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Liturgical aspects
in the book of Revelation of St. John the Theologian
(chapters 4 and 5)

ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Revelation of St. John the Theologian has been intriguing for more than two millennia with its plot achronology, pictorial richness and extensive symbolism. The messages in the book are locked in symbols that are unlikely to ever be fully revealed. It manifests its meaning partially, depending on the peace of mind of the reader, and not immediately and not always. As part of the Holy Scriptures, both the writing of the book of Revelation and its understanding can only be accomplished with the help and illumination of the Holy Spirit. The Revelation of John appears as a kind of bridge between the Old and the New Testament, between the past and the future of the world and humanity, between Jewish liturgical practices and the Christian Liturgy, revealing a magnificent picture of a universal worship performed jointly by earthly and heavenly beings, by angels and the faithful.

Isn't John the seer trying to tell his readers what God thinks worship should be (cf. John 4:23)? Succeeding by the Spirit to penetrate through the veil of human rites which in time formed Christian worship, does he not attempt to reveal the true divine purpose and heavenly realities hidden in those rites? These and similar questions give the book of Revelation and the scenes described in it a **topical character and relevance**, not only for the time when the work was written, but certainly for all future times until the fulfillment of the prophetic words it bears.

The **object of study** is the book of Revelation and more specifically the text in chapters 4 and 5.

The **subject of the study** is the heavenly worship and the presence of liturgical aspects within the object of study. The subject of attention are the existing hypotheses in the patristic and modern interpretations of the book of Revelation, as well as the specialized studies of the described visions from a liturgical and sacramental point of view.

The **purpose of the study** is to trace, interpret and present the liturgical and sacramental elements in the book of Revelation (ch. 4-5). Relying on the results of the development of the theme in the patristic and modern literature, I hope to be able to shed more light on the understanding of these elements. For this purpose, in the dissertation I focus on the sources from which the author of the book of Revelation probably drew when describing the heavenly worship - the Jewish and Christian liturgical practices, contemporary with the book of Revelation, the books of the Old Testament and the Jewish apocalyptic literature.

To realize the set goal, the following **research questions and tasks** should be taken into account:

- To trace and establish the liturgical dimension of the visions described in the book of Revelation (ch. 4-5);

- To define and analyze the liturgical and sacramental elements in the text of ch. 4-5 of the book of Revelation and to establish the nature of their relationship with the rest of the book;

- To investigate whether a liturgical structure and material can be found in the foundation of the book of Revelation (chapters 4-5);

- To trace to what extent we can talk about aspects of worship related to the life of the ancient Church;

- To analyze what were the visions of heaven (heavenly world) when the book of Revelation was written, especially what were the Jewish traditions about heaven as the place of God's seat in the heavenly temple, standing at the head of the divine council and being glorified/honored;

- To determine the author's sources for the description of the heavenly worship in Ch. 4-5 with a focus on what can be gleaned from earthly Christian worship;

- To establish to what extent Jewish synagogue practice in the 1st century influenced the worship of the ancient Church and the book of Revelation.

In this dissertation, the subject of justification and verification is the following **hypothesis**: The heavenly worship in the book of Revelation and the worship in the ancient Church have common elements to the extent that they have a common root in the Jewish worship known from the Jerusalem temple and the synagogue.

The revelation can be understood as an interpretation of a liturgical practice existing at the time of the seer in the ancient Church, as this interpretation, in addition to giving a theological explanation to the existing practices, strongly influenced the gradual formation and development of the first liturgical successions.

In this dissertation, I use the diachronic **method of research**, following the semantic development over time of some terms and ideas in different texts on the issue under consideration, as well as the synchronic method, trying to establish the meaning of certain ideas or phraseology from the same period. The study is based on the historical-critical approach to the texts under study, as well as the entire set of analysis tools included in it (textual, genre, source, editorial and rhetorical analysis). In addition, I attempt to establish the connections and relations between some liturgical and sacramental elements in ch. 4-5 of the book of Revelation and the symbolism they have in Judaism.

