

REVIEW

by Prof. IVAN STOYANOV IVANOV, PhD

for dissertation:

„LITURGICAL ASPECTS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN (CHAPTER 4 AND 5)“

with author NAKO PETKOV NAKOV, PhD student at the Department of Biblical Studies at the Faculty of Theology at the University of St. Kliment Ohridski“

and scientific supervisor: Prof. D.Sc. EMIL TRAIICHEV STOYANOV.

On the basis of Art. 4 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and order of the Rector of SU RD 38-350 of 2.07.2024 and decision of the FS of the Faculty of Theology of 20.06.2024 protocol no. 15, and protocol of the First meeting of The scientific jury from 16.07.2024 I was elected as a member (review author) for the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree „doctor“ for the dissertation of Nako Petkov Nakov.

Information about the doctoral student and the doctoral program

In 2017, Nako Nakov was enrolled to study at the Faculty of Theology at the University of St. Kliment Ohridski“, Professional field: Religion and theology, Specialization: Theology, Master’s program: Religion and education, correspondence form of study. In 2019, he completed the master’s course with an average grade of study course — Excellent 5.79 and an average grade of diploma work — Excellent 5.75 with the protocol of the state examination commission n. 21 of 11.02.2020 Based on an order n. 2 RD 20-930 of 07/09/2019 Nako Nakov is enrolled in full-time doctoral studies in professional direction 2.4. Religion and Theology, Doctoral Program „Theology“ — Holy Scripture of the New Testament at the Department of Biblical Studies, considered from 10.07.2020 to 10.07.2023. During the course of study, the doctoral student has 3 publications related to the topic of the dissertation research, and also participation with reports at scientific conferences, as well as participation in a project of the Department of Biblical Studies. Shows a serious attitude during his studies and completes the Individual Plan. He was dismissed with the right of defense by order n. RD 20-1840 of 11.10.2023.

Information about the dissertation and the abstract

The dissertation consists of 200 printed pages. It consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references (150 titles: 64 in Cyrillic, 86 in Latin, Internet sites), 338 footnotes. The abstract contains 27 pages.

The work examines a significant aspect in the field of New Testament biblical studies, which advocates not only strictly biblical studies, but is also transferred to the liturgical aspects of the subject. The topic is challenging from a research point of view, as he mentions in his Motivated Proposal and the PhD supervisor, „but also too multi-directional, and this is an objective factor of difficulty in development.“ The research concept has a well-formulated topicality, object,

subject, hypothesis, goals and objectives. The methods are appropriate and reflect the specifics of the research procedure. The studied and used literature is on the subject of labor.

The object of the study is the text of the book of Revelation, and more specifically the texts in chapters 4 and 5. The object of the study is the heavenly worship and the presence of liturgical aspects within the object of study. Both the existing theories and hypotheses in the patristic and modern interpretations of the book of Revelation, as well as the specialized studies devoted to the analysis of the described visions from a liturgical and sacramental point of view, are drawn and used. The purpose of the study is to trace, interpret and present the liturgical and sacramental elements in the book of Revelation (ch. 4-5). In the dissertation, the author dwells on the sources from which he drew on the book of Revelation in the description of the heavenly service. Jewish and Christian liturgical practices contemporary to the book of Revelation, the books of the Old Testament, and Jewish apocalyptic literature. Tasks of the research: The tasks set in the work are divided into four chapters: 1. The Jewish apocalyptic literature and the Revelation of St. John the Theologian — p. 21; 2. Isagogical data on the book of Revelation (authorship, time and place of writing, book of Revelation and the New Testament canon, content, main ideas and themes, types of interpretations/ - 38; 3. Book of Revelation and the Christian liturgy / early Christian liturgy and its roots in Judaism and the liturgical use of the book of Revelation/ - 67; Interpretation of the book of Revelation /pt. 4 and 5/ in the perspective of the given topic - 108. The history of the studies on the issue is presented in detail. The conclusion summarizes the main results conclusions. The headings of the chapters, however, are not formed according to the necessary scientific standard used in dissertations and stand disjointedly, as if they are subordinate to one chapter, namely the main topic of the dissertation. This, as well as other inaccuracies in the content structure, does impression of some of the members of the Primary Unit (Department of Biblical Studies), was reflected in the recommendations already at the internal discussion, but unfortunately it was not changed. I agree with the following statement: „The titles of the chapters give a feeling of some kind of globality, which disturbs, and against the background of the specific title one can think of a „monograph/s in the dissertation“. I.e. each chapter can be an independent study“ (assoc. professor I. Naydenov, KS opinion).

