

## REVIEW

By **Prof. Klara Asenova Toneva, DSc**

of the dissertation of

**Krasimir Nikolov Ivanov**

PhD student at the Department of "Practical Theology" at the Faculty of Theology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

On the topic: "**Pastoral care for families in psycho-social therapy of addictions**"  
To obtain the PhD in Professional Field 2.4. " Religion and Theology", PhD program  
"Theology" – "Pastoral Psychology"

This review was prepared and presented after a decision of the Faculty Council of the Theological Faculty on 19. 01. 2023, № 5 and subsequent Order of the Rector № RD 38-51/27.01 of 2023 and on the basis of Minutes №1 of a meeting of the scientific jury of 09.02.2023.

At the first meeting the scientific jury was present by the following staff: Prof. Klara Toneva, DSc, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Archpriest Ivan Ivanov and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Priest Stoyan Chilikov. Prof. Dr. Priest Lyudmil Malev and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Priest Theodor Stoychev participated via conference call. The jury found that the procedure was organized in compliance with all legal requirements. After discussions Assoc. Prof. Dr. Archpriest Ivan Ivanov was elected chairman and Prof. Klara Toneva, DSc and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Priest Stoyan Chilikov were elected for reviewers. The other members were tasked with preparing written opinions. The deadline for submission of reviews and opinions was set for 27 April 2023 and the date for an open meeting of the scientific jury and public defense – May 12, 2023 at 1 pm. Administrative Secretary is Mr. Ivaylo Nachev. All deadlines for the procedure have been met.

### **Information about the PhD student and the Ph.D.:**

Krasimir Nikolov Ivanov graduated with Bachelor's degree in 2005 completing the program of Psychology at New Bulgarian University. In 2016 he received his Master's degree in "Faith and Life" from the Department of Theology at New Bulgarian University. From 2019 till 2022, Krasimir Nikolov Ivanov was a PhD student at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". His dissertation

work was on the topic: "Pastoral care for families in psycho-social therapy of addictions" supervised by Assoc. Prof. Ivo Yanev, PhD. Ivanov successfully completed his individual plan and has been deducted with the right of defense.

### **Dissertation and Abstract data:**

The dissertation topic is relevant, useful and beneficial for the field. Not only does it imply, but also requires in-depth theological knowledge: a serious training in the field of Pastoral Theology in particular, as well as knowledge in the field of Dogmatic Theology and Psychology of Religion. An accurate theological language and a rich bibliographic awareness are required.

The peer-reviewed work is a volume of 179 non-standard pages, which include: Preface, List of abbreviations, Introduction, three chapters, Conclusion, Annexes and Literature used. The scientific and textual apparatus contains 382 footnotes with attached literary sources in Bulgarian and a few in English. The survey of the literature used is an indicator of a good level of critical reading.

**The Abstract** partially meets the requirements; For example, there is no place for the contributions to the individual chapters, the conclusion is too voluminous (relative to the other parts), etc. In general, the main problem-research cores in the individual chapters are distinguished; the research references and the author's publications are indicated.

In the **Preface** Krasimir Ivanov explains his choice on the topic as following: "The reasons for writing this study are directly related to my professional experience in the field of psycho-social rehabilitation of addicts and their families" (p.4). He frames the contributions of the dissertation in three aspects.

**The Introduction**, as an important part of the dissertation, largely reveals what the final result will be; the structure of the introduction is relatively good: it gives an overall characteristic of the dissertation work, and it justifies the relevance of the topic.

Krasimir Ivanov has reviewed some of the major studies on the issues, bringing them under the rubric "A brief retrospective on the topic". As I will mention later, there are missing major works; Along with the above, it is necessary not only to mention what the authors consider, but how their findings relate to the studied issues.

The PhD student expresses the object-subject part of his work as follows: "**The object** of the study is the pastoral care for families where the dependent member is undergoing therapy in a program of psycho-social rehabilitation...**The subject of the**

**study** is psychosocial rehabilitation as a therapeutic method of addicts."(p. 8). The initial hypothesis of the study is to test whether "Christian care for families in therapy in the context of psychosocial rehabilitation contributes to achieving a deeper and more comprehensive change in the dependent family member based on Christian values and lifestyles..." (p. 8 – 9).

The proposed methodology sounds ambitious and sets big expectations—interview, comparative analysis, synthesis, hermeneutic analysis, and whether and to what extent the PhD student has coped, will become a question in the context of my presentation.

I have no serious remarks about the structure of the study – it is logically grounded and with an old methodology that is traditionally established in the Faculty of Theology.

Chapter **One** - "The Pastor and Pastoral Care of the Family in the Context of the Orthodox Church. The essence of pastoral and pastoral care" is introductory to the main theme. For this purpose, Krasimir Ivanov makes an attempt to justify the understanding that in the Orthodox Church there is no difference between theology and pastorship: theology is a therapeutic science that aims to guide a person on the path of his healing and deification. Pastorship in turn, is a service to God's people. Ivanov also discusses marriage as an institution of the Church, as well as its modern desacralization and the problems that accompany it. Undoubtedly, one of them is when a family member falls under some dependence.

