

OPINION

of prof. Dilyan Nikolaev Nikolchev, PhD, Theological Faculty

at SU "Sv. Kliment Ohridski"

on the contest for the academic duty of "professor" of assoc. prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD, in the field of 2.4 Religion and Theology (Introduction to the history of the Church and History of the Church)

The contest is submitted and carried out in full accordance with ZRASRB, the manual for its use as well as the PUDSU of SU "Sv. Kliment Ohridski". Only assoc. prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD, has supplied documents to participate with. He is participating with one monograph (different from his dissertation and his first habilitation work) and 20 articles and studies.

The main work of the candidate

The main work presented for opinion and consideration is entitled *Учителят Ганчо Велев Ганчев (1921 – 1998) или за занаята на богослова историк през XX век*, contains 286 standard pages and is structured thusly: Introduction and four thematic chapters, followed by a Conclusion and Appendices with archival documents. The author has added also a Bibliography of Gancho Veleв, Abbreviations and Indexes of the personal names, the toponyms and the terminology. In the beginning of the work are contained the typical monographial elements – Abbreviations, Gratitude and Foreword.

The subject of the candidate's research is the personality and activities of the long-time seminary teacher Gancho Veleв, who devoted his entire life to bearing witness to the Church history (p. 22) and left lasting traces in the scientific and church life in the new and most recent history of the BOC - a theological figure whom Pavlov rightly wrote was "among the most worthy of his time" (p. 38). And although the candidate insists that his text about Gancho Veleв is not sentimental (pp. 22, 24, etc.), I think that, in a broader view, the research, in addition to source studies, can also be defined as bearing pathos – feeling and soulful, moving, emotional and triumphant, elated and eloquent – ultimately scientifically sentimental. And precisely in this sentimentality lies one of the merits of P. Pavlov's work. It also makes the composition original, i.e. it is not merely an erudite exercise, but a reflection capable of engaging the reader's entire intellectual and emotional nature. Of course, the habilitation work is a work demonstrating the erudition and hermeneutic skill of the author, it is an unconventional text entering into an open and honest polemic "with our vaunted historians, professors and scholars" (p. 38) regarding the place and role of our Church during the communist period in our country (p. 147). But the most important thing is that, through his research, the candidate has largely managed to problematize the concept of personality (in this case, P. Pavlov's teacher - Gancho Veleв; this is important to emphasize, since it is also

about preserved living and immediate impressions in the author of the habilitation thesis: it is clear that the teacher Gancho Velev "took him by the hand" when Pavlov himself was his student, "opened" his mind and touched his heart) in the conditions of church life, at the same time skillfully through adding intriguing comments on the intellectual and written legacy of the teacher Gancho Velev, giving the reader the opportunity to expand his horizons, his knowledge and his understanding of the essence of the Church in general. In this way, P. Pavlov's monograph becomes a "good opportunity" for rethinking the entire ontological church problematic - the knowledge of the being of the existence, projectivity towards new horizons, whether or not we share his historical views and understandings. And since the candidate's monograph is mainly based on the personal archive of Gancho Velev, containing various creative materials, correspondence, diaries and memoirs, Pavlov's work itself mainly concerns the problem of memory for the communist past, the time during which G. Velev was most creative in his life. In this way, the work of the candidate acquires an even greater social significance and goes beyond purely scientific interest, as it affects to a large extent the global issue of the transition from the past to the present and the future of Bulgaria, or in the language of political scientists - from totalitarianism to democracy.

A contributing point in Pavel Pavlov's habilitation essay is the fact that through the unpublished archive of Gancho Velev, the author introduces new documents into circulation, which he not only presents in the form of "facsimiles", but skillfully analyzes. This is actually a visualization of the historical past, contributing to the understanding and preservation of the church's historical memory, and we must admit - a rare aspect of the work of professional church historians.

Pavel Pavlov is a welcome interlocutor and promoter of church history knowledge and a preferred expert in the field of church history. This is probably due not only to his encyclopedic historical competence and his ability to articulate his theses through an interesting way of verbal expression, but also to his ability to balance history as mental imagination and history as material and immaterial facts: he finds a way to "moderate" both positions, and this reveals him as a bearer of the best traditions in the field not only of church history, but of theology in general.

Assoc. prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD has also submitted for review 20 other publications of his, which, like his main habilitation thesis, have an original character. The contributions are real and proven. Due to the limited volume of the opinion, these studies of his, unfortunately, cannot be peer-reviewed, but in all cases the general assessment of them is positive.

Critical remarks and recommendations

In the last more than 20 years, I have had the opportunity to discuss with my colleague P. Pavlov some of his texts, with recommendations from my side for language

changes, related to improvement, meeting the standards and requirements of the scientific text. I recognize, of course, the individuality of each author's writing; it is no coincidence that in academic circles it is often noted that there is a specific "handwriting" characteristic of one or another colleague. Such specificity exists in abundance in the manner of writing scientific texts in Pavel Pavlov as well. And all these years, until today's review of his texts, I have been inclined to accept as his personal style certain elements of this extravagance and extraordinariness in written expression, but in many cases I have strongly disagreed. I have provided a large part of my notes, primarily related to linguistic problems in the main work, to P. Pavlov, and I will not dwell on them. However, I will point out two problems in the expression of my colleague Pavlov: the use of an exclamation mark as a sign of strong emotion, which is contrary to the rules for creating a scientific text (eg: "*Such bright personalities did not tolerate the time of our youth, did not tolerate now!*" (p. 40), as well as the use of words that do not exist in any form in the Bulgarian language (eg: "*which must be **infelt** at least in order to be understood*" (p. 101).

Of all such cases, I was most impressed by the attempt to introduce a derivative of the word "historian": "*He was a true histor - he testified to history personally...*" (p. 43); "*With his skills as a histor, he describes in detail...*" (p. 72); forms of "histor" are also found: the **histor**, **histors**. The origin of this invented word is obvious: from "history" as a testimony and "historian" as a witness - a loan from the Greek language. Yet the least the author could have done was to explain by way of a footnote or in the introduction what this attempt to bring such words into scientific use entails. There remain, of course, the questions of how likely their reception is by other researchers, as well as whether such innovations in theological language are justified and imperative.

I hope that the research will undergo a second edition as soon as possible, in which the spelling mistakes and illogicalities that have been made will be avoided.

Conclusion:

Everything that I think and wrote here, I find sufficient reason to rate the overall creativity of the candidate with the highest possible position. My conclusion is more than logical considering what Dr. Pavel Pavlov as a researcher has demonstrated in his main habilitation professorial work and the other works submitted for evaluation. After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, the analysis of their significance and their scientific and applied scientific contributions, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and to recommend to the scientific jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University for the election of Assoc. prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD to the academic position of professor at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" by professional direction 2.4. (*Introduction to Church History and Church History*).

P.S: Outside of my conclusion, I will allow myself to write something very personal that only the current professor candidate can understand: for more than 20 years at the Faculty of Theology as a teacher and researcher, Assoc. prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD has earned the respect of the students, and of his colleagues with his self-sacrificing kindness, through which he also proves himself as a valuable person and scientific worker - this is what I tried to say during the defense of his dissertation work in 2005, but I was not understood, also by him; now is the time...

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Opinion written by: Prof. Dilyan

Nikolchev, PhD: