

ANNA IVANČÁKOVÁ

Peter Caban, *Dejiny kresťanskej liturgie v staroveku*, Vydavateľstvo Paulínky, Praha 2012, 135 pp.

The author of the *History of Christian Liturgy in the Ancient Times*, rev. Peter Caban, was born in Banská Bystrica. Having graduated from the Roman Catholic Faculty of Theology at the Comenius University in Bratislava, where he also completed his doctoral course, he is currently a priest in the diocese of Banská Bystrica (Slovakia). In 2004 he was awarded the BA title in Liturgics and Church Music. Engaged in the development of teaching aids, he participates in national and international conferences. He is also a member of research councils, academic research organisations and other institutions responsible for the development of art in Slovakia. During his many trips he lectured at different renowned foreign universities and other scholarly institutions. In his research he focuses on the history of Christian liturgy, Christian archaeology and sacral art.

In the introduction the author mentions that while working on his monograph he used private research, as well as written historical sources, books and personal experience from visits at some European universities (Graz, Innsbruck, Regensburg, Vienna, Thessaloniki, Berlin, Potsdam). On the basis of his own work the author tries to present the stages of liturgy development in the Ancient Times in the Christian west. He aims at contributing to the world's research on liturgy, the research the results of which have not yet been published. His attempts resulted in the creation of an originally written, up-to-date monograph concerning liturgical issues of Ancient Christianity.

The first chapter discusses the Jewish roots of Christian liturgy and the history of Judaism as the primary origin of Christianity. He describes different streams of Judaism, the relations in the society in which Christianity came into existence, the later functioning of these streams in the Roman Empire and the functions of early-Christian liturgy that derived from Judaism.

In the second chapter the author elaborates on the birth of Christian liturgy in the times of the Apostles. A part of this chapter is devoted to the Last Supper – the first Christian liturgy described in the Bible by four different authors, the first liturgical prayers and rites, as well as Sunday celebrations in these communities.

The destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, being an important event in the times when Christians were persecuted and gradually separated from Jews, is referred to at the beginning of the third chapter. Due to Caesarean edicts, participation in liturgy became the main form of reinforcement, despite the liturgical form being simple and rough. In this chapter the celebration of Easter is also mentioned.

The main topic of the fourth chapter is the situation after the victorious battle of Constantine the Great. Christianity, after the period of persecution, became the privileged and reigning religion. The author talks about liturgy, but also about Christian archaeology, devoting a part of this chapter to Christian basilicas. He goes on to describe the divisions that appeared between the eastern and the western parts of the country. The two most interesting hypotheses concerning the origin of Christmas are also presented in this chapter. A substantial part of the chapter discusses three Ancient metropolises which had an important impact on the liturgy. The function of the religious orders that came into existence at that time is described at the end of the chapter.

The fifth chapter deals with the references to liturgy that appear in writings, codices, letters, etc. which were preserved from that period. This part gives the book its exceptional scientific and social value, since it discusses the writings from the period when Christians were strongly influenced by Judaism, as well as Greek and Latin culture. The analysis reveals the author's thorough research on the texts, including the analysis of Slovak translations of some liturgical prayers which were a part of the old liturgy.

The liturgy celebrated in late Ancient period is presented in chapter six. Since there are more source texts available from this period, the author makes use of them, also discussing liturgical families and liturgical rites in the east, which makes the chapter itself, as well as its ending, incredibly interesting. This part clearly presents the richness of tradition constantly preserved in liturgy.

The text is a gripping piece of writing. The author manages to present and successfully summarise the knowledge that has not yet been publicised. Although the text is an academic monograph, the style of the author is interesting and gives an impression that 'history is not as scary as some may think'.

Liturgy is not only the food for the eyes, but also, and most importantly, the food for the souls, which was clear even for people in the Ancient times. Every believer regularly participating in liturgy can change their attitudes and appreciate being a part of it.

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