

SHORT REVIEW

of Prof. DSc Anissava Lyubenova Miltenova

regarding the dossier submitted by Assoc. Prof. V. Rev. Ivan Stoyanov Ivanov, PhD
candidate in the competition for the academic position of 'professor', professional field
2.4. Religion and theology (liturgical studies)

Faculty of Theology, Sofia University

By order No ПД-38-224/28.04.2023 of the Rector of the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia I have been appointed Member of the Evaluation Committee in a competition for the academic position of 'professor', professional field 2.4. Religion and theology (liturgical studies), gazetted in the *State Gazette*, No. 35 /18.04.2023.

The single candidate in the competition is Assoc. Prof. V. Rev. Ivan Stoyanov Ivanov, PhD, Department of Practical Theology at the Faculty of Theology, St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia. The candidate's dossier, as submitted in hard copy and digital media, is in full compliance with the Regulations for the Development of the Sofia University Academic Staff and includes all documents required. The procedure meets all the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act.

The candidate is a graduate of the Faculty of Theology at the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia with a degree of Master of Theology (1996); the Prof. Pancho Vladigerov National Academy of Music, Vocal Faculty, with the degree of 'Bachelor' (1999), the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome with the degree of 'Licentiate in Eastern Theology' (2003) and the Almo Collegio Capranica, Rome (2004). He was awarded the academic and educational degree of 'doctor' at the Sofia University Faculty of Theology in 2005 following the successful defence of the thesis on "The Liturgical Tradition of Hesychasm in 14th-15th Century Musical and Hymnographic Monuments" with academic supervisor Prof. Dr Elena Toncheva. In 2009 he was elected associate professor at the same faculty of Sofia University and has headed the Department of Practical Theology since 2021. The candidate has specialized at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, the Czech Republic (2012) and at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Trnava in Bratislava, Slovakia (2023). In recent years he has been active internationally, and since 2021 he has been the ecclesiastic and diplomatic representative

of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Rome and Primate of St Cyril, St Methodius and Their Five Holy Disciples Bulgarian Orthodox Community in Rome. He has been honoured with several awards for his work, and the "Benedict XVI" honorary plaque of Pontifical Lateran University as professor of Orthodox liturgical, eucharistic and sacramental theology (implemented by him since 2021) deserves special mention. The candidate's scholarly and teaching work is in the areas of liturgy, liturgical theology, eucharistic and sacramental theology, Christian liturgical practice, religious worship practices, church music and hymnography, as well as ecclesiastic diplomacy and interfaith dialogue.

The candidate's submitted dossier for the competition fully meets the requirements of Sofia University under Section V, Article 115, as well as the national requirements according to the Regulations on the Application of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act: the habilitation thesis on the subject of *Евхаристията – Mysterium fidei – Mysterium vitae* (литургично изследване на тайнството Евхаристия) [*The Eucharist – Mysterium fidei – Mysterium vitae (a liturgical study of the Eucharist sacrament)*] (published by Университетско издателство „Св. Климент Охридски“, София, 2020. ISBN: 978-954-07-4888-7), a chapter from a collective monograph (Liturgical commentaries, analyses and interpretations of the *Pilgrimage of Etheria* (a comparative study with parallels from the liturgical tradition of the Church). *Pilgrimage of Etheria, Peregrinatio ad loca Sancta – Pilgrimage to the Holy Lands. A liturgical source. Text, commentary, interpretation*, 2019), 21 studies and 5 articles. The citations also meet the requirements.

Liturgical studies and liturgical practice in its centuries-old development are the focus of Assoc. Prof. Ivan Ivanov's scientific interests. The monograph submitted for the competition, „Евхаристията – *mysterium fidei – mysterium vitae* (литургично изследване на тайнството евхаристия)“ [*The Eucharist – Mysterium fidei – Mysterium vitae (a liturgical study of the Eucharist sacrament)*], is a complete, comprehensive and thorough study of the sacrament of the Eucharist in the context of the Orthodox tradition. The author sets out as a goal in the exposition of the scientific problems of the overall tradition: "the identification and interpretation of the Eucharist and its *nucleus eucharistic* – Eucharistic nucleus – the *epiclesis* – (ἐπίκλησις – invocation of the Holy Spirit), comparing the Bulgarian liturgical tradition with the world liturgical tradition" (p. 20). The chosen topic is crucial for the liturgy in general - both for its history and contemporary state and in terms of its comparative aspect to the content of liturgical

