

REVIEW

**by Prof. Dr. Magdalena Marinova Legkostup
(University of Veliko Tarnovo "Sts. Cyril and Methodius")**

on the materials submitted for participation in the competition
for the academic position of Associate Professor
at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"
field of higher education **2. Humanities**
Professional field **2.4 Religion and Theology**
(Moral Theology - Religion and Moral Education)

In the competition for "Associate Professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 39 of 02.05.2023 and in the inter-web-page of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of *Theology* at the *Faculty of Philosophy and History*, as the only candidate participated **Senior Lecturer PhD Ivelina Nikolova Nikolova** from the Department of *Theology* at the *Faculty of Philosophy and History*.

1. General presentation of the materials received

By order RD-21-1419 of 30.06.2023 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of the competition for the academic position of 'Associate Professor' in the field of higher education **2. Humanities**, professional field **2.4 Religion and Theology** (Moral Theology - Religion and Moral Education), announced for the needs of the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History.

For participation in the announced competition has submitted documents only one candidate: Senior Lecturer PhD Ivelina Nikolova Nikolova from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The set of materials submitted by PhD Nikolova on paper is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU, and includes the required documents such as application form, curriculum vitae, copy of diplomas, list of scientific works and citations, references, annotation of the materials, self-assessment of the contributions, declaration of originality, certificate of work experience, scientific metrics.

The candidate, **Senior Lecturer PhD Ivelina Nikolova** has enclosed a total of 15 scientific works, including 1 monograph, 5 articles, 9 textbooks and teaching aids. The 15 scientific works accepted for review are on the issues of the competition. Their distribution by relevant headings, in the country and abroad, is as follows 12 scientific works in Bulgarian and 3 scientific works in English.

2. Brief biographical details of the candidate

The education, professional and scientific development of Senior Lecturer PhD Ivelina Nikolova over the years correspond and logically lead her to this competition. She holds a Bachelor's degree (2004) and a Master's degree (2005) in Theology from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohrid-

ski", as well as a Master's degree in Medieval Philosophy and Culture at the Faculty of Philosophy of the same University in 2007. In 2010, she received her Doctorate in Theology as a full-time PhD student at the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University.

Dr. Nikolova's professional career has also developed consistently. From 2004 to 2011, she was a teacher of Religious Studies at the 74th Kindergarten "Magnolia", while in the academic year 2009-2010 she held the position of Deputy Librarian and Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at the Theological Faculty of Sofia University. In the period 2010-2017, she deployed extensive activity as a teacher of religion in kindergartens and schools in Kyustendil. This gave her extremely valuable scientific and practical experience. Since 2011, Dr. Ivelina Nikolova has been a lecturer in Systematic and Moral Theology at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", moving through the positions of Assistant Professor (2011) and Senior Assistant Professor (from 2013 to present) in the Department of Theology of the Faculty of Philosophy and History.

3. General description of the candidate's activities

Assessment of the candidate's teaching and learning activities and preparation

Senior Lecturer PhD Ivelina Nikolova Principal asst. Dr. Ivelina Nikolova has extensive scientific and teaching experience - more than 12 years of teaching experience at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". She is the author of curricula and the holder of 7 courses. Her annual teaching load is 490 hours. In her teaching and learning activities, the candidate uses modern teaching methods and technical means, applying the latest achievements of information and communication technologies. She is a member of 6 state examination committees. He has published 1 textbook "Introduction to Christian Apologetics" (2013), intended for students of Theology.

The candidate also holds administrative positions in the Faculty of Philosophy and History as a member of the Faculty Committee on Ethics and Academic Unity. She has participated in the updating and development of curricula for two undergraduate ("Theology" and "History and Religion") and one graduate ("Orthodoxy - Tradition and Modernity") degree programs, as well as in the development of the Self-Evaluation Report for two accreditation procedures. The candidate has participated in the preparation and organization of 3 national and 3 international seminars and conferences organized by the Department of Theology. He has also submitted a note of participation in 2 national projects to the Research Fund. Performed pre-press preparation, graphic design and cover preparation of numerous scientific and educational literature.

Evaluation of the candidate's scientific and applied activity

The report on the fulfilment of the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position "Associate Professor" shows that the candidate Senior Lecturer PhD Ivelina Nikolova ful-

files the requirements. The candidate has submitted 1 independent monograph, 5 scientific articles and 9 teaching aids. Of these, 3 articles are in English. All publications are independent.