The content of the study develops in different directions, with the author emphasizing the following biblical themes:

Isagogical data for the book of Revelation; Authorship, time and place of writing; Book of Revelation and the New Testament canon; Contents of the Book of Revelation; Epistle to the Seven Churches in Asia Minor; The Seven Seals (4:1-8:1); The seven trumpets (8:2-11:19); Persecution of the Church by the dragon and the two beasts (12-14); The Seven Golden Cups (chapters 15-16); Christ's victory over Satan (17:1-20:6); New heaven and new earth (20:7-22:5); Main themes and ideas; Types of interpretations; The Jewish apocalyptic literature and the Revelation of St. Apostle John the Theologian; Book Revelation of St. Apostle John the Theologian and the Christian; Divine service; Early Christian worship and its roots in Judaism; Angel worship and the Church; The place of Revelation in the history of the Liturgy; The liturgical use of the book of Revelation; Interpretation of the book of Revelation (ch. 4-5).

In this dissertation, the subject of justification and verification is the following hypothesis: The heavenly worship in the book of Revelation and the worship in the ancient Church have common elements to the extent that they have a common root in the Jewish worship known

from the Jerusalem temple and the synagogue. However, this is not a hypothesis that can be expressed by a biblical specialist, but rather repeats the liturgical hypotheses detailed in the studies of prominent Bulgarian and foreign liturgists.

Regarding the methodology used by the author, it is found that it is very ambitiously proposed and actually goes beyond what is presented in the content of the dissertation. According to the author, the Revelation can be understood as an interpretation of a liturgical practice that existed in the time of the seer in the ancient Church, as this interpretation, in addition to giving a theological explanation to the existing practices, strongly influenced the gradual formation and development of the first liturgical successions. The author, who is not a specialist-liturgist, does not reveal and does not inform what liturgical successions he has in mind.

In the current dissertation, Nakov defines that he uses the so-called diachronic method of research, following the semantic development over time of some terms and presents in different texts on the issue under consideration, as well as the synchronic method, trying to establish the meaning of certain ideas or phraseology from the considered. The study is based on the historical-critical approach to the texts under study, as well as the entire set of analysis tools included in it (textual, genre, source, editorial and rhetorical analysis).

Using his biblical knowledge in the field of the New Testament, the author explores the following topics: 1. Due to human sinfulness, the world is distorted by man himself and is connected to evil, therefore there comes a time when the human world must be destroyed in order for the „new heaven’ and ‘new earth’. 2. The call to repentance is the purpose of the Divine; acceptance of the disasters that are happening, and this call sounds not only in the book of Revelation, but also in the entire Holy Scripture; 3. Evil constantly grows and reaches colossal proportions, corrupting God’s Creation; 4. The last word in the history of the world is with God regardless of the amazing ability of evil to corrupt and grow rapidly. 5. Judgment over the world precedes the final triumph of the Kingdom of God, and this Judgment appears as the last and main moment in all human history and is a central theme in Revelation. 6. App. John addresses the people with the call, „Be awake.“ 7. In the time of St. John the Theologian, the cult of the emperor acquired the status of an official cult. The Christians, firmly believing that there was one true God to whom worship and service were due, refused service to the emperor, resulting in their martyrdom. Types of interpretations of the above Gospel topics are offered: The main and most common types of interpretations of the book of Revelation can be grouped into the following seven groups: 1) Historical interpretation, the book depicts events of world history, ending with the Second Coming of Christ; 2) Eschatological, the book describes events of the last times; 3) Church-historical - comprehensive coverage of the history of the Church of Christ; 4) Events contemporary to the author - persecutions and trials; 5) In terms of comparative theology, researchers of Revelation look for the presence of influence of religious ideas of other peoples; 6) Mysterious or spiritual interpretation - the whole book should be understood allegorically; 7) Eclectic - they combine one or another of the above types of interpretations. I believe that this part of the thesis has the most prominent transference moment, although the cited literature on the subject is insufficient and outdated. In the field of biblical studies, these topics have long found their scientific treatment and interpretation. (cf. all information on the subject in the dissertation on pp. 22-68). In fact, the author at the beginning of this chapter gives a good description of the history of research on the book of Revelation (cf. pp. 9-20), which can be taken as a contribution, as well as the statement of the interesting biblical hypothesis that the book of Revelation is a function of the specificity of the

