REVIEW

for dissertation on topic:

"The Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians (XIV - middle of the XV century)"

For award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

by full-time doctoral student Radostin Grigorov Grigorov

Professional field: 2.2. History and archeology. Doctoral program: "History of Bulgaria" - History of Medieval Bulgaria

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The doctoral student was expelled with the right to defense ahead of schedule on 20.10. 2021, with order RD-20-2479 / 23.11.2021 of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski ”, on the basis of protocol № 2 from a remote meeting of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Sofia, and electronic report of the Dean of the Faculty № 70-02-506 / 22.11.2021

The topic of the dissertation was chosen very successfully. Despite the significant number of studies on Bulgarian-Byzantine church relations in the fourteenth century, as well as the relations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (I prefer this name, not „Tsarigrad“, used in the dissertation!) With various people of Bulgarian origin, there is no summary study. True, they have been considered in several attempts to write a general history of the Bulgarian Church, but they have a number of problems and the results cannot be described as satisfactory. This also applies to some newly published works abroad, which are moving on the tracks of another strong tradition, which seeks pseudo-canonical support for its existence!

The work begins with an introduction, which sets out the objectives of the study. The main goal is to study the relations between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians in the XIV - middle of the XV century. The following are two parts, in which the main literature on the topic is reviewed, as well as the main sources. They are short but comprehensive. And in general, the whole work shows the good source and bibliographic awareness of the author. It can be noted that in the historiographical part, and this applies to the whole work, the doctoral student who knows the literature well could highlight the contributions and problems in the relevant works, although in some places he has shown attitude. Here I might point out that sometimes, in the pursuit of bibliographic completeness, it has even become a paradox to cite marginal authors who have no contributions to the issue, probably "for completeness" (some examples below).

In the first chapter, the dissertation gives a brief overview of the history of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, from the creation to the fall of Constantinople under Ottoman rule. This is justified insofar as it traces the origin and development of the church's idea of "universal" domination. This could explain some of the problems in the relations between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarian Patriarchate not only during the study period, but throughout the existence of the Bulgarian Church.

In some places the author goes into unnecessary details that are well known and do not need to be repeated (eg about the hobbies of Patriarch Theophylact on horses, etc.), obviously to show that the practice of the Patriarchate of Constantinople often differs from its claims. .

In the second chapter, which for me is the main one in the dissertation, the doctoral student has examined the relations between the two patriarchates. The exposition is comprehensive, the main points of this relationship are well known. However, in my opinion, before this chapter there should be some separate part, or even a whole chapter, in which to consider the issue of relations between the two churches at least after the uprising of Assenevtsi, at the end of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. even from the very establishment of the Bulgarian Church. These relations have a long history before the fourteenth century, and the problems between them in the study period are very often rooted in the previous ones. Or they find explanations in them… Such is e.g. the problem of the autocephaly of the Bulgarian church. This problem has been posed in science for a long time, it is currently being discussed very actively again, incl. in some works that the doctoral student knows and cites (eg in Dossier byzantins 15), as well as some that came out very recently. It has a direct bearing on the issues of the relationship between the two churches in the period under study.

In some of the events e.g. the Patriarchate of Constantinople's desire to challenge the autocephalous status of the Bulgarian Church is directly evident. Such is e.g. the case of the famous message of Patriarch Callistus to Bulgarian monks, to whom the author has dedicated a part of this chapter. There are such cases in the thirteenth century, the most famous of which is the experience of the Second Council of Lyons in 1274. In the interest of truth, I must say that the first chapter addresses some of these issues. In considering the main points of the relations between the two churches in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the author makes references to the previous century, but it seems to me that this issue should be considered separately!

The main part of the second chapter deals with the issue of ecclesiastical jurisdiction over some dioceses during the study period - in the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula (Black Sea dioceses south of Stara Planina, Varna and Drustar dioceses), but also elsewhere - Philippopolis, Sofia, Vidin, Wallachian metropolitanate. The condition of the sources does not allow very often to make a definite decision for the individual dioceses, but the author has presented and examined correctly both the sources and the bibliography in each case. Wherever possible, he took action. Finally, he draws a conclusion that is somewhat subjective, but can be strongly supported, not only because of scientific intuition, but because looking at these dioceses we can see that they are more than half of the dioceses of the Patriarchate of Tarnovo.

And the conclusion is that: "Certain dioceses for certain periods are in the documents of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and even if there are titular metropolitans at that time, may not always correspond to the real situation. It is possible that there is a titular, but he lives in Constantinople and is part of the Synod there, and at the same time has a real metropolitan of the Tarnovo Patriarchate, but not enough sources are preserved to prove this, or vice versa. Sometimes in the Middle Ages dioceses were not considered in the national-political aspect and it is possible that the territory is ruled politically by one state, but is part of the diocese of another church. On the other hand, it is possible that in the cases under consideration it is a question of diocesan fragmentation in the pursuit of autocephaly, rather than a triumph of Constantinople. The question of ecclesiastical dioceses therefore remains controversial. Obviously, the Patriarchate of Constantinople never resigned itself to the existence and status of the Bulgarian Church and never stopped trying to change it. Taking into account and using the political situations at any time, this can happen in different ways, one of which is the accession of different dioceses.