and confessional practices. The author has made a comprehensive analysis of the sources, commenting on their interpretation in the works of scholars and exegetes from the time after the Apostolic Tradition to the present day. The topic allows for a multifaceted analysis - the formative factors of liturgical phenomena and the forms of realization of the Eucharistic sacrament, the catholicity in eucharistic oikumene (discussed in Chapter One).

The history, development, and parts of the liturgy are the subject of study in Chapter Two, in which a rich and comprehensive set of sources on the Eucharist are collected and commented upon. The text characterizes the Eastern liturgical families: the Antiochian, Alexandrian, and of Jerusalem, as well as the established liturgy of the Church. The early forms of worship and their development in the Byzantine liturgical rite, which is also of major importance for the Slavonic tradition, are analysed in detail. The parts of the liturgy are comprehensively discussed in theological, textual, exegetical, hymnological and practical aspects over time. The overview is accompanied by well-chosen examples from the heritage of the Church Fathers. A comprehensive analysis is made of the devotional texts (according to their Byzantine and Slavonic redactions) of the Eucharistic canons of the Liturgy of St Basil the Great and the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, which are the basic basis for the reception and celebration of the Eucharist. The approach to commenting on the sources is well thought out, systematic and convincing, showing a thorough knowledge of the tradition and skill in its presentation.

Chapter Three is devoted to the Church's doctrine of the sacrament of the Eucharist and the liturgical actions found in it (the following phenomena are critically interpreted: *transubstantiation, consecration, reception of the gifts of grace, abiding in the permanent Pentecost, the Sacrifice of Christ and the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the apocalyptic manifestations of the sacrament, the process of glorification and praise by angels and men, the Eucharistic Creed, the Eucharistic pneumatology*, etc.). The liturgical phenomena (text and ritual) are placed in the context of Orthodoxy, following the teaching of the Church Fathers, and thus the mystical perception and interpretation of the Eucharistic texts in the liturgy are revealed. Eucharistic angelology in particular is the subject of the fourth chapter, in which the author has demonstrated his ability to enter deeply into the structure of the text and reveal its specificity.

Fifty-one valuable materials, related to the history and development of Eastern and Western liturgical practices and complementing the study as a whole, many of which are unknown to the

Bulgarian audience, are published in an appendix. The bibliography includes sources, corpora of published texts, reference books and scientific literature, totalling more than 450 titles.

In conclusion, it can be said that in the study Assoc. Prof. Ivan Ivanov presents for the first time the Eucharist as the centre of the liturgy through Eucharistic Christology and pneumatology, with the multifaceted clarification of the epiclesis - the most important transforming and sanctifying part of the liturgical action. The author's high competence is evident both in his dogmatic-canonical interpretation of the issues and in his knowledge of liturgical texts and hymnography. Last but not least, the monograph shows the author's deep understanding of the social aspect of the Eucharist and its importance for communion in the Church.

Assoc. Prof. Ivan Ivanov has also made a number of scientific contributions in the field of musicology by examining essential features of hymnographic compositions related to the Hesychasm (see e.g. *Liturgical Theology and Church (Byzantine-Slavic) Music and Hymnographic Practice*. – In *Scripta & e-Scripta*, issue: 19, 2019, 279-303), explores angelic imagery and angelology in hymnographic forms and genres, studies the Trisagion, etc. Among his publications submitted for the competition, not a few are those published in foreign periodicals, which testify to the international interest in his work. It is characteristic of his scientific output that he examines the sources with a consistently sound methodology, and justified conclusions follow the totality of the collected arguments and theoretical comparisons.

I will confidently vote for the award of the academic rank of 'Professor' to Associate Professor Dr Archpriest Ivan Stoyanov Ivanov and recommend the esteemed Scientific Committee to submit this proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University for approval.

21.08.2023

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