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R E V I E W
for a dissertation on:
„THE GRACIOUS CREATIVITY OF MAN IN TIME ACCORDING TO
FATHER GEORGES FLOROVSKY“
submitted by Rusina Rumenova Torosyan
for the award of the degree of PhD in 2.4. Religion and Theology
(History of Orthodox Theology in the Twentieth Century)

By order ПД-38-424/15.07.2022 of the Rector of the Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury, and by the jury (minutes 1/19.07.2021) – as its chairman and reviewer in the procedure for the public defense of the dissertation of the doctoral student in independent training Rusina Rumenova Torosyan for the award of the degree of PhD.

Rusina Torosyan was born on 09.02.1971. She completed her secondary education in 1989 at the 9th FEG „Alphonse de Lamartine“ in Sofia. In 1990 she went to Paris where she enrolled as a student of History of Art at the Sorbonne. In 1991 she interrupted his studies and went to the USA, where she still lives. In 2019 she graduated in Theology at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ with excellent grades.

By order of the Rector of Sofia University ПД 20-1446/24.09.2020, amended by ПД 20-2049/26.11.2020, she was enrolled in the PhD program in 2.4. Religion and Theology, Doctoral Program in Theology (History of Orthodox

Theology in the Twentieth Century) at the Department of Historical Theology of the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University, as of 25.09.2020 with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Pavel Pavlov. She has passed the required examinations and other commitments according to her PhD Individual Plan. In the process of preparation of her thesis there is no evidence of any violations. She was dismissed early with the right to defence (order ПД 20-1369/15.07.2021).

Her professional career has been mainly in the field of insurance and she has had her own insurance office since 2003. She attended the Princeton University of New Jersey twice where she worked with the archives of Fr. Florovsky in connection with this research. She is fluent in French and English. She has a good knowledge of communications and information technology. She writes poetry.

The dissertation submitted for review contains 220 pages and has the following structure: Foreword, Introduction, four chapters, Conclusion, Appendices, Declaration of Authenticity of the Text and References. The abstract consists of 21 pages.

I have carefully read the text of the dissertation. A skillful and balanced distribution of the text in the individual chapters has been achieved. Man and his person, the image and likeness of God in him, are identified as the main subject of theological analysis. The aim is, on the basis of the testimonies in the theology of Fr. Florovsky to gain a clearer insight into the mystery of the human person.

In the **Foreword**, Torosyan details the reasons that led her to choose this topic and acknowledges all those from whom she received help. For her, this is a „dream come true“. She also points out the difficulties that accompanied her work on the thesis, mainly due to the travel restrictions imposed by the pandemic and her distance from her homeland.

I will present this otherwise rich text concisely. I should note that the proposed statements and conclusions in the text are well argued.

In the **Introduction**, along with outlining the subject, object, aims, objectives and methodology, which includes the source method in relation to the archive of the Fr. Florovsky, as well as the theological-critical and hermeneutical methods in dealing with his published works, and also the dogmatic interpretive method.

In **Chapter One**, entitled „**The Time of Grace**“, Torosyan addresses the question of time in three sub-paragraphs, seen through the lens of Christianity, which inverts people’s previous conceptions of time by subordinating time to man. This happens thanks to the Resurrection of the Theanthropos Christ, which allows man the possibility to transition from time to eternity. The notion of time changes from cyclic to linear. History is only filled with meaning after the incarnation of the Theanthropos. Time appears with Creation and without it there is no time, which is also perishable, has a beginning and an end, and man emerges. Time is not comparable to eternity, the two being mutually interpenetrating. Man was created for eternity and will remain for eternal life in God. Grace is the Divine creative energy and love. Freedom is about the graceful creativity of man, and its fruit is love. Creativity is the gracious overcoming of nature in itself.

