

STATEMENT

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member of the Jury in the competition for the degree of Doctor of Science in 2.4

Religion and Theology - Holy Scripture of the Old Testament

for the dissertation of Zoran Tsvetkov Kalev

on "... "evil before the Lord" in the book of Judges of Israel"

Faculty of Theology of "St. Kliment Ohridski"

The proposed topic is of necessity for our biblical studies, since, to my knowledge, it has not been studied. Particularly useful, in my opinion, however, is the author's desire to leave familiar treatments in our country concerning the historical diachronicity of Old Testament exposition and to draw in new approaches to the evaluation of Old Testament narratives.

The structure of the text consists of an introduction, five chapters, two excursuses, a conclusion, an appendix, and references used. I would say that this is an established arrangement in our scholarship.

The introduction meets the scientific criteria, in the sense that it contains the main necessary points. I would like to draw attention to the paragraph "Research on the topic", not because it is the most extensive, but because it obviously claims to set out the main points on which the author will move in his exposition. The doctoral student rightly dwells on the various methods that have come into use in Old Testament studies. The problem is that he does not, in my opinion, go consistently. If I have understood his intent correctly, Zoran Kalev chooses the theory of M. Noth, because it stands for the idea of the existence of a deuteronomic history. Except that he doesn't mention the serious dispute that exists between him and John Seters.

As is well known, John Seters does not accept Martin Noth's classical conception of the Deuteronomistic tradition, and he is not its only critic, which means that the doctoral student, in my view, freely proceeds on his guiding

premise that evil in Judges must be explained through a Deuteronomistic perspective. This is evident from the fact that he doesn't say anything at all because he thinks this premise should be accepted. It is not even understood what this tradition actually is. He then moves on to the complex question of whether the Jewish religion in its original form was polytheistic or monotheistic. The transition to this problem had to be made after the necessary preparation. I do not wish to mention the involvement in this same point of our much-respected Biblical scholars, who, however, have not written on its subject, but pass by it quite indirectly. Besides, they are radically at variance with his main point, namely, that a large part of the Old Testament narratives are very late compositions. Clearly the PhD simply does not want to say that he disagrees with them, in all likelihood for objective reasons.

To be honest, it is not clear to me how the author relates his chosen methods (quote: "The methods used in the course of the work are historical-critical, exegetical analysis, source and transmission criticism, genre-form criticism, and textual impact history"), since the historical-critical approach is not shared by representatives of Reader-response theory.

In the exposition Zoran Kalev has tried to stick to his chosen model - to bring the events in Judges, and not only them, under the matrix of the deuteronomic theory. For this purpose he draws on an extremely rich bibliography, which speaks of a conscious and responsible search for theological solutions. Moreover, his willingness to use source material, both from written evidence and that which comes from archaeological evidence, makes a good impression. However, I find the exposition a bit like biblical structuralism. Where the doctoral student finds expressions or motifs characteristic of the deuteronomistic theory (e.g., punishment due to entanglement in idolatry, or opposition in Old Testament texts to idolatry), he proceeds to interpretation in light of the above model. Thus, for example, the book of Daniel, for some unknown reason, is introduced into the text, as is Ezra. The intent is clear - to

show that the deuteronomic model is also part of Ezra's exposition (quote, "...the position of ethnocentrism, even if not accepted by all Levites, is described in the book to show that the deuteronomic model is constant for those who define themselves as 'sojourners'"). As I mentioned, at the beginning of my opinion, it is not argued by the PhD himself why the Deuteronomic model should be accepted and seen everywhere. On page 93, according to the text I have, he refers to J. Seters in order to demonstrate the ideologically leading importance of the deuteronomic framework. Only that J. Seters does not accept the historicity of the biblical narratives, which is probably not a problem for the Ph.D. student, but he should have at least tried to prove his point.

In my opinion, however, the essential problem is that the text is stylistically very difficult to read. I had serious difficulty in understanding what the PhD student was trying to say. I don't know because he hasn't given it to a stylist or proofreader. Therefore I cannot claim to have got the exposition completely right, but I hope I have at least followed the main idea.

In spite of the criticisms made, I think that Zoran Kalev has undoubtedly made a great effort, which I think should be appreciated. He has also taken what I would describe as an interesting approach.

That is why I believe that the proposed monographic study meets the scientific criteria for academic development and why I recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to award Zoran Cvetkov Kalev the scientific degree of Doctor of Science.

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prof. dr. Teodor Stojchev

