

ATTITUDE

From Theodore Stoychev,

specialty theology,

Assoc. Prof. at the School of Theology Shumen University „Konstantin
Preslavsky“

of a dissertation for the award of the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences”
by: field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.4. *Religion and
Theology*

Author: PROT. Assoc. Prof. Dr. STOYAN ILIEV CHILIKOV, Faculty of
Philosophy and History, “Paisii Hiledarski” University of Plovdiv
(*acad. position., sc. degree, name, surname, surname - university or scientific
organization*)

Topic: THE FEAST "DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS" IN THE
ORTHODOX LITURGICAL TRADITION (THEOLOGICAL CONTENT OF
THE FEAST BASED ON
THE HYMNOGRAPHIC AND HOMILETIC TEXTS OF THE CHURCH)

By Rector's order ПД 21-521/29.02.2024 I have been appointed a member
of the scientific jury under the procedure described above. Within the term
established by law, Assoc.

Prof. Dr. Stoyan Chilikov presented the required set of documents, and at
the first meeting of the scientific jury it was decided to prepare an opinion on the
dissertation.

The proposed scientific work is the first in our country seriously engaged
with the theme of the Mother of God. The character of the text is strictly scientific
and sides from well-known mythologies around the image of the Virgin. And
since we are accustomed to the pretend vocabulary surrounding Her life and
works, I believe that the analysis offered by Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Chilikov fills a
serious gap. The topic is of particular interest to me, not only because, as a priest

serving in a temple that bears the name „Assumption of the Theotokos“, I need to clarify the meaning of the Theotokos for Orthodox thought, but also because I am directly interested in the linguistic referentiality between God and His Mother. How does religious language function when it comes to God and some of the saints? Some of the answers I found in my colleague Chilikov's monographic study are not the main reason why I would define his work as a significant contribution to Bulgarian theology. What gives it particular merit is that the text bears all the hallmarks of a rigorous scholarly study.

As for the structural arrangement, I don't think it needs to be said that it meets all the criteria for academic research. The statement contains an introduction, three chapters divided into sub-points and a conclusion. In addition to applying a well-known structural stratification, my colleague priest Chilikov follows a basic set objective and not only does not leave it, but also illuminates it in a detailed and comprehensive manner. I would also like to say that his scholarly handwriting is distinctive, which is also important for academic analysis. He sides with positions shared in our theological circles, for example, set by a prof. Dulgerov to draw his own conclusions based on sources. When I speak of theological specificity, I think it manifests itself in a seriously sacralized respect for the sacred witness. Although I differ in this respect from Priest Chilikov, I respect his reading of the available facts. Another feature of his work is its strictly theological character, combined skillfully with the application of historical criticism. I think, if I have understood the author correctly, that the latter gives way to the theological line of exposition.

An outstanding feature of the analysis is that Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Chilikov deals mainly with sources and in the original. He has followed the most ancient manuscripts that represent the Byzantine and Slavic hymnographic traditions for the feast (Sin. Gr. 631 and Sin. Gr. 630 - the Byzantine tradition and Ta and C 168 - the Old Bulgarian). This gives his work exceptional scholarly merit. The

same avoids ready-made conceptual matrices, but follows what comes from the sources. Anyone who works this way knows how complex this process is. At the same time, he exposes and polemics with the opinions of eminent scholars who have worked on the topics he discusses. This demonstrates an excellent knowledge of the academic literature.

The scholar from the University of Plovdiv has tried to interpret the symbolic side of the apocalyptic imagery. Although I would have liked to find more such hermeneutical work, what has been done gives the text even greater depth.

When I speak of the depth and breadth of the presentation, I mean, in addition to what has been said above, the fact that the topic at hand is actually illuminated from all sides. It does not dwell solely on the Feast of the Assumption, but engages in expounding other events such as the Resurrection and the Ascension of Mather of God. In this way he discusses the latter events in relation to the Assumption, and one could say that he connects them. Despite my skepticism about the historical nature of the events, Assoc. Prof. Chilikov not only acknowledges it, but emphasizes the profound theological significance of „what happened“. True to his theological profile, he places all these moments in the life of the Mother of God in the light of Christ. In this way, he preserves the Christocentric character of his exposition. Constantly cospending with apocryphal, hymnographic, homiletical and theological sources helps the breadth of the exposition. Assoc. Prof. Chilikov does not ignore the serious importance of the apocryphal texts in the establishment of the feast, but places them in the light of the tradition of the Fathers who, illumined by the Spirit, as he himself assumes, elaborated the narrative that comes from the non-canonical texts.

Due to the above, I confidently give my *positive* evaluation of the conducted research presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved

results and contributions, and *I offer to the honorable scientific jury to award/not to award the scientific degree "Doctor of Science"* of Assoc. Dr. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov in the field of higher education: Humanities, professional direction 2.4. Religion and Theology, the scientific specialty Medicine, Psychology and Faith.

I would like to say in conclusion that on the basis of what I have shared above, I recommend to the Honorable Jury to award the degree of „Doctor of Science“ to Associate Professor Stoyan Chilikov and vote positively.

07.05. 2024.

Prepared the opinion :

(Assoc. Prof.Theodore Stoychev)