

One of the First Liturgical Hymns of the Eastern and Western Christian Church: the Great Doxology – Gloria in excelsis Deo From the Beginning until its Liturgical Crystallisation

GEORGE DIACONU*

The doxological character is one of the essential aspects of the Christian worship, taken from the Hebrew divine worship. Thus, the doxological character of many Christian prayers and liturgical hymns represents the foundation and at the same time the key which reveals and explains the theology of the Creation, its mystery and purpose. The role of the Creation is to praise the Creator, as invited conclusively by the last verse of the last canonical Psalm: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!" (Ps. 150, 6). We will bring to the forefront of our debate the Great Doxology, one of the first liturgical hymns of the three basic doxological structures (the small, the great and the maximum doxologies) of the Eastern and Western Christian Church.

Keywords: *the Great Doxology (η μεγάλη δοξολογία), Gloria in excelsis Deo, liturgical forms, epigraphic and archaeological testimonies, sources.*

The Christian Church was born in the context and within the Hebrew religious precepts¹, which the Savior came to fulfill and not to break (Mth. 5, 17). In the essence and in the core of these precepts we find the glorification of God's name and in the same time the faithfulness or loyalty towards Him (Exod. 20, 2-5); so that, within the divine cult (both public and particular) of the Christian Church, a prevalent doxological feature and character has developed (besides the prayer of petition and thanksgiving). Offering sacrifices represents the religious tone of God's glorification sentiment, even on behalf of the first men, Cain and Abel, the sons of the protoparents, Adam and Eve, offering sacrifices to God from the fruit of their labour (Gen. 4, 3-4).

In the end though, the Judaic ritual fell into formalism, God Himself demanding some times in the history of the Hebrew people, an amendment in the sense of an involvement at a personal, inner and spiritual level. David, the psalmist, seizes upon the real sacrifice that must be offered to God, the only one which pleases him: the one of the lips arising from humble thought

* George Diaconu, PhD, "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Address: Aleea Mioriței, Nr. 2, Bl. 5, A, Ap.6, 240226, Râmnicu Valcea, Romania; e-mail: gdiaconu01@yahoo.ro

¹ Nicu Moldoveanu, *Istoria muzicii bisericești la români*, București 2010, Introducere, p. 8.