The **structure** of the present work includes 3 chapters:

1. Isagogical data about the book of Revelation (authorship, time and place of writing, book of Revelation and the New Testament canon, content, main ideas and themes, types of interpretations, the Jewish apocalyptic literature and the Revelation of St. John the Theologian).

2. The Book of Revelation of St. John the Theologian and Christian worship (ancient Christian worship and its roots in Judaism, angelic worship and the Church, the place of Revelation in the history of the Liturgy and liturgical use of the book of Revelation).

3. Interpretation of the book of Revelation (ch. 4-5) in the perspective of the given topic.

1. Isagogical data for the book of Revelation

I examine the authorship, time and place of writing of the book of Revelation, the book's place in the New Testament canon, content, main ideas and themes, and types of interpretations.

1.1. Authorship, time and place of writing

The author of the book of Revelation calls himself John (1:1; 1:4; 22:8). According to church tradition, this is St. John the Theologian himself - a disciple of the Savior, who wrote the fourth Gospel and three Council Epistles. In the work "Conversation with the Jew Tryphon", St. Justin Martyr mentions: "a man whose name is John, one of Christ's apostles, who prophesied through given to him revelation..." This opinion is joined by: the unknown to us compiler of the Muratorian Canon, St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, and also Origen, Tertullian, St. Hippolytus of Rome and other church writers and St. Fathers, although there are other opinions regarding the authorship of the book, which appeared already in the first centuries of the life of the Church, but acquired popularity in the middle of the 3rd century through St. Dionysius of Alexandria. Other modern researchers speak of the so-called "John's Circle" in Ephesus, composed of disciples of the Apostle John, in which the writings bearing the authorship of St. John the Evangelist appear.

Regarding the place where the seer John received the Revelation of Jesus Christ, it is mentioned in the text of the book itself - "on the island called Patmos" (1:9), where he was exiled because of the preaching of the word of God.

Concerning **the time of the writing** of the book, the opinions of researchers converged around two periods. The first is during the reign of the emperor Nero (54-68), that is, immediately before the destruction of the

temple in Jerusalem, and the second is the time of the reign of Domitian (81-96). It is more likely that the book of Revelation was written towards the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian, judging by the words of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in his work "Against Heresies" (V. 30, 3), quoted and supported by Eusebius of Caesarea. Victorinus of Petavia speaks of the exile of St. John on the island of Patmos during the reign of Domitian, and only after Domitian's death and release from exile he writes his Gospel. Based on all this information in church tradition, it is more logical to assume that the book was written in the mid-90s of the 1st century (c. 95-96).

1.2. Book of Revelation and the New Testament canon

The place of the book of Revelation in the list of the books in New Testament remained problematic in some Eastern local Churches such as the Syrian until the 6th century. Revelation is not present in the famous Peshito Syriac translation. The Antiochian theologians St. John Chrysostom (IV century) and Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus (5th century) did not interpret the book of Revelation. The book is not mentioned by St. Cyril of Jerusalem (350), who even forbids its use, nor in the 60th rule of the Council of Laodicea (360), nor in the 85th apostolic rule. At the same time, St. Athanasius the Great in his 39th Easter Epistle included the Apocalypse in the list of 27 canonical New Testament books (367), and the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Council (692) confirmed two New Testament canons - one with the book of Revelation included, and the other without it. Later, the book of Revelation is not presented in some of the Greek manuscripts until the 10th century.

At the same time, the positive attitude towards the book is present. It was accepted by St. Papius of Hierapolis, St. Justin the Philosopher, St. Dionysius of Corinth, St. Meliton of Sardis (On the Revelation of John quoted by Origen and mentioned in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea, Blessed Jerome and Rufinus of Aquileia), St. Theophilus of Antioch,

Apollonius and St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Canon of Muratorius and Itala - in the II century; Clement of Alexandria and Origen - in the 3rd century; Victorinus of Pythias, St. Ephrem the Syrian, St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, St. Basil the Great, St. Hilary of Pictavia, St. Athanasius the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Didymus the Blind and St. Ambrose of Mediolanus in the 4th century. The last doubts about the book disappear only in the 10th century.