Another major issue that is addressed is the famous letter of Patriarch Callistus to the Bulgarian monks. The question is well considered, with an excellent knowledge of literature, but more attention could be paid to the outcome of this scandalous message, and the interpretation of the information from the so-called Servant of Patriarch Euthymius. Because here, too, there is considerable momentum in science that must be overcome.

The author makes very interesting and debatable conclusions in the fifth part of this second chapter. It is called "Elevation of the Tarnovo Patriarchate. The Bulgarian Church in its own way of development". The idea for this own path of development was taken up by the great Bulgarian medievalist V. Gyuzelev, who claimed:

„… Over time, the Bulgarian Church gradually moved away from the Byzantine model on which it was established, as the Tarnovo Patriarchate pursued a policy of "Bulgarianization" of church life, expressed in several directions: the use of the Bulgarian language in worship and literature; imposing a Bulgarian cycle on the church calendar, which was dominated by the celebration of Bulgarian saints; changing the program of painting the churches by overlapping the images of Bulgarian national saints (Ivan Rilski, Joakim Osogovski, Ilarion Maglenski, Petka Tarnovska, Prohor Pchinski); independence in making the ointment, etc. In the Christian faith and church practice of the Bulgarians there was a mixture of Eastern Orthodox Christianity such as Constantinople and Mount Athos, along with reforms by the Patriarchate of Tarnovo, as well as elements of ingrained folk Christianity, which preserved a number of pagan rites. Thus, over time, the Tarnovo Patriarchate largely "nationalized" the faith, and the systematic introduction of Bulgarian elements in church life led to the formation of the "Bulgarian form of faith", which differed from the Greco-Byzantine and Roman Catholic“.

This idea on which the doctoral student is based is interesting, but it should at least be clarified. It cannot be said that over time the Bulgarian Church became more and more distant from the Byzantine model. Neither the use of their own language in worship (Byzantium does not mind) nor the inclusion of their own saints in the calendar, which in no way dominate it (very rarely they are the first saint of the day), do not distance the Bulgarian Church from the Byzantine model, because this is true for many local churches, incl. within Byzantium. The same applies to some of the sacraments, in the performance of which there are peculiarities that are insisted on, as it turned out, by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The information used about some deviations of the Bulgarian Church is from Byzantine sources - not only the famous message of Patriarch Callistus from 1361, but also the letter of instruction of the Catholic Vicar of Bosnia Bartolomeo della Verna from 1379, where the information that: "The king is right to baptize these Slavs, because they do not follow either the Greek or the Roman religion", comes from Emperor John (V Palaeologus). And the information from the same document that the priests of the Bulgarians do not baptize correctly comes from Greek priests.

As for the preserved pagan rites of the Bulgarian Church, which are much insisted on in a number of studies (especially in the recent past), this is a misunderstanding, as there is no church that has not adopted earlier traditions, especially at the level of Christian Christianity. . No two churches are exactly alike in this respect, even if they are within the same denomination. There is no church, including the Church of Constantinople, that has achieved "pure" Christianity without any continuity from older cults and cultures! Finally, the idea of the "Bulgarianization" of the saints did not belong to R. Komsalova (p. 94), nor did the author in question contribute to this issue.

In the last part of the second chapter the author discusses the issue of the liquidation of the Tarnovo Patriarchate. The doctoral student correctly presented the sources and the significant bibliography on the subject, highlighting the main opinions both on the chronology of this event and its causes. Therefore, the conclusion he draws seems correct - the demotion of the Patriarchate of Tarnovo is a logical conclusion to the history of relations between the two churches in previous centuries, it is part of the program of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to establish dominance over the Eastern Orthodox world. The doctoral student's remark that the destruction or liquidation of the Tarnovo Patriarchate should not be talked about, but rather the usurpation by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, seems to be correct, as evidenced by the lack of a conciliar act! Of course, from the point of view of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, he was not needed, as long as it had its own views on the status of the Patriarchate of Tarnovo. These "views", realized thanks to the political situation in the Balkans at that time, are not so much the product of the existence of ecclesiastical and legal arguments, as many authors accept, but more of the circumstances. Because obviously the lack not only of a council act, or some other document for joining and demorating the Tarnovo Patriarchate, but also the "disappearance" of the tomos from the council in 1235 for elevation and patriarchal rank, does not seem to be accidental!

