

STATEMENT

on the procedure for the defence of a dissertation on:

"The intercession of the saints in the prayer sequences of the Byzantine Rite Liturgy (based on Slavonic sources from the 15th to the 19th centuries)".

for the degree of Doctor of Education and Science

by candidate: Miloslav Danov Bonov,

Field of Higher Education: 2. Humanities

Professional field: 2.4. Religion and Theology, specialty "Liturgy"

Doctoral Program: "Theology" - "Liturgy", Department,

Theological Faculty (BF), Sofia University "St. Faculty of Theology, Sofia University (Sofia)

The opinion was prepared by **Prof. Dr. Marlena Legoknovna, Professor of the University of St. Cyril and Methodius**, as a member of the scientific jury, according to the Order № RD 38-67 / 05.02.2024 of the Rector of the University of Sofia.

1. General characteristics of the thesis and the submitted materials

The dissertation on "The Intercession of the Saints in the Prayer Sequences of the Byzantine Rite Liturgy (based on Slavonic sources from the 15th to the 19th centuries)" is 237 pages long and includes 425 footnotes. It consists of a list of abbreviations, an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, appendices, sources and references. The bibliography presented contains 15 sources, 127 titles in Cyrillic, 9 in Latin, 2 in Greek and 5 electronic sources.

In the Introduction the relevance of the topic, the main aims and objectives, the subject, the object and the methodology of the dissertation research are stated. The main researches related to the topic of the research work are presented in depth. Chapter One provides the biblical and theological grounds for viewing holiness as the primary goal of God's post-Fall household. The biblical grounds for holiness are argued, and then a retrospective of its understanding and manifestation in time to the fourth century AD is presented. The book also presents the history of holiness. The question of the Church and its dogmatic response to the saints before God is developed in relation to the aims of the study. Chapter two develops the problem of the place of the saints in Orthodox worship after the fourth century. It traces the development of the Byzantine rite up to the ninth century. The degrees of sanctity according to the order of the proskomidia are distinguished. An in-depth analysis of the invocation of saints in the two Byzantine liturgies is made. The third chapter examines the cult of saints in the Byzantine rite according to Slavonic sources of the 15th-19th centuries. The types of Slavic-language redactions in the period of the 15th-19th centuries are presented and, on the basis of

the comparative method, the research discourse is directed towards proving the stability and immutability of the cult of saints as a worship and continuum. The Conclusion synthesizes the research conducted, formulating relevant conclusions and presenting

2. Details and personal impressions of the applicant

Miloslav Danov Bonov was born in 1960 in the town of. Born in 1960 in Vratsa. He received his higher education in 1989 at the Art Academy "Nikolay Pavlovich" Sofia. Since 1994 he has been a member of the Union of Bulgarian Artists. He is a prominent author with numerous solo exhibitions. He began his theological education at the St. In 2017 he graduated from the Parallel Course. He then completed two Master's programmes at the Faculty of Theology, Sofia University - in 2019 a Master's programme in Faith and Life and in 2020 a Master's programme in Liturgics. From 2020 to 2023 he is a full-time PhD student in the Department of Practical Theology, specialty "Liturgics".

I have no personal impressions of the candidate.

3. 3. Content analysis of the scientific and applied achievements of the candidate, contained in the submitted dissertation and the publications included in the procedure

The scientific research of doctoral student Miloslav Bonov proves categorically that the intercession of the saints, which occupies a deserved place in liturgical practice, is an expression of the dogmas that correctly reflected the revelation of God, thus providing a convincing answer from a confessional point of view to the claims that the relationship with God does not need a mediator, but is personal. I agree with the scientific contributions formulated by doctoral student Miloslav Bonev. Indeed, this dissertation research is one of the few in Bulgarian liturgical theology that not only examines Slavonic sources in Bulgarian, Russian and Serbian, but also analyzes and compares their different redactions that were in use in the Byzantine liturgical rite of the fifteenth-nineteenth centuries.

