

RECENSION

By prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, Department of Theology, Faculty of Philosophy and History of PU
“Paisii Hilendarski”

of the dissertational work for the fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of “**doctor**”

Field of higher education 2. Humanitarian sciences

Academic major 2.4. Religion and Theology

Doctoral program Medicine, psychology, and faith

Author: Yuliyán Agop Odazhiyan

Topic: Liturgical and Musicological Aspects of the Great Doxology in the Slavic Manuscripts in the Rila Choir School

Scientific supervisor: prof. Avksentii Delipapazov and assoc. prof. Elena Arnaudova

1. General description of the presented materials

With the order № P 21-2360 given on 17.12.2024г. by the Rector of the Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” (PU), I have been made a member of the scientific jury for conducting the procedure of the defense of the dissertation on the topic of Liturgical and musicological aspects of the Great Doxology in the Slavic manuscripts in the Rila Choir School for the degree of “doctor” in the field of 2. Humanitarian sciences, majoring in 2.4. Religion and Theology, doctoral program Medicine, psychology, and faith. The author of the dissertation is Yuliyán Agop Odazhiyan – PhD student of individual preparation from the Department of Theology from the PHF of the PU with scientific supervisor prof. Avksentii Delipapazov and assoc. prof. Elena Arnaudova from the PU.

The compiled materials presented by Yuliyán Agop Odazhiyan in paper format are in accordance with Art.36 (1) from the Regulation for the development of the academic staff of PU and they include the following documents:

- A request to the Rector of the PU to commence the procedure of the defense of the dissertation;
- Autobiography in European format;
- Protocol from the department council about reporting the readiness for commencing the procedure, with a discussion about the dissertation in advance;
- abstract;
- a list of the scientific articles published on the topic of the dissertation;

- copies of the scientific publications;
- a list of noted citations;
- declaration of originality and credibility of the applied documents;

The PhD student has applied five publications, two of which await publishing abroad. The five publications are accepted for recension.

2. Brief biographical information about the PhD student

Yuliyán Agop Odazhiyan has a Bachelor's and Master's degree from the Academy of the musical, dance, and fine arts – Plovdiv. He has two more Master's degrees: in Theology and in History. His career path begins as a teacher in Middle Musical School in Shiroka Luka in 2002, while also working as a conductor at SMU. Afterwards, he is a music teacher at SOU "St. St. Kiril and Metodii", while also working as a conductor for the choir of Plovdiv seminary until 2009. He also works at SOU "Kliment Ohridski" – Kostenets, as well as in OU "Hristo Smirnenski" – Momin Prohod, where he is currently the principal of the school. He works as chief consultant at the Ministry of Education and Sciences during 2018-2019, as well as at PU from 2012 up to now.

3. Relevance of the subject matter and its purpose and goals

I believe the dissertation stands out with the relevance of its subject matter for two reasons: firstly, because it is empirical. The author sets tasks for the work which he successfully resolves in the course of the study. They are based on his pedagogical experience and adequate theoretical and practical preparation. Secondly, the conclusions drawn are on the basis of the examination of manuscripts from a couple of centuries ago, which applicability is also relevant in contemporary times according to what has been said by St. Apostle Paul "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). In light of what has been said, Yuliyán Agop Odazhiyan examines the important liturgical and musicological aspects of the manuscripts from the Renaissance period and applying them to contemporary times.

4. Familiarity with the subject matter

Mr. Yuliyán Agop Odazhiyan is well-acquainted with the scientific problem he is working on. He works with source materials and even more with manuscripts which he analyzes, and on the basis of the suggested analysis, he reaches the appropriate conclusions. This defines the undoubtedly critical read of the author, his personal participation in the work and scientific contributions, for which I will devote special attention below.

