

## OPINION

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Pavlin Sabev, PhD, Department of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo.

For the dissertation of **Svetoslav Georgiev Tsekov**:

### **Trullan (*Quinisext*) Council (691-2)**

#### ***(Historical-Canonical Research)***

For awarding the educational and scientific degree PhD in professional field 2.4 Religion and Theology (General Church History)

### **Information about the doctoral program and the doctoral student**

The present procedure was opened following a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Theology dated 17.11.2022 (Prot. No. 3) and a subsequent order of the Rector of the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski No. RD 38-627/29.11.2022. The opinion was prepared on the basis of the rector's order and Prot. No. 1 of the first meeting of the scientific jury held on 13.12.2022.

On the present procedure, I have been provided with all the necessary materials, as well as detailed information from the discussion of the dissertation work at an extended departmental meeting of the Department of Historical Theology, held on 10.11.2022. The procedure is organized in compliance with all legal requirements. From the submitted protocol for verifying the originality of the text of the dissertation, it can be seen that it is an original author's work by Svetoslav Georgiev Tsekov.

Svetoslav Tsekov graduated from the Sofia Theological Seminary, and then from the Faculty of Law of the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. From 2019 to 2022 he is a doctoral student in General History of the Church. The choice of topic, as the doctoral student himself shares in the preface of the dissertation, is tied to the legal education and professional realization of the doctoral student. I welcome such a conscious and purposeful choice of topic.

### **Data for the dissertation and the author's summary of dissertation**

The peer-reviewed dissertation has a volume of 279 pages, divided into: Preface, Introduction, three chapters, Conclusion, Declaration of originality, Bibliography (179 titles), Appendices (7 app.).

The two aspects in the title of the dissertation – the historical and the canonical – are closely related, as the doctoral student points out at the beginning of the Preface and the Introduction, emphasizing the need to examine the context. The structure of the dissertation

reflects this in the best possible way, allowing the author to examine the activity of the council in its historical context. Therefore, although the first two chapters contain well-known facts, they are necessary and of great importance to this study. The third chapter, which examines the canonical inheritance from the council, offers us an interesting approach to systematize the canons according to their addressee (clergy, laity, all members of the Church - III.2.2) and subject (III.2.3), placing those which have "lost their applicability" in a separate category (III.2.4).

The research methodology is relevant to its historical character. The historical facts are comprehensively presented, which makes it possible to study the activity of the council by tracing the etiology of some processes further back in time.

The author's summary of dissertation is compiled according to the requirements and correctly reflects the content of the dissertation work. The doctoral student has four publications, one of which is in press. Of the three publications provided to me, two are on the topic of the dissertation, their content concerns the historical context of the council and does not duplicate part of the text of the dissertation.

#### **Contributions and critical remarks**

I accept the contributions that the doctoral student formulated as a self-evaluation of his work. I think that the first two contributions can be combined, as they represent the contribution character of the dissertation in Bulgarian Church historiography. The methodology of classifying the canons, as well as the relationship with the structure and management of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, are contributing and important.

I would like to share a few *critical remarks* that do not reduce the merits of this study:

1. The historiographic overview in the Introduction should set the starting point from which the doctoral student starts to build on with something new - his thesis, what he has to tell us, consistently argued in the text of the dissertation. The historiographic overview presented here does not give me an idea of the starting point, but rather seems to me to be a shortened version of the Bibliography section with short, *very general* annotations, and only to Cyrillic literature. The historical sources for the council are not separated and their independence (or dependence) from each other and their historical relevance is not commented upon. In the Bibliography it would be good to create a section with text-critical editions of the sources. It is noticeable that the works of Mansi and Ohme, which are defined as "fundamental to the present study" (p. 18), are hardly cited (H. Ohme only on p. 174 - one of the cited works, and Mansi on p. 80, 83, 90). Especially in the section dealing with time, place, and participants, there should be more reference to sources and then to scholarly

research on these matters. The sources in this part are cited according to the Russian edition *Деяния вселенских соборов*, but not correctly, as only the volume is indicated: e.g. p. 114, note 195<sup>1</sup>, 199, 200; p.115, notes 203, 204; p.116, note 206; p.117, notes 210, 211, etc., in general in the entire section from p. 109 to 133, and in other places, the critical apparatus needs basic clarification. A more saturated reference to sources and their precise citation is also lacking regarding the attitude of the Roman Church to the Council. In a historical study the work with the sources on their critical editions is a priority.

2. From the applications, I consider №6 and №7 to be relevant; the others, it seems to me, do not contribute anything substantial to the text of the study. If a book were published based on the text of the thesis, then the appendices would make some sense.

3. Before issuing the dissertation, it is good to do one more editorial processing to remove some errors and ambiguities in the statement, e.g. on page 10 we read: "... since the time of the *first ecumenical council* (*emphasis P. Sabev*), held in Constantinople in 381 - the Second Ecumenical Council, where with its third rule ...". On p. 13, the doctoral student states as a task: "to *prove* (*emphasis P. Sabev*) the time of the Trullan Council, the participants in it, the place of its holding..." etc. "Satisfying the interest/curiosity of the reader" (see pp. 6, 260) is not the best stylistics for the text of a dissertation/academic paper.

### **Conclusion**

The peer-reviewed dissertation of Svetoslav Georgiev Tsekov corresponds to the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions in Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

Considering the stated contributions, which I accept as real achievements of this research, I recommend the honorable scientific jury to award of Svetoslav Tsekov the scientific degree PhD in professional direction field 2.4 Religion and Theology (General Church History).

*On the current procedure my vote is positive.*

23.01.2023

Assoc. Prof. Pavlin Sabev, PhD

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<sup>1</sup>This important note is unclear. First, the citation Theophanes. ..., P. X. 366, implies a previous citation of the source, and there is none. Second, which of the editions listed in the Literature is cited: 136) *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor AD 284 – 813. Oxford, 1997* or 137) *Theophanis Confessor. Chronographia 284 – 813. (ed. C. de Boor), 2 Bde. Leipzig, 1883*. In the 1997 Oxford edition of Cyril Mango the page is 501. Abbreviation Theophanes. ..., P. X. 366 remains unclear.