

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svetoslav Ribolov

on the dissertation submitted for the awarding of the scientific and educational degree

"Doctor": "Jaroslav Pelikan and the Path of the Historian to the Church (via Tradition to Orthodoxy)" by Mr. Teodor Assenov Avramov.

Theological Faculty at the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, Department of "Historical Theology",

Scientific field: 2. Humanities; Professional direction: 2.4. Religion and Theology

The present opinion was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the academic staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and New Regulations on the terms and conditions for the acquisition of scientific degrees and the occupation of academic positions at St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, amended and supplemented by the AS of 26.05.2021.

The review of the material is according to the order of the Rector of the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia for the appointment of a scientific jury, No. RD 38-350/10.07.2023. Mr. Teodor Assenov Avramov has provided all the necessary documents regarding the protection procedure of the dissertation.

1. Data on the procedure

The doctoral student completed the bachelor's and master's program at the Theological Faculty of Sofia University. During the course, he has participated in the Erasmus program, undertaking stays at various academic institutions abroad. He continued his theological education in the doctoral program within the same Faculty of Theology at Sofia. As a student and a PhD candidate, he consistently demonstrated diligence, punctuality and courtesy towards his colleagues. He fulfilled his individual plan and was granted the right of defense. The dissertation paper submitted to me for opinion was discussed at a meeting of the Department of "Historical Theology" of Faculty of Theology at the University of Sofia. During the initial scientific jury meeting, a chairman was elected and the reviewers along with the assessors were designated. The procedure was followed and I have confidence that no violations occurred.

2. Publication data

The doctoral student has presented three publications in scientific journals related to his dissertation topic. These publications are as follows: "The difficulties of the Christian historians?" *Theological Thought* 1 (2021), 87-96; "To Orthodoxy through the Tradition. An Attempt at a Brief Biography", *Christianity and Culture* 158 (2/2021), 29-41; "Yaroslav Pelikan and the History of Theology", *Forum Theologicum Sardicense/Bogoslovska Missal* 2 (2021), 155-164. All three suggested articles exhibit originality and represent significant contributions that skillfully complement the content of the dissertation.

3. On the Dissertation

The dissertation comprises a total of 277 standard computer words pages. It includes a preface, introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of literature used, a declaration of originality, and three appendices relevant to the topic under consideration. The text of the dissertation is readable and well-structured, organized into three balanced chapters. The introduction covers the following aspects: topicality, chronological and contextual boundaries, subject, object, goals, objectives, methodology and research history. Of particular importance is the research history, as it furnishes the author with compelling arguments in support of his thesis and its originality.

The author of the dissertation provides an excellent analysis of Jaroslav Pelikan's life path, as well as his quest for truth within Christianity, specifically the way to Orthodoxy. Consequently, the work transitions from being purely prosopographical in nature to becoming a historical-theological exploration, offering a profound understanding of the modern theologian's life journey as a pursuit of divine knowledge, inextricably connected with Orthodox asceticism. Overall, this work is exceptionally well-crafted from a theological perspective, leaving a strong impression. The critical approach to the sources is noteworthy, particularly in the careful examination of archival materials.

4. Evaluation of scientific contributions

The author has presented five scientifically sound contributions, all of which are accurately formulated and with which I concur. Undoubtedly, the originality of the

chosen topic and its precise formulation contribute to the effectiveness of these contributions. It is certain that this work will have an impact not only on contemporary theological studies but also on the overall scientific endeavors within the Faculty of Theology at St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia.

5. Critical notes and recommendations

Perhaps it would be beneficial to further connect the life and work of Jaroslav Pelikan to the institutional forums and decisions of the Orthodox Church during the latter half of the 20th century, especially concerning topics related to interdenominational, interreligious, and inter-Orthodox dialogue. Interweaving these aspects into the narrative of the thinker's life, in my opinion, would provide the researcher with stronger supporting arguments. Apart from this suggestion, I have no other criticism of the text.

6. Data on the Abstract

The abstract is submitted in Bulgarian and English. It corresponds to the content of the dissertation.

7. Conclusion

Despite the minor flaws in the thesis that I have pointed out, I believe it fully meets the criteria for the acquisition of the scientific and educational degree "Doctor". In my opinion, this is one of the best written Doctoral Dissertations in recent years within our Faculty. Therefore, I declare that I will vote in favor of Mr. Avramov's procedure for awarding the "Doctor" degree in the professional direction 2.4. Religion and Theology.

I have no shared publications with the author.

Sofia

03.09.2023

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Assoc. Prof. Svetoslav Ribolov