

Assoc. Prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD  
Theological Faculty  
SU "Sv. Kliment Ohridski"  
"Sveta Nedelya" Sq. 19

## R E V I E W

of the scholarly works and academic activity  
of **assoc. prof. Diljan Nikolaev Nikolchev, PhD**  
only candidate in the competition for the  
obtaining of the academic position of "**professor**"  
in professional directive *2.4 Religion and Theology*, of the discipline *Church Law and  
Structure and management of the BOC* (DV br. 57/26.06.2020)  
for the need of the **Theological Faculty of SU "Sv. Kl. Ohridski"**.

This review is prepared on the basis of documents, submitted to the competition being held by SU "Sv. Kliment Ohridski" and published in DV br. 57/26.06.2020. The submitted documents are in accordance with the requirements. The procedure of the competition is adequately followed. I have been appointed as a member of the scholarly commission on the procedure in question with order RD 38-352/26.07.2020 of the Rector of SU "Sv. Kliment Ohridski". During its first sitting (Prot. №1/14.09.2020) the commission decided that the only candidate assoc. prof. Diljan Nikolchev, PhD, is in accordance with the requirements and his scholarly works provided for the competition are accepted for review for the appointment to the academic position "professor", in professional directive 2.4 Religion and Theology (Church law. Structure and management of the BOC). At the sitting in question I was appointed as a reviewer for the current procedure.

## **1. The competition**

The competition has the necessary teaching-hours. They are provided by lectures in disciplines in EQD “bachelor” and EQD “Masters” in SU’s Theological Faculty. The competition for professor in the discipline is necessary for the following reasons. Assoc. prof. Nikolchev is the most senior lecturer in the moment at the Theological Faculty with more than 25 years of uninterrupted work under a fixed-term contract with the University. After the retirement of fr. prof. Radko Poptodorov, almost 30 years ago, there has not been a professor in the field of Church law. This competition is the culmination of a multi-year effort for the preservation of the tradition and the filling of the gap.

For participation in the competition assoc. prof. Diljan Nikolchev, PhD, provides a list of publications, which contains **16 titles: 1 published monograph, 2 studia, and 13 articles**. All submitted titles are in the field of study of the competition or in direct relationship with it. All are published after his habilitation in 2006.

## **2. Information about the candidate**

Assoc. prof. Diljan Nikolaev Nikolchev, PhD, (b. 18.03.1961) is a long-term lecturer, researcher and publicist in the field of church-law problematics, contemporary ecclesiastical topics, as well as in the field of the newest history of the BOC, viewed primarily through the archives of the Commission on the dossiers. He has two higher-learning Master’s degrees – in theology from the SA “Sv. Kliment Ohridski” (Diploma № 624/29.06.196) and law from SWU “Neofit Rilski” (2009). Received a diploma as a specialist (1999) in Roman Law in the JF of SU “Sv. Kliment Ohridski”. In his career he is an editor of the Synodal Publishing House and a teacher. Since 1994 is an assistant professor in the Theological Faculty and received tenure on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1995, working as an assistant professor for more than 25 years on a fixed-term contract in SU (from 1997 senior assistant, from 2000 chief assistant, and from 2006 is an associated professor in Church Law in the Theological Faculty of SU “Sv. Kliment Ohridski” with diploma №

23824/2006 from VAK). He acquires PhD in 2015 with a dissertation: "Exarch Stefan and the developments of National security before and after the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1994 (Historical-canonical investigation) (Diploma № SU 2015-128/20.07.2015), as well as a Doctor of the Sciences with a dissertation: "Metropolitan Paisii of Vratsa and the Eparchy of Vraca (1930-1974) through the archival documents" (Diploma № S 2018-4/30.04.2018). Assoc. prof. Nikolchev has been a member of the editorial board and editor in chief of the Theological thought journal, the leading director of social and scholarly projects, head of a cathedra and the president of the General Assembly of the Theological Faculty. He has been the Secretary and President of the section "Theological Sciences" at the SUL. At this time, he has numerous publications: 4 monographs, 4 studia and 84 articles in Bulgarian and international scholarly publications. Assoc. prof. Nikolchev is the scholarly advisor to many PhD candidates (three have defended successfully) and Master's students.

### **3. The Monograph**

Due to the size of this review I will focus on the main work which assoc. prof. Nikolchev applies to the competition, the monograph "History, structure and management of the Struma-Drama eparchy (Belomorian section, 1941-1942) and Eparchy of Drama (1943-1944) through the lens of the archival documents". Sofia, UI "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", 20202, 336 pgs. ISBN 978-954-07-50-24-8. Before everything else what must be underscored is that this is a topic that has not been developed completely and his contribution has a major factor for the study of the history, structure and management of the BOC in recent times. The colleague Nikolchev definitely has a feeling for discovering and working profusely with archival sources, which are not of particular interest to anybody else. That should be admired! The monograph fills a necessity for a work of its kind in Bulgarian. Already from the first glance the enormous amount of systematic and research labor is evident, as well as the reflection and thinking-through of the materials. The precise work with the sources is also impressive. Indeed, a grand amount of work has been done with the archive and the force of this work is in the details and the rich

factology. A bibliography on the topic is also included. I agree with the necessity for such research, as stated by the author, but I couldn't bring myself to understand what he means by p. 4 "hesitations over the judgement of this period" (p. 18).