1.3. Contents of the Book of Revelation

More popular under the name Apocalypse, the book of Revelation presents a revelation that the Lord Jesus Christ gave to John the seer on the island of Patmos, with the command that it be written down and sent to seven Churches in the Roman province of Asia (Asia Minor), located in the cities: Ephesus, Smyrna , Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The text begins with introductory words (1:1-3), an epistolary introduction (1:4-8), and an opening vision describing the author's calling (1:9-20). The rest of the book can be tentatively divided into 7 parts, the content of which is described in sections of 1.3.1. to 1.3.7 with the following content: **1.3.1. Letters to the seven Churches in Asia Minor (ch. 2-3)** In these letters, the prophet speaks specifically about the needs of each of the seven churches, but his recommendations to each of them come from the Spirit of God and are of special concern to the entire Universal Church. **1.3.2. The Seven Seals (4:1-8:1)** When the Lamb breaks the first four seals four horsemen appear. They bear the symbols of calamities befalling mankind. After the fifth seal was broken, the prophet saw under the heavenly altar the souls of the martyrs. The breaking of the sixth seal is accompanied by an earthquake and other destructive phenomena in heaven and on earth that foreshadow the Last Judgment. Before the removal of the seventh seal, an angel places the seal of the Living God on the foreheads of the faithful servants of God on earth, 144 thousand of the twelve tribes of Israel, also an innumerable multitude, so that they will not suffer from the coming great calamities. **1.3.3. The Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19)** The

contents of the seventh seal are revealed under the trumpets of seven angels. Each of the first six trumpets heralds calamities to humans and nature. The seventh trumpet heralds God's victory over satanic forces. **1.3.4. Persecution of the Church by the dragon and the two beasts (chap. 12-14)** There is a battle in heaven, Archangel Michael and his angels fight with the dragon and his angels. The Lamb appears standing on Mount Zion and heralds the final Judgment of the world and the final victory of God (ch. 14). **1.3.5. The seven golden bowls (ch. 15-16)** Seven angels pour out seven golden bowls of God's wrath on the earth. **1.3.6. Christ's victory over Satan (17:1-20:6)** The Word of God, depicted as a military leader sitting on a white horse, binds Satan and locks him in the abyss for a thousand years. In this millennial period the kingdom of the Messiah continues. **1.3.7. New Heaven and New Earth (20:7-22:5)** After a thousand years, Satan will again be given freedom to operate on earth, but soon he will be finally cast into the lake of fire. There is a general judgment upon mankind, and John the seer sees a new heaven and a new earth, and also the new Jerusalem descending from heaven. Next is a description of the majestic picture of God living with men, where there are no more tears and pain, crying and death.

1.4. Main ideas and themes

Depending on the prism through which the text is viewed, researchers discover different messages and essence of the book. In the plot of the book of Revelation, the following **thematic lines** are outlined: 1. Due to human sinfulness, the world is distorted by man himself and is associated with evil, therefore there comes a time when the human world must be destroyed in order for a "new heaven" to come and "new land". 2. The call to repentance is the purpose of God's allowing the calamities to happen, and this call sounds not only in the book of Revelation, but also in the entire Holy Scripture. 3. Evil constantly grows and reaches colossal proportions, corrupting God's creation. 4. God has the last word in the history of the

world regardless of the amazing ability of evil to corrupt and grow rapidly. 5. Judgment over the world precedes the final triumph of the Kingdom of God, and this Judgment appears as the last and main moment in all human history and is a central theme in Revelation. 6. Ap. John addresses the people with the call, "Be awake." 7. By the time of st. John the cult of the emperor had acquired the status of an official cult. The Christians, firmly believing that there is one true God to whom worship and service are due, refused service to the emperor, resulting in their martyrdom.

1.5. Types of interpretations

The main and most common types of interpretations of the book of Revelation can be grouped into the following seven groups: 1) *Historical* interpretation, the book depicts events of world history, ending with the Second Coming of Christ; 2) *Eschatological*, the book describes events of the last times; 3) *Church-historical* – comprehensive coverage of the history of the Church of Christ; 4) Events *contemporary to the author* – persecutions and trials; 5) In terms of *comparative theology*, researchers of Revelation look for the presence of influence of religious ideas of other peoples; 6) *Mysterious or spiritual interpretation* – the whole book should be understood allegorically; 7) *Eclectic* – they combine one or another of the above types of interpretations.

