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Θεόδωρος Ξ. Γιάγκου / Αντώνιος-Αιμίλιος Ν. Ταχιάος (eds.), *Αλληλογραφία Αγίου Νικοδήμου Αγιορείτη και Δωροθέου Βουλησμά – Το Πηδάλιον και οι «περιπέτειές» του*. Κυπρός: Νέα Χαλκηδόνα, 2020. 504 p. ISBN 978-9963-9877-1-9.

This book is an edition of the correspondence between St. Nikodemos Hagioreites (1749–1809) and Dorotheos Boulesmas (c. 1740–1818) concerning the Pedalion (1800), the most famous and influential early-modern annotated collection of Greek Orthodox

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canon law. The edition also contains an introduction of about 150 pages which presents the historical context, the persons, and the topics of the correspondence.

St. Nikodemos Hagioreites is well-known as one of the most prolific Greek Orthodox authors and editors of the era. Many know him as one of the editors of the *Philokalia*, a collection of patristic and Byzantine spiritual texts dealing with the Jesus prayer and hesychasm. He was also affiliated with the so-called Kollybades Movement which sought to reform contemporary Ottoman Greek liturgical practices and spirituality in accordance with the ideals of church fathers and Byzantine monasticism.

Dorotheos Boulesmas was grand preacher of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and appointed *ensor librorum* by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The primary purpose of the correspondence is to get imprimatur for the manuscript of the Pedalion.

This correspondence provides us with information about the origin of the Pedalion as well as the actual positions of St. Nikodemos, which are not always reflected in the commentaries of the published version of the Pedalion, since he was forced by Boulesmas to revise some commentaries to the canons in order to be granted imprimatur.

One of these controversial issues is well-known from ecumenical dialogue – the reception of converts through (re)baptism and the theory of sacramental oikonomia (i.e., the theory that the Orthodox Church as the steward of grace can make invalid sacraments valid and/or valid sacraments invalid at its own discretion). The North American Orthodox–Catholic Theological Consultation, for example, refers to the position of the published version of the Pedalion in its document “Baptism and ‘Sacramental Economy’: An Agreed Statement” (1999).

The published version of the Pedalion has helped to lay the foundation of the modern theory of sacramental oikonomia as well as the opinion that converts should, contrary to the explicit decrees of the ecumenical councils, normally be received through (re)baptism and only in exceptional circumstance be received through sacramental oikonomia which will make their previous invalid baptism valid.

The theologoumenon of the invalidity of baptisms celebrated outside the institutional borders of the Eastern Orthodox Church was given official sanction by Ecumenical Patriarch Cyril V through a decree in 1755. This decree was the culmination of the reaction to the change of East policy by *De Propaganda Fide*.

In the 17th century there was a great controversy among Roman Catholic theologians and canonists about the status of Eastern Christians – whether they were basically Catholics, schismatics, or heretics. Many of the Roman Catholic missionaries practiced intercommunion with the Eastern Christians and recognized them as basically Catholics. *De Propaganda Fide* put an end to this ambiguous situation through a decree in 1729 which strictly forbade intercommunion with the Eastern Christian Churches.

Furthermore, the Melkite Schism in the 1720s, when a part of the Patriarchate of Antioch entered into union with the Roman Catholic Church, provoked resentments and polemics against the new parallel Eastern church structure in union with Rome. The reaction to this new situation culminated in the above-mentioned decree of 1755 which declared heretical baptisms invalid.

Although the Pedalion is one of the sources of the modern theory of sacramental oikonomia, which was developed in order to defend the innovation of the decree of 1755, it is interesting that the Pedalion never explicitly refers to this decree. The reason

for this can be gathered from the published correspondence between St. Nikodemos and Boulesmas.

In accordance with the explicit decrees of the ecumenical councils and the examples of church history, St. Nikodemos held not only that heretics should not in general be received through rebaptism, but that schismatic clergy should also be received in orders. Boulesmas, on the other hand, upheld the innovation of 1755. St. Nikodemos failed to convince Boulesmas that he was wrong and submitted in the spirit of monastic obedience to the position of Boulesmas in the published version of the *Pedalion* – contrary to his personal convictions!

A related topic on which they disagreed was baptism of necessity. In order to achieve some type of theological consistency, Boulesmas rejected all baptisms that were not celebrated by an Orthodox bishop or priest through three immersions. This also included the rejection of clinical baptism without three immersions and the baptism of emergency administered by a deacon or non-ordained person. St. Nikodemos, on the other hand, accepted these baptisms in accordance with the examples of church history and the Byzantine tradition of canon law.

This edition is not only of great interest to church historians and canonists, but also has important implication for ecumenical dialogue, since it sheds new light on the historical background of the modern policies of the Eastern Orthodox Churches toward other Christians especially with regards to the recognition or non-recognition of baptism.

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