

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 Archeology),
announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in SJ, issue 100
of December 16, 2022**

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Marian Bogoev Stoyadinov PhD – VTU "St. Cyril and Methodius" (Religion and Theology / Humanities), in the capacity of a member of the scientific jury of the competition according to Order № RD 38-49 / 27.01.2023 of the Rector of Sofia University.

Candidate: Assistant Professor **Ventsislav Georgiev Karavalchev** PhD, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBMITTED MATERIALS

1. Candidacy data

The documents submitted by the candidate comply with the requirements of ZRASRB, PPZRASRB and the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (PURPNSZADSU).

For participation in the competition, the candidate Ventsislav Karavalchev presented a list of 15 titles, incl. 13 publications in Bulgarian scientific journals and scientific forums and one monograph. The candidate's published dissertation is also included in the list. It will not be commented on, as it was the subject of a PhD procedure. Other documents were also presented (*certificate from the "Human Resources" department of the SU, official note for auditorium employment from the Faculty of Theology at the SU, certificate of fulfillment of the minimum state requirements, certificate of the citations, author's certificate of the original scientific contributions, reference to the indicators under Article 112, paragraph 2, summaries of the peer-reviewed publications*), supporting the achievements of the candidate.

The attached documents certify the necessary academic achievements of Ventsislav Karavalchev in the field of Church history and Archeology. They confirm facts that are well known to the Bulgarian theological collegium.

2. Candidate data

Ventsislav Karavalchev obtained a master's degree in theology at the Faculty of Theology of the "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 1992 - this is the first year in which the Theological Academy regains the status of the Faculty of Theology at SU. In the following years, the candidate improves his theological level – practically and theoretically – at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey (Switzerland), Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome, Italy), the University of Kapodistria (Athens, Greece), the University of Birmingham (Great Britain), the Theological Seminary "St. John the Theologian" (Batumi, Georgia), Theological Institute "St. Andrey

Parvozvani" (Kiev, Ukraine). He defended his doctoral dissertation in 2016 on the topic: *The repressive policy of the communist authorities against the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria (1944-1964)*.

To date, Dr. Ventsislav Karavalchev is the assistant professor in the department of "Historical Theology" in the Faculty of Theology of SU.

3. General characteristics of the scientific works and achievements of the candidate

The scientific works of the candidate submitted for evaluation are dated from 2006 to 2023. A central place among them is the monograph *Christianity in Anchialo (Pomorie)*, Sofia, 2023. This work is a contribution both in a local context – everyone who has a relation to Pomorie and its history, would agree with such a statement – but also in the global context of Church history in general. The lives and biographies of a number of saints and saints of the Church are connected with the ancient Anchialo, data on which are included in the study. The author analyzes data from a large number of sources, while at the same time synthesizing the most essential stages in the historical development of Anchialo Christianity.

In summary, the following can be confirmed for all proposed texts:

A) The candidate's publications, which are submitted for participation in the competition, are accessible and familiar to everyone who has an interest in the history of the Church in Bulgaria. They are organized and extracted from the entire volume of Dr. Karavalchev's publications, in my view, not only because of their qualities in themselves. They harmonize in a very appropriate way with the main habilitation work and are a kind of crown around the main message of the intended monograph. At the same time, in each text there is a core that can be developed and grow into a larger study in the future. All of them meet the minimum national requirements and, accordingly, the additional requirements of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" for occupying the academic position of "associate professor" in the scientific field and professional direction of the competition;

b) The scientific works presented by the candidate do not repeat those from previous procedures for acquiring a scientific title and academic position; It is difficult for me to estimate the volume of the published dissertation (*The Repressive Policy of the Communist Power against the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria (1944 – 1964)*). Sofia: Foundation Heritage of the Zographic World Abode, 2020) is a "revised and supplemented version" of the defended dissertation in 2016, since I do not have the text of the latter. Therefore, I do not comment on this work;

c) There is no plagiarism proven in the statutory order in the scientific papers submitted at the competition.

4. Characteristics and evaluation of the teaching activity of the candidate

The candidate's academic and pedagogical activity is summarized in the report on his classroom employment for the academic years 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. This report provides the formal framework for Dr. Karavalchev's teaching work at the Faculty of Theology of SU. This is not the first teaching engagement of the candidate who has nearly five years of teaching experience in Batumi (Georgia) and another three years in Kyiv (Ukraine).

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

Contributions can be commented on in several areas. First of all, I would highlight the specific contributions to the church history of Anchialo in the monograph *Christianity in Anchialo (Pomorie)*. The applicant has provided a brief description of eight such contributions. Every single one of them is real. The theme of the preaching of the apostolic age, which is commented on in the first part of his book, finds parallels in the publications dedicated to St. Andrew, St. Clement (of Serdica and Rome), St. Nikita of Remesiana, etc.. The "sea" theme can be traced in the publications about the island monasteries (Sea of Marmara and Sozopol). The "medieval" context is visible both in the book and in the publications dedicated to St. Demetrius. The "Ottoman" context, as well as the more recent times, is also commented on in the publications dedicated to the "Miliet" system, Rev. Dimitra, Archbishop. Joseph Sokolski and Mitr. Boris Nevrokopsky. Each of the texts can be given high marks from an academic point of view. They are both informative and analytical aids in the formation of our current theological and historical-archaeological education.

The citations to date are 12 (based on the attached reference). Texts of the candidate have been cited in publications by other authors since 2011 (approximately 1 per year). With the publication of the latest monograph, I believe that this figure will be significantly higher in the coming years.

6. Critical remarks and recommendations

In a future reprint of *Christianity in Anchialo (Pomorie)*, I would recommend a larger amount of illustrative material (in an *appendix* or in the main text). Full-color images, especially of murals or icons, will certainly make the edition more expensive, but at the same time will enrich the text. In addition to this, the notes on the available images are insufficiently informative. Each of these images is an argument of its own, and it would be good if they were more detailed, indicating their origin or availability at the date of publication. In the present edition, the illustrations are organized more like decorative elements to the text, which underestimates their real contribution.

I would also recommend that the title of the monograph *Christianity in Anchialo (Pomorie)* be accompanied by a subtitle indicating a clear boundary in the research chronological framework – in this case to the middle of the twentieth century.

7. Personal impressions of the candidate

I have known Ventsislav Karavalchev since my studies at the Academy of Theology (1996-1990) and my impressions of him are excellent. I follow and read his scientific publications. To date, I believe that his participation in this competition is a natural development in his professional path. This will benefit both his students and the academic debate and development of the theological field in which he works.

8. Conclusion on the application

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific papers presented in the competition and based on the analysis of their importance and the scientific and scientific-applied contributions contained in them, I confirm that the scientific achievements meet the requirements of ZRASRB, Regulations for its application and relevant Regulations of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for holding the candidate for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the scientific field and professional direction of the competition. In particular, the candidate satisfies the minimum national requirements in the professional field and no plagiarism has been established in the scientific papers submitted at the competition.

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

II. OVERALL CONCLUSION

Based on the above, I **recommend** the scientific jury to propose to the competent authority for the selection of the Faculty of Theology at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" to elect Ventsislav Georgiev Karavalchev to occupy the academic position of "associate professor" in professional direction 2.4. Religion and Theology (Church Archaeology).

Jury member::

(Assoc. Prof. Mariyan Stoydinov PhD)

23.03.2023