



Education and Real Religious Life

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Abstract

Religious studies at secular schools and universities aim at the disclosure, comprehension of laws, trends, driving forces, main stages of religious history. There is a problem of interaction of secular education and religious sphere of modern culture. Secular education tends to give students scientific image of reality, in particular neutral information about different religions. Many students and their teachers have personal religious beliefs and it's hard for them to be neutral. The aim of this paper is to investigate the problem and find ways to harmonize this contradiction.

Key Words: Tolerance; Religiosity; Secular education; Religious life problems; Russian culture

Introduction

Education and religion are essential spheres of modern culture. Each student has his own ideas about religions, for many students religious ideas are parts of their worldview. Therefore secular education can't be abstracted from real religious life. We must ask ourselves, what does it mean to be religious, to be a believer? How much do religious attitudes affect the behavior of students, their relationship with others? What are the ways and the principles of interaction of educational and religious organizations? And most importantly: what are the goals of studying the religious sphere of culture at different stages of education. Is secular education able to help students to solve problems of real religious life?

Method: To investigate these problems we use hypothetical - deductive, textual, comparative, analytical - synthetic and deductive methods.

1. Religious studies in secular (non-religious) education

Modern Russian education system includes courses of religious studies. Several years ago there were no such disciplines in state schools as if religion was not worth to pay serious attention to it. It was realized then education and religious institutes of society could not be separated. The mandatory discipline "Basics of world religious cultures" was included to the

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program of fourth grade of Russian primary schools for children of 10 – 11 years old. Educational programs of higher education institutions include history, sociology and psychology of religion, courses as "The Bible and the Koran - monuments of culture", "Bible Stories in works of art", the history of free thought and atheism, phenomenology and anthropology of religion, religious studies and other disciplines. It is important to use these courses to avoid possible religious conflicts. The significance of secular religious knowledge is increasing due to a possible transition to the study of these disciplines for 1 - 11 school classes of Russian schools. Russian Orthodox Church and Moslem spiritual leaders in Russia insist on such transition.

School children ask issues related to the field of religion not only teachers of humanitarian courses. They apply the question "Does God really exist?" to all school mentors. As it turned out teachers today prefer to answer diplomatically: they offer the children ask about it parents at home. Of course, it is desirable that teachers of biology, chemistry, mathematics also have theological competence.

Personal preferences associated with beliefs of students certainly present in studies of religious courses. On the one hand, modern education is scientific: a school, college, university are fields where students meet with modern science. On the other hand, worldviews of certain number of students are formed under the influence of religious images. Believers, members of Orthodox communities and followers of other religions perceive some topics with negative attitude. People write complaints, rightly demand respect for their religious feelings.

What could be the way out of this situation? History, Sociology, Psychology, Geography of religion are sciences. If we open a university textbook of sociology of religion, in its introduction is usually recommended to take students personal religious beliefs "to bracket", in the words of Edmund Husserl (Johnstone, 1997, p. 2). Topics related to the sociology of religion, they have to investigate as if there is no God.

At the same time Theology, Phenomenology of religion, Philosophy of religion are not sciences completely because their content varies depending on group and personal interests (Livingston, 1993). It means all doubtful, painful topics might be discussed in frames of these partially scientific courses. Such approach looks acceptable for the carriers of different beliefs. So the method of solution can be found. In a frame of philosophy of religion study students may discuss different approaches to speculative topics such as the proofs of the existence of God, the relationship of faith and knowledge, the origin of the universe, problems of theodicy, soteriology and eschatology.

Moreover, theology has recently included by the Higher Attestation Commission of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation to the list of professions, which are assigned to the degree of doctor and candidate of sciences. It means theology may now enter a section of religious disciplines taught in secular universities.

2. Religion in modern Russian culture

For final decade of XX century Russia as atheistic country turned to Orthodox one. How did it happen and what happened in reality?

Religion for all previous history periods of its existence served as the source of creation, spread and adoption of common standards and values, taking, therefore, a leading position in different cultures. At the end of the XIX century in Russia and other countries had appeared a problem of the admissibility of religion perform these tasks. Religions ability to maintain the stability of social systems had been questioned, since the objective existence of God became problematic for many (Lenin, 1965).

The validity of such attitude was determined by the fact that the existence of sacred beings was different from the existence of stars, the moon, a tree or a chair. In fact, there are species of life corresponding to a particular level of objectivity. There were special forms of the existence of material things, of social interaction, ethics, laws, and works of art, words, dreams, and hallucinations. On the word "table" was impossible to put a bowl of soup as on real table, but the table and "table" there. If left disused thing near the garbage container, it would be taken away to the dump, but if this thing to put in the museum, visitors would treat it as a monument to the past, or even the product of contemporary art. Although a work of art, a moral principle, the religious idea were such that they could not be "touched" with his hands, they could have a greater impact on people's lives than the visible and tangible objects.

The founder of the Soviet Russia, Lenin following the French thinkers of the XVIII century developed the idea of fading religion (Lenin, 1965). As supporters of the concept of the progressive development of society, Marxists predicted that with the elimination of factors depending on the negative impacts of environmental and social conflicts the need of large masses of the population in the illusory comfort would disappear (Marx, 1955).

There was an increase of interest in the ideology and ritual activities of religious organizations in the Soviet Union since the mid 80-ies of XX century. The period of religious dynamics, religious ferment associated with significant changes in the political, economic and spiritual spheres had begun. For this period, proclaimed in words the freedom of conscience became

real, and for the people who had hidden religious interests, there was a real possibility of their full implementation. New modern stage of Christianization became a part of the all-Russian religious revival movement. At this stage there was a significant increase in the number of existing religious organizations. According to my observations new generations who came to the church, especially educated individuals, were attracted not only by external, ritual side of Christianity, but also internal, essential, first of all ethical content of its doctrine.

