

## S T A T E M E N T

**of Assoc. Prof. Mihail Ivanov Gruev, Ph. D., Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”/ Archival State Agency of Bulgaria, Member of scientific jury for participation in a competition of taking of the academic position “professor” in Faculty of Theology of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, in the field of education *Humanities*, professional direction 2.4. *Religion and theology (Church law, Structure and Management of Bulgarian Orthodox Church)*, announced in State Gazette, issue 57 of 26 of June, 2020.**

The competition was announced and held in full compliance with the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Documents for participation in it have been submitted only by Assoc. Prof. Dilyan Nikolaev Nicolchev, Dr. Hab. He participated in the competition with one published monograph (other than his dissertations and his first habilitation) and 14 studies and articles.

### **1. Teaching activity**

Insofar as holding the academic position of professor means, above all, reaching a kind of peak in the teaching of the subject and in creating your own school of students and followers, I consider the teaching experience of the candidate to be of particular importance. As he himself points out in his academic CV, he started as a part-time lecturer in the disciplines *Church Law* and *Organization and Management of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church* in 1994. A year later he became a full-time position as assistant professor in this discipline at the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In 2006 Nikolchev was habilitated as an associate professor, as he is to this day. Meanwhile, in 2015 he obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", and in 2018 - the scientific degree "Doctor of Theology". Over the years, the candidate has been conducting seminars and lecturing on *Church Law, Structure and Management of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Introduction to Church Marriage Law, Roman Law Principles and Institutions in the Regulation of Church Law*, etc. As can be seen from the topics of the courses, led by Assoc. Prof. D. Nikolchev, as well as from the titles of his publications, his interests are located in the interdisciplinary field between theology, law and history. In the period 2012 - 2015 Assoc. Prof. Nikolchev is part-time lecturer at the University of Veliko

Tarnovo "St. St. Cyril and Methodius ". He was also a visiting lecturer in the Erasmus program at the University of Trnava, Republic of Slovakia. Assoc. Prof. Nikolchev has so far had three successfully defended Ph. D. students. All this outlines his profile as a well-established lecturer, reading a variety of lecture courses and preparing his followers in the science.

## **2. Research activity**

The number of scientific publications and the thematic fields in which Assoc. Prof. Nikolchev works are impressive. He is the author of four independent monographs, 88 studies and articles (11 of which are co-authored), co-author of a scientific collection, etc. Of course, the subject of the present analysis will be only those of them that were written after the academic position of "associate professor" and are not related to his two doctoral dissertations. Among them the most significant is his book: *History, structure and management of the Strumica - Drama Diocese (White Sea part 1941 - 1942) and the Drama Diocese (1943 - 1944) through the reading of archival documents*. S., University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski ", 2020, 366 p. With it he complements and expands an important thematic circle of his earlier studies on the role and place of personalities such as Sofia Metropolitan Stefan, Vratsa Metropolitan Paisii and others in the history of the church, but also of the society as a whole. Here his attention is drawn to the personality of the Metropolitan of Nevrokop Boris, but unlike his other monographs, this is not a spiritual biography of a clergyman, but an attempt to look more broadly - to the Strumica-Drama and later only the Drama region diocese and through it on the role and place of the church in the years of the Second World War, on the character of the Bulgarian government in the Aegean Macedonia etc. The author builds his research on a significant quantity of published and unpublished documents, stored mainly in the SA - Blagoevgrad and in the Central State Archives. In addition, he draws on the available publications, mostly related to the personality of Metropolitan Boris. It should be noted that in recent years, and especially in connection with the research undertaken by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in connection with his possible canonization, research on his work has advanced. Recently at the Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski" - Blagoevgrad was defended a dissertation on this issue, which Nikolchev most conscientiously uses and cites. The other source widely used by the author is the biography and diary entries of Bishop Anthony of Provat, the vicarious of the Diocese of Drama during the war years. Very often he gives the floor to challenge or verify facts that are not clear from the available documents. As already noted, however, the author's aim is to go beyond the genre of

biography, and through it to try to reconstruct a harsh and complex time. It can be concluded that he has largely succeeded in achieving this. The very view of what is happening in the territories occupied by Bulgaria is unconventional, the topic is not considered monographically, and the total volume of publications on the topic in Bulgarian historiography is very modest. All this confronts the author with many difficulties, some of which have become weaknesses of the study. Here I will only highlight the more important ones, in my opinion. Due to the work with a huge volume of documents, in some places he indulged in descriptive empiricism to the extent that the sources themselves seem to lead the author, and not vice versa. The enumeration of the dozens of church sites and their priests has burdened the exposition with excessive factology, which is superfluous, the reader is not able to understand the specifics and even imagine where the enumerated settlements are located. Without proper maps of the region (one was added at the end, the scale of which makes it completely unusable), in this form the narrative has become a kind of register of names of settlements and people. Part of this fact could easily be saved, and its place could be filled by a more precise analysis, which looks at the psychological portraits of priests - seconded and local, the relationship between the parishioners themselves - Bulgarians and Greeks, locals and immigrants etc. It should be noted, however, that in some places the author has managed to achieve this effect, he has carefully clarified little-known facts about the scale of the so-called Drama Uprising, the devastation of the monastery of St. Bogoroditsa in the Kushnitsa mountain, the problems around the ownership of the properties of the monastery of St. John Prodromos near Serres etc. The other publications with which the candidate participates in the competition are divided approximately equally in the genres of *ecclesiastical law* and *structure and history of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in recent times*. They have an original character, neither in them, nor in any other publication of D. Nikolchev, I have found plagiarism.

### 3. Conclusion

The above gives me every reason to conclude that before the esteemed scientific jury is a worthy candidacy of an already established scientist and lecturer. I am convincingly voting "for" the award of Assoc. Prof. Dilyan Nikolaev Nikolchev, Dr. Hab., to the academic position of "Professor" in the professional field 2. 4. - Religion and Theology (Church Law, Dilyan Nikolaev Nikolchev to the academic position of "Professor" in the professional field 2. 4. - Religion and Theology (Church Law, Structure and Management of the BOC) and I invite the other members of the

scientific jury, as well as the Faculty Council of the Theological Faculty of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski "to support this choice.

Sofia, 20.11.2020.

Member of the scientific jury:

/Assoc. Prof. Mihail Gruev, Ph. D./