1.6. The Jewish apocalyptic literature and the Revelation of St. Apostle John the Theologian

For the first time, the term ἀποκάλυψις was used to refer to this genre only at the end of the 1st century AD. in the Revelation of St. John the Theologian and only after that it began to be used in the names of other apocalyptic writings (e.g. Apocalypse of Peter, Apocalypse of Baruch, Apocalypse of Abraham, etc.).

In this section, I consider the development of apocalyptic literature in a Jewish environment from the point of view of theology, general features of apocalyptic writings, the attitude to the history and development

of the world, and especially to its end, as well as the presence of the Messiah in the writings.

The authors of apocalyptic writings in a Jewish environment make attempts to lift the veil of secrets concerning the history of this world and its end. Revelations were received through visions and transferring of the seer to other worlds, accompanied by communication, talks, and sometimes with the appearance of a heavenly book, as a bearer of unrevealed reality. An angel is present at the scene of the vision who mediates the receipt of the revelation or serves as a guide during the seer's sojourn.

Common to apocalyptic literature is the concept of how the world is structured - there is an invisible, hidden world of angels and demons that have a direct bearing on human destiny. The world we live in is mysterious and inexplicable. The need for revelation means that the world is also secret. The fate of humanity is determined by a final eschatological judgment.

Apocalyptic Jewish belief is that the seer can "penetrate" the firmament and see the glorious world of God and his angels. This is often expressed by the words "I see the heavens opened" or "door open in heaven" (Rev. 4:1). The ability of the seer to see the throne of heaven is already found in the early apocalyptic texts (Dan. 7:9). In early Israelite beliefs, God is described as seated in the midst of the divine council, and this notion serves as the basis for the later construction of apocalyptic cosmology.

In their relation to the history of the world, the prophets probably gave the apocalyptic writers the belief that God would at a decisive moment intervene in the course of history to judge the world. Apocalyptic writers divide history into periods or epochs, implying that history has a predetermined duration that can be calculated to predict the end of history. As for the ultimate goal of history, according to most apocalyptic writers it is the restoration of Israel. In some writings, the goal of life is a transformation into an angelic state (1 Enoch, 104), which emphasizes the

apocalyptic fascination with the heavenly angelic world and the desire to know it. According to Christian belief, receiving and understanding God's revelation requires the inspiration of the Spirit.

The personality of Messiah in the Jewish apocalyptic texts occupies an insignificant and even unnoticeable place, while in the Revelation of John the Messiah dominates from the first to the last chapter - the resurrected Lord of the Church, the coming conqueror of the satanic forces. Jewish fantasies and predictions about the end of the world have been replaced by the Church's faith in God, as the only Lord of history, Who alone leads it to the coming end. A new view is presented, both of history itself and of its end as interrelated and inseparable from Christianity, and at the center of which stands the "Slain Lamb," proclaiming Himself, "I am the first and the last and the Living one; And I was dead, and see, I am living for ever" (Rev. 1:17c-18). This central figure fundamentally distinguishes the Revelation of John from the rest of the Jewish apocalyptic writings. Appearing for the first time in the vision of the heavenly throne, this face becomes a key to understanding history and how the world is gradually moving towards its end.

2. The Book of Revelation of st. Ap. John the Theologian and the Christian worship

Regardless of the fact that the New Testament canon was finally formed only after the 4th century, Christian worship existed since the birth of the Church of Christ. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church builds and strengthens the historical foundations of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for a fulfilling liturgical life and missionary preaching.

2.1. Early Christian worship and its roots in Judaism

In this section, I consider the hypothesis that elements of the Jewish synagogue worship are found both in the scenes of the book of Revelation

(ch. 4-5) and in the worship of the early Christian Church, while certain aspects have been preserved in the Holy Liturgy, such as we have it today.

