

OPINION

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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: " **THE IDEA OF REINCARNATION IN THE EASTERN RELIGIONS
(THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS)**" by **Victoria Albert Traykova**, 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 38-212/ 03.05.2022). Victoria Albert Traykova has provided all the necessary documents concerning the procedure for the defense of the dissertation.

1.Data about the dissertant and the procedure

Victoria Albert Traykova has studied and graduated from the Faculty of Theology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" . 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 Historical 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 contains a total of 279 standard pages. It consists of a preface, introduction, development in three chapters, conclusion and list of references.

With the preface, the doctoral student introduces the topic by presenting a summary of the motives of his research work.

The introduction justifies the choice of the topic and its relevance; the subject, object, aims and objectives of the research are clearly formulated. As a positive element, I take into

account the mentioned historiography on the problem, which indicates a good knowledge of the literature on the research problem.

The dissertation consists of three chapters, The first chapter „**Origin of the idea of rebirth**“ traces the historical path of the idea of reincarnation. The second chapter „**Christian view of the idea of reincarnation**“ is devoted entirely to the evidentiary and apologetic part of the dissertation. Provoked by the challenges of the East, the Christian view finds it necessary to turn to it, to study it, and to state firmly the position of the Christian apologists, the Church, and the teachings of Christ.. The third chapter „**Manifestations of the idea of rebirth**“ points out some modern misunderstandings in the perception of both Christianity and Buddhism.

In the conclusion of the research paper, the main conclusions of the essay are drawn based on the thesis statement.

Due to the limited number of pages to compose a statement, I will limit myself to what has been said so far, focusing on the scholarly contributions and critical comments and recommendations to the dissertation.

3. Evaluation of the scientific contributions

The scientific contributions of the thesis according to its author are:

1. The dissertation is one of the first scientific experiments in Bulgarian Orthodox theology to study the idea of reincarnation in Eastern religions and the regard of Orthodox Christianity on this issue.

2. The dissertation will be useful in future research of students in History of Religions.

3. The dissertation is the first step towards bringing the issue of reincarnation to the general public from a Christian point of view and setting new dimensions of the conversation on the topic of why there is no rebirth.

I fully accept the first of these scientific contributions, believing that Victoria Traykova's dissertation fills a small gap in Bulgarian theological thought. It explores the idea of rebirth from a Christian point of view. Despite the existence of similar writings as that of Schumann, H. Seekers of souls versus deniers of souls - the teachings of Indian religions on reincarnation. The idea of reincarnation in the East and in the West, 2019, Victoria Traykova managed to explore the topic from the standpoint of the Orthodox Church tradition.

4. Critical remarks and recommendations

The dissertation presents a scientific study of the topic of rebirth, and presents the Christian point of view on this issue, as already mentioned in the contributions, but the work would be of greater scientific value if a theological analysis of the doctrine of rebirth, which

that is, not so much to list the teachings of church authors in connection with the topic, but to cite their views on the topic, as an argument in the analysis made by the author in support of the research thesis defended in the paper.

I think that in its current form the dissertation is written more for a more popular audience and would be successful in publishing it, but as a dissertation text there is no scientific novelty and clear theological analysis with his arguments. There are many well-known facts in the dissertation that could be said more briefly in order to focus on the analysis rather than the description. In the context of this statement, a third chapter, which has many good ideas and these, could be shortened before the defense, and then revised and published in order to acquaint a wider range of readers with the topic of the study. In this sense, I cannot accept the scientific contributions proposed by the author / second and third / that it is useful to students of theology or that the text seeks greater publicity. I think that the whole second point of the second point of the third chapter: "Examples of Gnostic sects" is superfluous. The dissertation text is already more than large than the accepted model for a dissertation text in the field and if it is not specific and analytical it makes it difficult to understand its content and loses its academicity. In the introduction to the work there is a historiography on the topic, but it is proposed without analysis by the author, which brings it closer to the bibliography published at the end of the dissertation.

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 two publications that are in the field of his dissertation.

6. Conclusion

Despite the errors and inaccuracies of the dissertation as pointed out, I declare that I will vote positively on the procedure of Victoria Albert Traykova for the award of the PhD in the professional field 2.4 Theology.

09.06.20229.

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