

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariyan Stoyadinov
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"St. St. Cyril and Methodius"

Mandatory information

Scientific field (field of higher education): Humanities

Professional direction: 2.4. Religion and theology

Scientific specialty: Ecclesiastical law

Educational institution: SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Theology,
Department of Practical Theology

Title/Topic of Dissertation: "The Statute of the BOC-BP: Practice, Application
and Conflicts with Other Sources of Church Law"

Dissertation student: Mihail Rumenov Mihailov

Academic supervisor: Prof. Dilyan Nikolchev, Ph.D

1. Data on the doctorate, dissertation, abstract and publications

Mihail Rumenov Mihailov was enrolled as a part-time doctoral student in the Department of Practical Theology of the Faculty of Theology of the SU in 2019. He was dismissed with the right of defense in 2023 (RD 38-650/13.12.2023). The procedure was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the law and by-laws.

The volume of the dissertation is 492 pages with the following structure: Preface, Introduction, exposition in five Chapters, Conclusion, Appendices and Bibliography. The bibliography includes 129 sources in English, Bulgarian and German, which are divided into sections: sources, used and cited literature (in Cyrillic, Latin and electronic editions). There are three appendices (1. Table with

the requirements of all current and repealed church regulations related to the educational qualification, 2. Project for the Regulations for the activities of the Diocesan Council and 3. Project for the Register of church properties).

As far as I know, this is the first monographic study on the Statute of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The work is original and I have not noticed any incorrect borrowings.

The methodology used by the doctoral student is complex, applying a legal (legal-dogmatic), sociological-axiological and comparative method. Citations below are in accordance with the standard of scholarly work. The abstract, in a volume of 38 pages, is a synthesized version of the dissertation and gives an idea of the qualities of the main text. The publications of the doctoral student are sufficient in number and in direct connection with the topic contained in the dissertation work.

2. Scientific contributions

In his self-assessment of scientific contributions, the doctoral student formulated six points.

First contribution: Usually the application for contribution is rejected if the research is the first of its kind only in our country. However, in view of the subject, the object and the subject of the study, we have no reason to look for a universal (ie beyond the local framework) contribution of the text. This in no way diminishes its value, and the fact that a comprehensive analysis has been carried out on the subject gives reasons to accept this contribution as real.

The wording regarding the Statute as a "source of local ecclesiastical law" is more appropriate than the one used in the title of Chapter I - "source of ecclesiastical law".

Second contribution: The comparison "between the provisions of the already revoked statutes and those of the current one, with which the development of the canonical institutes reflected in the organizational statute of the BOC has been traced" is a contribution because 1) it outlines an objective reality and this is done for the first time and 2) provides an analytical volume of data that can be used in any subsequent study of this ecclesiastical-legal matter.

Third contribution: The practice of state courts related to matters regulated in the Statute could be the subject of a separate study. In this case, citing "a part of the practice" to "indicate the understanding of the Bulgarian court" (*in general*, note M.S.) about the meaning of the statutory provisions" indicates only an appropriate approach. The study of practice during a specific period, with conclusions for a specific period, would be beneficial.

Fourth contribution: I positively evaluate the analysis of the local ecclesiastical law based on the UBOC-BP in accordance with the current Synodal regulations and the decisions of St. Synod. I would recommend accessing the archive of St. Synod to be regulated at a higher level, so that doctoral students do not have to face closed doors alone. This is not the PhD student's problem in this case, but access to the archive would benefit everyone.

Fifth and sixth contributions: The analysis of church administrative practice in the BOC (and its inconsistencies with the normative requirements) was carried out correctly. This aspect of the work, as well as the proposed draft regulations deserve attention and are a prerequisite for both discussion and implementation.

In summary, I believe that the PhD student has fulfilled the purpose and in solving the tasks has proven his competences for conscientious scientific work.

3. Conclusion

Based on everything presented up to this point, I positively evaluate the doctoral dissertation of Mihail Rumenov Mihailov and declare that I will vote PRO awarding him the ONS "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Theology".

Veliko Tarnovo, 28.02.2024

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