5. Method of the research

The purpose of the theoretical and applied study is to analyze the liturgical and musicological aspects of the manuscripts from the Rila school of the Great Doxology. In relation to this, the

dissertation student sets specific tasks which he resolves with the help of the appropriate methodology. In accordance with the interdisciplinary nature of the scientific study, the appropriate methods for work have been used. The dissertation student mainly uses the historical-critical method, the philological and exegetical method, according to the interdisciplinary nature of the study and the tasks resolved in the work.

6. Review and evaluation of the dissertation

The dissertation spans 257 standard computer pages. It contains an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, applications, and used literature. The bibliography covers a total of 154 bibliographic units. The dissertational work uses a scientific method, consisting of 413 footnotes.

The text of the dissertational work is readable and well-structured in three balanced chapters.

The dissertational work contains a subject, object, purpose, goals, and methods of the scientific study. In the introduction, the author presents specific historiography about the researched topic, which is accompanied with the necessary analysis of the used scientific studies and sources on the topic.

Chapter One of the dissertational work is titled “Liturgical aspects of the Great Doxology”. The author of the basis of the perichoresis between prayer and faith, *lex orandi - lex credendi* – examines the liturgical peculiarities of the Great Doxology. This sets the right course of the study. The Great Doxology as a genre is related to the praise and celebration of God. In this sense, it is part of liturgical practice in the church. Along with this, it also contains the truths of faith which are confessed praising God. The intertwining of the dogmatic truths regarding the triadology, Christology, ecclesiology and eschatology, all find their focal point in the soteriology. The author of the dissertational work correctly traces the link between dogma and faith, expressed in the Great Doxology by examining select moments from its dogmatic structure. The liturgical textbooks often define the dogmatic elements in the structure of the hymnographic compositions as a means to fight heresy. This is the case, only insofar as the heresies stimulate the formulation of the dogmatic teaching of the Church on certain issues. But at the same time they are not so much an answer to the heresies as they are an organically and implicitly built in the culture of the Church as they define their faith.

The heresies only formulate the truths of faith by the Church.

The text of the first chapter of the dissertational work traces the development of the Doxology as hymnographic genre, which exists from early Christian times, and its connection with the angelic tradition as a Doxology which is rooted in heavenly liturgy. The difference between the Great Doxology and the Small Doxology is related to its liturgical usage. But for the Great Doxology, due

to the depth of the repenting and doxological motifs, the technical performance of requires more precision, which is conveyed by the richness of church music.

The content of Chapter Two of the dissertational work examines the Rila manuscripts of the Great Doxology, while in Chapter Three a musicological and tropical analysis is conducted based on the manuscripts that were able to be read, as well as on the tradition of the Church. Since the two chapters are directly connected, I will analyze them here together.

The Greek tradition in the Eastern church singing or Byzantine music serves as the basis for the developments in the Rila Choir School. On the other hand, the authors from the Rila Choir School, such as Neofit of Rila, create masterpieces in the field of Eastern singing, which are on par with Daniil Protopsalt, Petar Bereekt, Balasii ierei, Petar Lampadarii, Anastasii Rapsaniot, Grigorii Protopsalt, or Teodor Fokeiski. Leading role in the Rila Choir School and author of, not only the music of the Great Doxology, but of many other hymnographic works also, is national educator and abbot of the Rila Monastery – Neofit of Rila, who has encyclopedic knowledge, is fluent in multiple languages, of which are Ancient Greek and Church-Slavonic, has rich musical knowledge, is very familiar with Eastern singing and a great performer. When we add his strong faith in God, these are the prerequisites for his successful creative work in the field of Church singing and more specifically the Great Doxology of tone 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

7. Contributions and significance of the research to science and practices

The topic of the scientific study is dissertationable, relevant, and its study fills one of the empty spaces in native academic theology. The author has read a great deal of literature on the topic and has managed to analyze it by correctly formulating the conclusions of his study.