2) Through the applied possibility of a comparative approach and interpretation in the direction of "similarity - difference", the Byzantine continuity in the liturgical tradition and especially the texts reflecting the intercession of the saints, as the main part of the anaphora, is traced and proved.

3) Through a contributory study of the Slavonic redactions of the two Byzantine liturgies, it is demonstrated that intercession of the saints is invariably sought and perceived in the continuum of church life as a continuity of tradition from apostolic times, today and for generations to come.

4) Through a comparative analysis of the evidence of the liturgical texts in the Slavonic service books (from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries), the visible and invisible to the prayer life of the Church attitude to the saints, the cult of the saints, and their fundamental

importance in the building of a living relationship between the earthly and heavenly Church is convincingly demonstrated.

4. Approbation of results

Some of the results of the dissertation research were presented at the Doctoral Readings at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University "St. "The Intercession of the Saints in God's Providence for the Salvation of Man".

On the basis of the dissertation seven publications have been formed. Cyril and Methodius", and in 4 scientific publications in the collection "Thought, Word, Text" of the Plovdiv University Press "Paisii Hilendarski", one of which is in print.

The presented publications meet and even exceed the minimum national requirements (under Article 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Law on Publications and Education) and the additional requirements of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific field and professional field of the procedure;

No plagiarism has been proven in the submitted dissertation and scientific works under this procedure.

5. Qualities of the abstract

The abstract is 34 pages in length, 21 of which meet the requirements for its preparation, and the results and content of the dissertation are presented correctly. The remaining 13 pages, however, contain appendices that structurally should not be here.

6. Critical comments and recommendations

1) Although some of the comments made in the discussion of the dissertation at the 10.01.2024 meeting of the Department of Practical Theology have been taken into account and blanketed, my recommendation is that the text of the dissertation should be carefully edited before publication. It is also to the advantage of the thesis to avoid the numerous abbreviations VLR, ZS, LBB, LIZ, and especially the abbreviation I for the intercessory part in the anaphora, used only 15 times in the thesis.

2) The methodological parameters of the research set out in the Introduction are often indistinguishable in the content of the development, which raises the question of whether the research objective is clearly formulated. The research would be much more representative if each of the three chapters ended with the formulation of specific conclusions.

3) It is noteworthy that the content of the conclusion is set out on only 4 pages, which makes it disproportionate to the Introduction, which has a length of 14 pages. It would have been to the benefit of the results of the research work if the conclusions were proportionate to the breadth of the research and in clearer correlation with the goals and objectives achieved.

4) Regarding the literature used, I recommend a stricter application of bibliographic standards, as well as numbering of individual titles. Many of the works cited as literature are sources and should be moved to this section. Major scholarly works by some of the leading liturgical scholars are not listed. It would have been good to have included in the bibliography the study of St. Nectarius of Aegina, Metropolitan of Pentapolis "On the Saints of God" (ΑΓΙΟΣ ΝΕΚΤΑΡΙΟΣ ΠΕΝΤΑΠΟΛΕΩΣ, Μελέτη περί των Αγίων του Θεού. Αθήναι 1981, 8ο, σελ. 40, available at: <https://leipsanothiki.blogspot.com/2014/01/232.html#more>

7. Conclusion

Having read the dissertation and the accompanying scientific publications and based on the analysis of their significance and the scientific and applied contributions contained therein, I confirm that the submitted dissertation and the scientific publications, as well as the quality and originality of the results and achievements presented therein, meet the requirements of the Law on the Application of the Law on the Application of the Law on the Application of the Law on the Application of the Law on the Application of the Law on the Quality and Originality of the Results and Achievements, and the relevant Regulations of St. Kliment Ohridski" for the candidate to acquire the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific field 2. Humanities and professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology. In particular, the candidate satisfies the minimum national requirements in the professional field and no plagiarism has been found in the scientific works submitted for the competition.

On the basis of the above, I recommend the scientific jury to award Miloslav Danov Bonov the degree of Doctor of Education and Science in the scientific field 2. Humanities, professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Liturgy).

01.04.2024

Prepared the opinion:

(Prof. Dr. Magdalena Legkostup)