

The Priesthood in Antiquity (1st -7th century.) An Introductory Study. Summary

The title “*priest*“ isn’t attached to any Christian ministry in the text of the New Testament Books. The early Christian ministry was not a continuation of the Jewish priesthood. In the New Testament we can follow the development of the Christology (*Hbr*) and Ecclesiology of priesthood (*1 Pt and Apocalypse*). The early Christians focused first on the redemptive event of Jesus Christ’s Sacrifice and Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant. Later only the ministries and priests ceremonies developed. The New Testament handed over the title of priest, which should be understood as a service in Christ (*diakonia in Christo*). The earliest Judeo-Christian communities (the 1st and 2nd century) were governed by the presbyters while the ethno-Christians had the ministry of the *ejpi"skopoi kai; dia"konoi*. The fusion of these two traditions in the 2nd and 3rd century resulted in the monarchic priesthood, which developed the tripartite structure of bishops, presbyters and deacons. The first efforts to regulate the issue of priesthood appeared in the 4th century. The authors of the Western Church emphasized the dignity and sancticity of the priesthood, which resulted from the function and the object of the priesthood itself. At the same time the Eastern Church emphasized the Mystery of Incarnation as the unique source of the sancticity and dignity of priesthood. From the theological point of view the medieval theology received the tripartite structure of the Church and the tendency to the sacralisation and sacerdotalisation of the priest’s office. The approach was markedly different as regard i.e.: the sacred, cultic, and ministerial, the origin of the theology of the bishops collegiality and the theology of the Peter’s Ministry.