The work is produced with diligence and care. The narration is easy to read and draws you in. The language and style are brilliant. The work appropriately is divided into two parts, the first focusing mainly on history and canonical structure whereas the second contains rich factology and statistical information from the archives on the structure and ecclesial life in every one of the villages and monasteries belonging to the eparchy. In conclusion I consider the monograph an original work, possessing the necessary scholarly contributions.

I have known the colleague Nikolchev for many years, and I am fully aware of his manner of work. He has a special attitude towards the question of objectivity and in the monograph has made sure in many places to suppress his strong inclination to over-the-top criticism. This must be congratulated! Despite this I allow myself a few suggestions. Firstly, the period in question is war time and decisions are made within this context. In this sense we cannot speak about a discriminatory attitude towards Greek priests (p. 77-78), as they were "hired" with the same salaries as their Bulgarian colleagues, as well as considering the fact that those of them who were relieved of duty were provided with modest living expenses. Let us be realistic and not pour more oil into the fire of the foreign "historical propaganda", akin to the topic of "Bulgarian fascism". Secondly, and honestly as a friend, I find it close to impossible to work for such a profound amount of time with an archive and not go, for even a single time to visit the places. This seems very strange to me, especially when we consider the proximity of said places (less than 300 km. a distance that Nikolchev could travel for less than three hours). Part of the historical events and processes could be easily explained by the specifics the geography of the region. Such writing about an ecclesial diocese without knowing the specific places is characteristic of another epoch. The work in question lacks an accurate and contemporary geographical

description, as well as authentic geographical literature. With this in mind I would also recommend the inclusion of geographical maps, which illustrate the texts. Thirdly, the unceasing criticality towards everything Bulgarian is beginning to be a bit too much for me. I do not support or admire this “spirit of negation” in Bulgarian historiography. The underlined anti-ecclesiality brings a scent of revolutionary times. What also remains unclear is the authors position regarding the Bulgarian Exarchate and its role in these lands – in the end are they Bulgarian, Greek or Turkish? What also remains an unknown is the psychological condition and mindset of the people in question. For example, the question about the priests’ “materialism” or why many priests from Sv. Vrachko want to go to the Drama eparchy while at the same time nobody from Razlog does? There are reasons for this. When writing a historical work, it is not necessary to discredit somebody. The historian is not a judge, he neither punishes, nor does he benevolently pardon. In this moralistic-protestant manner there is no joy, no positive *askesis* – only mistakes, mistakes and some random apparition of a hero from a provincial type. What is also lacking, with few exceptions, is any theological literature. The competition is in the field of theology and, it seems, the excessive interdisciplinarity is on the path to dissolving theology.

On the topic of the Jewish questions I completely understand the colleague – from the current perspective we clearly see that more could have been done about the saving of the Belomorian Jews, but it is not correct to compare the Bulgarian and the Greek church on this, because the Greeks are in a different position and it is natural that they are more critical towards the Germans. The question of the responsibility of the Nevrokopian metropolitan for the beds and linens in the Metropoly appears, to me, to be a joke. There are some things in the work that weirdly remind me of Macedonian publications from the Yugoslavian period.

Apart from the monograph assoc. prof. Nikolchev has made available a considerable amount of articles as additional works which I consider to be completely acceptable and

appropriate to the topic of the competition for professorship – Church law and structure and management of the BOC.

The professor, unlike the associate professor is an established lecturer with a team of colleagues working around him – assistants and doctoral students. Every professor is an Alma Mater, a *universum* of sorts, a totality, and original masterpiece – new methodology, a school. This means new courses, opportunities for new people to teach etc. I do hope that the colleague manages to accomplish all of this, to succeed in sharing all that he has discovered and described and to enkindle others, who would, in turn, contribute to the further clarification of important moments in the history, structure and management of the BOC in recent times. I have drifted away but only in this do I find sense, the rest is a dull journey to the NSS.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Having in mind the complete long-lasting educational and academic contributions I fully support the candidacy of the colleague Nikolchev and recommend to the Scientific Jury to propose to the Faculty Council of the Theological Faculty at SU “Sv. Kliment Ohridski” to elect **assoc. prof. Diljan Nikolaev Nikolchev**, PhD, for the academic position of “*professor*” in the professional directive **2.4 Religion and theology** in the scholarly field of Church law and Structure and Management of the BOC.

Sofia, 14.11.2020

Holy Emperor Justinian

(assoc. prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD)