

STATEMENT

from

Assoc. Prof. Kostadin Kirilov Nushev, PhD

**For dissertation work for a scientific degree "Doctor of Science" on
professional field 2.4. "Religion and Theology"**

of Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva

**Dissertation on the topic: "The doctrinal confrontation between Christianity
and Islam (according to Heresy 101 of St. John Damascene)"**

The scientific dissertation work of Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva, presented for defense of doctoral thesis, covers of 453 standard pages, which in terms of structure and composition consists of a Preface, an Introduction, seven separate chapters dedicated to the different components of the topic with scientific conclusions about each of the researched problems, Conclusion and list of used literature. The scientific theologian and systematic study is structured within the established form for a dissertation and monograph with the relevant parts, elements and attributes , which fully meets the requirements of the Law and the regulations for dissertation research and scientific monographic work.

The dissertation is dedicated to a topical problem for Bulgarian theological science, which covers a historical, systematic and comparative survey and critical study of the doctrinal similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam. The subject matter of the presented monograph is timely and fills an important gap in our theological and religious scholarly literature due to its comprehensive scope and critical focus on the distinctions and differences in the doctrinal systems of Christianity and Islam. The problem-subject area of research of the dissertation covers the relationship and differences between the religious teachings and practices of the two great monotheistic religions - Christianity and Islam, with an emphasis on the theological - doctrinal differences in religious and moral-practical terms.

A valuable contributing point of the scientific research in terms of content is the combination of patristic and historical-dogmatic questions of faith with the specific ecclesiastical-theological approach of the Orthodox teaching of the Church, the religious-historical perspective and the modern scientific-critical analysis. These fundamental theological methodological principles are presented through the scientific analysis and overview of the early theological critical reviews and theological reflections on Islam in the theological - dogmatic and heresiological works of St. John Damascene and the subsequent Byzantine cultural-historical tradition of the Church. The presented work combines historical-critical and theological-systematic methods and approaches to outline the similarities and differences between the faith and the doctrinal system of the two great monotheistic religions, following the theological discussion on the subject over the centuries from the time of St. John Damascene and the early church theological-dogmatic reflection on the origin and doctrine of Islam as a religious system, which presents certain deviations from the basic truths of the Christian creed and the teachings of the Universal Church. In her research, Prof. Clara Toneva deepens her previous scientific research and builds on the theological-systematic research achieved through this on the history and contemporary state of the relationship between Christianity and the Islamic religious tradition. There is a serious, mature and well-systematized scholarly-theological study that has been conducted within a well-thought-out research plan, conceptual framework, and rigorous scientific methodology. The study moves in the methodological and research field of the History of Religions, but also includes many contemporary approaches of comparative theology and comparative religious studies . A serious volume of source and scientific literature on the topic of the dissertation research was used, and there are serious results and contributing moments and achievements, as well as delineating new horizons for future scientific research. The scientific research includes more important and basic scientific works of Bulgarian theologians and Islamologists , Arabists and historians of religion, as well as contemporary topical studies of foreign authors and researchers from various academic schools and scientific traditions.

Prof. Klara Toneva's monographic study is a well-structured theological-systematic dissertation work with a markedly critical analysis of the more important doctrinal aspects of Christianity and Islam, which gives due credit and builds on the previous achievements in Bulgarian theological science, while also being based on the achievements of the modern critical view and scholarly reading of many current problems of comparative religion and interreligious dialogue. The conclusions and contributions of the scientific monographic work testify to the seriousness and maturity of the research, to a deep and comprehensive scientific interest, a systematic approach to the topic and the adequacy of the obtained results. This work will be a valuable study aid for students of the majors "Theology" and "Religion in Europe", for students of the master's degree of study and for teachers of Religion in deepening and expanding their qualification in the field of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, History of Religions , Comparative Religious Studies and Religious Pedagogy.

Based on the mentioned merits, results and contribution moments of the scientific research, I evaluate the proposed monographic work of Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva as a successfully completed independent dissertation research work, which contains significant scientific contributions and meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff and of the regulations for its application. I give a positive assessment in a defense procedure and I support with a positive vote as a member of the scientific jury the proposal for awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Theological Sciences" in professional field 2.4. Religion and theology of Prof. Dr. Klara Toneva.

16.01.2023

Assoc. Dr. K. Nushev