

## OPINION

**on the submitted works**  
**for participation in a competition for the academic position of PROFESSOR in professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (History of Religion), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in SJ, issue 63 of July 30, 2021**

**Reviewer:** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marian Bogoev Stoyadinov – 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 38-450 / 17.09.2021 of the Rector of Sofia University.

**Candidate:** Associate Professor **Clara Asenova Toneva** 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 Clara Toneva presented 2 monographs, 4 studies, 16 articles (5 of which in English) and 2 textbooks, or a total of 24 titles. Other documents were presented (*Rector's Award for Young Scientist for 2005, certificate from Sofia University for academic positions, reference for classroom employment, official notes for participation in 6 projects, official note for part-time lecturer at the Military Academy, reference for scientific manuals of undergraduates and doctoral students*), supporting the achievements of the candidate.

The attached documents certify the necessary practical and academic achievements of Clara Toneva in the field of the *History of Religions* in particular and in *Systematic Theology* in general.

#### 2. Candidate data

Clara Toneva obtained a master's degree in theology at the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 1995. She defended his doctoral dissertation on "The position of the Muslim woman as a modern challenge for Islam" in 2004. She habilitated in the field of 2.4. Religion and Theology (History of Religions) and is Associate Professor of the History of Religions in the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University since 2012.

Since 2006 till 2017, Assoc. Prof. Toneva was the scientific supervisor of 14 graduates. Associate Professor Toneva is the doctoral supervisor of eight PhD students, three of whom have already defended their dissertations (in 2014, 2017 and 2021), and one is in the process of defense.

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

The candidate's scientific papers presented for evaluation were published in the period 2004-2021. Central to them are the monograph *Secularized Religiosity* (2018) and the studies *The Muslim as a Subject of Islamic Morality and Worldview* (2010); *Archimandrite Prof. Dr. Evtimiy (Sapundzhiev) - the founder of the discipline History of Religions in Bulgarian Theology* (2020), which are directly related to the *History of Religions*.

In summary, with regard to the publications submitted for participation in the competition for a Professor in 2.4. Religion and theology (History of Religions) we can say the following:

- a) The scientific works meet the minimum national requirements (Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of ZRASRB) and respectively the additional requirements of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for holding the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific field of Humanities and professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology. The two textbooks on Dogmatic Theology from 2007 (*Introduction to Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* and *Appendix to Introduction to Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*) and the 2008 monograph *The Church – Community of Love* cannot be attributed to the *History of Religions*;
- b) The scientific papers submitted by the candidate don't repeat those of previous procedures for acquiring a scientific title and academic position;
- 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 educational and pedagogical activity of Assoc. Prof. Toneva at the Faculty of Theology is summarized in the report on her classroom employment during the last two academic years. In the faculty he gives lectures on the following disciplines: *History of Religions*; *History of Monotheistic Religions*; *Religion and extremism*; *Non-Christian Religious Reachings*; *Islamic Philosophy*; *Islam – Founding Texts, Theology and Cult*. At the same time – since 2017 till 2021 Assoc. Prof. Toneva is a part-time lecturer at the Military Academy "G. S. Rakovski" in disciplines that are directly related to the *History of Religions*. From the presented evidences is clear that the teaching activity of the candidate is at the level expected for her academic position.

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

Contributions in several areas can be commented on. First of all, I would like to highlight the development of the discipline History of Religions at the Faculty of Theology, as well as the development of the potentials contained in it to a wider audience. If the *History of Religions* was in the "shadow" of *Christian apologetics* for decades, now, in the person of Assoc. Prof. Toneva as a holder, the discipline acquires a clearer profile. Is is demonstrated in to the monograph *Secularized Religiosity* (2018). Moreover, in this work the History of Religions

corresponds to the Sociology of Religions. This interdisciplinarity in methodology is a well-chosen optics for the analysis of contemporary challenges facing the Church and society.

Secondly, I would highlight the scientific approach to traditional religions through dialogue in research; setting clear boundaries; building respect for other people's religious tradition, without harming other people's religious feelings, but also without deviating from one's own faith. Studies and articles dedicated to Islam build on the foundation laid by the doctoral dissertation and previous monographs of Assoc. Prof. Toneva.

Thirdly, I would like to highlight the experience of the candidate in the field work to protect our country from radicalization on religious grounds. Her teaching engagements at the Military Academy, as well as her publications in this field, are a consequence of this experience.

The citations to date are 62. The latter is a very good attestation for the recognition of Assoc. Prof. Toneva in our academic context and an indirect assessment of the quality of her scientific output.

## **6. Critical remarks and recommendations**

In connection with the above, it would be good for Assoc. Prof. Toneva to attach a reference to her “visibility” in international databases of scientific products. A reference to the h-index (from Google Scholar) would be helpful as well. The field in which she works is extremely relevant in the international academic discourse and I appreciate the lack of such data as an omission. However, given the qualities of Assoc. Prof. Toneva, I believe that this shortcoming can be overcome in the foreseeable future.

## **7. Personal impressions of the candidate**

I know Clara Toneva as a loyal and conscientious scholar, as a colleague with worthy achievements in the field of the *History of Religions*. I have sincere respect for her ability to contextualize historical data in the contemporary life, social, ecclesiastical, and academic situation. I consider her participation in this competition to be natural, given the numerous scientific achievements by which she has established herself as a successor to the work of Prof. Archim. Evtimiy Sapundzhiev in Alma Mater.

## **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 “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 body of the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” to elect **Clara Asenova Toneva** for the academic position of “Professor” in the professional field 2.4. Religion and theology (History of Religion).

Jury member:: .....

(Assoc. Prof. Mariyan Stoydinov PhD)

01.12.2021