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REVIEW

for the dissertation of

Svetoslav Georgiev Cekov

on the topic

**„The Ecumenical Council of Trulo (Quinisext) (691-2)
(historical-canonical research)“**

for the educational and research degree of „doctor“ in the scientific specialty „Theology“ in 2.4 „Religion and Theology“ (General Church History) by the scientific jury of SU „Sv. Kliment Ohridski“.

This review is prepared based on my participation as a member of the scientific jury of the competition according to (Report № 1/13.12.2022 г.), in which I was tasked to be a reviewer of the dissertation in question.

1. Data for the Candidate

Svetoslav Georgiev Cekov is born on the 2nd of March 1993 in Sofia. Between 2006-2011 he studies and successfully finishes the Sofia spiritual seminary „Sv. Ioan Rilski“. He graduates with a Master’s degree in Law in 2018. Since the beginning of the next year he returns to theology by winning a competition for a PhD position in 2.4 Religion and Theology (General Church History).

Already while studying he is working as an assistant lawyer, and since his graduation as a jurist consultant, junior lawyer and as a freelance lawyer. Also, Svetoslav is an active churchman and an excellent psalt. During his time as a PhD candidate I have good impressions of his work, as well as a fruitful collaboration with his scientific advisor prof. Alexander Omarchevski, PhD.

2. Regarding the procedure

Svetoslav Georgiev Cekov is admitted as a regular PhD candidate with an order by the Rector of SU ПД 20-52/07.01.2019 г. in the scientific field 2.4 Religion and Theology (General

Church History). After fulfilling his individual plan and the passing of the term of his PhD he is admitted to defense of his dissertation under an order from the Rector of SU (PД 20-547/01.03.2022 г.). The preliminary discussion of his work in the cathedra of „Historical Theology“ was carried out on the 10.11.2022. In this expanded meeting of the cathedra (Protocol № 3/10.11.2022 г.) the first instance verified the maintaining of the legal requirements on the procedure and made remarks regarding the text, which the PhD candidate agreed to accept and correct. The dissertation was supported unanimously by the members of the cathedra. The decision of the cathedra was verified by the FC of the Theological Faculty on the 17.11.2022 (Protocol №3). With an order of the Rector of SU № PД 38-627/29.11.2022 г. the members of the scientific jury was verified and the deadline for the defense was set – until the 24.03.2023.

In its first meeting the jury (Protocol № 1/13.12.2022 г.) verified that the procedure is organized according to the requirements of the law and SU’s procedural guidelines. After discussion assoc. prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD was elected as chairman. As Reviewers – pr. assoc. prof. Liudmil Malev and assoc. prof. Pavel Pavlov. Prof DHS Vera Boneva, assoc. prof. Ivo Yanev, Phd, and assoc. prof Pavlin Sabev, PhD, were tasked with submitting written positions on the dissertation. The deadline for these was set at 27.02.2023. The date for the defense – 17.03.2023 – was also set. All deadlines for the procedure were kept.

3. Data on the Dissertation

The submitted for review research „The Ecumenical Council of Trulo (Quinisext) (691-2) (historical-canonical research)“ contains 278 standard pages. It is comprised of these distinct parts: Foreword, Introduction, Three chapters (with multiple subchapters and points), Conclusion, Declaration of authorship, Bibliography and Appendices (7 in total). I accept the proposed plan for the research. The text is written in good Bulgarian language.

The Topic

With the choosing of this topic a vacancy in Bulgarian church-historical research is filled. The topic is also guided by the juridical background and work of the PhD candidate.

In the **Foreword** (p. 3-6) the author declares his motives for the choice of topic for the dissertation.

In the **Introduction** the object, subject, aims, tasks, and structure are outlined, as well as its relevancy. The declared aim of the work in question is: „to help the reader accurately apprehend the aims of the Trulo canons, by helping them to understand contemporary practices in Christianity

in general as well as in the BOC-BP specifically“. The tasks of the dissertation are several: „to research the historical and political circumstances and processes, that brought about the convocation of the Trulo (Quinisext) council and its procedure; to review the accepted rules in the council and group them in different categories, which then helps their systematization; to prove the time of the convocation of the Trulo Council, its participants, the place of convocation and the statute of the Council.“

The First Chapter entitled “Historical circumstance and political position in Byzantium and the Church until the middle of the VII c.“ (p. 22-92) presents an introductory investigation of the topic and looks at the historical circumstance and political position of the Eastern Roman Empire and the Church until the middle of the seventh century. This chapter is defined in different sub-chapters. The first one looks very briefly and incredibly sparingly at the foundation of Byzantium and the split between the Eastern and Western roman empires. The second one briefly overviews the Fourth Ecumenical Council and the Schism of Akakii, at least to the point where we can point out some processes that led to the convocation of the Council of Trulo. The third point is devoted to the convocation of the Fifth Ecumenical Council by emperor Justinian the Great. The fourth point turns to the period after Justinian I the Great by highlighting various ecclesial and state processes that occur just before the Council of Trulo. It is divided into further sub-points: the first treats the immediate successors of Justinian, the second is devoted to Heraclius and his reforms, the third – to the newly established heresy of Monothelism, the fourth addresses emperor Constantine IV and the Sixth Ecumenical Council held under him. The First chapter concludes with a brief conclusion in which the main points of the treated questions are presented.

