



Review

The Courage of Faith

*by Wim Lamfers,
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Reviewed by Alexandru Mălureanu

Wim Lamfers is a reformed priest from Netherlands. He studied Protestant theology in Utrecht (Netherlands) and Orthodox theology in Sibiu (Romania). In his book Lamfers addresses the fundamental themes of theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a true model of behavior for authorities and anti-christian regime, being a fighter for religious and social freedom. Wim Lamfers aims in presenting personality and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in order to promote the ecumenical dialogue, namely, pace and spiritual character, among the Orthodox, Protestants and Roman Catholics.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in 1906 in Breslau. He became assistant of the famous theologian Adolf von Harnack and he researched the ecclesiological issues (his thesis was entitled "Community of saints" / "Sanctorum Communion"). In 1930 he studied in



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New York at Union Theological Seminary, and from 1931 he was active in the young ecumenical movement, with global views. In 1933 he became priest of German's parish in London, with a significant religious attitude to anti-Nazi. On 5 April 1943 he was arrested and on 9 April 1945, at Hitler's personal order, he was hanged.

Bonhoeffer's theology bears witness of the faith in a totalitarian state. Thus, Father Wim Lamfers says that a brave theologian knows how church must react against a dictatorship and anti-christian regime and how can fight.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer also proposes solutions to rebuild a society affected by atheism, by an inhuman ideology. So he proposes a typical Lutheran spirituality, emphasizing the importance of discipline of silence, meditation, prayer, singing in common, biblical knowledge, preaching the word of God and confession (which he calls „the mystery of community“ and he considers it the third sacrament, after the word of God and holy Communion).

Lamfers develops these ideas in different chapters: “A typical Lutheran spirituality”, “Faith and ethics”, “A Lutheran ecclesiology”, “Church and Politics”.

He argues that Bonhoeffer is one of the few theologians who deals with politics, convinced that theologians must analyze political life in order to take position on a policy that is not humanitarian. He is consistently against national-socialism and rejects anti-semitism. Bonhoeffer criticized church for lenient attitude towards opponents, saying that only a strong opposition can stop a dangerous ideology. Bonhoeffer believes that not policy, but the church is the center of history and the salvation of the world.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology is a deep, contextual and ministering theology, with Christological, ecclesiological and practical aspects, being open to the world and dealing with world's problems.

I recommend this book to all those interested in manifestation of „the courage of faith“, in troubled times and in times of peace, through openness to dialogue, tolerance, belief and confession.