

## OPINION

by Assoc.Prof. Dr. Sc. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov; Department of Theology, Faculty of Philosophy and History, Paisii Hilendarski Plovdiv University

on Dissertation work for acquiring the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" in Scientific field of High Education: 2. Humanities, Professional field: 2.4 Religion and Theology

on the topic: "Metaphysics of Light in the Areopagite Corpus".  
by **Dimitar Bozhidarov Bogdanov**,  
Theological Faculty, Department of Systematic Theology ,  
Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“

The opinion was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law for the development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation and the New Regulations for the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions at the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski", amended and supplemented by the AC on 26.05.2021.

The reviewing of the materials is according to the order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Kliment". No. RD 38-19/ 13.01.2025).

**Dimitar Bozhidarov Bogdanov** has provided all the necessary documents concerning the procedure for the defense of the dissertation.

### **1.Data about the dissertant and the procedure**

Mr. Dimitar Bozhidarov Bogdanov holds a Master's degree in Economics from the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics - Svishtov. In 2017, he also obtained a Master's degree in Philosophy from the Faculty of Philosophy of the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", and in parallel in 2018 he also obtained a Master's degree in Theology from the Faculty of Theology of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". He continues his theological education in the doctoral program of the Faculty of Theology of the Sofia University. He completed his Individual Plan and was discharged with the right to defend. The dissertation, which has been submitted to me for opinion, has been discussed at a meeting of the Department of Systematic Theology of the Theological Faculty, Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“. At the same meeting it was decided to admit it to public defence. At the first meeting of the scientific jury, a chairman was elected and the authors were appointed to draw up reviews and opinions. The procedure was followed and I consider that no violations were committed.

## **2. Dissertation data**

The dissertation has a total volume of 329 standard computer pages. It contains a preface, introduction, list of abbreviations, three chapters, conclusion and list of used literature. The bibliography covers a total of 174 bibliographical units, which is systematized in the following headings: sources, studies in Cyrillic, studies in Latin and reference literature. The bibliography used is relevant to the topic, the defended thesis and the presentation of the text of the dissertation. The dissertation has 1088 footnotes, of which 976 are quotes and borrowed ideas or terms from the indicated sources, and 112 are explanatory notes by the author.

The text of the dissertation research is readable and well structured in three balanced chapters.

The dissertation research contains the subject, object, relevance, goals, objectives, research methods and working hypothesis of the scientific research. In the introduction, the author presents a specific historiography on the research problem, which is accompanied by the necessary analysis.

## **3. Evaluation of the scientific contributions**

The topic of the scientific research is dissertable. The author has mastered academic writing and demonstrates the depth of the analysis made in the content part of the dissertation. The topic of the dissertation is ambitious and requires a thorough reading of the texts of St. Dionysius the Areopagite and their analysis in the light of the tasks set by the dissertationist and the research thesis defended by him. The dissertationist has succeeded in this, with the main contribution in connection with what I have emphasized being the presentation of the philosophical perspective of the text in its theological "light", emphasizing the spiritual and theological content of the corpus of works of St. Dionysius. The author has managed to illustrate the connection and interaction between church theology and Neoplatonism in the Areopagite corpus and its theological perception, as a result of which he presents the teaching of the light of St. Dionysius the Areopagite in its ecclesiastical meaning, of the sanctifying energy of God. In this context, I agree with the main thesis of Dimitar Bogdanov's essay, namely that "Areopagite overcomes and "baptizes" the essentialist metaphysics of light of Plotinus and Proclus, "transforming" it in a Christian way, thereby removing its substantial, and hence its pantheistic, character" (p.14).

To summarize, I can say: the dissertation's text meets all the criteria regarding scientific innovations and contributions for obtaining the scientific educational degree of doctor.

## **4. Critical remarks and recommendations**

Undoubtedly, the topic of the dissertation research is relevant. Moreover: after Lyuba Stefanova's dissertation text "The Doctrine of the Image and Symbol in the Areopagite Corpus",

which was published by the East-West Publishing House in 2021, this is the second text in relation to the corpus of the Areopagites, which builds on what was researched by Dr. Lyuba Stefanova. However, it seems to me that the relevance of the dissertation text presented on page 8 is not well formulated and the author should revise it in view of the publication of the dissertation work, which I highly recommend. The author conveys the mystical theology of St. Dionysius the Areopagite about light as the fruit of man's ascent to God through the sacraments. It is not clear, however, why he does not talk so much about the feat and Christian asceticism, considering the influence on him of Neoplatonism and the entire Christian tradition. Why does he emphasize symbols and sacraments, and not pay the same attention to the feat and Christian asceticism?

**5. Abstract details. Publications and participation in scientific forums. Personal impressions of the dissertation.**

The abstract is written as required and correctly reflects the content of the dissertation.

The dissertant has submitted 4 publications that are in the field of his dissertation.

**6. Conclusion**

I am fully convinced that the dissertation meets the necessary scientific criteria for this type of scientific research. I declare that I will vote positively on the procedure of **Dimitar Bozhidarov Bogdanov** for the award of the PhD in the professional field 2.4 Religion and Theology.

01.04.2025.

Assoc. Prof. Rev. Stoyan Chilikov

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