A central place in the ministry in the Jerusalem Temple was occupied by offering a sacrifice to God, and the material sacrifice was preceded and accompanied by singing psalms, which was considered a special kind of votive sacrifice, a vow - a solemn promise to God (2 Chron. 5:13). The clothing of the Jewish priests performing the divine service in the temple was composed predominantly of white fine material, as a symbol of purity and ritual integrity. As a parallel for comparison, the twenty-four elders standing before the throne in the heavenly service of the book of Revelation are clothed in white robes (Rev. 4:4), as a symbol of spiritual purity. Unlike the headbands (migba'at) of the temple Jewish priests, the 24 elders "had crowns of gold on their heads" as a symbol of holiness and a gift from God to the saints for their spiritual exploits. As part of the acts of the temple ritual, after the sacrificial animal is slaughtered, the priests go to the designated place to recite the prayer Sema Israel ("Hear, O Israel").

At the time of the Jerusalem Temple, the synagogue was the assembly of people in the outer court of the Temple - συναγωγή ("congregation"), which people participated in the worship that took place in the Temple and supplemented it by singing psalms and chanting "hallelujah". A synagogue is a place of worship, understood in a broader sense, such as glorification, reading and interpretation of the Law and the Prophets. This spiritual and verbal nature of serving God is reminiscent of the nature of Christian worship, with the proviso that in the Christian temple there is a sacrifice, but without blood. Basically, the synagogue service consists of: opening psalms and prayers, Sema with accompanying prayers, blessings or the Semoneh 'Esreh prayer (literally "eighteen" or eighteen blessings), readings from the Law, readings from the Prophets, closing blessings.

Christianity appeared in the bosom of Judaism, as along with some worship forms, it also accepted Old Testament holy books that were used in synagogues. In form and spiritual character, the synagogue service with its prayers, readings and blessings in form is not too far from the Christian service. Reading the Scriptures and the prophets in the synagogue was the basis of the divine service, and this element is preserved in some form in the Christian divine service. Thanks to the synagogue, Judaism, and after it, Christianity began to look at the reading of the Scripture as part of worship, as a form of prayer.

In New Testament times, the reading from the Law was accompanied by the reading of some of the prophets according to the Jewish canon. We find evidence of this in the Gospel according to Luke (4:17), as well as in Acts of St. Apostles (13:15). The reading from the prophets in the synagogue is chosen by the reader in such a way as to correspond to the reading of the Law, just as in the Holy Liturgy the reading of the Apostle is meaningfully bound to the text of the Gospel reading.

The description in the book Acts of St. Apostles (2:46-47) formed an idea of two types or two forms of worship among the first Christians: one, connected with the temple and the synagogue, and the other, carried out in homes: "breaking bread in the houses, ..., praising God." The presence of Christ's apostles in the temple and synagogues is described in many places in the Gospels (Luke 24:53; Matt. 12:9; Matt. 13:54; Mark 1:21; John 18:20). The apostles and the first Christians continued to visit the synagogue, as did the Savior, but the service of God continued after that in one or another Christian home in the form of the breaking of bread, as a reminder of the promise left by the Lord Jesus Christ. The act of breaking bread at common Christian tables has an eucharistic character (Acts 5:42; 6:4). The apostles and the first Christians did not have an order of worship that was created later, they served God by their way of life (Acts 8:25), by prayers (Acts 8:15), by faith and by being in The Holy Spirit (Acts 7:55-

56). The service in the temple or the synagogue in prayers and singing psalms does not give full expression to the new Christian faith. The need for a divine service, which can be attended by understanding and faith only by Christians, outside of the assembly of Jews, remains unsatisfied. Therefore, the breaking of bread at Christian dinners in homes gives completion to both the prayer presence in the synagogue and the service of the Lord, fulfilling His command: "do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19).

2.2. The Angelic worship and the Church

Interpretations of the Revelation tend to focus on the eschatological nature of the visions described in it, paying little attention to the liturgical character of the book, although it is in this respect that the Revelation of St. John is strikingly different from other Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts. The liturgical elements in the book are not just a literary device, but are an essential part of the process of revelation and reflect the reaction of the initiates to the gradual revelation of God's salvific plan and its fulfillment.

