

## Book Reviews

**R**einard THÖLE, *Geheiligt werde Dein Name. Christliche Gottesdienste zwischen Anbetung und Anbiederung*, Baden-Baden, Tectum Verlag, 2021, 178 pp.

Under this title: *Hallowed be Thy name. Divine worship between adoration or worship and favor*, the German theologian Reinhard Thöle undertakes an analysis of divine worship, its meaning and fruits in the Christian life. The author of this book was a professor of History and Theology of the Eastern Churches in several theological centers in Germany, but especially at the University of Halle-Wittenberg, Germany.

The author starts his analyzes from the practical observation that the forms of the different services, the way of their officiating, as well as the attitude of the participants towards them are so differently understood within the different denominations or Churches, that he feels the need to undertake an analysis of the meaning of divine worship, of its relationship to the One Who is at its center - God or Jesus Christ, the Mother of God, the saints - as well as how people understand this cultic relationship with the divine Transcendent.

The work includes, after an Introduction (p. 1-5), ten parts or chapters, in which the various aspects of divine worship are analyzed. If in the Introduction, the author tries to explain the phenomenon of divine worship, in the first chapter the roots of the liturgical worship, seen as a heritage that comes from the past, are analyzed (p. 7-22). The author rightly states that the New Testament itself cannot be understood without the experience of the Supper celebrated after the Resurrection with the risen Christ. On the other hand, the celebration of the Eucharist preserves, interprets and ennobles the biblical accounts about the Risen Christ and, at the same time, provides a living framework for the interpretation of these accounts of the Gospels. In other words, there is a reciprocity between these biblical

accounts and the celebration of the Eucharist (p. 9). In this chapter, other explanations of divine worship are detailed in relation to the Church, which acquires a certain identity through worship. In the liturgical worship, one can feel the mystery of Almighty God and the presence of man with his weaknesses: the mighty God and the weak man rising up to the living God. In divine worship, man is like a deer that sighs for springs of water and seeks to meet God (Psalm 42). In prayer the transcendent and mysteriously hidden God is felt as present (p. 13). A special place is dedicated in this chapter to the inner way of prayer, with reference to the meaning of Jesus' prayer or the prayer of the heart. The second chapter presents the paralysis in the ecumenical world or in inter-Christian relations (p. 25-53) talking about the broken mirror of the Churches, in the sense that there are as many forms of officiating liturgical worship as there are denominations or Churches. This becomes obvious if we make a simple visit on Sundays to different denominations, observing the unfolding of divine worship. Although the general structure of the Liturgy is about the same, differences can still be observed that are based on the doctrine of each faith. Divine worship is the mirror of faith.

**Between the preservation of Tradition and the sacrifice of modernism in the Roman Catholic Church** (p. 55-70) is that part of the work that must be looked at with particular attention, because it presents the divine cult in close connection with the Church's Tradition, on the one hand, and what the challenges of modernity mean, on the other hand. The evolutions of divine worship in the Western Catholic space are presented, with all the turmoil, challenges and the concrete way in which the crises it went through were managed. Last but not least, the doctrinal, canonical and liturgical position of the Eastern Churches united with Rome is analyzed. The great transformations these Churches have gone through and are still going through are identified and analyzed by the author.

**Between self-giving and the fear of touching the sacred in the Orthodox world** (p. 71-75). Rightly, the author emphasizes the fact that in the Orthodox vision there is a close connection between ecclesial reality and divine worship, the Church living in the light of divine worship and, above all, of the Liturgy (p. 71). The author successfully manages to highlight the

specifics of the Orthodox vision regarding divine worship and especially, with reference to the Eucharistic Liturgy, which he analyzes with great theological finesse. He shows Orthodoxy's love for the celebration of faith in public divine worship, but he does not hesitate to portray those more delicate aspects within Orthodoxy regarding the Calendar and its correction, with reference to the liturgical language, aspects related to jurisdiction, and, in general, related to inter-orthodox relations, etc.

**Between enlightened faithfulness to the Bible and loss of identity in the Protestant world** (pp. 77-102). Aspects specific to the Christian world stemming from the Protestant Reformation are analyzed at this point of the work. The paradox of the Eucharistic Supper among Protestants, the risks of this vision and its consequences, the specifics of the church year in this Christian world, etc. The author does not hesitate to make a spiritual diagnosis regarding this development of worship in the Protestant world and to suggest ways to overcome difficult situations. The historical developments of the various Protestant ecclesial communities are taken into account by the author, stating that only in 1973, with the "Leuenberger Konkordie" (Agreement from Leuenberg) of March 16, 1973, an consensus was reached between the various Protestant factions from Germany, and, implicitly, a communion of the pulpit, of the Lord's Supper and of consecration in church service (Ordination).

What the author of the work has precisely noted is the fact that each of these "Christian worlds" has a certain liturgical ethos, as a reflection of the faith professed by the respective ecclesial community. The author also makes a theological-historical-liturgical analysis regarding the mysterious aspect of the work of the Word of God in the world and in people's lives, the Eucharist in the catacombs, the divine presence in the life of the world and people, at the same time sketching some perspectives, in this sense.

This work cannot fail to delight the Orthodox reader, as well as any reader, because it presents a concrete, practical theme of Christian living, affirming the confessional identity of Christians. It is permeated by the author's enthusiasm stemming from his passion for divine worship, having a particular familiarity with the various liturgical structures that appeared

in history and the relationship of each liturgical rite or liturgical formula with a certain ecclesial configuration.

This work should be known by as many Christians as possible, in order to better understand what liturgical worship means, what are its meanings and why a certain formula or liturgical structure appeared in one part or another of the Christian world.

The issue of this work can be an opportunity to initiate a dialogue between liturgical theologians from the East and the West, in order to better understand the deep meanings of divine worship, its revealed roots, why and how these foundations of liturgical worship were reflected in different times and places of the Christian world.

**Rev. Prof. Dr. Ioan TULCAN**

**F**lorin DOBREI, Sebastian-Dragoș BUNGHEZ, *Preotul profesor Teodor Botiș (1873-1940). O viață în slujba bisericii, a învățământului și a neamului românesc [The priest teacher Teodor Botiș (1873-1940). A life in the service of the church, education and the Romanian nation]*, Editura Universității “Aurel Vlaicu”, Arad, 2022, 576 pp.<sup>1</sup>

“Happy is he who writes things worth reading,  
happy is he who does deeds worthy of writing,  
but happier is he who does deeds worthy of writing  
and write things worth reading”.

Plinius Minor

I believe that these highly valuable words of the Roman writer Plinius Minor or Plinius the Younger (61-113), friend of the historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus and close to the emperor Marcus Ulpius Traianus, suggestively paint the effigy of the priest teacher Teodor Botiș, whose

<sup>1</sup> Book presentation held in the festive hall of the Arad County Council (March 30, 2023).