



Accoc. Prof. Ekaterina Damjanova  
sofia.bg  
Faculty of Theology  
Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski”  
19 Sveta Nedelya sq.



email: damyanova@theo.uni-

Tel. +359 2 9890115/ 19  
Sofia 1000

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## **REVIEW**

By Accoc. Prof. Ekaterina Atanasova Damjanova,

on dissertation work of Zoran Kalev

on the subject:

**"... the evil in the eyes of the Lord" in The Book of Judges“**

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional direction: 2.4.

Religion and Theology

Scientific speciality: „Biblical studies – Old Testament“

My reason for participating in the Scientific Jury is based on the order of the Rector of the Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ to determine the composition of the Scientific Jury in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

### **1. Information about the doctoral student**

According to the biographical, from 2020 to 2023 Zoran Kalev is a doctoral student in a regular form of education in the Biblical studies department at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, with Accoc. Prof. Ivaylo Naydenov as his doctoral advisor. The doctoral student has a bachelor's and master's degree from the Theological faculty at the same university. Since the year 2020 Zoran Kalev is an assistant at the Biblical studies department.

## 2. General characteristics of the dissertation

The submitted doctoral dissertation tries to examine the term "evil in the eyes of the Lord" in The Book of Judges as a result of the redactional work of a hypothetical Deuteronomistic author. In connection with the aforementioned hypothesis the dissertation provides an analysis of the historical development of the religion of Ancient Israel. As a basic proposal is given the statement that biblical monotheism and the belief in a jealous God, Who demands obedience to the rules of the covenant are theological concepts. Moreover, according to the doctoral student, these concepts have emerged in the time of the reforms of the Judean king Josiah and after the Babylonian captivity.

The dissertation features presentations of textual units from The Book of Judges in which the subject of "the evil in the eyes of the Lord" is interpreted. The subject itself has relevance both in the past and present..

The dissertation fits the criteria for length (317 pages in print) and structuring of the text. It features an Introduction (c. 6-33), five chapters (c. 34-254), two excurses, conclusion, appendix and a list of cited works. The reference guide to the text consists of 592 footnotes.

## 3. Evaluation of the obtained scientific and scientific-applied results

The **introduction** (pp. 6-33) includes all the required elements, provides the methodological grounds for the study and illustrates the motivation for the study and the its goals.

Methodologically speaking, the doctoral student uses an array of methods: historico-grammatical, textual criticism, literary criticism, linguistic analysis, form and genre criticism.

The goals which are set at the beginning determine the shape of the dissertation, which itself is decently structured in five interconnected chapters. The doctoral student has kept these chapters at a balanced length.

**The main body** of the text consists of two introductory chapters: Chapter One (p. 34-42) "Isagogical notes on The Book of Judges" and Chapter Two (p. 57-112) "An Overview of the periods of the evil in the eyes of the Lord". In Chapter Three "The evil in the eyes of the Lord during the time of Deborah the prophetess and Gideon the judge (Judg.4- 8)" (p. 115-164) Kalev continues to explore the topic of existing Deuteronomistic passages in these textual units and analyzes the meaning of the term "the evil in the eyes of the Lord" therein. In Chapter Four "The periods of the evil in the eyes of the Lord in Judges 9-10" (p. 165- 219) the Song of Moses (Deut. 32) is included to the other sources for analysis. It is here and also in the last fifth chapter "The Book of Judges- exegetical problems" (p. 220-253) where the major contributions of the present study are made.

**The Conclusion** (pp. 276-287) lists the main conclusions based on the analyzes conducted, which answer the questions posed in the Introduction.

The conclusions fully correspond to the summaries made to the individual chapters of the exposition. Directions for future research are also laid out.

The **literature** used (pp 302-317) is correctly cited in the essay and covers a large array of publications (231 titles in Cyrillic and Latin). It is sufficient in terms of source, information and interpretation.

The proposed dissertation has positive aspects and is the result of a diligent approach to the set goals. Showcasing his linguistic skills, Zoran Kalev constructs a study which fits the criteria for a doctoral dissertation. A positive aspect is the frequent mentioning of archeological data in support of specific opinions. The study has a contributive character in the field of Bulgarian biblical studies.

#### **4. Notes and recommendations**

Considering the merits of the proposed work and the undoubted efforts of the dissertationer in its compilation, I would like to make some critical remarks about the text as a whole:

1. In terms of style, there are sentences which are difficult to follow and some textual constructions are difficult to understand.
2. The Deuteronomistic hypothesis is presented without the substantial critique against it which is made by scholars such as Gerhard von Rad, F. M. Cross and the Harvard school, which proposes an earlier date and the Göttingen school which argues for multiple post-exilic authors.
3. The interpretations of The Book of Judges, given by a number of Church Fathers in the first few centuries of Christianity, are not the focus of the dissertation. This element does not allow for the study to be representative of the Eastern Orthodox tradition on the subject.
4. Alongside the presented explanations, opinions and theories of multiple scholars, the personal viewpoint of the doctoral student could be expressed more strongly.
5. The archeological data is cited through secondary sources.

#### **5. Contributions**

I accept and admire the fine contributions of the PhD student. The work has an undeniable practical-applied meaning: it can be considered both as a strictly scientific work and as an educational resource and for use by a wider range of readers.

The materials submitted for the procedure meet the requirements of the LDASRB and its regulations. The abstract correctly reflects the most important moments of the scientific research and its results.

The dissertation student has 5 research papers on the topic of the dissertation and fulfills the minimum national requirements.

## **6. Conclusion**

Everything positive said so far, gives me a reason to give a positive assessment of Zoran Kalev. I will vote with “Yes” for Zoran Kalev to receive an educational degree of „Doctor“ of theology in the professional field 2. 4. Religion and theology: specialty “Biblical studies-Old Testament”

I do not have joint publications, projects or any other type of conflict of interest with the author.

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Ekaterina Damjanova