In the early stages of formation of the liturgy, a number of elements become visible, some of which define the history of the development of the liturgy until the present day, such as the Eucharistic Παρουσία, the participation of the Church in the angelic liturgy, the emphasis on the importance of the interpreter of the Scripture, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist as an act of the Church in its universal integrity, and association of the Holy Eucharist with the Judgment over the world and the perception of the Holy Liturgy as a spiritual battle.

In the exposition in this part, I explain in more details two of the listed characteristics that stand out particularly clearly: 1) the participation of the Church in angelic worship and 2) the importance of the Interpreter of Scripture.

Scenes confirming the participation of the Church in angelic worship appear repeatedly in the Revelation of St. John - the seer and other initiates participate with the angels in a common heavenly worship, such as this common participation of people (the twenty-four elders in ch. 4 and 5; 144,000, "marked with a seal from all the tribes of Israel" and also "a great multitude that no one could number, from all tribes and peoples and languages" in chapter 7) and angels (together with the four beasts in the heavenly worship) is one of the specific ideas of the book and probably illustrates an universal worship. In the worship there is no boundary between the earthly and the heavenly.

Another important liturgical aspect in the book of Revelation is the presence of an unshakable conviction in the early Church that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Interpreter of the Scriptures - "no one can, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth, can open the book, nor can it see" (Rev. 5:3). In the Didache, for example, in the Divine service (Holy Eucharist) thanks are given to the heavenly Father, in which the Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of as the announcer of the secret of the holy vineyard of David (Didache, 9, 2). There seems to have been a practice in the worship of the ancient Church of offering prayer to reveal the true meaning of the text of the Scripture, and to obtain an opportunity for its worthy interpretation, although, as the many prayers preserved in Origen's sermons show, for sending them had no established formula.

2.3. The Place of Revelation in the History of the Liturgy

The liturgical framework of Revelation contains a number of aspects that are similarly found in the liturgical successions of the ancient Church. I suggest that an understanding of the liturgical nature of Revelation can help clarify the historical development of the Divine Liturgy.

The revelation can be taken as an interpretation of a divine service existing at the time of the seer in the early Church, and this interpretation greatly influenced the gradual development of the first liturgical

successions. The similarities of the pictures from ch. 4 and 5 of the book with the earlier liturgical successions can be explained by the presence of a common root in the Old Testament and in the Jewish forms and ideas of worship. The fact that the earliest sources of Christian worship (Revelation, St. Clement of Rome, First Epistle to the Corinthians, and the Didache) bear a close resemblance to Jewish forms of worship allows for only one explanation: there was historical continuity.

2.4. The liturgical use of the Revelation

The book of Revelation is one of the few canonical biblical books that are not present in Orthodox lectionaries. In this section, I consider the likely reasons for not including the book in the service.

Probably first and foremost is the fact that it is not easy to read and understand the book of Revelation. Another possible reason is the distancing of modern man from the liturgical experience of the Church. Over the centuries, it seems that worship has lost its universal dimension, and in addition, it has also lost its earthly, human appearance. It remains somehow outside the everyday life of people and history. As a result, the Holy Liturgy seems to take place in a world of its own, separate from people and separate from Heaven.

The attitude towards the book in the West world is different. There, as early as the 5th–6th centuries, a public reading of Revelation was prescribed in the liturgies from Easter to Pentecost, which is referred to in rule 17 of the Council of Toledo (633) with references to numerous church councils regarding the necessity of using Revelation in Roman worship

3. Interpretation of the book of Revelation (ch. 4-5)

In this chapter I examine the interpretations of the Church Fathers of the text from ch. 4-5 of the book of Revelation through the prism of the given topic. The basis of the examination is the Greek text of the book, with

the emphasis falling on the presence of liturgical aspects in the text and in the interpretations.

The verses in Rev. 4:1-5:14 can be tentatively divided into three parts. After the introductory verses (4:1-2a), the first part (4:2b-11) begins with the picture of the heavenly throne and ends with the praises of the four beasts 4:9-11. The appearance of a book sealed with seven seals and the words of one of the elders in verses 5:1-5:5 constitute the second part. The third part begins with the appearance of the Lamb and continues with the doxology until the end of chapter 5 (verses 5:6-14), while at the same time serving as a transition from the pictures in chapters 4 and 5 to the dramatic events of the opening of the seven seals by the Lamb.