The Second Chapter entitled „Historical overview of the Trulo (Quinisext) Council“ (p. 93-163) pays special attention to the historical examination of the Trulo Council. It begins with a part devoted entirely to Justinian II, by trying to pinpoint his birthplace, character, attitudes and leadership. The second part of this chapter is addressed at the Council of Trulo itself and is divided into nine points, each of which looks at a specific question. The first addresses the reasons that led to the convocation. The second – the location of the Council; the third – the time of its convocation; the fourth – the participants in the sessions; the fifth – to clear up the status of the Council; the sixth is directed especially at the welcoming words of the fathers for the emperor Justinian II; the seventh addresses the papal reception of the rules accepted by the Council, the eight treats the

questions of the legitimacy and acceptance of the rules and the last – ninth – addresses the question of the relationship of both Rome and Constantinople to the rules. The second chapter concludes with a conclusion in which the main points of the treated questions are presented.

The Third Chapter, entitled „Canonical overview of the rules of the Council of Trulo (Quinisext)“ (p. 164-252) treats the canons of the Council in general. It contains different sub-points, the first of which treats the difference between dogmata and canons. The second focuses on the canonical activity of the council of Trulo and the types of rules. This point subsists in several sub-points. The first gives general information on the canons of the council of Trulo; the second classifies the rules of the council according to their addressee, with separate presentations for the rules regarding clerics, lay people, and finally – for all members of the Church. The third subpoint provides a classification of the rules according to their subject, and the fourth point – delineates which canons have lost their relevancy and application today. This chapter also finishes with a conclusion in which the main points of the treated questions are presented.

The research finishes with a **Conclusion** (p. 253-259) in which the main conclusions are presented based on the researched topics, the results are summarized, and the main questions posed in the beginning are answered – to research the Council of Trulo from an ecclesio-historical and ecclesio-canonical point of view.

The **Bibliography** (p. 261-270) contains 179 titles (sources and research, in Cyrillic and Latin script, both published and digital).

The **Appendices** I see as applicable and relevant (especially the tables in Ap. 6 and 7), but the maps should be corrected for the possible publication of the text.

The **Abstract of the Dissertation** (25 p.) reflects the contents of the dissertation, but its introduction makes a wrong interpretation of the value of the human being and their life “then and now” – in the Christian tradition it does not change, and such a concept is inappropriate for a theological work.

In the dissertation presented for the defense there is no plagiarism.

On the topic of the dissertation the candidate also presents **four** scientific publication.

I have no common publication with the colleague.

4. Virtues and contributions of the dissertation

The topic of the dissertation is clearly and accurately formulated. The work is written in a good Bulgarian language. The text is clear, has logical consistency and follows proper academic

style. The chronological borders are correctly and clearly outlined. The dissertation is carried out in the tradition of the Bulgarian church-historical methodology. The second and third chapters have their academic merits and contributions. Such an investigation is necessary for Bulgarian theology. Whether this dissertation manages to fulfill its initial elevated expectations is entirely different.

I accept 4 out of the 5 contributions outlined by the candidate (without the 2nd one). As especially relevant I see the decision in the third chapter, where the Trulo rules are classified both by addressee as well as object. Apart from this some are highlighted that have lost their relevancy.

5. Recommendations

The work in general is adequate – the topic is well chosen, the text is correctly written but it seems inspiration and a sensitivity to it are lacking. The main literature provided is entirely banal general courses in Church history.

The much too large overview first chapter (22-92 p.) which makes no considerable contribution can be shortened significantly. It creates a disbalance between the historical and canonical that is desired. The size of the work can be beneficial only if it is filled with appropriate content. Here it is entirely unprovoked. The work also contains many unnecessary generalizations.

The candidate has tried to follow the recommendations of the cathedra but there were so many that he has not managed to follow all of them. With minimal effort these mistakes can be corrected. In the publication of this work I would recommend that the colleague significantly review some points in his work.

Another suggestion regarding the Bibliography – the sources are not separated. Some of the authors are not inverted (6. А. Джурова...). Some of the literary sources in the Bibliography are missing from the text. In the general historical narrative that was chosen a deafening omission is that of prof. Georgi Bakalov.

The author very carefully and insistently defends the position of this Council as Ecumenical. The complete lack of accessible works that uphold the Ecumenicity of the councils in general is problematic (Tzankov, Florovsky, and others).

The pages in the Abstract – 281 do not correspond to the actual 278.

Conclusion

Despite all the notes and recommendations the dissertation is a well documented and professionally carried out research, which brings its own contribution to Bulgarian theology. The

work is according to the requirements for a dissertation for the awarding of the scientific and educational degree „doctor“ in scientific specialty „Theology“ in **2.4 Religion and Theology** (General Church History). All of this gives me reason to strongly support the dissertation and to vote in favor of the work by Svetoslav Georgiev Cekov

Cheesefare Sunday, 26.02.2023

Sofia

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(assoc. prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD)