

STANDPOINT

by Dr. Slavia Georgieva Barlieva – Professor

at the Cyril and Methodius Research Center at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, on the work submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Professor" in the field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Liturgy) for the needs of the Theological Faculty of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski."

I present this opinion as a member of the academic jury appointed by Order No. RD 38-224 dated April 28, 2023, by the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." In the professorship competition announced on April 18, 2023 (State Gazette, issue 35) for the needs of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," the sole candidate participating is Associate Professor Reverend Dr. Ivan Stoyanov Ivanov (Kyumurdzhiev).

Deacon Ivan Stoyanov Ivanov presents in the competition his monograph "THE EUCHARIST - MYSTERIUM FIDEI - MYSTERIUM VITAE (Liturgy Study of the Mystery of Eucharist)." Sofia, 2020, 605 p. ISBN 978-954-07-4888-7, a chapter (75 p.) - "Liturgy Comments, Analyses, and Interpretations of the Diary of Egeria" from the collection "The Diary of Egeria Peregrinatio ad Loca Sancta - Worship to the Holy Lands. Liturgical Source" (Sofia, 2019), composed by himself, 5 articles, and 21 studies dedicated to the problems of liturgical theology, the sources and history of liturgical practice, and its church-diplomatic reflections in the modern era. All of these represent a comprehensive research profile built upon excellent education and encyclopedic theological knowledge.

The liturgical study of the mystery of the Eucharist in the monograph "THE EUCHARIST - MYSTERIUM FIDEI - MYSTERIUM VITAE" is dedicated to the great liturgists whose works have shaped the Bulgarian school of Eucharistic theology, of which the discussed author is a representative. Just as in most of his studies on the topic, in this monograph, he examines the mysteries and rituals of the Eucharist in accordance with Bulgarian scholarly heritage, but also through the lens of global research solutions.

Deacon Ivan Ivanov presents various liturgical phenomena ("The Liturgy; The Eucharist; The Anaphora (Eucharistic Canon) with its various parts (with emphasis on the epiclesis) and the issue of transubstantiation and consecration; the cult - liturgical proceedings, symbols, the sacrament, the sacrifice, and others" (p. 19), tracing their history, development, function, and interpretation. His main goal is to identify emerging scholarly problems by studying the interaction between the tradition and interpretation of the Eucharist in Bulgaria and in an international context.

The declared (and adhered to) principles of the study include scrupulous use of sources, consistent establishment of the objective nature of the research, particularly in clarifying contradictions between liturgical science and church tradition, and adapting the results of scientific research to the needs of the present and future.

The content of the book is not only comparable to the finest examples of historical liturgics but is also enriched with developments on the subject of the Eucharist through the

issues of faith and church life from our contemporary era, examined within the context of the Orthodox liturgical tradition. It is a successful endeavor to clarify questions related to the factors shaping the liturgical phenomena, particularly those contributing to the realization of the Eucharistic mystery - both from the moment of the "consecration and transformation of the offered gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ" and for the participating Christians within the Body of Christ - the Church. The Eucharist is proven as the greatest sacrament, the foundation of the Church's life, which sanctifies and blesses every creation of God, and its absence would imply the absence of the Church altogether (p. 451).

The author examines the development of worship and the various periods during which the sacraments are established, forming as liturgical proceedings, parts of the structure of the liturgy. Participation in the initiating and enlightening sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, as well as in the therapeutic mystery of Confession, is presented as an act of faith through which Christians strengthen themselves as "strong members of the Church," finding their path to God and eternal life (p. 129). The prototype of the sacraments is the Eucharist itself, which is the centerpiece of the Liturgy, and it, in turn, along with prayers and hymns, constructs the overall structure of Christian worship. The book is an excellent vademecum regarding the three parts of the Liturgy (Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Offering, and Liturgy of the Eucharist), but is also enhanced with a novel dogmatic-canonical liturgical research approach and a terminology dictionary related to the specifics of the studied issues of the Liturgy, particularly those of the Eucharist.

The work of Associate Professor Ivanov thoroughly presents the formation of liturgical families and their liturgical offices, reflecting the worship diversity in Christian East and West. The common characteristics and specific features of the liturgical phenomena are elucidated through a comprehensive analysis of the Eucharistic prayers of the Anaphora, wherein the texts encode the doctrinal characteristics of each church community. Equally significant in this perspective is the application (pp. 494 - 609), in which the author systematically presents excerpts from published scholarly studies dedicated to the history and development of the liturgical families of the East and West. This supplements and supports his exposition and conclusions. Beginning with the oldest church designation - that of the Egyptian Church Orders from the 3rd century and the slightly later liturgical office of the Papyrus of Deir el-Balaizah, Assoc. Prof. Ivan Ivanov provides information on an additional 46 liturgical offices, thus illustrating the development of the Eucharistic canon and essentially conducting another critical comparative analysis of the church tradition.

The book presented in the competition contains an extensive, systematized array of information in the field of liturgical theology, as well as productive ideas, analyses, and interpretations that undoubtedly will capture the attention not only of theologians - students, instructors, and researchers, but also a broad spectrum of other specialists in the field of humanities, who will find a competent and comprehensible explanation for many complex phenomena of Christian ritual practice. The value of the publication would be further enhanced if, in future reprints, indices - a name and subject index and an index of cited manuscripts - were added.

The work of Deacon Associate Professor Reverend Dr. Ivan Stoyanov Ivanov is an indisputable contribution to theological research and presents its author as a leading scholar with exceptional academic qualifications in the field of liturgical theology. The reference under Article 2(b) of the Higher Education Act for field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Liturgy) demonstrates compliance with national requirements for the academic position of "Professor." The scholarly contributions of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivanov, demonstrated in his publications, through his supervised doctoral candidates and projects, and his teaching activities, validate his candidacy for the academic position of "Professor" as entirely justified. I strongly support his appointment to this position and recommend to the esteemed Academic Council that Ivan Stoyanov Ivanov (Kyumurdzhievski) be appointed as "Professor" in the professional field of Religion and Theology (Liturgy). This would be a well-deserved step in his career advancement, paving the way for promising prospects for the development of the teaching staff at the Theological Faculty of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski."

Sofia, August 27, 2023

[Electronically signed by Slavia Barlieva]