

REVIEW

by Prof. Klara Asenova Toneva, DSc

Faculty of Theology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

of the materials submitted for participation in a competition

for occupying the academic position of "**Professor**"

at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"

in: Field of Higher Education 2. *Humanities*, professional field 2.4 *Religion and Theology*
(*Patrology and Dogmatic Theology*)

The competition for "professor" is announced in the State Gazette, issue 96 of 11.11.2025, on the website of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" and is for the needs of the Department of *Theology* at the Faculty of *Philosophy and History* of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski".

1. General presentation of the materials received

According to Order No. PD-22-35 from 09.01.2026, issued by the Rector of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski", appointed me as a member of the scientific jury for this competition for the academic position of Professor. Only one candidate applied: Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc, from the Faculty of Philosophy and History at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski".

The set of materials presented is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv and contains the following documents:

- Application form to the Rector for admission to participate in the competition;
- CV in European format;
- Diploma for higher education with acquired educational and qualification degree "Master";

- Diploma for educational and scientific degree "Doctor";
- Diploma (certificate) for the academic position of Associate Professor;
- Diploma for the degree of Doctor of Science;
- List of scientific papers;
- Scientific papers (copies of publications);
- Reference for compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements;
- Declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
- Annotations of the materials under Art. 76. of PRAPU (in Bulgarian and foreign languages);
- Self-assessment of contributions;
- List of citations;
- Document (certificate) for work experience;
- Documents for academic work;
- Research documents;
- Set of documents on paper from item 1 to item 16 - 2 pieces
- A set of documents on electronic media from item 1 to item 16 -2 pieces.

2. Brief curriculum vitae

Stoyan Chilikov graduated from the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 1996. In 2000, he earned the title of candidate of theological sciences at the Moscow Theological Academy, and in 2001, the Higher Attestation Commission recognized this as the "educational and scientific degree of doctor." He completed two specializations at Thessaloniki State University and Lateran University in Rome. From 2002 to 2009, he worked as a Chief Assistant Professor at the Plovdiv Branch "Lyuben Karavelov" in Kardzhali. Since 2009, he has served as Associate Professor of Patrology at the Department of Theology at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski." In 2019, he defended his Doctor of Science degree with a dissertation titled: "The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition (theological content of the feast based on the hymnographic and homiletic texts of the Church)."

3. General characteristics of the applicant's activity

The candidate has participated in five projects, served as a guest professor in Venice in 2013, and presented reports at both national and international conferences. He has served as a scientific reviewer for 7 monographs, edited 2 collections, and is a member of the editorial boards of 3 scientific journals.

He has supervised six diploma students and one PhD student to successful completion. Currently, he is mentoring four PhD students. He has developed seven lecture courses and authored five teaching aids and textbooks.

Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc, has authored 51 scientific papers. For this review, I considered one **habilitation work—a monograph** titled "Eucharist and Asceticism in the Tradition of the Church"—along with four articles published in scientific journals that are refereed and indexed in internationally recognized databases, and 18 articles published in peer-reviewed but non-refereed journals and edited collective volumes.

Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc, has focused his research on several main areas: Eucharistic ecclesiology, ascetic theology, and the study of lesser-known or previously unexplored Church Fathers and writers.

The habilitation work, "Eucharist and Asceticism in the Tradition of the Church," is a clear example of these research interests. In this monograph, the author explores how asceticism and the Eucharist are connected within church tradition. Drawing on patristic and liturgical sources, he examines topics such as preparation for the sacraments, fasting, and the role of asceticism in the Eucharistic life. The author draws on a wide range of biblical, patristic, hymnographic, and liturgical sources to build a robust theological argument about the relationship between Eucharistic experience and asceticism. The second chapter deepens this synthesis, while the third presents the author's theological perspective on salvation through the sacraments and asceticism, viewed through the Palamite doctrine of essence and energy.

One of the author's key contributions in the monograph is his *analysis of the Church's hymnography and liturgical texts*. This approach is a consistent feature throughout theological work. Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc.

I also recognize that the candidate's research enriches the standard methods used in theological analysis.

Another contribution is the candidate's skillful development of a methodological framework that treats *hymnographic and liturgical texts as equally important as biblical and patristic sources*. This approach was also evident in his doctoral dissertation, where he focused on the *hymnography of church feasts*.

The candidate's analysis of hymnographic and liturgical church texts highlights their theological and liturgical value and depth. This approach is evident not only in the monograph but also in his study on "joyful sorrow," which offers the first systematic review and analysis of the Holy Fathers' teachings on this spiritual state.

A significant part of the candidate's research stands out for its clear practical and applied value. By revealing the practical and pastoral significance of liturgical sources within today's church tradition, his work is important for the Church and relevant to current church practice. This is evident in the habilitation work, the article "The Salvation and Sanctification of Man in the Hymnography of St. Nicholas of Constantinople," studies on St. John of Damascus, and two articles about St. Paisii Hilendarski, which analyze hymnographic and hagiographic sources and their relevance for contemporary church tradition. Other examples include "Suffering and Sin According to the Texts of Ancient and Modern Euchologies" and "Soteriology of the Paschal Canon and of the Canon of Holy Saturday."

Another contribution is that, through his analysis, the author proposes suitable pastoral approaches to key issues in preparing the faithful for participation in the Holy Eucharist.

The candidate has also made important contributions by researching *the educational role of faith*. His work highlights the Church's role as an institution for spiritual education and upbringing. This is seen in articles about Metropolitan Kliment of Tarnovo, "The Upbringing of Children According to St. John Chrysostom and St. Porphyry Kavsokalyvit," "The Pedagogical Views of the Metropolitan of Stara Zagora Methodius Kusev," and several articles published in English.

I also recognize the candidate's research on current issues facing the Church, along with his suggested approaches to address them. These topics include the relationship between dogma and ethos, clericalism and anti-clericalism, secularization of the Church and church life, and attitudes toward war and nationalism. Examples can be found in articles such as "Anthropological Collisions of the Correlation of Dogma-Ethos in the Church," "Defense of Faith or Witness to the Faith: Secularization of the Church," "Christianity and War Based on the Biblical and Patristic Texts of the Church," and "The Thracian Church of Bulgaria."

The theological analyses in Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc's works are closely connected to current *church practice*.

The candidate has 41 citations in reputable scientific journals. These citations are thorough, relevant, and have not been used in other procedures.

The candidate meets all quantitative criteria for the professorial position. His total classroom hours are 750 for 2025/26, 690 for 2024/25, and 615 for 2023/24. According to the report on minimum national requirements, he has achieved 1175 points, more than double the required 550 points. Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc, is recognized in scientific circles both in Bulgaria and internationally, as shown by his many publications, citations, and participation in national and international scientific forums.

4. Assessment of the applicant's personal contribution

Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc, has clearly contributed personally to all the materials I reviewed. His engagement with research topics is evident, and he guides the reader thoughtfully through the development of his ideas.

I am confident that the contributions and results achieved by Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc is his own personal achievement.

5. Notes and recommendations

I have no critical remarks. I note that the candidate does not use the research of Fr. Prof. Dr. Iv. Ivanov, lecturer in Liturgics (BF, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"). St. Kliment Ohridski, whose research interests place the central focus precisely on St. Eucharist (see Eucharist). Between angels and men. The liturgical musical-hymnographic tradition of hesychasm; La musica bizantina - immagine della fede. Interpretazione liturgica; the Eucharist – *Mysterium fidei* – *Mysterium vitae*; Eucharist and Interconfessional Dialogue – Theories, Practices, Hypotheses in Bulgarian and World Liturgical Theology, "Harmony in Differences"; Eucharistic holiness in the Anaphora; Liturgical Theology – Manifestation of the Mystical Theology of the Church (a feature of mystical theology, reflected in the monograph "The Eucharist – *Mysterium fidei* – *Mysterium vitae*, Thought, Word, Text, Vol. 31 (36) new series, 2025, issue:31, 2025, pp.:11-35; Basic terms for consecration and conversion in the Eucharist., DIPTYCH. DIPTYCH, kn. 1, 2025, pp. 5-20 et seq., etc.).

6. Personal impressions

I know Fr. Assoc. Prof. DSc Stoyan Chilikov as a respected colleague, knowledgeable lecturer, dedicated researcher, and valued clergyman. I wish him good health, success in this competition, and continued achievements in theological science.

Conclusion

The documents and materials are presented by Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (RASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Implementation of the Law on Academic Staff and the relevant Regulations of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski".

The candidate has submitted a substantial number of scientific papers, all published after his Doctor of Sciences defense. Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Chilikov's research includes original scientific and applied contributions recognized both in Bulgaria and internationally, with some works published by international academic publishers. His theoretical work is notable for its practical applicability, and much of his research can be used in teaching. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc is unquestionable. His achievements in teaching and research far exceed the minimum national requirements.

After thoroughly reviewing the materials and scientific papers submitted by Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc, and considering the significance and value of his scientific and applied contributions, I give my clear positive assessment.

Based on the above, I strongly recommend that the Scientific Jury prepare a report to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History, proposing the election of Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Iliev Chilikov, DSc, to the academic position of Professor at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" in the field of Humanities, professional field 2.4 Religion and Theology (Patrology and Dogmatic Theology).

22.02. 2026

Reviewer:

(Prof. DSc. Klara Toneva)

