



REVIEW

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

For the dissertation on a topic

" Intercession of the saints in the prayer sequences

of the liturgy from the Byzantine ritual

(according to the Slavic sources of the XV-XIX centuries)"

To doctoral student Miloslav Danov Bonov

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "PhD",

professional direction 2.4. Religion and Theology (Liturgic Science)

Supervisor: Protoiereus Ivan Ivanov Prof., PhD

1. Procedure data

The present procedure was opened following the decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Theology on 18.01.2024, protocol No. 07 and order No. RD 38-67/05.02.2024. At its first meeting, held on 19.02.2024, the scientific jury in composition: prof. prot. Ludmil Malev PhD, Prof. Maria Yovcheva PhD, Prof. Magdalena Legkostup PhD, Assoc. Prof. Pr. Stoyan Chilikov PhD and Assoc. Prof. Ivo Yanev PhD found that the procedure was organized in compliance with all legal requirements. After discussions, Assoc. Prof. Ivo Yanev PhD was elected as the chairman of the scientific jury, and as reviewers Prof. Prot. Ludmil Malev PhD and Assoc. Prof. Ivo Yanev PhD. The other members are assigned to prepare written opinions. The deadline for submission of reviews and opinions was 29.04.2024, and the



date for the open meeting of the scientific jury and public defense was 15.05.2022. All deadlines for the procedure were correctly observed. I believe that the procedure has been followed, I do not find any violations in its conduct. All documents are available. The scope and type of research correspond to the requirements of the Rules for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees of the SU, as well as the legal provisions regulating the procedure.

2. Information about the dissertation student

Miloslav Bonov was born on November 30, 1960 in Vratsa. In 1989 he graduated from the Nikolay Pavlovich Art Academy in Sofia - majoring in graphics, in 2017 he graduated from the Parallel Course at the PSU "SDS St. Ioan Rilski", then master's program "Faith and Life" at the Faculty of Theology of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", and in 2020 the master's program "Liturgy and Music" in the same faculty. In the period 2020-2023, he was a full-time doctoral student at the "Practical Theology" department, when, after completing his individual plan, he was dismissed with the right to defense. Successfully passed the internal discussion and anti-plagiarism procedures.

3. Dissertation and abstract data

The presented doctoral dissertation on the topic "Intercession of the saints in the prayer sequences of the liturgy from the Byzantine ritual (according to the Slavic sources of the XV-XIX centuries)" of the dissertation student M. Bonov has a volume of 237 pages, 425 footnotes and has the following structure: Preface , Abbreviations, Introduction, three chapters, Conclusion, Appendices, Sources and References. The dissertation is written in a good literary language, the author is well acquainted with and correctly uses the terminology of Liturgical theology and explores an important point in the Liturgy of the Orthodox Church, in the part dedicated to the Holy Eucharist - namely, the intercession of the saints in the prayer sequences in the Byzantine

Liturgies, according to the Slavic sources from the XV-XIX centuries. The dissertation study examines the main liturgical Slavic sources in Bulgarian, Russian and Serbian languages, with their different editions used in the Byzantine liturgical ritual. The aim is to show the continuity of the Old Bulgarian sources regarding the intercession of the saints, what part of the cult they are, how sustainable their use is in the Slavic tradition as an indication of the true Orthodox confession of faith among the Slavic peoples.

In the **Preface**, the author indicates the reason for taking up the development of this topic, as well as gratitude to the scientific supervisor, as well as to the teachers from the Faculty of Theology of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

In the **Introduction**, the topicality of the topic is indicated - "the faithful reading of the Holy Scriptures and the practice in the Holy Tradition, bequeathed by the holy fathers of the Church in confirmation of the subordination, which places the intercession (intercession) of the saints, as an invariable condition for eternal salvation" (p. 8-9). The main purpose of the work is to trace and prove the Byzantine continuity in the peoples who used the Old Bulgarian language for worship; to what extent the intercession of the saints is part of the cult of the Eastern Orthodox ritual and to what extent it is sustained in the tradition handed down by Christianity. The **main tasks**, which in my opinion have been successfully completed, are: 1. To trace the invocation of the intercession of the saints in the two Byzantine Liturgies; 2. Are the places in the Liturgies - Zlatoustova and Vasilieva always the same, or is there a change in the order of the considered source texts; and 3. To point out the main similarities and differences between the two Byzantine liturgical orders. The subject of the dissertation are fourteen liturgies created between the 15th and 19th centuries. **The subject of the researched topic** are the prayer sequences calling for the intercession of the saints in the two Byzantine Liturgies in the liturgies studied. **The main concept of the research** in the dissertation is the comparative method. The main authors in the

field of the studied topic are indicated, without specific reference to their works and main ideas in them.

