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Religious Self-Identification of Charismatic Churches Believers (On the Material of the Krasnoyarsk Region)

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For today, the Charismatic branch of the modern Russian Protestantism is one of the most dynamically developed religious movements in Russia. In the given article we analyze factors, which form a subjective motivation of the charismatic believers in the process of their religious self-identification. The following research proves that being the main line of the charismatic ideology, priority of the personal religious experience contributes to the integration of believers into a protestant environment without individual's obligatory inclusion into the system of institutionalized religious practices, and satisfies not only religious, but also social demands of the believers.

Keywords: the Charismatic movement, Pentecostalism, Protestantism, Charismatism.

Point

The Charismatic movement (neo-Pentecostalism) appeared in Russia at the end of 1980-s – at the beginning of 1990-s and presently it is characterized as one of the largest and most dynamically developed religious movements in the country. The latest official information, concerning the number of religious organizations, having been registered by the Ministry of Justice, contains the data only for the end of 2005, and according to it, there are 1553 Charismatic organizations of Pentecostalism having been registered in the country, and it allows the confession to take the third place by its numerosity, giving way only to the orthodox and the Islamic organizations. Though, we should bear in mind that the information of the Ministry

of Justice cannot reflex the real confessional situation because of the following reasons. Firstly, the registry of the Ministry of Justice includes only those organizations, which have undergone the registration procedure on their own will in accordance with the active legislation. Thereat, some branches of conservative Pentecostalism are known to be used to avoid registering their affiliations because of religious and ideological reasons, others do not strive for official registration for their small numerosity, or they register just their church only, but omit its branches in other centers of population, which numbers can reach dozens of people. Thus, according to the data, presented by R.N. Lunkin, only one of such unions, which includes as Pentecostals, so Charismatists, contains more than 1700 communities. Another

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union, the Russian Christian Union of Evangelic Faith, unites 1536 churches (Lunkin, 2005). Secondly, it concerns the problem of variety classification of Pentecostal organizations and singling of proper charismatic churches out of them. Up till now, even the followers of these movements themselves cannot clearly separate Charismatism from the environment of Pentecostalism, and that is why, raising the question of qualitative proportions between the classic Pentecostals and the Charimatists, we should allow some conventionality to a certain extend. Moreover, and R.N. Lunkin also underlines the fact that the columns «Churches of Full Gospel», «Evangelical Christians», «Presbyterians» and so on are indicated in separate lines in the register of the Ministry of Justice, and most of these organizations are included into the Charismatic unions, while they rightfully deserve to be referred as to the list of the Pentecostal or of the Charismatic organizations. According to the research, having been carried out by R.N. Lunkin, the real number of Pentecostal and Charismatic organizations in Russia makes up about 4.5 thousand churches and groups, which unite almost 900 thousand believers (Lunkin, 2005).

In the beginning of 1990-s, almost all the Russian confessions experienced a certain growth of their religious organizations' numbers, though today we should admit that «religious boom» had been over to the end of the previous decade. Nevertheless, the official statistics of the Ministry of Justice reveals a continuing tendency of growth precisely of the Charismatic unions: «... The Charismatic churches still have a tendency to growth. The shares of other confessions have not undergone any noticeable changing».

In connection with all the mentioned above, we should underline that this phenomenon still remains under-studied, though the Charismatic movement has been already for twenty years on

the confessional map of Russia. Up till now, the data concerning the Charismatic movement in the native religion study literature is of fragmental and very often of contradictory character.

The steady growth of charismatic churches, significant inflow of youth into the movement, expansion of the churches' social structure and forms of their social activity prove that there are certain significant bases in the given religious phenomenon, which cause not only its growth power, but also, to a certain degree, the Charismatic movement importance in the modern Russian society. Though, the fact, that the time of the Charismatic movement appearance in Russia coincided with the mass «westernization» period, has formed an opinion in our society that Charismatism being foreign for the Russian religious life. The given position is most actively defended by the representatives of the so-called Sectological School of researchers, who consider the movement as one of the new religious cults, which gain their adepts due to various practices of psychological control.

Study of the modern Charismatic churches gives a possibility of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of Charismatism. And according to our hypothesis, the bases of the phenomenon lie in subjective religious experience, which is a consequence of a peculiar interpretation of the reality, and which forms a life style and behavior of the individual or of a group of individuals. To our mind, under conditions of continuing secularization the Charismatic belief experience is precisely that very form of religiosity, which most adequately reflects the development of religion tendencies in the modern world, wherein religiosity becomes more and more individualized.