In the **Second chapter** "The teaching of man and his vocation according to the Holy Fathers in relation to the psychosocial therapy of addictions" the author draws his attention to the following more important research subtopics: the Christian doctrine of man is theocentric – man was created in the image of God, strayed from God, redeemed through the sacrifice of the cross of Jesus Christ, and called to be like God. Christian anthropology is based on triadology and Christology, it examines the essence of man in his single nature and in the diversity of created identities. On this basis, Krasimir Ivanov reflects on addiction, defining it as one of the diseases of which man began struggle after the Fall. Therefore, his observation is that addiction also has its spiritual foundations and, accordingly, its spiritual healing.

The **Third chapter** is entitled "Therapy of families in the context of psychosocial therapy of dependent individuals" and examines the topic in the following order: a definition of co-dependence is given and the factors for its development are deduced; the author distinguishes the stages of its formation; indicates what are disorders in case of co-dependence; shares his observations on co-dependents as

parents; offers addiction therapy; focuses on approaches to Christian marriage counseling; discloses the results of interviews with clergy involved in caring for families with similar problems; makes an attempt to analyze the results of interviews and offers a method of spiritual care for families of addicts.

**The conclusion** sounds general and extensive; I recommend revising it by briefly and clearly bringing out what has been achieved in the dissertation study.

**Scientific contributions:**

The author puts it this way:

1. First study in Bulgaria, dedicated to pastoral care for families of addicts;
2. It offers systematic and scientifically based attempt to justify and better understand the need to introduce pastoral care for families of addicts who are in psychosocial therapy;
3. The existing experience in the spiritual care of parents and families of addicts who are in the process of psychosocial therapy as a basis for future development is studied.

With regard to the contributions:

- it is necessary either to write them again or to refine them by clarifying what exactly the doctoral student means and, in fact, what is the real contribution of the research;
- the second and third contributions could be combined;
- on the third — 'basis for future development'...Development of what? it is never clear.

**Publications:** The PhD student applies three publications that are relevant to the topic of the dissertation, one paper "in print" and one publication that is not related to the dissertation research.

**Conclusions and recommendations:**

Krasimir Ivanov did not comply with the recommendations and the remarks made to him during the internal discussion, i.e., the work has not been improved.

The main problematic aspects are as follows:

- it has a compilative character;
- there is no actual research on a scientific problem;

- there is no firm foundation laid by the research of the pastoral approach (with what it complements and how does it influence the other approaches; are they parallel or not, is there an aspect of contiguity which distinguishes the problematic parts and the positive influences etc.);

- In general, the writing has a common character, which tackles the topic superficially;

-there is no theological understanding and depth. The argument that there is no theological tradition in such issues is not enough. Krasimir Ivanov has a Master's degree in Theology and he is also a practicing therapist, which implies that his work is interdisciplinary in nature and that he could contribute to the development of pastoral theology in Bulgaria;

-Insufficient bibliographic awareness.

A few examples:

In the second chapter, the doctrine of man and his vocation according to the Holy Fathers, Krasimir Ivanov devotes only five pages on the question (even though the entire chapter is named so), quoting quote after quote from patristic teachings;

Regarding the work of St. John of Damascus – "An Accurate Exposition of the Orthodox Faith", the PhD student refers to a 2006 edition, while the Bulgarian theological science has a new academic translation in three volumes (edited by Prof. Dr. Iv. Hristov and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svet. Ribolov);

When the author speaks of the God-likeness of man or the sacrament of Marriage, Krasimir Ivanov exhausts the topic in several pages and does not use major publications on the topic (e.g. those of Iv. Panchovski, T. Koev, prot. N. Shivarov, Sl. Valchanov, A. Hubanchev, E. Traychev – specifically from the Bulgarian theological school), instead he only refers to one source (pp. 18, 20-21, 36, 38).

The given examples are small part which shows that Krasimir Ivanov does not know fundamental works of Orthodox theological literature. His gaps of scientific research go beyond theology; e.g. when he mentions pagan traditions, shamanism and the use of psychoactive substances (pp. 46, 49) or when he writes about Islam, there is again a lack of basic research and the names of quoted authors (such as Mircha Eliade, Tsvetan Teofanov among others).

In connection with the previous interviews with clergy, I believe that for one study they are not enough, and hence – scientifically questionable; On what principle are the priests chosen? Do the interviews have a representative character? etc.

The conclusions should be clear and concise; the citation does not comply with the requirements of the BF; The Dissertation is written informally and repeats parts of the main text; The style is not academic, etc.

It pains me to say that I have not read such text in which every sentence has a spelling or punctuation error. I will refrain from further commenting.

At this stage, I do not recommend the publishing of this work. After deepening the theological view, refining the dogmatic expression, enriching the bibliographic references, undergoing serious style editing and mandatory proof reading, the text could be useful.

I have not collaborated on any publications with the PhD student.

**Conclusion:**

The current review is critical, the findings and remarks are well-intentioned. I believe he has worked as best he can.

I would vote positively to award him the scientific degree "doctor", only if during the public defense, Krasimir Ivanov is able to defend his text - substantiated and categorically.

24.04.2023  
Sofia

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