

REVIEW

in the field of higher education **2. Humanities**

COMPETITION FOR THE ACADEMIC POSITION OF **PROFESSOR**
IN THE PROFESSIONAL FIELD

2.4. RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

(Patrology and Dogmatic Theology)

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for the needs of the **Faculty of Philosophy and History**

at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

by **Assoc. Prof. Svetoslav S. Ribolov, PhD**

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Sole candidate:

Rev. Assoc. Prof. Stoian Iliev Chilikov, Doctor of Theological Sciences

I. Information about the Candidate

The academic and teaching career of Rev. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoian Chilikov at **Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv** began in 2002, when he was appointed as a part-time assistant lecturer. Subsequently, almost his entire academic career has been connected with the same university, where he has gradually and deservedly advanced through all stages of the academic hierarchy.

In 2019 he defended the academic degree **Doctor of Sciences** at the same university. Since 2023 he has also been teaching at the **Sofia Theological Seminary “St. John of Rila”**—a commendable initiative in an institution where I myself began my serious teaching activity. His presence in this ecclesiastical school will undoubtedly contribute to strengthening the connections between academic theological institutions and secondary theological education.

During his early academic years, Rev. Assoc. Prof. Chilikov specialized in several reputable theological schools abroad. Particularly noteworthy are his profound knowledge of the **Greek language** and his specialization at the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**.

The set of materials submitted by Rev. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoian Chilikov fully complies with the **Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv**. The candidate has submitted a total of **24 scholarly works**, including two monographs, a number of articles, and three teaching manuals. All of these works fall within the scope of publications subject to evaluation in the current procedure.

II. Information about the Procedure

The present procedure for the academic position of **Professor** was opened by order of the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (Order No. RD-22-35/09.01.2026), following a proposal by Assoc. Prof. Stoika Petkova Petkanova, PhD (Report RD-21-31/08.01.2026), for the needs of the Faculty of Philosophy and History of the same university.

The order defines the parameters of the procedure and the composition of the academic jury. At its first meeting the jury established that the sole candidate, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoian Iliev Chilikov, convincingly meets the requirements of the **Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria**, the implementing regulations, and the internal regulations of the university.

According to the submitted report on the fulfilment of the minimum national requirements, the candidate has accumulated **1175 points in the professional field**, with all publications directly related to the subject of the competition.

Considering the presented evidence, the academic jury admitted for evaluation the scholarly production of Assoc. Prof. Chilikov in the competition for the academic position of **Professor in the professional field 2.4 Religion and Theology (Patrology and Dogmatic Theology)**.

At its first meeting the academic jury elected **Assoc. Prof. Ivelina Nikolova, PhD** as Chair and appointed **Prof. Georgi Kapriev, DSc**, **Prof. Klara Toneva, DSc**, and **Assoc. Prof. Svetoslav Ribolov, PhD** as reviewers. The remaining members were tasked with preparing written opinions.

The deadline for submitting reviews and opinions was set for **5 March 2026**, and all deadlines have been duly observed.

III. Description of the Scholarly Works

The corpus of publications submitted by Rev. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoian Chilikov outlines a consistent theological research program centered on the **inner unity between dogma, liturgical experience, and spiritual (ascetic) life.**

His works are situated within the fields of **patrology and dogmatic theology**, while also extending into **liturgical theology, hymnography, Orthodox anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology**, as well as issues of **church pedagogy and the spiritual-moral challenges of contemporary society.**

A characteristic feature of these studies is the systematic use of **primary sources**—Holy Scripture, patristic texts, canonical testimonies, euchological texts, and liturgical poetry—together with a hermeneutical approach that does not separate theological reflection from the ecclesial ethos and lived experience of the Church.

1. Habilitation Monograph: Eucharist and Asceticism as a Unified Ecclesial Experience

The central work among the submitted publications is the monograph:

“Eucharist and Asceticism in the Tradition of the Church” (Sofia: Omophor, 2025).

The study addresses one of the most significant and актуални themes in the life of the Church as the Body of Christ: **the synthesis between the Eucharistic mystery and the ascetic struggle.**

The fundamental thesis is clearly articulated: **Eucharist and asceticism are not autonomous spheres of church life that may alternate or be hierarchically opposed outside the living tradition of the Church. Rather, they represent mutually interpenetrating dimensions of the same ecclesial reality.**

The argument is developed through several fundamental theological correlations: **dogma – ethos; image – likeness; grace – freedom; essence – energies; salvation – deification.**

These pairs function as structuring frameworks of the theological discourse and reveal the inner logic of the study: the Christian life is a unified

process of participation in Christ through the sacraments and the ascetic struggle.

