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REVIEW

for the dissertation of **Nina Taneva Koleva**

on the topic

"The Arian debates under the rule of Emperoro Constantius II (historical-dogmatic research)"

for the educational and research degree of „doctor“ in the scientific specialty
„Theolog“y 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 № 1/20.02.2024 г.), in which I was tasked to be a reviewer of the dissertation in question.

1. Data for the Candidate

Nina Taneva Koleva was born on July 5, 1971 in Elhovo. In 2010, she completed the bachelor's course at the Faculty of Theology at the "St. Kliment Ohridski" with the professional qualification of theologian and teacher of theology. In 2012, she graduated from the Master's Program "Christian Pilgrimage" at the same faculty, but graduated with a master's degree in 2018. Since 2016, he has been a primary teacher at the capital's 101 SU "Bacho Kiro". From the following year, 2017, she is a teacher for children and adults in the Sunday school at the church "St. Andrei Parvozvani" in the city of Sofia. Since 2020, she has been a lecturer and leader of pilgrimage groups at the "St. John of Rila" of the St. Sofia Metropoly. There is also a two-year course in Turkology and

Altaic studies at the Center for Eastern Languages and Cultures of the SU. She speaks Turkish, Italian, Russian, English and Greek languages to varying degrees.

I have excellent impressions from following and working in the field of pilgrimage of doctoral student Nina Koleva, as well as from the period of her full-time doctoral studies under the scientific guidance and joint work with Prof. Alexander Omarceviski, PhD.

2. Data on the procedure

Nina Koleva is admitted as a regular PhD candidate with an order by the Rector of SU № ПД 20-239/29.01.2020 in the scientific field 2.4 Religion and Theology (General Church History) in the cathedra of “Historical Theology” and scientific discipline “History of Christianity”. She has been given the opportunity to defend her dissertation on 01.02.2023 on the basis of a suggestion from the cathedra and a decision from the faculty council and the rector. The preliminary discussion on the work in the cathedra was held on 09.01.2024 (Protocol No. 5). The cathedra checked the correspondence with the requirements of the law. The dissertation, after receiving notes and corrections, was given unanimous support. The decision of the cathedra was approved by the faculty council of the theological faculty on 18.01.2024 (Protocol 7). With an order by the rector of SU ПД 38-66/05.02.2024 г. the jury and the secretary and the deadline for the defense have been set – 23.05.2024.

In its first meeting the jury (Protocol № 1/20.02.2024 г.) verified that the procedure is organized according to the requirements of the law and SU’s procedural guidelines. After discussion prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD was elected as chairman. As Reviewers – prof. Pavel Pavlov and prof. Vera Boneva. Prof. Nina Dimitrova, DSc, pr. Prof. Liudmil Malev, PhD and asoc. Prof. Ventsislav Karavaltchev were tasked with submitting written positions on the dissertation. The deadline for these was set at 10.04.2024. The date for the defense – 25.04.2023 – was also set. All deadlines for the procedure were kept.

3. Data on the Dissertation

The submitted for review research “The Arian debates under the rule of Emperoro Constantius II (historical-dogmatic research)” contains 197 standard pages. It is comprised of these distinct parts: Abbreviations, Foreword, Introduction, Three chapters (with multiple subchapters and points), Conclusion, Declaration of authorship, Bibliography. The text has 334 footnotes.

The Topic

The subject of this dissertation is extremely interesting. It covers a very important period, elucidating and interpreting many of the important events of the time of St. Constantine the Great and his successors. The clarification of this period of the Church's history is important, both in relation to the Cappadocian Fathers and the time of Emperor Theodosius the Great. In this sense, the topic is important and original.

In the **Introduction**, the PhD student well-justifies the purpose, tasks, subject and object of the research. The methods for working on the dissertation are also outlined. The third task "studying the reign of Constantius II, his religious policy and his attitude towards Arianism" is outlined as the main one. A useful review of the sources and the main, according to the author, studies on the topic of the dissertation has been made.

In the **First Chapter**, entitled St. Emperor Constantine I and successors (p. 24-70) the author introduces us in 2 separate parts to the era of Imp. St. Constantine the Great and the historical context of the period under consideration. The first part deals with the era, and the second with the personality of the emperor. The information presented is well organized and reasoned.

The **second chapter** is entitled The Arian Controversy (pp. 71-123). Here the dissertation focuses our attention on the theological context of the age. In several points both the essence of Arianism and its council rejection and the theological arguments against it of St. Athanasius the Great and St. Cappadocian

Fathers are considered. On the one hand, this chapter is a little heavy for me and breaks the connection between the first and third chapters, which emphasize more on the religio-political elements, but I accept its placement in this way because the Arian controversy is a major point in the proposed theme. On the other hand, basic topics in theology and history of the Church, which far exceed the era of Emperor Constantius II, are dealt with rather fragmentarily: the Ecumenical Councils, the Nicaean theology, the Cappadocian synthesis, etc.

In the **Third Chapter** - Emperor Constantius II as Ruler (pp. 124-176), the author focuses on the personality and rule of the specific emperor. This chapter is the most detailed and corresponds to the greatest extent to the set topic and tasks. In two parts, the author tries to exhaust all the main moments in the religious policy of Emperor Constantius II.

The **conclusion** (p. 177-181) is too general and has an incomplete nature, but it should summarize the achieved results and highlight the completed tasks and the achieved goals.

The **bibliography** (p. 183-197) includes a total of 193 titles, of which 38 historical sources, 108 studies in different languages, 34 titles from scientific periodicals and 12 sources on the Internet.

The **abstract** (29 p.) generally reflects the content of the dissertation work, but the main content of the three chapters of the Exposition is presented in only two pages, while significant parts of the Introduction and Conclusion of the dissertation are placed almost mechanically in the Abstract.

On the topic of the dissertation, the dissertation student also presents **three** publications.

4. Virtues and contributions of the dissertation

The title of the dissertation is clearly and accurately worded. I consider the

scope and plan of work to be very relevant. The work is written in good Bulgarian. The text is clear, has a logical sequence and is in good academic style. Time frames are properly and clearly delineated. The work was written in the traditions of the Bulgarian church-historical methodology.

I generally accept the 4 main contributions formulated by the doctoral student. In addition, from a scientific point of view, the research has a contributing character in other points as well. The questions raised in the dissertation may serve as fruitful discussions and subsequent research on topics touched upon in the developed text.

5. Recommendations

In general, the work is very good - the topic is well chosen, the text is competently written, it shows inspiration and sense. At the internal discussion, many notes were made, which PhD student Nina Koleva largely complied with. Of course, in such a procedure, time is never enough. Technically, the work is significantly improved, but needs further refinement. The indicated pages in the table of contents diverge slightly in the text. There are quite a few spelling mistakes that could be corrected with minimal effort (e.g. on p. 175, note 332).

I also have a recommendation regarding the way sources are used and cited. A number of things would need to be refined when the present work is being prepared for publication.

Under the current procedure, I have no joint publications with the doctoral student.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to express my conviction that, despite the mentioned notes and recommendations, the presented dissertation work is a well-documented and professionally executed study that makes a significant contribution to the researched topic. The work meets the requirements for a

dissertation for awarding the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Theology" in professional direction 2.4. "Religion and Theology" (History of Christianity). This gives me reason to confidently support the dissertation and vote in favor of the work of PhD student Nina Koleva.

06.04.2024, Dormition of Saint Methodios

Sofia

Prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD