

## REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Emil Traychev Stoyanov – Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“

of the materials submitted for participation in a competition  
for the academic position of „**associate professor**“  
at Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“,

in: field of higher education 2. Humanities,  
professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (New Testament)

In the competition for „associate professor“, announced in the State Gazette, issue 96 of 11.11.2025, and on the website of Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“ for the needs of the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, the candidate is Head Assistant Dr. Eva Krasteva Kovacheva from Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“.

### 1. General presentation of the received materials

By order № PD-22-36 of 09.01.2026 of the rector of Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“ (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury in a competition for the academic position of „**associate professor**“ at PU in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (New Testament), announced for the needs of the Chair of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History.

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition: Head Asst. Dr. Eva Krasteva Kovacheva from Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“.

The candidate presented by the Head Asst. Dr. Eva Krasteva Kovacheva a set of materials on an electronic medium is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv and includes the following documents:

- Administrative documents
- Monograph
- Studies and articles
- Compilation of collections

The candidate, Head Asst. Dr. Eva Krasteva Kovacheva has applied a total of 66 scientific works, 2 monographs, 12 studies, 51 articles, and 1 study outside the category of the announced competition. 58 scientific works that are outside the dissertation are accepted for review and are taken into account in the final assessment. 7 scientific works on the dissertation and 1 study outside the issues of the competition are not reviewed. The distribution of scientific works, in the country and abroad, is as follows: 60 in Bulgarian, 2 in English and 2 in German. A list of citations and documents for scientific research work is presented.

## **2. Brief biographical data of the candidate**

Eva Kovacheva received her theological education at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“, Faculty of Theology (1998-2003). In the period 2003-2011 she received her doctorate at Philips-University Marburg in the Department of History of Religions, where in 2011 she defended her doctoral dissertation on „The White Brotherhood of Petar Danov. Origin, History and Teaching“. From 2012 to 2013 she was a part-time assistant, from 2013 to 2020 – assistant, and from 2020 – Head Assistant at the University of Plovdiv „Paisiy Hilendarski“. Head. Assist. Prof. Eva Kovacheva is the author of numerous studies and articles devoted to various issues in the field of New Testament Biblical Studies.

## **3. General characteristics of the candidate's activities**

Head Assist. Eva Kovacheva has convincing teaching and research experience. Over the years, she has led lecture courses in both bachelor's and master's programs. At the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, she teaches Introduction and Interpretation of the New Testament, Book of Acts of the Apostles, Heterodox Confessions, Early Christianity 1st-4th centuries, The Doctrine of the Church in the Epistles of St. Apostle Paul and the Kingdom of God in the Gospels. Head. Assist. Kovacheva is the author of a number of articles and studies devoted to various aspects of New Testament Biblical Studies. She supervises graduate students, organizes conferences, participates in projects and the compilation and publication of scientific collections, etc. Eva Kovacheva's successful professional realization is a kind of attestation for the quality of her teaching work and her research abilities.

As a kind of habilitation work, Eva Kovacheva presents for the competition the monograph „FLESHLY“, „SOULFUL“ AND „SPIRITUAL“ CHRISTIANS ACCORDING TO THE EPISTLES OF THE HOLY APOSTLES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TOPIC OF THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH GOD (Plovdiv: University Publishing House „Paisiy

Hilendarski“, 2025, – 370 pp.). The study is dedicated to the definitions of „fleshly“, „soulful“ and „spiritual“ (σαρκικοί, ψυχικοί, πνευματικοί) Christians, as they are found in the conciliar epistles and the epistles of St. Apostle Paul in the context of the union of the soul with God. The topic is vast and involves practically all significant sources from different eras (the Old Testament, rabbinic literature, mystery cults and Gnosticism), which largely determined the intellectual life of the respective time and were of decisive importance for the formation of the theoretical basis. The developments of this intertwined and ambiguous confrontation, in which, together with purely intellectual arguments, the reception of the concepts in question in the patristic literature plays an inconsiderable role, are described in detail on the basis of rich source material. The aim is for justification and precision in the exposition, as well as for the author’s unprejudiced view. The facts are left to speak for themselves, without being forced in the name of some pre-set concept, and the interpretative intervention only delicately suggests their semantic interrelation. In the words of the author, the monograph „is the fruit and result of gradual and long-term work, through which he arrives in a constructive way at its ideological and thematic content and preparation“. And yet, it seems to me that the goals and objectives declared in this way are subject to additional clarification, especially since the sources used offer a much wider spectrum of solutions, largely related to the search for conformity with the biblical way of thinking. By the way, one of the merits of the text is its openness, the hidden potential for developing specific topics, for which the monograph represents a reliable basis. I really want to hope that Eva Kovacheva will continue and deepen her interpretation of this important issue in New Testament biblical studies.

The studies and articles submitted for participation in the competition are additional evidence of the candidate’s research work. Kovacheva has found a successful way to focus and structure the materials written in different years and on different occasions. Many of these works have been presented and discussed in prestigious scientific forums. They have been reviewed and cited in authoritative scientific publications.

The noted citations are also a testimony and assessment of the candidate’s scientific works, as well as their recognition among scientific circles in our country and abroad.

#### **4. Assessment of the candidate’s personal contribution**

The substantive analysis of the main scientific, applied science and methodological contributions of the presented monograph and publications shows a good knowledge of the main achievements of the scientific tradition and highlighting the problem areas outlined in

Bulgarian biblical studies in recent years. Kovacheva's scientific production is a further development and at the same time a deepening of certain shared themes and problems. This outlines new perspectives for the development of current aspects of already existing scientific fields, theories and hypotheses.

## 5. Critical remarks and recommendations

I believe that cited authors such as Kenneth Hagin (*How You Can Be Led by the Spirit of God*, 2005), W. Nee (*Der geistliche Christ*, 2013), Stanley Bruce Anstey (*Zwölf Menschen in den Schriften des Paulus. Bedeutung und Anwendung einiger lehrmäßiger Ausdrücke von Paulus*, 2023), as well as representatives of movements such as the Plymouth Brethren, Methodists, etc., in many respects stand on the periphery of specialized New Testament biblical studies, regardless of their popularity in our country and elsewhere.

It should be noted that the texts of the Old Testament testify to a peculiar, but not fully developed anthropology. The terms of modern and ancient Greek anthropology do not have suitable equivalents in the language of the ancient Semites (Israelites). It is even more important to emphasize that the very approach to the problems of human existence is special and significantly differs from modern and previous ancient Greek approaches. And this is because the understanding of man in the Old Testament is based on biblical ontology. A key detail for Old Testament anthropology is that man is not conceived as an independent being, separate from God and the rest of creation, as a being „in itself“, but in a constant relationship with someone, God or creation, always present relationship and movement. Man by himself, separate, detached – is not man. He is not man if he does not have a relationship with someone, first of all with God and his neighbor. At every moment man must choose: „...they have chosen“ (Isa. 66:3), „it is up to you to choose,“ (Job 34:33). The choice is offered by God himself: „I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life...“ (Deut. 30:19). Moreover, in the Old Testament there is no description or sketch of the ideal man, although the perfection of man and his ascent to God is the main idea of the biblical tradition.

The Old Testament often speaks of man using concepts such as: *נֶפֶשׁ בָּשָׂר* and *רוּחַ*. They refer, in essence, directly to man himself. These are major anthropological concepts that define the nature of the human being, including, of course, the understanding of the emergence, i.e. the creation of man, in the perspective of the biblical tradition. However, in the Old Testament texts it is nowhere said that man has *נֶפֶשׁ* (soul), *רוּחַ* (spirit) and *בָּשָׂר* (body), and nowhere are these concepts considered as different components of the human being. Although they

sometimes occur close to each other, even in the same verse (Job 13:14; 14:22; Ps. 62:2; 83:3), they do not designate one part of man in comparison with the others, this is not a substantial opposition. In practice, it is a completely different parallelism, in which man is presented exclusively in his unity, but from different sides. In this way, the human being is considered as a psychophysical whole and Holy Scripture excludes any possibility of anthropological dichotomy or trichotomy. Man is perceived in his single and complete being, the image of God, united in all respects, as נִפְשׁוֹ, רִוּחַ or בְּשָׂרׁ as a unique person, endowed by God with life. Holy Scripture testifies that man is a godlike being. The image of God in man is concluded above all in the freedom of man, i.e. in the free, personal way of existence. The New Testament writers remain completely faithful to the Old Testament view of man. Of course, unlike the Old Testament writers, they see man in the perspective of Christ. Thus, the concepts ψυχή, πνεῦμα, σῶμα, σάρξ, καρδία, νοῦς are only different dimensions of the human being. This is especially noticeable in St. Apostle Paul. In 1 Thess. 5:23 the apostle says: „your whole being – spirit (πνεῦμα), soul (ψυχή) and body (σῶμα)“. Like the Old Testament writers, he does not speak of the person in himself, but of the whole person („your whole being“), considered from different sides. And not only in this verse, but in his entire theological outlook, St. Apostle Paul, like the other New Testament writers, remains faithful to the Old Testament tradition. The same can be said about the later patristic thought (see Kubat, R. ОСНОВЕ СТАРОСАВЕЗНЕ АНТРОПОЛОГИЈЕ, 2008; Јевтић, А. Духовни живот видјен из перспективе антропологије, 1993 and Прологомена за исихастичку гносеологију, 1990; Wolff, H. W. Anthropologie des Alten Testaments, 19732; Gundry, R. H. Soma in biblical theology, with emphasis on Pauline anthropology, 1976, Kesich, V. The First Day of the New Creation: The Resurrection and Christian Faith, 1982, etc.).

Moreover, in the title of the monograph, as well as in its content, there seems to be a distant resemblance to the teachings of the Roman Gnostic Platonist Valentinus. A characteristic feature of his teachings is the fascination with triads. The trinity is traced at all levels: the three „gods“ (supreme deity, demiurge and devil) correspond at the anthropological level to the triad of spirit, soul and body. In cosmology, three „worlds“ are also distinguished: ogdoada – the higher spheres subject to the supreme deity; hebdomada – the kingdom of Yahweh and, finally, the earth, under the jurisdiction of the devil „prince of this world“. In history, the trinity is manifested in the fact that all people are divided into categories depending on their origin. That is, humanity is not homogeneous. The difference between these three categories lies in the fact that some people („σαρκικοί“) are completely subordinate to the

corporeal, material nature, others („ψυχικοί“) have a body and soul, and still others („πνευματικοί“), in addition to body and soul, also have a spirit. The descendants of Seth constitute a kind of elite, to which the followers of Valentine consider themselves. Only those who possess the spirit (πνευματικοί) can be saved. Sometimes the Gnostics call Christians „soulful“ (ψυχικοί).

## **6. Personal Impressions**

As for my personal impressions of the candidate, I must note the ease of communication with Head Assist. Kovacheva, an ease due primarily to her ability, while upholding her views and positions in principle, to respect and value the achievements of her colleagues – a virtue not particularly common in our circles. Unfortunately, I have only cursory direct impressions of her teaching activities. But these relatively scarce impressions of mine are fully confirmed by the assessments of her colleagues and students about the thoroughness and seriousness with which she treats the tasks assigned to her.

## **CONCLUSION**

The documents and materials presented by Head Assist. Dr. Eva Krasteva Kovacheva meet all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (AADRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the AADRB and the relevant Regulations of the Paisii Hilendarski University.

The candidate in the competition has presented a significant number of scientific works published after the materials used in the defense of the Educational and Scientific Degree „doctor“. The candidate's works contain original scientific contributions that have received international recognition, with a representative part of them being published in journals and in scientific collections issued by international academic publishing houses. His theoretical developments have practical applicability, with some of them being directly oriented towards academic work. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Head Assistant Dr. Eva Krasteva Kovacheva are unquestionable.

The results achieved by Head Assistant Dr. Eva Krasteva Kovacheva in academic and research activities fully comply with the minimum national requirements.

After familiarizing myself with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition and with a view to analyzing their significance and the scientific and applied contributions contained therein, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and to

recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History for the election of Head Assistant Dr. Eva Krasteva Kovacheva to the academic position of „Associate Professor“ at the „Paisiy Hilendarski“ University of Plovdiv in: field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (New Testament).

21.02. 2026

Reviewer:

(signature)

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