

R E V I E W

From: Prof. Petko Stefanov Petkov, Ph.D.

Veliko Turnovo University “St. Cyril and St. Methodius”,
Faculty of History,

member of a scientific jury appointed by Order № RD 38-352 /
26.07.2020 of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, in a
competition for the academic position PROFESSOR, announced by Sofia
University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in the State Gazette, issue no. 57 / 26.06.2020
in professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Ecclesiastical Law,
Organization and Management of the BOC)

Regarding: The scientific, scientific-applied and professional-academic activity and production, presented by the only participant in the competition Assoc. Prof. Doctor of Science Dilyan Nikolaev Nikolchev

I. Summary data on the scientific production and the activity of the candidate.

Assoc. Prof. Dilyan Nikolchev is a habilitated lecturer at the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". For more than two decades he has been teaching Church Law, Organization and Management of the BOC, Church Marriage Law. Since 2006 he has been an associate professor, and in 2018 he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science for his successfully defended dissertation on "Metropolitan Paisii of Vratsa and the Diocese of Vratsa (1930-1974) through the reading of archival documents". From 2012 to 2015 D. Nikolchev is a lecturer in Church Law at the Orthodox Theological Faculty of the University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. Cyril and St. Methodius".

Assoc. Prof. D. Nikolchev is a scholar with lasting interests in the structure and management of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC). He is the author of a number of works on a wide range of issues of church government, organization and history of the BOC. He is known to the scientific community and the general public with his publications on various topics: the life and work of famous Bulgarian bishops such as Exarch Stefan and Paisii Vrachanski after the significant socio-political changes in the mid-40s of the twentieth century, marriage, divorce and subsequent marriage in the Orthodox Church, the normative problems of the Law on Religions and the Statute of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and many others.

Assoc. Prof. Nikolchev is a member of the editorial boards of the magazines "Bogoslovska misal" and "Liubomadrie", and the first was editor-in-chief (2008-2016). He has led research projects at Sofia University and the Research Fund. Assoc. Prof. D. Nikolchev is the scientific supervisor of three doctoral students who successfully defended their doctoral dissertations. He is also a longtime member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, he was secretary and chairman of the section "Theological Sciences".

II. Evaluation of the scientific and practical results and contributions of the creative production submitted for participation in the competition.

Dilyan Nikolchev participated in the competition for professor with sixteen papers, published after the acquisition of the scientific position of associate professor (2005) and the scientific degrees "Doctor" (2015) and "Doctor of Science" (2018).

Special attention should be paid to the monograph "History, structure and management of the Strumica-Drama Diocese" (Aegean part, 1941 - 1942) and the Diocese of Drama (1943 - 1944) through the reading of archival documents" (Sofia, Univ. Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2020). The content of the

monograph, which includes 366 pages, is oriented towards the church structure and management of two of the dioceses of the BOC in specific historical periods. By its scientific nature, the research is interdisciplinary. In its history, theology, the structure of the BOC, local church law are intertwined as information and interpretation. The use of a huge array of different archives makes it largely a historical-archival and archaeographic study. The monograph traces events, facts and circumstances related to unknown or little-known moments of the church organization during the Second World War in the lands of White Sea Thrace annexed to Bulgaria. The policy of the Kingdom of Bulgaria, conducted in these territories, is also considered.

As in his other research, here D. Nikolchev uses a very wide source base, mostly archival and unexplored so far. Its inclusion in scientific circulation is one of the serious contributions of this work. Another significant contribution is contained in the second part of the study. There are located and presented the spiritual areas, parishes and governing bodies of the two objects of study - Strumica-Drama Diocese and Drama Diocese. The author has managed to convey in detail the church structure, management and general condition of the sections, incl. the number of temples, monasteries, chapels, their property status, etc. Against the background of the wartime changes, the attitude of the ruler of the Strumica-Drama diocese, and later also of the Drama diocese, Metropolitan Boris of Nevrokop, to the church government and church life is shown. His self-assessment, quoted in the conclusion, is not exaggerated, but objectively reflects the efforts of the still schismatic BOC to cope with the unexpected challenges of World War II: "The Bulgarian Orthodox Church, imbued with the spirit of Christ and guided by its bright traditions the mentioned lands of Thrace and Macedonia a truly Christian and highly noble mission. She left there only good deeds and bright memories, which no person with a conscience will be able to deny. What would foreign church authorities do in such a case on Bulgarian borders, among the Bulgarian population, we do not want to talk about".

The other publications, with which Assoc. Prof. Dilyan Nikolchev participated in the competition for professor, confirm the idea of him as a professional researcher on a wide range of church management, church law and church history topics. They consider both scientific and scientifically applied issues - from the teachings of St. Apostle Paul on Christian marriage, through the current problems of ecclesiastical criminal law and one of the few studies on the canonical meaning of the lifelong ministry of the Orthodox bishop to the participation of the laity in the life of the Church and the role of the media for public representation of their positions, challenges and prospects in the conditions of the new democratic legal standards that Bulgaria has adopted in the spheres of religious rights and freedoms. The only publication that deals from the canonical point of view with the question of the cooperation of the bishops of the BOC with the totalitarian services in the period 1944-1989 stands out. For me, however, the article "On the Fate of the Exarchate Statute after its Adoption by the Second CNS in 1922" arouses the greatest interest, in which the author sheds light on the history of the adoption of the Exarchate Statute in 1937 and in particular examines the complex relations between the BOC and the state authorities in the field of church legislation in the 1920s and 1930s.

III. Critical remarks and recommendations.

The presented scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Doctor of Science Dilyan Nikolchev is remarkable for the breadth of topics and its chronological scope. Instead of critical remarks, I would recommend the author to adhere to his previous academic approach - keeping the broad historiographical and source base of his research to strive for the most comprehensive consideration of the research topics and problems, which as interdisciplinary, allow different approaches and methods of research and presentation.

IV. Conclusion.

Considering the prominent merits of the presented scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Doctor of Science Dilyan Nikolchev, his long teaching career, as well as the important fact that the candidate in the competition has met the minimum national requirements for the academic position of "professor", I share my strong opinion awarding the academic position "professor" to Assoc. Prof. Doctor of Science Dilyan Nikolaev Nikolchev in professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Church Law, Structure and Management of the BOC).

01.11.2020

Jury member:

(Prof. Petko St. Petkov, Ph.D.)