The hymns in Ch. 4 and 5 are the only ones in the book of Revelation where Ἄγιος stands in conjunction with εἶναι (εἶ in 4:11 and 5:9, and ἐστὶν in 5:12).

In verse 4:8, the first doxology appears, and it is sounded at the climax of the actions that begin with the appearance of "a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard" (4:1). The voice, "ἡ φωνὴ ἡ πρώτη," is logically related to what happens in the first three chapters of the book – the voice the prophet hears in verses 1:10, 1:12, 1:15, and 3:20 to tie the messages together to the seven churches with the heavenly worship in chapters 4 and 5, and with the whole message of the book of Revelation. The appearance of revelation is directly related to the spiritual state of the seer - ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι (1:10 and 4:2). The detailed description of the topography of the heavenly throne in 4:2-8 is followed by the climax of the antiphonal doxology of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in 4:8 and 4:11 sounding before the throne: ... Ἄγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. (4:8) ἢ Ἄγιος εἶ, ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, λαβεῖν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, ὅτι σὺ ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα, καὶ διὰ τὸ θέλημά σου ἦσαν καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν. (4:11).

The text of Revelation allows us to assume that one of the main implications of the book is related to the Holy Liturgy. First, as the time of the appearance of the vision "On the Lord's day I was in the Spirit..." (Rev.1:10) - on the Lord's day (ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ), the day of God, the day appointed for worship. A large part of the verses, especially in chapters 4 and 5, sound liturgical (4:8-11; 5:9-10). In addition, the text contains many direct and indirect references to the Eucharistic part of the anaphora: "the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." (2:7); "...I will give him to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written" (2:17); "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me" (3:20); "...the spirit of life will enter into them from God and they will stand on their feet..." (11:11); "...blessed are those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (19:9); "...to the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life" (21:6), as well as almost the entire chapter 22. And as a final blessing in ch. 22 last verse 21 - "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." The climax is in the scene of the heavenly worship in chapter 4 and specifically verses 8 and 10: "...and without rest day and night they cried out: holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come" (4:8) and "the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne..." (4:10).

We find five doxologies in chapters 4 and 5 of the book of Revelation:

"holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8); "You are worthy, Lord, to receive glory, honor and power, for You have created all things, and by Your will all things exist and were created" (Rev. 4:11); "You are worthy to take the book and remove

its seals, because You were slain and with Your blood redeemed us for God from every tribe and tongue, nation and tribe, and made us kings and priests before our God; and we shall reign on earth" (Rev. 5:9, 10); "worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and wealth, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and praise" (Rev. 5:12); "to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb - praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever" (Rev. 5:13):

Three of these five doxologies begin with the confession Ἄξιός ἐστι ἢ Ἄξιόν ἐστιν. The last word in the service is "Amen" - "καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα ἔλεγον· Ἀμήν", followed by a silent gesture of adoration - "the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever" (Rev. 5:14).

In summary, attention can be drawn to the following. The setting in which the scene of the Divine Liturgy unfolds in St. John's vision typologically recalls elements of Solomon's Temple. In the vision we find images whose prototype already exists in the Scripture of the Old Testament. On the temple throne stand two cherubim (Ex. 25:18-20, 37:7-9), there is a poured sea (2 Chron. 4:2) or a sea of copper (Jer. 52:17), there are 12 elders who symbolize the 12 tribes of the people of Israel, and in the worship scene in the book of Revelation, 4 cherubim appear - "four living creatures in front and behind full of eyes, and the four living creatures each had six wings around them, a sea of glass like crystal and twenty-four thrones; and I saw twenty-four elders sitting on thrones" (Rev. 4:4, 6-8).