Chapter Two is entitled „**The Seal of Love**“. In it, the author discusses the relationship between time, logos and tropos in four sub-points. Time is transformed by the human soul into good and spiritual beauty. It is an inseparable part of man's gracious creativity, as it is a sphere of freedom. Logoi are the creative imperishable energy of the Word. God’s will is in them. There is creativity in nature, but it is different from that of man, the difference being the freedom of the individual. Time is most fully mastered in the tropos of love. It relates to the need for the unfolding of Creation because of its perishable and imperfect nature. If man fails to do this, he cannot solve his own creative task. To the extent that he bears the fruit of love, to that extent does he realize himself. Man’s creative completion is in God. Only the individual is capable of having and giving love. Because of freedom, the individual ceases to be merely a natural

being. The individual is free to transcend his own creaturely nature. The human hypostasis is spiritual with its gracious and creative potential. The hypostasis is the energetic and spiritual center of man. The personality is higher than its hypostasis but manifests energetically through it. The human Self was created for love. It is ontologically good, but also imperfect. He is the spiritual and creative center of man, perfection being his highest gracious potentiality. The Self possesses the whole man and manifests itself through him. Therein lies the mystery of image and likeness. Without love the Self is self-destructive and dies. Spiritual value is created only in love and has a gracious nature. The acquisition of value happens and takes place in the creative life of the Self.

In **Chapter Three**, titled „**Wisdom and Creativity**“, Torosyan discusses issues related to God’s Wisdom and Creativity in two sub-sections. God creates the world with His Word, which is Wisdom. It is revealed as a Person. Creativity is inherent only in the free and good Person that it is in God. Jesus Christ is the Self of love, but He is also the Sophia Wisdom of God, Who is of God and is His immanent Power. It cannot be thought of as a fourth hypostasis of God. Sophia is transcendent to the world, but she loves it and is therefore in it. At their core, man's creative crises are crises of love. In evil man dies spiritually, not existentially, which for him is the hellish state.

Chapter four is entitled „**The New Creation**“ and consists of two sub-sections. Here the author deals with issues related to the Divine Oikonomia and the power and beauty of man. The issue of original sin must be considered within the theology of the person. Human mortality testifies to man’s alienation from God. Through death God not only punishes but also heals fallen human nature. The restoration of the whole human nature takes place in love by the simple will of that nature. Only in communion with God does man become himself, otherwise he falls to a lower level. Sin is overcome only by inner conversion and change, and repentance is sealed by grace in the sacraments. The spiritual creation of man takes place in the Church.

In the **Conclusion**, Torosyan summarizes the results, pointing out that they go beyond the pre-set objectives.

At the end of the text, as **Appendix**, are included facsimiles of 5 fragments of various unpublished texts from the archive of Fr. Florovsky, located in the Firestone Library of Princeton University.

The text is generally readable, written in good Bulgarian. At least some of the comments from the internal defense have been taken into account.

The **References** used include a total of 125 sources and contemporary studies on various aspects of the problem at hand in several languages. The critical apparatus includes 392 footnotes.

The abstract is correct and properly prepared and accurately reflects the content of the study. It also lists 7 scientific contributions, which I take to be objective.

The required three printed publications on the subject are also presented, without forming part of the main text.

My overall impression is that the candidate has successfully tackled this difficult task. In this sense, the thesis meets the requirements for a doctoral dissertation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. There are still spelling and punctuation errors in the text. By their nature they are easily and quickly remediable. For example, the noun „providence“ is masculine; „transcendent“ is spelled „transcendent“; some merged forms are spelled separately, etc.

2. The introduction of the term „self“-ial and its derivatives, which permeate the whole text, should have been defined at the beginning.

3. In places the language is too emotional for a scientific essay.

4. Sometimes the accumulation of too many terms and definitions in one sentence makes it difficult for the reader to understand the meaning.

I declare that I have no mutual publications, research projects or other conflicts of interest with the candidate within the meaning of the law.

In view of all of the above, I vote "for" and urge the other members of the esteemed scientific jury to support the work of Roussina Roumenova Torosyan by awarding her the doctoral degree in the professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (History of Orthodox Theology in the Twentieth Century).

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(Prof. Dr. Al. Omarchevski)