The carried research of the Krasnoyarsk Region Charismatic churches has revealed that believing Charimatists experience a deep subjective motivation in the process of religious

self-identification, and it gives us a right to assert that the modern Charismatic movement has significant bases, which meet the demands of the Russian. To our opinion, being the main line of the charismatic church ideology, priority of the personal religious experience is the domineering factor, which defines self-identification of its followers. The other factor, providing a steady growth of the Charismatic churches, is specific peculiarities of the Charismatic unions' social organization, which satisfy social demands of various social groups and social strata.

Example

As an object of the scientific study, the Charismatic movement should be approached starting from salvation of the problem of this religious phenomenon's nature and definition of its place within the system of Christianity. Up till now, on this account there has been no any common position in the religious study literature, due to this subject under-development. Hence, in the course of study of the phenomenon «Charismatism», special attention should be paid to specification of the original and the foregoing term «charisma». As a scientific notion, today the word «charisma» is widely used in various spheres of social and humanitarian knowledge, first of all, in psychology and social sciences, in the course of political power and leadership theories development. Though, the notion «charisma» has a direct reference to the subject of the given research only in its original meaning, wherein only its religious content is accentuated.

In the course of all the history of Christianity, «charisma», or its synonym «grace», being most often used in Russian, have been considered to be one of the fundamental bases of the Christian faith. Thereat, there has not been any commonly accepted notion and universal understanding of the considered term among various trends of Christianity. And we prove it by the fact that

there has been a lot of interpretations of the notion «charisma» in Christianity, and consequently a lot of theological conceptions, based on these interpretations. That is why there is a certain difficulty in defining of charisma as an object of religious faith.

Unlike theological interpretations, the first strictly scientific definition of the notion «charisma» was given by M. Weber. And he used it first of all as a substantiation of the charismatic type of political supremacy. But, moreover, M. Weber used the given notion also in creation of the theory of origin of new religions. Though, the notion «charisma», which was suggested by M. Weber, has gone far beyond the borders of the narrow religious discourse. Within the frames of the present research, we are interested in «charisma» as a certain sphere of religious notions of Christianity, and particularly of Protestantism. We are also to clarify, that as an object of scientific research we do not take precisely charisma or grace in that very form, in which it is presented to the religious world outlook, but just notions of it, being fixed in the form of various theological conceptions. Thus, having limited the sphere of definition and study of the given notion, we shall proceed to the discussion of theological theories by means of their retrospective analysis.

As it has been mentioned above, the derivative from «charisma» is the term «charismatism». In comparison with the first one, the definition of charismatism is entirely speculative, as far as it is based on the interpretation of religious notions. That is why, being beyond the borders of the empiric study, charismatism presents by itself an observable phenomenon, referring to the sphere of religious behavior.

In spite of the fact, that the object of the given research is the phenomenon of charismatism in Protestantism, if we want to reach the set goals, we are to address the notion of grace, which has been formed in the course of all the history of

Christianity. First and most significant theological discussions, connected to the usage of the given notion, are referred to IV – V centuries, when the process of formation and dogmatization of the Christian faith was going most intensively. A noticeable part in this process was taken by the Church's consideration of the questions, concerning the God's grace, its content, essence, and its role in salvation, the question of relation between the man's will and the God's grace and so on. Various interpretations of charisma generated a lot of conceptions, which in their turn became a significant, or sometimes, a determining factor in appearance of a lot of not only peripheral, but also main trends of Christianity.

The word «charis» was already used in ancient Greece, and meant a pleasant feeling, being caused by objects or individuals, possessing beauty or other positive qualities. In Latin this word corresponded to the word «gratia». According to Davydenkov, the word «charis» was very close by its meaning to the Greece word «dynameis», which was used in the New Testament, and meant the God's grace as a power, being alive and active, which destination was to confirm the results of atonement in people. (Davydenkov, 2005)

Thus, according to the usage of the word «charisma» in the New Testament texts, its meaning indicates to some metaphysical gift, some grace, which believers receive from God for salvation or for realization of their mission.

Genesis analysis of the God's grace notions lets us see that development of these ideas has gone on in the context of interaction of two oppositional conceptions, which have collided in the questions of interrelation of the man's freedom and the God's grace. Though, the following fact becomes obvious that reconciliation of these positions has been going within the frames of the mystic Christianity, where the notion of charisma has acquired not a theoretical meaning,

but a practical existential experience of belief. These trend peculiarities are in actualization of the spiritual side of the faith, in raising the significance of the charismatic religious experience as a sphere of interaction of the man and the God's grace. The ideas, expressed by the representatives of this group, have more the character of a practical guidance in spiritual life, than a developed system of notions of the God's grace essence and its relation to the man's will. Here, religious experience of the charismatic Christianity is most explicitly expressed.