The third chapter examines the political relations between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarians, in the context of political and ecclesiastical life in the Balkans. It examines several interesting political events between Bulgaria and Byzantium, with the participation of church leaders, or various incidents with Bulgarian clergy in relations with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. These are known events, but the different point of view provides opportunities for new interpretations. In the selection of events in this chapter, the famous case of the visit of Patriarch Callistus to Siar, the widow of the first Serbian king - Stefan Dusan, the Bulgarian Elena, sister of Tsar John Alexander, is impressive. The dynastic marriage connected the Bulgarian and Serbian ruling houses, apparently related to the participation of the Bulgarian patriarch in the ordination of the first Serbian patriarch. The question here is to what extent does the origin of the Serbian queen have anything to do with resolving the disputes between the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Pec? There is an assumption, based on the origin of Elena, that perhaps this visit, which according to Kantakuzin has an anti-Ottoman orientation, was intended to create a Byzantine-Serbian-Bulgarian anti-Ottoman union, but this is hardly possible, given the time of the visit - on the eve of the last Bulgarian-Byzantine war. Or was her help sought to prevent the Bulgarian-Byzantine conflict?

In this chapter I would like to draw attention to the sixth part, in which the doctoral student deals with an issue that is relatively rare in the field of view of researchers - the attitude of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to Bulgarian rulers in the famous handbook "Ἔκθεσις νέα". It clearly shows the peculiar "economy" of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which should rather be called hypocrisy, as it shows significant differences in the official attitude towards the Bulgarian political and ecclesiastical authorities and practice.

The fourth chapter is devoted to another popular question in science - about prominent Bulgarian clergymen in office or in relations with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The author has referred to many well-known cases in this direction (eg Metropolitan Cyprian, Metropolitan Gregory Tsamblak, Patriarch Ephraim), but also to those that are not discussed too much in science, most often because of their hypothetical Bulgarian origin. the Serbian church leaders Ioaniki, Sava IV and Spyridon, the Metropolitan of Trabzon Spyridon, the All-Russian Metropolitan Isidore, etc.). However, I think it is quite right that they should be included in a more detailed discussion, as the issue has already been raised in historiography.

The fifth chapter is entitled "Participation of Bulgarians in the life of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the first half of the XV century" and in it the author continues to explore the issue of prominent Bulgarians in the Patriarchate of Constantinople, but in the next century. It is dedicated mainly to the famous Patriarch of Constantinople Joseph II and his participation in the Council of Florence and the union signed there, as well as to the Metropolitan of Tarnovo Ignatius, also a participant in the Council. The question for all these Bulgarians is, and of certain Bulgarian origin, unproven or quite hypothetical, to what extent he plays a role in their activities. For some this is clear, at least for linguistic reasons, but for others it cannot be established at all.

Here in some places some adjustments can be made, such as that concerning the mural program of the church “St. Apostles Peter and Paul” in Tarnovo. The doctoral student referred to older research, adding correctly and additional literature, but even if we assume that the union signed by Metropolitan Ignatius of Tarnovo has an impact on some scenes from the murals, the appearance of images of Kiev saints Boris and Gleb can hardly to engage in such a statement. They are probably earlier, the veneration of these saints has its own history on the Balkan Peninsula, both as memories and as images (apart from this church, also in the church in Milesevo, Serbia - the first half of the thirteenth century).

There are two applications in the dissertation. The first is devoted to a dispute between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Ohrid Archbishopric over the Vidin and Sofia dioceses since the beginning of the 15th century. for the destruction of the Tarnovo Patriarchate and its transformation into a metropolis. The second is a list of the patriarchs of Constantinople, from the first bishop of the city to the middle of the fifteenth century church. If, after all, the doctoral student insists on having this list, then he could think of lists of the heads and other churches involved in the study?!

Finally, I would like to make some small remarks. Of course, there is no Spiridonov transcript of the Synod, but Palauzov (p. 12), the Russian form "Nikolay" of the names of persons who lived in the Middle Ages, incl. for the Roman popes (p. 38), established in our historiography, does not exist during this period. Joseph II is not the first Bulgarian patriarch of Constantinople (p. 162), such of course did not exist, but the first Bulgarian, patriarch of Constantinople. It may be added that the Barlaamites, in addition to being excellent connoisseurs of antiquity (p. 52), were also Thomists, followers of the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, which at that time in the West had already outlived its usefulness. Otherwise, one may be left with the impression that they are the bearers of some kind of renaissance ideology, as some authors try to convince us.

The abstract meets the requirements. The listed contributions correspond to the text of the dissertation and can be considered real. To these I would add again the excellent bibliographic awareness, which is a prerequisite for the scientific contributions in question, but is relatively rare in research on the subject. The doctoral student presented two articles for publication on the topic of the dissertation

In conclusion, I would like to say that the work can definitely be defended, and the doctoral student can be awarded the scientific and educational degree of "doctor", for which I will vote with conviction. I call on the esteemed scientific jury to vote for this as well!

Paris, Saint-Denis, Prof. DHS Dimo Chesmedjiev

December 25, 2021, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv/

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