

REVIEW

by Ivo Georgiev Yanev, Assoc. Prof., PhD,

of Roussina Roumenova Torosyan's dissertation

THE GRACEFUL CREATIVITY OF MAN IN TIME

ACCORDING TO FATHER GEORGI FLOROVSKI

for awarding the educational and scientific PhD degree in professional field 2.4 Religion and Theology (History of Orthodox Theology in the 20th Century)

Supervisor: Pavel Nikolov Pavlov, Assoc. Prof., PhD

The doctoral student and her supervisor have chosen an important and interesting for contemporary theology topic, but at the same time a topic difficult to develop due to the fact that its object is the work of one of the most genius, prolific, charismatic and encyclopedic representatives of the theology of the Orthodox Church in the twentieth century – namely, prot. Georgi Florovsky.

The dissertation body comprises a total of 220 typed pages with a **preface, an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, an appendix and bibliography**. The scientific apparatus includes 418 footnotes and 107 sources of Bulgarian and English literature. The volume, structure and written presentation of the submitted dissertation correspond to the requirements for this type of scientific texts.

The **Preface** informs of the personal reasons behind the choice of topic for the dissertation, and expresses gratitude to the scientific supervisor and the Faculty of Theology.

The **Introduction** of Mrs. Torosyan presents the **object** to be studied in the dissertation, namely, man and his “*blagodatno tvorchestvo*” (translated by the author as graceful creativity) according to Archpriest Georgy Florovsky. The **subject** of analysis is man and his person (personality) as belonging to God and the God's image in man, the full of grace relationship of the Godman, the acquisition of value and human theosis. **The Methodology and structure** of the dissertation are also introduced.

In **Chapter One, The Acceptable Time (“blagodatnoto vreme”** or literally, the time which is full of grace), Mrs. Torosyan elaborates on the Christian understanding of history and time, as it is presented in the works of Archpriest G. Florovsky. The author writes that “man is to *overcome with grace* his nature, and this grace-filled act or process of

overcoming requires time, and it requires a choice made by the person in favor of his *super-natural freedom* or above *natural freedom*. This is the calling of a person.

In **Chapter Two, The Seal of Love**, Mrs. Torosyan analyses the relationships (marked by God's grace) between time, logos and tropos, and between time, person and hypostasis, as well as human freedom and its significance for the work of man. Time is linked to freedom since it is defined by Fr. Florovsky as comprising a field of *super-natural freedom* or above natural freedom. As for the Theology of the Person the author introduces two new terms: *I-ology* (literally Ego-ology) and *I-iality* (literally Ego-ality) with view to discern better the hypostatic space of the human person from hypostatic space of any other lower-plane creation. Man is a *living soul*, he is created in the image and likeness of God, and his annointment puts him on a plane higher than all Creation. Since only man is made to be like the Word and is created as a free person in the image of his Maker, he is defined as an “I” or as being “I”-ial.

In **Chapter Three, Wisdom and Creativity**, Mrs. Torosyan presents a scientific theory of Wisdom, as well as the creative crises of man, the importance of human freedom, and compares it critically in an analysis with the spiritual challenges of contemporary man. The author makes note of the *connectedness to the world* which stick that which is created to that which is uncreated for an eternal being; she also makes an attempt to make clear the theology of the Taking On of Human flesh, the Death on a Cross and Resurrection.

In **Chapter Four, The New Creation**, the author connects the Theology of the Person to the Theology of the Resurrection, whereby she analyses the connection (with view to creativity) between the likeness to God and the being an image of God, where God-likeness is understood as fullness of the potentiality of being an image of God. The author believes that the *Graceful Creativity* of man cannot be understood outside ecclesiology, and that Fr. Florovsky's theology is a churched theology. All *graceful creativity* is occurring in Christ's Church and it occurs in a world which is a world in the Church. For this reason at the end of the last fourth chapter are listed in a summarized version the witnesses which Fr. Florovsky has given in favor of the Church. The Sacraments of the Church are related to God's Economy and the opportunity given to man to be part of it.

The **Conclusion** gives the key points and results of the dissertation of Mrs. Roussina Torosyan. The **Appendix** consists of several of the original documents from Fr. Florovsky's personal archive from the Firestone Library of Princeton University, which only increases the value and insight of the dissertation.

Several **remarks** and **comments**. Naturally there are certain typos and technical glitches which are easily corrected. On some pages the footnotes make the mistake of citing the full title of the cited source instead of giving an *Ibid.* abbreviation (see p. 20 among others). The written text at some points is still too emotional for a scientific text, despite the attempts of the author to improve it, which deserve commendation, after the given feedback at the internal discussion of the text prior to the public defense.

The **Abstract** corresponds to the contents of the dissertation with the exception of the extremely brief presentation of the structure of the dissertation which in its turn is unable to offer a good presentation of the work. I agree with the listed **scientific contributions** of Mrs. Torosyan in her abstract. We note the existence of the required **three published articles** related to topic of the dissertation.

I hereby declare that I have no affiliated business or activities, or co-authorship with the author of this dissertation, the doctoral student Mrs. Roussina Torosyan, and also that we do not fall within the hypotheses of the legal documents defining conflict of interest.

I believe that the dissertation of Mrs. Roussina Torosyan is a valuable contribution to the Theological science as a whole, and in particular for the History of Orthodox Thought in the Twentieth Century. The doctoral student has analysed in depth and fulness the works of Archpriest Georgi Florovsky, she has been *in touch* with his archives, and convincingly presents the understanding of graceful creativity of man in time of this notable clerk and theologian of the Orthodox Church. Having in mind the agreement of this dissertation with the set requirements in the legal documents, which set out the characteristics of this type of scientific text, and the meeting of all procedures, connected to the preparation of the doctoral student and the process of its being made ready for public defense, as well as the fact that the doctoral student meets the national requirements set in ZRASRB in terms of the scientometric data for obtaining the educational and scientific degree of *Doctor*; **all of the above makes me value highly her scientific contributions and to vote a convincing *Yes* in favor of awarding Mrs. Roussina Torosyan with the educational and scientific degree of *Doctor* in professional field 2.4 Religion and Theology (History of Orthodox Theology in the 20th Century). I recommend that the members of the respected jury also vote *Yes*.**

Sofia,

September 1, 2022

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