era and the interest in it is associated with severe socio-political moments (something also typical of the Old Testament apocalyptic).

I must emphasize to the esteemed Jury that, as a specialist-liturgist, the focus of my review examines certain topics in Mr. Nakov's dissertation, which are also of interest in the context of strictly liturgical studies. The author makes an attempt to enter the world of New Testament hermeneutics, however, he implements the principles of liturgical methodology. These topics are covered in the following content. (cf. p. 69 –). A large part of the text of Mr. Nakov's dissertation presented here is borrowed ideologically, semantically, and even entire passages from the text of the book: *Ivan Stoyanov Ivanov (Kyumurjiyski), From berākāh to εὐχαριστία. From Jewish to Christian liturgical practice, University Publishing House „St. Kliment Ohridski“, Sofia, 2121.*

I agree with the recommendations made by members of the Primary Unit during the internal discussion of the work, that Nakov's dissertation apparently lacks basic research by R. Taft, M. Arrantz, C. Giraud, Makariopolski ep. Nikolai Kozhuharov, archim. A. Delipapazov, archpriest. Bl. Chiflyanov to priest-economist I. Ivanov, which would be useful for a better examination of the liturgical aspects. The dissertation presents some important sources for the development of worship in the early Christian era, which, however, are given in the main corpus of the text without being distinguished and presented as independent and independent texts, therefore it gives the impression that these texts are the authorship of the dissertation author. it would be good if they were placed in separate paragraphs or preferably in an appendix.

Regarding the text of the second chapter: The Book of Revelation of St. John the Theologian and Christian worship. The author, on the basis of hypotheses already known in the scientific space, and definitions, borrowings and such which are also found in my early studies and publications, that regardless of the fact that the New Testament canon or the definitions of the Holy Ecumenical Councils were finally formed only after the IV century , Christian worship has existed since the birth of the Church of Christ. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church builds and strengthens the historical foundations of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for a full-fledged liturgical life and missionary preaching, a trend that was explored by liturgists from the beginning of the 20th century in the person of authors such as Prot. Johann Mayendorff and Alchemy. Kiplerian Kern. Unfortunately, these authors, as well as subsequent research, are not represented in the dissertation. The ancient Christian worship and its roots in the Jewish worship were examined by the doctoral student in a compilative sense, based on the book of Prof. Ivan Ivanov, and compared with some ancient sources cited by modern authors and secondary literature.

Thus, for example, liturgical actions in the worship temple ritual, the Sema Israel prayer („Listen, Israel“), the synagogue service, prayers, chants, antiphons and readings and most detailed according to Ivanov and Arantz: opening psalms and prayers, Sema with accompanying prayers, blessings or the Semoneh 'Esreh prayer (literally „eighteen“ or eighteen canticles), readings from the Law, readings from the prophets, closing blessings. Reading the Scriptures and the prophets in the synagogue was the basis of the worship, and this element in some form has been preserved in the Christian worship. Thanks to the synagogue, Judaism, and after it, Christianity began to look at the reading of the Holy Scriptures as part of the divine service, as a form of prayer, and others.

The same borrowing of texts, ideas and hypotheses is found in the next part of the dissertation, concerning the Angelic service and the Church: the early stages of the formation of the service become visible a number of elements, some of which determine the history of the development of the service to the present day such as the Eucharistic presence, the participation of the Church in the angelic service, the emphasis on the importance of the interpreter of Scripture, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist as an act of the Church in its universal entirety, and the association of the Holy Eucharist with the Judgment of the world and the perception of the Holy Liturgy as a spiritual battle.

