of the two Churches took place in Neuendettelsau (Germany), with the theme: *“Any ministration starts from the altar”*. *Social activity of the Protestant Church in Germany and in the Romanian Orthodox Church*.

Second Consultation theological with the theme: *Holy Spirit - our sanctification* was held at the Brâncoveanu Monastery from Sâmbăta de Sus (Romania), 2011.

The third Consultation theological took place in 2013 in Neuendettelsau and was focused on theme: *Understanding man as the image of God*.

The Diaconia Institute in Neuendettelsau is one of the most representative settlements of Philanthropy in Germany, comprising over 200 social settlements with over 7800 employees. 40 schools are under the jurisdiction of the Neuendettelsau Diaconia and services for elderly in as many settlements in Germany and Poland. The Diaconia in Neuendettelsau has several clinics in the Ansbach, Neuendettelsau, Nuremberg, and Schwabach, offering care services for over 2000 people. Over 1000 children attend kindergartens and after school in the Nuremberg metropolitan area.

The the present work renders the Greetings of the hosts and guests, after which the conferences held by theologians of the two Churches are integrated.

Thus, Rev. Prof. Dr. Christian Strecker presented theme : *Treasure in Clay Pots. About the dialectic of death and life in the theology of the Holy Apostle Paul*.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Ioan Chirilă delivered the conference: *Heroes , Martyrs and Confessors: The Liturgy Prayer Dedicated to Them- Argument for the Universality and Koinonicity of the Divine Liturgy*.

Rev. Dr. Peter Munzert presented conference: *When Life is Unbearable and Death Impossible. Spiritual assistance in a Limit Situation*.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Stefan Iloaie concentrated on: *Euthanasia – “The Lost Death” - Between the Freedom to Die and the Compulsion to Live*.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Friederich Heckmann presented the issue of Christian ethics in the conference entitled: *Christian Ethics and the Responsibility of the Churches Towards the Process of Death in a Secular and Postmodern Society*.

Finally, Prof. Dr. Sebastian Moldovan treated the theme: “*Wilful Death*”. *The Significance of a Christian Ideal for the Contemporary Problem of Voluntary Termination of Life*.

The editors included a relevant annex, presenting the recommendations which the Conference of Orthodox Bishops and in Germany, together with the Lutheran Church in Germany (EKD), gave to the members of the two Churches, in the context of the topic addressed by the present work, and put under the the generic: “*So that you do not grieve...*”. In this document there are several guidelines, which the leaders of the two Churches have made for church ministers and their believers. Some of these should be mentioned: accompanying the sick and their relatives to death, praying for the sick facing death, burial forms, death in exceptional situations, etc.

All these theological contributions highlighted the fundamental coordinates of the understanding of life from a Christian point of view, in order to capture the way in which death is understood within the horizon of the gift of life. The book is worth reading, because it brings many clarifications for the contemporary man, faced with lighter or heavier suffering, and finally with the reality of death.

The merit of the present work is also that it has highlighted the fact that, in addition to inter-Christian theological dialogue, which is very important for the closeness between Christians of the same faith, practical cooperation is also of great importance, i.e. in terms of serving one’s fellow man, according to the Model of Jesus Christ, Who came into the world to serve and save the world.

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