In **the First chapter, "Holiness, as the main goal of God's house-building after the fall"**, the biblical foundations of holiness, the adjective "holy", are presented, and according to the author, the use of this term is associated with religious experience and experience. Man, by abusing his free will, given to him by God at Creation, has lost this true spiritual state. People who, with humility, prayer, love and denial of their own will, are enlightened by the Holy Spirit while still alive, are called saints and are honored to be "friends of God" and as such, prayers for intercession are addressed to them. The terminological similarities and differences in the use of the term holiness in different eras of Christianity are indicated. The understanding of holiness and saints in the Old and New Testaments, as well as in the first Christian centuries, are presented. In the next part, entitled "The Church and its dogmatic answer for the saints before God", the use of the term dogmatic and the word answer is puzzling. It is not necessary in a liturgical study for the author to deviate from questions about the dogmatics of the Church and analysis of the Ecumenical Councils, but it is simply necessary to briefly present the teaching of the Church about the Holy Mother of God and the saints. Not to mention that the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787) did not aim to confirm the teaching of the Church about the saints, although this is also a fundamental point, albeit secondary, but to confirm icon veneration, i.e. we again observe a deviation from the baseline of the study.

In **the Second chapter, "The place of the saints in the Orthodox liturgy after the 4th century"**, the development of the Byzantine liturgical ritual is presented, where you pay too much attention to the history of Byzantium, which you can present more briefly in relation to the Byzantine liturgical family. The five main stages of the so-called Byzantine liturgical synthesis are presented. The degrees of sanctity according to

the rank of the proskomidia are indicated, in which nine particles are taken for the nine ranks of saints, as well as the invocation of the saints in the two Byzantine liturgies. In my opinion, the presentation of the service of St. Longinus takes the study away from the main topic.

In **the Third Chapter "The Cult of the Saints in the Byzantine Ritual in the Slavic Sources of the 15th-19th Centuries"** an attempt is made to present the continuity of the so-called Slavic tradition. Here again, the text is separated from the main topic, considering the veneration of St. Tiveriopolis martyrs and the problems that arose with researchers from the Republic of North Macedonia in this connection. An interesting personal moment for me is the Euthymius clerk and Pope Gerasim's scribal school, because I knew Prof. Elena Kotseva, the discoverer and researcher of this clerk, as well as of the work of Pope Gerasim. The following is a presentation of the Slavic redactions of the liturgies of the Byzantine ritual, with the indication of fourteen Slavic-language celebrants. The last part of this chapter is devoted to worship as a continuation of the cult of the saints as intercessors and patrons, but in the political context of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, which, according to the author, proves the strong influence of their cult on Bulgarian soil.

In **the Conclusion** of the dissertation, the doctoral student has made a summary of the entire study with relevant conclusions, but in my opinion, quite shorter in percentage terms than the main text of the study. The **abstract** corresponds to the structure and content of the dissertation, although in my opinion it could be more extended.

The used **scientific and text-critical writings** are sufficient for the present study, which mainly concerns the Slavic liturgical sources of Old Bulgarian origin. **Appendices** are important evidence for the purposes of the dissertation.

The abstract corresponds to the main text, but I think that the presented applications have no place in it, they should only be in the main dissertation text. The contributing moments of the scientific study are missing because they are presented in the main corpus of the study.

Recommendations and comments

There are some spelling and technical errors that can be easily fixed. Unfortunately, some of the recommendations at the level of internal discussion in the Primary Unit - Department, which were noticed by the collegium, as flaws in the text, have not been corrected. In the dissertation, unnecessary deviations from the main topic of the study are often noted. As if the author's ideas and conclusions, which are an important part of a dissertation work, are missing clearly enough. I know that every young scholar strives to present the comprehensiveness of his knowledge and research in theology, but the purpose of a dissertation is to show the study of one particular topic. I understand the author's desire to use abbreviations, which is normal in the field of liturgical theology, but there are too many of them in this text. In my opinion, some places can be conveyed in an abbreviated form without at all costs being abbreviated. In several places I see Wikipedia cited, as well as some other Internet sites, in my opinion, in a scientific writing there is no place to cite popular sites, which can often contain even misleading information. Sources, in my opinion, should be part of References. The mentioned notes in no way harm the dignity and hard work of the dissertation student.

4. Scientific contributions

I accept the scientific contributions achieved during the research and formulated in the reference presented by the dissertation.

5. Publications and participation in scientific forums

On the topic of the dissertation, six publications are presented, which are of the necessary scientific value and are specifically related to the topic of the dissertation and meet the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, par. 2 and 3 of ZRASRB and Art. 24 of the Regulations for the implementation of the RSARB. There is no official information whether PhD student M. Bonov participated in scientific forums.

6. Conclusion

My overall assessment of the dissertation work, the abstract, scientific publications, as well as the scientific contributions indicated by the dissertation student, is positive. Therefore, I propose to the honorable Scientific Jury to vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the Scientific field: 2. Humanities; Professional direction: 2.4. Religion and theology; Scientific specialty (Liturgical) of Miloslav Danov Bonov.

Sofia,

22. 04. 2024

(Ivo Yanev, Assoc. Prof., PhD)