

## OPINION

On a competition for occupying the Academic Position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Church Archaeology), for the needs of the Department of Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology, announced by SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" in SG, issue 100/ 16.12.2022.

The opinion was prepared by Prof. DSc. Klara Assenova Toneva, Faculty of Theology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia in my capacity of a member of the scientific jury of the competition according to Order No RD 38-49/27.01.2023 of the Rector of SU.

One candidate submitted documents for participation in the announced competition: **Asst. Prof. Ventsislav Georgiev Karavalchev, Phd**, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

### **I. Description of the submitted materials**

#### **1. Candidacy data**

The submitted documents for the competition meet the requirements of the PPZRASRB and the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions in SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". The documents are well arranged and organized. For participation in the competition Asst. Prof. Ventsislav Georgiev Karavalchev, Phd presents a list that includes 1 monograph and 15 articles. The documents certify the necessary academic and practical qualities and achievements of the candidate both in the field of *Church Archaeology* and in *Historical Theology* in general.

#### **2. Candidate data**

Ventsislav Karavalchev graduated the Theological Academy (1992), he has been specialized in Italy and Greece; he has Master's degree in the field of Christian-Muslim Relations (University of Birmingham); he was an Orthodox missionary in Ukraine and

Georgia (2002–2012); since 2016 he is a lecturer at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University.

### **3. General characteristics of the candidate's scientific works and achievements**

The scientific works of Ventsislav Karavalchev are directly related to Church Archaeology. The focus is the monograph *Christianity in Anhialo (Pomorie)*, published this current year, which is a useful study based on both a literary source and archaeological data, as well as on scientific publications by Bulgarian and foreign authors. Secondly, there are also original author's ideas – for example, the hypothesis of the Jewish etymology of the name "Anchialo", meaning "God is alive to me".

In connection with the scientific works submitted for participation in the competition, I summarize the following:

*meet the* minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the scientific field of Humanities and professional field 2.4. Religion and theology;

*do not repeat* such from previous procedures for obtaining a scientific title and academic position;

*there is no plagiarism* that has been proven by the statutory order.

### **4. Characteristics and evaluation of the applicant's teaching activities**

The teaching engagement of V. Karavalchev is at level that corresponds to his academic position.

### **5. Content analysis of the scientific and applied achievements of the candidate contained in the materials for participation in the competition**

I agree with the contributions that the candidate makes.

As an author of the current opinion I point out the following achievements of the applicant:

*first* – the personal contribution of Asst. Prof. Ventsislav Georgiev Karavalchev, Phd for the development of the discipline of *Church Archaeology*;

*second*, his personal experience in practical and applied terms (Orthodox missionary in Ukraine and Georgia) is impressive;

*third*, the candidate participates in media appearances related to topics of Church archaeology and Church history. The justification (in the public space) of the need for religious education supports both intercultural and civic education, as well as the upbringing (especially of the young) in Orthodox spirituality.

## **6. Critical remarks and recommendations**

I share some of my own observations, which does not change my overall positive impression.

About *the title* — formulated in this way does not reveal what the research problem is specifically; a clarifying subtitle would help;

about the *structure* – if the text has been divided into separate chapters, this would have made it more perspicuous. There is a disproportion between the first and the second part, which are about 30 pages each, while the third has a double volume. Meaningfully and contently the third part could be divided into two parts;

what exactly can be considered an Introduction?— probably the author means the part called "Ancient Anchialo";

about the text called "*Instead* of conclusion" – yes, it is indeed instead of a conclusion; when republishing the book, a conclusion should be written, that clearly states what the author has achieved;

in some places the text sounds like a sermon (e.g. p. 51);

the use of expressions such as: "there is no data, but we are more than convinced" (p. 52), "it is possible, it is even certain" (p. 67), "we are more than confident..." (p. 36), "we cannot but be joyful..." (p. 51), "for us is a true joy..." (p. 79), etc. do not give scientific validity to the text. On the contrary, once – they take away from its scientificity, and the second time – they sow doubts, because when there are no data and scientific arguments, our confidence, conviction or joy as authors is not enough;

the summaries, which are found in certain places in the monograph, can be displayed after each part in order to facilitate the reader;

I did not meet in the scientific and critical apparatus the names and studies of Prof. Dr. Hristo Stoyanov and Assoc. Prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD. I am not talking here about loyalty or quoting in an inappropriate way, but other – about adherence to both the

research tradition in Bulgarian Orthodox theology and the scientific teaching tradition continuity in the 100-year history of the Faculty of Theology. Also in this direction is the fact that V. Karavalchev participated in the competition with publications in the magazine "Christianity and Culture", but not in "Theological Thought" – the official scientific journal of the Faculty of Theology.

There are also some technical omissions: the citation method is not in accordance with the practices of the Faculty of Theology; in "Bibliography" pages have been cited; punctuation errors are found, missed prepositions, etc.

### **7. Personal impressions of the candidate**

I know personally Asst. Prof. Ventsislav Georgiev Karavalchev, Phd as a very good researcher, interesting lecturer and a well-intentioned colleague who is respected and valued as a specialist in his field.

### **8. Conclusion of the candidacy**

After reading the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, as well as after analyzing their significance and applied scientific contributions, **I confirm** that the scientific achievements meet the requirements of the ZRASRB for occupation by Asst. Prof. Ventsislav Georgiev Karavalchev, Phd of the academic position "Associate Professor" in the scientific field and professional field of the competition.

## **II. Conclusion**

In accordance with the scientific achievements of the candidate, and as a member of the scientific jury for his habilitation, I consider that Asst. Prof. Ventsislav Georgiev Karavalchev, Phd deserves the requested scientific title "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Church Archaeology). I recommend the Faculty Council at Faculty of Theology at Sofia University "St. KlimentOhridski" to award it to him.

01.04.2023.

Prepared the opinion: .....

(Prof. DSc. KlaraToneva)