On the bases of the mentioned religious notions and theological conceptions of charisma, which took place in the history of Christianity, we can come to the conclusion that charisma presents by itself a subjective experience of the religious world outlook, which includes in itself a sensuous-emotional and intellectual components, and is expressed in theological terms and notions.

At the initial stage of the Russian Charismatic development, individual religious experience went along with the extreme mysticism. At the beginning of 90-s, social interest to everything «supernatural», «other-worldly» revealed as a mass phenomenon, and, to a certain degree, it affected the peculiarities of charismatic religiosity of that period.

However, in the process of the charismatic movement development, mystic elements of charismatic movement are gradually fading away, giving the central place to religious feelings and experience, which are being already reviewed not in mystic notions, but in a complex of spiritual-moral, moral-ethical, and sensuous-emotional categories.

On the whole, paying special attention to personal religious experience, as the main line of the Charismatic ideology, is within the frames of general paradigm of Protestantism, where personal belief has a priority in the matter of

salvation. Legitimation of personal religious experience corresponds to religious demands of the modern believer, living in the secularized society. Beyond the institutional separation of religion from various spheres of social life, the process of secularization reveals stronger and stronger expansion of individual religiosity, based on personal religious notions, feelings, and experience. To our mind, the Charismatic ideology, doctrine and practice become a method of institutionalization of personal religious feelings and notions, thus contributing to the process of religious self-identification.

Though, for the process of confirmation it is not enough just to accept and to explain the believer his personal religious experience. In order the neophyte becomes a part of the church, as of a social institution, not only his religious, but also his social demands should be met. In the course of our research, we have found out the factors, providing these conditions in the Charismatic movement.

Firstly, analysis of the social structure of Charismatic unions has proved that there are elements of communal organization of their religious life. Members of the commune have rather close interpersonal contacts. According to the conducted enquiry, the overwhelming majority of the church members, that is about 80 %, communicate with each other personally in the course of a week beyond Sunday services (enquiry materials dated 24.03.09).

We suppose that one of the reasons of formation of successful personal relations among the church people lies in peculiarities of the Protestant world outlook, which is expressed in the principle of overall priesthood. Classic Protestantism, including Charismaticism as well, supposes that every Christian takes part not only in the cult activity, but also performs priest (pastoral) duties towards others. Devotion to the neighbor presupposes mutual help as in spiritual,

so in practical matters and it brings to formation of close personal relations. Cellular structure of the church also contributes to the fact, as far as believers can meet each other in the middle of the week and communicate with each other in a narrow circle of friends. Precisely in home groups and in personal communication people perceive the main ideas and principals of the Charismatic world outlook. Thus, the principle of overall priesthood becomes the cementing factor of inter-church relations, which satisfies the needs of church people as in spiritual communication, so in everyday life matters.

To the opinion of believers, possibility of communication and friendly relationships with church people is one of the main reasons of their systematic church attendance. Charismatists consider the gaining of a circle of contacts to be one of the main merits of their faith.

To our point of view, presence of communal elements in the modern Charismatic churches is relevant to the peculiarities of the Russian society, wherein commune has been natural, and that is why one of the most acceptable forms of social organization in the course of all its history.

The other factor, which has influenced the growth of Charismatic organization members, is a variety of the churches' social structure. There are presented all the age categories in almost equal shares, just with some predominance of middle-aged people – from 25 to 40 years old. Every community has inevitably its own specifics, but generally the picture is one and the same. Among the grown-ups by their occupation there prevail clerks of commercial and budget organizations – 34 %, businessmen – 15 %, students – 15 %, pensioners – 12 %, workers – 11 %, house wives – 4 %, and unemployed people – 1 % (enquiry materials dated 24.03.09).

Formation of heterogeneous social structure of the Charismatic communities is caused by a wide range of specific church groups. There are

groups for businessmen, for people of elderly age, student groups, youth serving, teenage groups, children's Sunday schools, servings for disabled people, and rehabilitation centers for people, suffering from drug/alcohol dependence and former convicts, groups for men and meetings for women. In the variety of represented church servings and home groups, Church people can find circles of contacts, corresponding to their interests and social levels, and this fact also contributes to the formation of close personal relationships.

The third peculiarity, which contributes to the growth of Charismatic movement followers in the modern Russian society, is its flexibility and mobility of the movement in creation of conditions for successful realization of various social groups' demands.