The hermeneutical principle guiding the interpretation of sources—from biblical to patristic and liturgical texts—is the conviction that **dogma cannot be separated from ethos, grace from freedom, and essence from energies**.

Within this perspective Eucharist and asceticism are understood in terms of **perichoresis**, that is, as ontologically interrelated and mutually conditioning realities.

The first part of the monograph examines the correlation between **dogma and ethos**, exploring its significance in the tradition and life of the Church. The author analyzes the emergence of two theological perspectives often contrasted in contemporary discussions: **Eucharistic ecclesiology** and **therapeutic ecclesiology**.

The second part addresses the themes of **image and likeness, grace and freedom**, and the sacramental structure of ecclesial life. A central place is given to the fourth-century theological debate concerning the relationship between grace and freedom.

The third part presents a theological analysis of human salvation through the sacraments and ascetic struggle in the perspective of the **Palamite doctrine of essence and energies**. Eucharistic life is interpreted as ontological participation in the life of Christ, while ascetic life is understood as progressive transformation in the likeness of Christ through participation in the divine energies.

2. Monograph on the Dormition of the Mother of God

The second significant book, “**From Death to Life: The Dormition of the Mother of God**” (Sofia: **Fatum, 2025**), investigates the ecclesial tradition concerning the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos.

The study defends the thesis that the tradition implies not only the Dormition but also the **resurrection of the Mother of God**.

The research is based on the analysis of Byzantine manuscripts (Sin 630 and Sin 631 from the 11th century) and Slavic manuscript traditions, as well as hymnographic and patristic texts associated with the feast.

IV. Assessment of the Candidate's Personal Contribution

Taken as a whole, the publications of Rev. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoian Chilikov demonstrate sustained scholarly effort directed toward the rediscovery and theological interpretation of the **Orthodox Holy Tradition as a unity of dogma, liturgy, and spiritual life**.

The central axis of this scholarly work is the theme of the **synthesis between Eucharist and asceticism**, developed in the habilitation monograph through theological correlations that ensure the ecclesial and experiential character of the argumentation.

In addition, the author's contributions include: a. textological and liturgical-theological studies on the Dormition of the Theotokos, b. analyses of hymnographic corpora and euchological texts, c. research on contemporary issues such as **secularization**, transformations of the Christian ethos, and **the problem of war from a Christian perspective**.

These works integrate patristic tradition with contemporary theological concerns while preserving the intrinsic connection between theological truth and the lived experience of the Church.

V. Critical Remarks

First, I would like to make several critical remarks concerning the habilitation work.

The terminological use of the concept of *perichoresis* between Eucharist and asceticism is theologically problematic. In Orthodox theology the term traditionally refers primarily to the inner life of the Trinity or to the Christological interpenetration of the two natures.

Secondly, the opposition between **Eucharistic** and **therapeutic ecclesiology** appears somewhat simplified. In theological literature these concepts are often understood as complementary perspectives on the same ecclesial reality rather than as mutually exclusive models.

Thirdly, the discussion of the relationship between grace and freedom in the fourth century is mentioned but not sufficiently historically specified.

Fourthly, the relationship between the Eucharist and the sacraments is formulated in a rather general way.

VI. Conclusion

The documents and materials submitted by **Rev. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoian Chilikov** fully meet the requirements of the **Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria**, the implementing regulations, and the internal regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The candidate has presented a substantial body of scholarly works published after the materials used for the defense of his doctoral degree and his appointment as associate professor.

These works contain original scholarly contributions and have received international recognition, with many published in journals and academic volumes issued by international academic publishers.

After reviewing the submitted materials and evaluating their scholarly significance, I give my **positive assessment** and recommend that the Academic Jury submit a proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History for the election of **Rev. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stoian Chilikov** to the academic position of **Professor** in the field of: **2.Humanities Professional field 2.4 Religion and Theology (Patrology and Dogmatic Theology)** at **Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv**.

05.03.2026

Martyr Conon

Marcus the Ascetic

Reviewer:

Assoc. Prof. Svetoslav Ribolov, PhD