It can be assumed that the seer parallels and even connects heaven with the earthly temple in Jerusalem. The parallels are obvious. The seer calls the heavenly setting a temple (ὁ ναός) (Rev. 7:15; 11:19 – ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτοῦ; 14:15, 17; 16:1, 17; 15:6, 8- ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ; 15:5 – ὁ ναός τῆς σκηνῆς). Before the throne (holy of holies) stands an altar (8:3). The seven "lamps of fire" - ἑπτὰ λαμπάδες πυρὸς (4:5) reflect the lampstand with seven lights in the Jerusalem Temple (Zech. 4:1-6, 11); and "a sea of glass like crystal"

- θάλασσα ὑαλίνη ὁμοία κρυστάλλῳ (4:6) probably alludes to the large bronze laver in front of the altar in the temple - "and place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it" (Ex. 40: 7). The twenty-four elders could represent the twenty-four classes of priests and Levites who presided over temple worship after the exile. These priests, like the elders of heaven, bear both priestly and royal insignia. In the context of the book of Revelation, the elders, as we see in the various interpretations, carry Christian symbols (Rev. 5:10). As in the traditions of the temple in Jerusalem, inside the heavenly temple stands the ark of the covenant (11:19) or the tabernacle of the testimony (15:5), and the smoke of the glory of God and of His power is such that not everyone can enter the temple (15:8).

The Lamb's enthronement among all creation, the receiving of the Covenant, His high priestly ministry, and His redemptive work not only give a meaningful conclusion to the pictures of the heavenly worship in the book of Revelation, but also outline a new beginning. A beginning that restores the relationship between God and creation, a beginning that continues to seek its meaning at the end of time.

CONCLUSION

St. John, in his vision, probably paints a divinely revealed image of the liturgical practice in its original customary form, as it was at the time of the apostles and the first Christians, while at the same time showing the historical connection of the ancient Christian liturgy with the Jewish liturgical forms and practices, and the most essential is , that it carries a majestic idea for the subsequent formation and development of the Holy Eucharist.

The entire book of Revelation is permeated with liturgical motifs. Beginning in chapter 4 and continuing to the end of the book, the reader is immersed in a setting before the throne of God where unceasing worship of God takes place. The color white and the image of Christ are often present in the book of Revelation. It is a bright and hopeful book rather than a work that paints apocalyptic pictures and hell.

The crystal, which is associated with the radiance of holiness, symbolizes God as the source of that radiance. Even in purely literary and aesthetic terms, the book is one of the most valuable Christian sources of antiquity. Both in the content of the book and in its linguistic form there is a great deal of beauty. Beauty that comes from God.

CONTRIBUTION POINTS OF THE DISSERTATION

The following contributing points can be highlighted in the proposed dissertation:

1. The present study is the first attempt in Bulgarian Orthodox biblical studies, dedicated to the liturgical aspects of the book of Revelation (ch. 4-5);

2. For the first time in Bulgarian biblical studies, a systematized overview of the interpretive tradition related to the book of Revelation, from the first exegetical commentaries on the work to the present day, is made;

3. The novelty of the proposed work is rooted in its complementary nature with regard to insufficiently developed aspects of the relationship between ancient Christian liturgical practices and synagogue worship and their connection with the book of Revelation (ch. 4-5) both in Bulgarian and world biblical studies;

4. The presented work outlines perspectives for future academic research on the entire text of Revelation in view of its thematic orientation, theological significance and especially its liturgical and sacramental dimension.

PUBLICATIONS ON THE TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION

(in Bulgarian language)

1. Nakov, N. "BOOK OF REVELATION AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP", Collection of reports from the international scientific conference "Changes in the global world and new solutions", Regional Library "Lyuben Karavelov" - Ruse, 2021, pp. 156-165.
2. Nakov, N. "EARLY CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND ITS ROOTS IN JUDAISM WITH RESPECT TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION OF ST. JOHN", Collection of reports, Scientific conference "Harmony in differences" Sofia, 10.12.2021, pp. 59-68.
3. Nakov, N. "THE REBELLION OF THE SPIRIT IN THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN AND THE CALL TO REPENTANCE (Epistles to the Churches, book Revelation, ch. 1-3)", Collection of reports from the IX International Scientific Conference, Regional Library "Lyuben Karavelov" - Ruse , 2022, pp. 536-545.