

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Adriana Hristoslavova Lyubenova, PhD

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regarding the materials submitted for participation in a competition

for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor

in Field of Higher Education 2. Humanities

Professional Field 2.4. Religion and Theology (New Testament)

In the competition for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette, issue 96 of 11 November 2025, and published on the website of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, for the needs of the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, the sole candidate is Assistant Professor Eva Krasteva Kovacheva, PhD, of the same Department. By Order RD-22-36 of 9 January 2026, I have been appointed a member of the Scientific Jury for this competition and, in accordance with the decision of the Jury (Minutes No. 1 of 16-19 January 2026), I submit the following opinion for consideration:

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

The candidate participates in the competition with a total of 58 scholarly works published after the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” and not utilised in prior procedures—namely, one monograph, ten studies, and forty-seven articles. A number of these publications have been presented at international scholarly forums; one article is indexed in Web of Science; and a substantial body of her work has appeared in peer-reviewed academic outlets and thematic edited volumes. Overall, the submitted scholarly output considerably exceeds the minimum national requirements for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor.

Dr Kovacheva's professional development within the Department of Theology has been consistent and sustainable. Her academic training, grounded in theological studies in Sofia and further strengthened through doctoral specialisation in Marburg, is evident both in the maturity of her research and in her assured engagement with primary sources. Her habilitation constitutes a natural stage in this trajectory and corresponds to the substantive needs of the Professional Field.

2. General characteristics of the candidate's activity

Assessment of teaching activity and academic preparation

Assistant Professor Kovacheva teaches core disciplines in New Testament studies, including Introduction to and Exegesis of the New Testament, the Acts of the Holy Apostles, and Early Christianity, as well as specialised Master's-level courses. In this way, she carries a substantial share of the foundational training of students within the programme.

Her teaching is characterised by clear structure, a strong bibliographical foundation, and a sustained effort to integrate the classical Orthodox exegetical tradition with contemporary scholarly approaches. Her work with students is systematic and conscientious; she supervises degree dissertations and contributes actively to the development of course content.

Equally significant is her organisational and editorial work. Her involvement in the organisation of scholarly events and in the preparation of edited volumes demonstrates an active presence in academic life and a well-developed sense of institutional responsibility.

Assessment of research and research-applied activity

The monograph submitted as the habilitation work is devoted to an analysis of the New Testament notions of "carnal", "soulish", and "spiritual" Christians in the apostolic epistles, examined in the context of the theme of the union of the soul with God. The study covers a broad range of biblical texts and places them in dialogue with the patristic tradition as well as with contemporary academic literature. The work displays systematic argumentation, a capacity for synthesis, and confidence in exegetical analysis. It is supported by a substantial source base and demonstrates competent engagement with texts in multiple languages.

The candidate's studies and articles develop this thematic line in a coherent manner. Some focus on the exegesis of specific New Testament passages; others explore symbolism and spiritual dynamics within biblical texts; and further contributions address

the role of women in early Christianity or examine apocryphal and lesser-known sources. Particularly noteworthy are the publications involving the translation and analysis of New Testament pseudepigrapha, which attest to rigorous textual training and the ability to work directly with primary materials.

In thematic terms, Dr Kovacheva's scholarly output is focused and coherent. Rather than dispersing her research efforts, she advances a clearly defined problem-field within New Testament anthropology and spiritual exegesis in a sustained and cumulative way.

Assessment of the candidate's personal contribution

The submitted works are independently authored and bear a recognisable scholarly voice. They demonstrate a commitment to close textual analysis and to integrating exegetical work with a theological perspective. There is clear continuity in the candidate's research trajectory, together with a gradual expansion of thematic scope.

The results achieved in both research and teaching indicate a mature scholar and university lecturer with a well-defined professional profile.

3. Critical remarks and recommendations

I would recommend that a greater proportion of Dr Kovacheva's future publications be directed towards internationally indexed and more widely recognised specialist journals. Over 40% of her publications have appeared in "Misal, Slovo, Tekst", which, while valuable within the local scholarly context, suggests the need for a stronger international dissemination strategy. Given the thematic focus and methodological preparation evident in her work, the candidate has clear potential for a more visible presence in the broader international academic environment.

Conclusion

Having carefully reviewed the submitted materials and scholarly works, and having assessed their significance and scholarly contributions, I provide a positive evaluation.

I consider that Assistant Professor Eva Krasteva Kovacheva, PhD, meets the requirements for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 2.4. Religion and Theology (New Testament). **I therefore submit a positive evaluation** and propose that the Scientific Jury prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History at Paisii Hilendarski University

of Plovdiv recommending the appointment of Assistant Professor Eva Krasteva Kovacheva, PhD, to the academic position of Associate Professor in the scientific specialty New Testament, Professional Field 2.4. Religion and Theology, Field of Higher Education 2. Humanities.

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Prepared by:

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