Retaining Charismatic fundamental principals in the questions of their doctrine and moral, Charismatic churches stand out by their ability for quick modernization of the forms of church activity and structure in response to appearance of new social church groups and their new demands. «Jesus Movement» can be an illustrative example, which has appeared in the result of interaction of the Charismatic movement and the subculture of the Hippies.

Ability of Charismatic churches to meet the demands of various social groups is also vividly revealed in the modern youth movement. One of the typical peculiarities of Charismatists' practice is the usage of rock music in their servings. We need to say that rock music sounds in its pure form only in special servings for the youth, while at general meetings, where all the age groups participate, they use calmer styles for «worshipping». Youth meetings are organized at a high emotional degree, what we suppose to be important for the young organism's necessity of splashing out of their excess energy. We are also to take into consideration the Charismatists'

puritan moral, which does not permit sexual contacts before marriage, and it also demands an affective discharge.

Another important demand, being satisfied by the youth in Charismatic organizations, is their creative potential realization. In Charismatic churches, they have a special mechanism for realization of any kinds of creative projects. For example, if in the church there has appeared a group of creative young people, being interested in theatre, then the church can create the conditions for theatrical serving organization, where they could, firstly, practice evangelic activity, and secondly, realize their creative potential. It is important that creative process is considered by the Charismatists as a form of God serving, thus, it acquires an ideological platform.

In one of the Krasnoyarsk Charismatic churches, which is called «Christian Life», there are as many as two musical collectives, a theatrical studio, two dancing groups, which already carry on their concert activity. In 2004, they organized a creative club «Fishka». The main task of the club is: organization of creative mass-entertaining events. The idea is the following: the youth must find not only satisfaction of its religious demands, but also its needs in friendship, communication, and realization of its creative potential within the church community. The club strives for creating an alternative to the modern night clubs, but taking into consideration the Christian moral norms and moral values. Within the frames of the club they organize various youth parties, celebrations, birth days and so on. For example, one of the latest projects was dedicated to Saint Valentine's Day, when they considered an important for the youth topic «love in the modern world» in an informal atmosphere. The Club of the Cheerful and Quick-witted, different talk-shows, rising topical for young people questions, have become creative projects of the youth movement in the «Christian

Life» Church. They regularly organize youth conferences «Rebooting», and invite creative collectives from other regions.

Speaking of social groups as parts of the Charismatic churches of the Krasnoyarsk region, it is important to single out a comparatively broad layer of people, practicing business, and which in average make up 15 % from the total number of believers. Formation of this church layer is caused by general specifics of the Protestantism world outlook, which has been defined by Weber as the work ethics. In the modern Charismatic movement, attitude towards mortal life success has been actualized by the so-called «theology of prosperity», which is directed to prospering in all the life spheres.

The theology of prosperity satisfies people with entrepreneurial type of thinking as an ideological platform of their business activity, becoming an accelerator of believers' entrepreneurial activity. The researchers have shown that more than a half of business men started their business already after they had joined the community.

The theology of prosperity is very often understood in its narrow meaning, solely as a doctrine of financial prosperity. In reality, these ideas are taken by the Charismatists in a wider contest: «By his life, his death and his resurrection Jesus has proved that God wants to save the man in his spirit, in his soul and his body, and that the God's will in that, that every man could have Divine health and Divine prosperity in his life and by means of his faith could be the winner in all the spheres of his life: spiritually, morally, physically, economically, socially...» (interview dated 04.04.09).

We need to say, that during the semi-centenary of its existence in the world and twenty years' period of its development in Russia, the Charismatic movement has undergone a significant evolutionary process from mysticism

to rationalism as in the questions of faith, so in the practical life. This evolutionary process has also involved the ideas of prosperity. If on the initial stage of the movement development prosperity was taken as a gift of the God's grace, which could be gained by means of a prayer, then the modern doctrine of prosperity says that gradual methodical success of the Christian in all the spheres of his mortal life is guaranteed under condition of his life's correspondence to the God's will.

The expected success motivates the believing Charismatists to achievements in various kinds of activities – professional, creative, intellectual, and physical. According to the enquiry data, 78 % of respondents have marked that, as they have come to church they have felt the striving for improving their professional level, and only 20 % of the enquired have had this striving before they have joined Christianity. The overwhelming majority of the respondents have marked their general physical and psychological condition improvement, what being connected as with getting rid of pernicious habits, so with a more positive life attitude, which has been marked almost by all the believers, who have participated in the enquiry. (Enquiry materials dated 24.03.09)

We suppose that the ideas of «the theology of prosperity» perform at least two functions. Firstly, it is a goal-forming function, which motivates the believer to achieve results in a certain sphere of life. Secondly, expectation of a positive result of one's activity is a powerful mobilizing factor of activation of the person's resources for reaching one's set goals. And it is proved by the enquiry data, where the majority of believers consider their having found their goals in life to be the result of their faith.