The monograph "The Multiplicity of Christian Hope" is presented in the list of publications as a major habilitation work. Professionally and competently, Ms. Nikolova structurally lays out the axes that form the substantive fabric of the topic chronologically, giving its biblical foundations and eschatological treatment. In this way the author verifies the very theological-ethical criterion against which the topic is structured, and on the other hand ensures the possibility of concrete problematization of the individual elements that make up its overall structure. Accordingly, the habilitation thesis consists of two parts. *The first part* includes two chapters that present the moral problematic of hope from a philosophical and religious perspective. Chapter One traces developments in philosophical discussions of hope from antiquity to the present. In chapter two, the author offers significant information related to the historical-conceptual theological parameters of the topic from the Early Church and the era of the Ecumenical Councils, through the Middle Ages and contemporary Orthodox theology, with attention to the more interesting strands of Protestant and Roman Catholic theology. Emphasis is placed on the ethical aspects of Christian hope. *The second part* of the habilitation thesis consists of three chapters that present interesting, significant and useful information related to Christian hope. The author's decision to duplicate verbatim the title of this part with the title of the monograph, "The Multiplicity of Christian Hope," is puzzling. *Chapter One* presents the biblical view of hope in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. In *Chapter Two*, PhD Nikolova explores the place of the topic of Christian hope in the system of moral theology, fixing the topic around the foundational work of Prof. PhD Ivan Panchovsky. She builds on what he has begun by considering the reception of Christian hope and related basic theological-ethical issues, such as the God-knowledge-hope relation; the soteriological meaning and integral character of Christian hope; its meaning as an intellectual act and moral experience, as well as a virtue and moral phenomenon. The author analyzes the psychological features of hope, traces its relationship to the will of man and his attitude to earthly goods. Christian hope is presented as the realization of the expected, confidence in the unseen, the experience of the future in the present, and a modus vivendi for man. PhD Nikolova presents his vision of its properties, while also outlining in detail and analysis the sins against Christian hope. *Chapter Three*, "Modes of Christian Hope," provides a more extensive reflection on important theological and philosophical emphases such as the paradoxes of hope and its perception as a symbol. Emphasis is placed on the areological and axiological dimensions of hope. Positively impressive is the description and in-depth analysis of certain departures from Christian hope, such as despair, hopelessness, suicide, cowardice, as well as ways of overcoming them, which are of great practical-applied importance for the Christian life. In a detailed, well

argued and forceful manner, the author justifies the eschatological treatment of the subject. PhD Nikolova concludes her study by posing instead of a conclusion the challenge of the problem of ethical evolution in the contemporary sense of hope.

The applicant's scientific articles participating in the competition are five in number. The first of them traces the development of the educational model for religious education "Path to the Good", developed under the project and initiative of Kyustendil Municipality. The second examines the place and importance of key competences in Religious Education. The third article presents an ethical reflection on specific events in the history of the BOC with an ethical profile, with a brief focus on the situation of the BOC during communism and the schism. Some challenges of a moral nature facing the BOC are also highlighted with an emphasis on religious education in the country. The fourth article discusses issues related to the place of interaction in Religious Education, the challenges, prospects, goals and actual results of its application. The fifth article outlines the important ideas behind the idea of creating a CD of Bulgarian folk songs with Orthodox religious content within the framework of the Religion Project of the Kyustendil Municipality. The intersubjective links between the subjects Music and Religion and the application of such results are emphasized. A brief analysis of Bulgarian folk songs with Orthodox religious content is made.

The research and publications of PhD Ivelina Nikolova are not the result of the theoretical reflections of a "cabinet" scholar, but combine the theory, practice and experience of a theologian and educator, a teacher and a scholar who has largely approbated what has been written over the years. That is why she also participated in the competition with a set of 9 teaching aids and methodological guides for the primary stage of secondary schools, which form a comprehensive educational system for the translation of the Orthodox heritage intended for children.

Contributions (scientific, applied, applied) and citations

The candidate's contributions are complex (scientific and theoretical) and are the personal work of the candidate, they are irrefutable and proven. They concern two main thematic areas directly related to the competition for the academic post of Associate Professor: moral theology and religious and moral education. In general they concern:

1) Analysis of existing problems and identification of new and significant for the theory and practice of moral theology and religious moral education;

2) Systematizing and building on the existing knowledge of the thematic and structural limits of contemporary Bulgarian moral science, the reception of the main directions in the study of Christian hope, based on an original authorial approach and methodology, presenting a new direction in the subject;

3) Present new knowledge related to the study and practice of Religion based on in-depth research and practical experience;

4) The applicability of the model of religious and moral education in Bulgarian schools, etc.;

5) The results of the research sets possibilities for future research.

The first two contributions are significant for scientific theory and complement the conceptual framework of Orthodox theology in interpreting the problem of Christian hope. The third and fourth contributions construct the candidate's clear vision of contemporary religious-moral education and have a practical-applied character. The fifth contribution relates to the long-term research perspectives outlined by the candidate both in theoretical and practical-applied terms.

In the attached documents for the competition is presented a reference for 5 citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific peer-review, the main cited monograph is "Vladikino Selo Vladichentsi", Sofia: Vanguard, 2018. The citations are to the point and with the exception of one of them are from the last 3 years.

With regard to the minimum national requirements for scientific and teaching activity concerning the minimum number of points for groups of indicators under Article 2b of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria, I can state that they are fully met for the academic position for which PhD Ivelina Nikolova is applying.

4. Evaluation of the candidate's personal contribution

The personal contribution of the candidate PhD Ivelina Nikolova in the publications is indisputable, definite and established, and the obtained results and the formulated contributions are undoubtedly her personal work and merit.

5. Critical comments and recommendations

I have no critical remarks. I recommend to Senior Lecturer PhD Ivelina Nikolova to publish the results of her research in refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information, as well as to continue the development of the issues of religious and moral education of Bulgarian children.

6. Personal impressions

My personal impressions of PhD Nikolova are excellent. I know her from the period of her teaching activity in the town of. She has shown exceptional teaching, creative and organizational abilities. I appreciate her academic development as a teacher and researcher. PhD Ivelina Nikolova is organized, responsible and searching nature, promising scientist with creative ideas and concepts.

CONCLUSION

The achievements of Senior Lecturer PhD Ivelina Nikolova results in teaching and research activities, fully meet all the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the relevant Regulations of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

After familiarization with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analysis of their significance and scientific, scientific and applied contributions contained in them, I find it justified to give my positive assessment and to recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty for the election of the head as. PhD Ivelina Nikolova Nikolova to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" in: field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Moral Theology - Religion and Moral Education).

07.09.2023

Reviewer:

(Signature)

Professor PhD Magdalena Legkostup