The dissertation student has identified four scientific contributions of his dissertational work:

- „1. The dissertational work is the first research done on the Great Doxology in the Orthodox theological tradition;
2. It outlines a new research field, which has up until this point not been a topic of interest to scholars conducting studies in this field;
3. First time ascertainments and conclusions about the Great Doxology are made in relation to the work of the Rila scribes.
4. For the first time in the theological and musicological tradition a musicological and tropical analysis of this many doxologies – five different tones – is conducted.

Here I will comment only the most crucial contributions in the dissertation. First – the topic, which is dissertational and done successfully – an analysis is conducted, where impressive is the work done,

not only with the sources on topic, but also with manuscripts, something few researchers in the field of theology attempt to do due to the special skills required.

Every single chapter has its contributions thanks to the quality analysis which has been conducted on the topic, but Chapter Three stands out with its achievements. The Great Doxologies of hieromonk Neofit of Rila are analyzed in terms of their originality, the way they differ from the Greek tradition, while at the same time their hesychastic nature. The dissertation student analyzes the doxologies from the technical point of view of a musician, singer, and conductor, analyzes the orthography, the subtleties of its performance, and the writing of the doxologies, comparing the manuscripts with the printed editions. Detailed excerpts of the Doxology's most important moments are presented, as they characterize the style and compositional technique of Neofit of Rila. This way the dissertation student builds upon the work of the authors on similar topics before him, such as Elena Toncheva, "Рилската певческа школа през Възраждането", Dissertation, S., 1980 and Andrei Kasabov "Музикалното творчество на Йеромонах Неофит Рилски – лични творби", Dissertation. S., 2018.

The entire dissertational work as a whole accounts for excellent knowledge of the musical theory and practice of Eastern singing of its author. The conclusions reached are a result of sound and in-depth reasoning on the part of dissertation student, which in turn are a result of his ability to apply scientific and practical methods in his role as a teacher of Eastern singing and as a conductor who knows flawlessly the theory and practice of the art of doxology.

8. Abstract

The abstract is written in accordance with the requirements and correctly reflects the content of the dissertational work. The dissertation student has presented the necessary publications which are required as per the Regulation of PU for permission to defend a dissertational work.

The dissertation student has fulfilled the minimal scientometric requirements as per Art. 26, Par. 2 and 3 of ЗРАСПБ and meets the minimal requirements for the degree of "doctor" for a major in 2.4. Religion and Theology. I believe the data presented by Yuliyana Agop Odazhiyan in the reference is correct.

9. Remarks and recommendations

The dissertational work lacks a thesis, which is mandatory for scientific studies of this kind.

10. Personal impressions

I have known Mr. Yuliyana Agop Odazhiyan from the time of his starting his work at the PU. I have been greatly impressed by him as a colleague and Christian with strong faith. I would say that the Department of Theology at the PHF of the PU is in need of such colleagues, who combine their pedagogical work with professionalism and strong and sincere faith in God.

11. Suggestions for future use of the dissertational contributions and results

The dissertational work possesses great scientific merit and I believe that it is deserving of being published as its own monograph.

CONCLUSION

The dissertational work contains scientifically applicable results which represent an original contribution in this science and meet all the requirements of the Law of Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ЗПАЧРБ), the Regulation of applying the ЗПАЧРБ, and the Regulation of PU “Paisii Hilendarski”.

The dissertational works shows that the PhD student Yuliyana Agop Odazhiyan possess deep theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the field of 2.4. Religion and Theology by demonstrating the qualities and skills for conducting an individual scientific study.

In light of the aforementioned, I am confident in giving this study, presented by the recensed dissertational work, abstract, results accomplished, and contributions, a *positive evaluation*, and I *recommend the honorable scientific jury award the scientific degree of “doctor” to Yuliyana Agop Odazhiyan* in the field of 2.Humanitarian sciences, academic major in 2.4.Religion and Theology, Doctoral program Medicine, psychology, and faith.

20.01.2025 г.

Reviewer:

(signature)

(prof. Stoyan Chilikov)