Beyond the realization of the above mentioned demands, we should underline that there are conditions in the Charismatic movement

for social energy realization in the form of a social-beneficiary activity. Special attention should be paid to the striving of the Charismatic organizations for collaboration with the organs of state power and social organizations.

For the period of 2005-2008, there were organized 7 large-scaled actions on the central squares of the city within the frames of the Krasnoyarsk Charismatic churches' projects. For example, in June, 2005, they carried through the action «Stop-abortion», in August, 2005, they organized «HIV is not transmitted through friendship», which was directed to the HIV infection prevention and formation of a good-minded attitude towards the HIV infected people. The action was held within the frames of a grant, which had been won in the regional competition of the HIV infection prevention among the population, educative institutions and social organizations. In 2006, on the occasion of the Day against Drug Addiction, they organized the action «There is a way out» with the participation of Members of the Krasnoyarsk Region Legislative Assembly and workers of the Regional Narcological Dispensary. Representatives of the Youth Policy Office of the Krasnoyarsk Region Administration and of the Regional Narcological Dispensary took part in the given action. The action was held with the support from the part of the State Drug Control Federal Agency of the Russian Federation.

Annual December actions «Present Christmas to a Child» have become one of the social-beneficiary projects of the youth serving. The tasks of the project are: firstly, to pay attention to children-orphan and physically challenged children, and secondly, to attract the attention of the citizens to children's problems. Volunteers organized collection of Christmas gifts for children, living in children's welfare centers and correctional institutions of the Krasnoyarsk Region.

In order to provide psychological and material support to disabled people, they have created «charity serving» in the Krasnoyarsk church «New Generation». The service was begun in 2002 and at present it supports about 200 people with various degrees of physical disability.

Within the frames of the given article it is impossible to analyze all the aspects of the social activity, though the presented materials are quite enough to prove that the Charismatic movement possesses the mechanisms, being able not only to meet the demands of various social groups, but also to direct the social energy of believers to salvation of socially-significant problems.

Resume

In the result of the carried research we have revealed three main factors, providing the maintenance of the Charismatic unions' growing tendency up to nowadays. Firstly, the Charismatic movement gives the modern person a possibility to comprehend his/her religious experience, and also suggests ways of its conscious realization. To our opinion, this factor corresponds to the general process of society's secularization, which includes in itself not only institutional separation of religion from other spheres of social life, but also individualization of religious life, wherein religiosity, personal religious feeling becomes a domain of the concrete individual. The number of carriers of the so-called personal religiosity, «believers in general», and non-confessional doctrines, having personal experience, feelings or creed in their basis, is growing. To the mind of R. Bellah, who bases on the researches, having been carried out in 1978 by the American Institute of Public Opinion, modern believers come to their religious position in most cases independently from any kind of church organization. In church, the man gets «a feeling of belonging to the commune life, to its social and moral tasks».

(Bellah, 1996) We think that, making subjective religious feelings and experience to be the corner-stone of their ideology, the Charismatic movement contributes to Legitimation of the personal religious experience of such «out-of-church» believers, and also gives a possibility of further development and realization of their religious feelings by means of energy channeling in various types of church social activity.

The given research has proved that satisfaction of the demands of various social groups and strata is achieved by means of flexibility and mobile social organization of the Charismatic unions. It is also contributed by the Charismatic movement ability to quick ideological transformations in response to the changes, which appear in the socio-cultural, economical and political contexts.

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Религиозная самоидентификация харизматических приверженцев церкви (на материале Красноярского края)

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Харизматическое направление современного русского протестантизма на сегодняшний день является одним из наиболее динамично развивающихся религиозных движений в России. В статье анализируются факторы, формирующие субъективную мотивацию харизматических верующих в процессе религиозного самоопределения. Исследование показало, что приоритет личного религиозного опыта как магистральная линия харизматической идеологии способствует интеграции верующих в протестантскую среду без обязательного включения индивида в систему институционализированных религиозных практик и удовлетворяет не только религиозные, но и социальные потребности верующих.

Ключевые слова: харизматическое движение, пятидесятничество, протестантизм, харизматизм.
