

OPINION

according to the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "doctor"
of doctoral student **Ivaylo Evgeniev Vassilev**

in the doctoral program "Pastoral Theology" from the professional direction 2.4. Religion and
Theology, Faculty of Theology, University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski"

The opinion was prepared by **Assoc. Prof. Galya Yordanova, PhD**, University of Shumen
"Ep. Konstantin Preslavski", as a member of the scientific jury for the procedure

1. Information about the dissertation student

Ivaylo Evgeniev Vassilev is a full-time doctoral student assigned with the right of defense to the
"Practical Theology" department at the Faculty of Theology of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". His
dissertation is on "*Free Will and Obedience in the Process of Spiritual Care of the Orthodox Christian*".

From the presented resume it is clear that the dissertation student has completed one bachelor's
degree and two master's degrees, which speaks of a marked interest in academic growth.

In his research activity, the doctoral student Ivaylo Vassilev has participated in 4 scientific
projects and is an expert, communication and coordination in project management for the period 2011-
2015 in Plovdiv.

His scientific publications are 11 in number, two of which are in print.

He is a member of the editorial team of scientific journals and periodicals.

There are two translated books: *Archim. Maxim (Konstas), Take care of yourself. Conversations
about mindfulness and digital culture*, ISBN:978-619-91798-0-2, Paralingua Publishing House, Plovdiv,
2021 и *Prot. Andrew Phillips, When the English Became Angels. Orthodox Christianity and the Ancient
Church of England*, ISBN:978-619-90430-9-7, Temple "St. Prpmchtsa Paraskeva", Plovdiv, 2020, as
well as numerous shorter translations on theological topics.

The submitted documents for the procedure meet the requirements of PPZRASRB and are well
arranged and completed. They certify the necessary academic and practical qualities and achievements
of the doctoral student Ivaylo Vassilev in the field of theological science in general.

2. General characteristics of the doctoral student's scientific works and achievements

The scientific works of doctoral student Ivaylo Vassilev are related to practical theology.

The peer-reviewed work consists of a preface, an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion,
references, and an appendix. There is a volume of 236 pages without the appendix. The used literature

has an impressive volume of a total of 223 titles, of which 79 nos. sources, 83 Cyrillic literature and 61 Latin titles. The appendix offers selected excerpts from patristic texts related to the topic of the study.

The subject of the dissertation is clearly defined: obedience as a principle of human behavior and attitude towards God, based on free will. The subject of the proposed dissertation is the spiritual life of man, inseparably connected with his spiritual care. The purpose of the scientific exposition is to investigate and establish the place of man's free will and his obedience for salvation and eternal life in the bosom of his spiritual practice in the Church. In my opinion, the set goal is precisely formulated, and the separate stages of the research are presented as separate tasks. The most important of them are: to explore and clarify the role of man's free will in his salvation and its place in his spiritual path; to formulate and examine the stages of the process of spiritual care of the Orthodox Christian; to explore the adverse outcomes of disobedience; to study and explore obedience as an internal principle of behavior of the Orthodox Christian and its importance for understanding the dynamics of his growth in spiritual endeavor. To achieve the set goals, the following methods were used - comparative analysis, analysis and synthesis when working with the texts from the Holy Scriptures, the holy fathers and modern theological texts.

In the introduction, the author justifies the choice and relevance of the research, the object, the subject, the goals and tasks, reveals the methodology of the research. A history of research related to the issues under consideration is proposed, divided into two parts - at home and abroad. In the first chapter, the Orthodox understanding of the world and man is presented; freedom of will; obedience and its prerequisites. Emphasis is placed on obedience to the clergy, as well as the dimensions of obedience to one's neighbor.

The second chapter is entitled "Birth and confirmation of the Orthodox Christian". It is dedicated to the process of spiritual striving and care; birth and Christian initiation. The importance of confession, penance and Holy Communion are indicated.

The third chapter of the dissertation deals with the spiritual and moral growth of the Orthodox Christian and reaching perfection. Emphasis is placed on contemplation and devotion in the Christian's spiritual journey.

In the conclusion, conclusions are made regarding the issues of free will and obedience of man in his spiritual path of striving and care by the spiritual mentor.

The publications are related to the topic of the dissertation and well illustrate its content.

Представеният автореферат отговаря на изискванията.

In relation to the scientific publications submitted for participation in the procedure, I summarize the following:

meet the *minimum national* requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the scientific field 2. Humanities and professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Pastoral Theology);

there is no plagiarism that has been proven in accordance with the law.

3. Content analysis of the scientific and scientific-applied achievements of a doctoral student contained in the materials for participation in the procedure

I agree with the contributions that doctoral student Ivaylo Vassilev presents, namely:

First: for the first time, the topic has been put up for systematic discussion in Bulgarian theological science, with the Orthodox teaching on the free will of man in the stages of his spiritual life and care being presented consistently.

Second: a comprehensive analysis is made of obedience as a way of progressing in the spiritual life of the Orthodox Christian in the context of salvation

Third: the practical-applied nature of the research regarding the care of the Orthodox Christian should be noted, emphasizing the problems in the stages of his spiritual growth.

Fourth: a large number of patristic source material was used, which until now has not been translated or published in our country, which enables a more objective reading of the text.

4. Critical notes and recommendations

In *used literature*, the titles included in *Sources* should be specified (eg Trebnik, Sluzhebnik and some other titles should not be here).

As a recommendation, I can note that in paragraph 2 of Chapter I, the philosophical understanding of free will could be expanded a little more, which can be put "under the line" and give additional illumination to the issue.

My shared observations are in good faith and do not change my overall positive impression.

5. Personal impressions of the candidate

I do not know Ivaylo Vasilev personally, but only through the dissertation work and publications presented by him, and therefore I am only commenting on his research skills. To the already made evaluation of the dissertation development, I add good language culture and good presentation style.

6. Application conclusion

After reading the materials, scientific work and publications presented in the procedure, as well as after analyzing their significance and scientific applied contributions, I declare that the scientific achievements meet the requirements of the ZRASRB, the doctoral student **Ivaylo Evgeniev Vassilev**


has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the field of Pastoral Theology and can independently conduct scientific research.

Conclusion

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results that have their contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment for the presented dissertation. abstract, the achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "*doctor*" to **Ivaylo Evgeniev Vasilev** in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.4. Religion and Theology (Pastoral Theology).

12.09.2024 г.

Prepared the opinion:


(Assoc. Prof. Galya Yordanova, PhD)