

ASSESSMENT

of

ASSOC. PROF. KLARA ASENOVA TONEVA'S APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AS PROFESSOR IN THE PROFESSIONAL FIELD 2.4. RELIGION AND THEOLOGY (HISTORY OF RELIGIONS)

State Gazette № 63/27.07.2021 г., for the needs of the Faculty of Theology,
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Department of Systematic Theology
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Information and Documentation under Article 2b, para. 2 of the Act of development
of academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria under № 13130

As chairman of the academic jury, I have the honour and pleasure to introduce the candidate and present the details of the procedure. The research and teaching activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Assenova Toneva at the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" began twenty years ago – in 2002, when she became a part-time assistant in the Department of Systematic and Practical Theology and a full-time doctoral student of the History of Religions. After defending her dissertation in 2004, she was elected as assistant in the same department, and in 2012 she was elected as an associate professor. Her research work in recent years has resulted in 74 publications, of which 4 monographs, as well as 5 tutorials and 2 textbooks (co-authored). Assoc. Prof. Toneva has participated in 9 projects, 2 of which are international. She has supervised 14 masters and 8 doctoral students and has led 13 university lecture courses on the subject of the competition. The current procedure for professor was initiated by order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" № RD 38-450 / 17.09.2021 at the proposal of the Faculty of Theology (Minutes № 1 / 8.09.2021) for the needs of the now independent Department of Systematic Theology. The order determines the parameters of the procedure and the members of the academic jury. At its first meeting, the latter elected Prof. Ivan Christov as its chairman, and Prof. Nina Dimitrova, Prof. Valentin Kanavrov and Prof. Svetoslav Ribolov as its reviewers. The other members were asked to draw up written

observations. The deadline for submitting reviews and assessments was set for October 6, 2021, and the date for the final meeting was set for February 13, 2022. All deadlines for this decision have been met. Under the same protocol, the academic jury determined that the only candidate, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Assenova Toneva, meets all the necessary requirements. The reference presented by her for the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements is 1306 points in the professional field, as the main part of the publications are on the History of Religions or are interdisciplinary with an emphasis on this issue. Taking into account the presented evidence, the scientific jury admitted the evaluation of the scientific production presented by Assoc. Prof. Toneva in the competition for the academic position “Professor”, in the professional field: 2.4. Religion and Theology (History of Religions).

Assoc. Prof. Toneva participates in the competition with two monographs, four studies, sixteen articles and two textbooks. The main work for her participation in the competition is the monograph “Secularized Religiosity”, University Publishing House “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Sofia, 2018, 208 pages, ISBN: 978-954-07-4399-8. The work was discussed by the Department of Historical and Systematic Theology (Minutes № 5 / 16.01.2018) with the participation of five professors, including two full professors, and was given a positive assessment. The monograph is original and has a contributing character. It consists of a preface, an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The author clearly outlines the continuity of her work with the Bulgarian theology of previous generations and points out her original contribution. The book rethinks and complements its achievements towards the perspective of the concept of Religious Secularization introduced by Radovan Bigovich.

The first chapter, “The Ungodliness of the Secular World”, discusses the concept of Secularized Religiosity. Basic formulations from Archim. Evtimiy Sapundzhiev’s research were used, and have been updated in the light of modern Orthodox theology and the challenges of modernity.

The second chapter, “Secularism as a New Type of Religiosity”, examines the main forms of secularized religiosity. These are, firstly, the modern secularized state as an object of deification, secondly, secularized nationalism, perverting the Church's position, third, the absolutization of science, fourth, psychoanalysis as a messianic

religious movement that reduces pastoral care to psychotherapy, and fifth, Marxism, which in a paradoxical way, regardless of its atheistic nature, has become a secular religion of the Man-God.

The third chapter, “Secularization – A Door to Religious Radicalization”, is devoted to religious (Islamic and Christian) fundamentalism. Their intersections, common themes and goals, as well as their consolidation in the face of the threat they see in secularism have been outlined. The answer to this consolidation, in the face of secular fundamentalism, has also been considered. The author conditionally reduces religious fundamentalism to the reaction of individuals or groups of individuals who abuse religion. Of particular interest is the study of the radicalization of young Muslims and Christians in Bulgaria.

The fourth chapter, “The Church's Response: Service and Education”, examines Orthodox identity, the Christ-centered principles of the Orthodox faith, and the most essential features of the Orthodox mission. On this basis, the practices of the secular society, which tend to look for the weaknesses of the Church, are opposed. The role of religious education and the example of the Christian life have also been considered here.

In the book, the author expresses her confessional commitment and distinguishes herself from the expanding university religious studies.

The rest of the presented scientific production of the candidate includes not only studies and articles dedicated to the topic of the competition, but also to problems of Sociology of Religion, Dogmatics and Ecclesiology. However, the former are significantly predominant, as well as those that are interdisciplinary with an emphasis on the subject of the competition. In them the candidate shows depth and erudition. What has been said so far characterizes Assoc. Prof. Toneva as an established specialist in her field.

As the head of the Department of Systematic Theology, for which the competition was announced, I am pleased that we have a worthy candidate who will be able to contribute to the establishment of the new specialty “Religion in Europe”, where the department plays a key role.

Last but not least, I am proud that the first professorship of a woman in

Theology in Bulgaria is held in our department.

I declare that we have no joint activities and co-authorship with Assoc. Prof. Klara Toneva and we do not fall under the hypotheses of the normative documents defining conflict of interest.

In view of the above and in connection with Art. 111 para. (2) of PURPNSZADSU, I submit my positive assessment and recommend to the esteemed members of the Academic Jury to promote the election of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Klara Assenova Toneva for the academic position Professor in the professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (History of Religions).

06.12.2021 г.

(Prof. Ivan Christov, PhD)