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OPINION

**on the submitted works
for participation in a competition for the academic position of
Associate Professor
in professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Church Archaeology),
announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (SU), Faculty of Theology
in State Gazette, issue 100 of 16.12.2022.**

The opinion is prepared in my capacity as a member of the scientific jury of the competition in accordance with Order No. ПД 38-49 / 27.01.2023 of the Rector of SU. At the first meeting of the jury (minutes No. 1) I was elected its chairman. One candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition: Chief assistant Dr. **Ventzislav Georgiev Karavalchev**, SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Theology.

The documents submitted by the applicant comply with the legal requirements. There were no irregularities in the procedure. The applicant fulfils the minimum national requirements laid down in Art. 2b para. 2 and 3 of the ZRASRB Act. No plagiarism has been legally established in the scientific works submitted for the competition.

Ventzislav Karavalchev graduated from the Theological Faculty of SU in 1992 with a Master's degree. He then studied at the Universities of Birmingham and Athens. In the period 2013–2016 he was a full-time PhD student in Church History at the Faculty of Theology of the SU. He defended his dissertation on 01.09.2016, after which he was appointed as a chief assistant professor.

In addition to the discipline of Church Archaeology, of which he is the holder, Karavalchev also teaches a number of compulsory and elective courses in the specialties at the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs in the Faculty of Theology, as well as the discipline of Christianity in Africa in English in the specialty of African Studies at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of the SU. He is the Head of the Master's Program in Christian Pilgrimage at Faculty of Theology. He leads pilgrimage groups through the Pilgrimage-Educational Centre "St. John of Rila" at the Sofia Holy Metropolis. Karavalchev is sociable, helpful and enjoys a good reputation and the respect of the academic community and students. He is a family man, father of two children.

The candidate has submitted a list of 1 monograph and 15 articles, all registered in COBISS and not used in his PhD defense. A list with a total of 12 citations was also submitted for the participation in the competition. The attached publications attest to the necessary practical and academic achievements of Ventsislav Karavalchev in the field of Historical Theology in general.

The scientific papers submitted for evaluation were published in the period 2011–2023. Central among them is the monograph *Christianity in Anchialos (Pomorie)*. Sofia: СИМОЛИНИ 94, 2023, 218 pages. According to the author, it is "a first attempt at a comprehensive history of Anchialos' Christian past". Beginning with St. Paul, he adduces numerous testimonies and hypotheses to flesh out his narrative. The exposition is presented chronologically, ending with the end of the Ottoman period. The engaging narrative and high style are among the merits of the reviewed text.

The attached articles deal with various issues of Bulgarian church history. They can be grouped as follows: early Christian history of Bulgarian lands; medieval church history; new church history; interreligious dialogue. I accept the contributions highlighted by the author. They are written in Karavalchev's characteristic academic style and are supported by solid arguments and evidence.

The texts are readable, written in good, fluent, scientifically sound and understandable Bulgarian language.

The candidate's teaching activity is at the level expected for the academic position held.

I declare that I have no joint publications, research projects or other conflicts of interest with the applicant within the meaning of the law.

Having read the materials and scientific works submitted in the competition and on the basis of the analysis of their significance and scientific and applied contributions contained therein, I confirm that the scientific achievements meet the requirements of the ZRASRB for the candidate to hold the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field of the competition. The candidate satisfies the minimum national requirements in the professional field and no plagiarism has been found in the scientific works submitted to the competition.

I give my **positive** assessment of the application.

In view of all of the above, I confidently vote in favor and call upon the Honorable Scientific Jury to propose to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Theology of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" to elect the chief assistant Dr. **Ventzislav Georgiev Karavalchev** to the academic position of Associate Professor in the scientific field Humanities, professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Church Archaeology).

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(Prof. Dr. Al. Omarchevski)