Dissertation Contributions:

The appearance of such research, according to Nako Nakov, is related to the absence of comprehensive biblical and hermeneutic works in Bulgaria on the liturgical aspects considered in the book Revelation of St. John the Theologian (chapters 4 and 5)“, as well as with his desire to trace and systematize some modern trends in the study of the Apocalypse.

The scientific director and the author offer the specific contributions: 1. The present study is the first attempt in Bulgarian Orthodox biblical studies, dedicated to the liturgical aspects of the book of Revelation (ch. 4-5); 2. For the first time in Bulgarian biblical studies, a systematized overview of the interpretive tradition related to the book of Revelation, from the first exegetical commentaries on the work to the present day, is made; 3. The novelty of the proposed work is rooted in its complementary nature with regard to insufficiently developed aspects of the relationship between ancient Christian liturgical practices and synagogue worship and their connection with the book of Revelation (ch. 4-5) both in Bulgarian and in world biblical studies (I do not agree that this should be defined as a contribution); 4. The presented work outlines perspectives for future academic research on the entire text of Revelation with a view to its thematic focus, theological significance and especially its liturgical and sacramental dimension (this has a recommended aparcter, not a pirnos in science).

Objectivity and originality of the dissertation:

Based on the finding of irregularities in the accuracy of the citation (cf. opinion of E. Damyanova) and the objective testimony of the anti-plagiarism expertise of the text submitted by doctoral student Nako Nakov (cf. and on the basis of my personal studies, comparing the text of „OECUMENIUS ON THE APOCALYPSE NOW PRINTED FOR THE FIRST TIME FROM MANUSCRIPTS AT MESSINA, ROME, SALONIKA AND ATHOS EDITED WITH NOTES BY H. C. HOSKIER ANN ARBOR UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN 1928“, whose text was used, translated, interpreted, but not exactly quoted by the author in the dissertation (in an extended test of 170 pages, the author cites Oecumenius, Commentary on the Apocalypse, (ed. et al.), The Fathers of the Church, 2006, Vol. the opinions of the members of the Department of Biblical Studies and the Motivated proposal of the scientific supervisor, Prof. dbn E. Traichev, are relatively similar to the master’s thesis defended by the author is accepted as an upgrade of studies in this direction, as well as a seriously stated claim for the objectivity of the study and contribution to the field of Biblical theology.

Props:

The documentation submitted for the procedure is complete and the required checks have been made. I declare that I have no joint publications with the candidate. Underline citation meets the standard.

The language and style of the research is clear. The text is technically correct. The bibliography and references are not properly structured. Sources, primary and secondary literature, editions must be listed in separate paragraphs.

Publications on the topic of the dissertation:

Nakov, N. „BOOK OF REVELATION AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP“, Collection of reports from the international scientific conference „Changes in the global world and new solutions“, Regional Library „Lyuben Karavelov“ - Ruse, 2021, pp. 156-165. 2. Nakov, N. „EARLY CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND ITS ROOTS IN JUDAISM WITH RESPECT TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION OF ST. YOAN BOGOSLOV“, Collection of reports, Scientific conference „Harmony in differences“, Sofia, 10.12.2021, pp. 59-68. 3. Nakov, N. „THE REBELLION OF THE SPIRIT IN THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN AND THE CALL TO REPENTANCE (Epistles to the Churches, book Revelation, ch. 1 - 3)“, Collection of reports from the IX International Scientific Conference, Regional Library „Lyuben Karavelov“ - Ruse , 2022, pp. 536-545.

In conclusion

On the basis of the overall work of the dissertation student during his studies at the Faculty of Theology, the presented dissertation work and the published articles related to the topic of the dissertation, despite the shortcomings found in the work, contributions are found, especially in the first chapter, and this defines the presented work „ Liturgical Aspects in the Book of Revelation of St. John the Theologian (chapters 4 and 5)“, as a dissertation.

Upon successful defense of the dissertation work „Liturgical Aspects in the Book of Revelation of St. John the Theologian (Chapters 4 and 5)“, I recommend the respected Scientific Jury to vote positively for the awarding of the scientific and educational degree „Doctor“ to Mr. Nako Nakov.

Sofia, 09.10.2024

Prof. Ivan Ivanov, Ph.D