Reasons, factors of such changes were varied. One of them was the proclamation of the idea of the admissibility of pluralism of opinions accepted by public consciousness. There was a transfer of emphasis in relation to the pre-socialist past from critical negation to attempts to find the succession. A significant factor was the desire of the Soviet leadership to improve relations with various countries. The leaders had in mind that religion, influential churches had essential place in spiritual and political life of those countries. The human craving for "forbidden fruits" had started by Adam and Eve also played its role. Increased attention to the Orthodox Christianity was partly a reaction to the emergence and spread in Russia of non-traditional for the country Christian denominations and sects (Russians about religion and churches, 2012).

Ideological vacuum had formed after the destruction of the great Soviet Union and the refusal of communist ideology. Motherland, Soviet country was the main shrine of the majority of citizens of the USSR. Those, who were able to ignore it, constituted new ruling elite. As we know, the art of politics was the ability to present private interests of social groups as common interests of all. It is unlikely that a new Russian ideology would have been able to build on the ideas of the sanctity of private property, openly declared intention at all costs to maintain in private hands wealth once was considered nationwide. Politicians often used the word "God" trying to influence the audience as noted by Paul Tillich. It creates favorable impression of the moral qualities of a leader. Particular success can be achieved, labeling their opponents as atheists.

The slogans of those who destroyed the Soviet Union, found an echo, received full support, sympathy of oppressed in the Soviet Union religious leaders. There was a union of government and religious elites who supported the political line of Boris Yeltsin. For part of Russian citizens Islam became a form of expression of their protest intentions.

Until now, in sermons, spoken in the temples of modern Russia, its main difficulties are associated with the "godless past of the state". Even those negative phenomena which have appeared in the last twenty years, when the church had a real opportunities to influence society by beneficial effects - drop the international prestige of the country, depopulation, poverty of significant part of the population, an increase in crime, abandoned by their parents children, pedophile priests - all this is declared to be products of socialist past (Pomerantsev, 2012). That's why, although the majority of Russian citizens declared their support for religion, sacred forces still are not able to stop the movement of the country in a regressive direction.

Close and actively used today in the Russian version of theodicy is the assertion that evil is a consequence of the activity of the Church enemies, enemies of faith and of God. As early medieval theologians pointed out if anyone did not keep true faith he no longer belonged to God but to the devil. Heretics of the new Russia are modern witches, dancing and singing in churches, liberal intellectuals who open exhibitions of non-canonical icons, corrupt sectarians, professing wrong and worshiping wrong. They use false religious symbols to belittle their importance, they make obscene gestures, insulting innocent parishioners and ministers of religious buildings, allow themselves to criticize the God-loving statesmen. Behind the mask of dissent is viewed hateful image of Lenin. He is devil's messenger, a spiritual inspiration for all modern ugliness. It is no accident the mass campaign of condemnation of Russian music band "Pussy Riot", which held protests in Moscow "Cathedral of Christ - Savior" was scheduled for April 22, 2012 - Lenin's birthday.

In Middle Ages errors and inhumane actions of witches and heretics were considered as results of the influence of the dark forces. It was alleged that witches kill and eat children, raise storms and suggest thunderclouds, let in the locusts and caterpillars that devour crops, hit men by impotence and women by infertility, can produce deadly disease and kill people only by a glance. Today, hardly anyone would believe the stories about women flying on a broom. That's why critics of «Pussy Riot» used more plausible ways to discredit. The TV showed scenes of sexual orgies involving "heretics" reported cases of neglect of parental duty and racist statements, hinted at the ambiguity of the title of their art group. To reveal the background of Lenin's atheistic actions, people were informed that his mother was German, and his brother - a terrorist, money to support him was sent by Germans and Americans.

Today some followers of the religion of non-violence and love, like football fans, are ready to join the melee battle with those who do not belong to their number. As if it was not written, "... love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for those who persecute you. Yes, you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust "(Mt 5: 44 - 45.). Plaintively wailing of "godless times" persecutions "blessed peacemakers" try to attract the government, law enforcement, militia fighters, a crowd of uneducated, angry with beggarly life conditions individuals to suppress dissident activity. In some sense "last became first and first became last". Now nonreligious citizens and religious minorities in Russia need a protection from aggression.

3. Indicators of modern religiosity

It's clear we should take into consideration essential part of students identify themselves as religious. Now we should ask what it means to be religious. What are features of consciousness and behavior of modern believers? What is their religiosity?

Sociologists identified main performance indicators of religiosity (Johnstone, 1997, Livingston, 1993). There are four of them: a believer is an individual who believes in the existence of supernatural (A); he takes part in actions aimed to establish links with the sacred forces (B); he is a member of a religious association (C); religion affects his moral principles, his everyday life behavior (D).

Religiosity is a quality existing in the framework of the measure. In all its characteristics have place quantitative changes, individual degrees of their manifestation. Believers are not religious in the same sense. Religiosity is not measured only by one indicator. It may be high with one indicator and low if use another for the same individual. The influence of religiosity on the behavior and consciousness of the person depends on elected for the evaluation criteria.

On the criterion "A" (the belief in the supernatural), believers can be divided into persons with strong beliefs, doubters, those who don't care about the truth of religious principles and those who feign. It is difficult to obtain reliable knowledge examining this criterion because the method of its study is introspective. We have to rely on people's judgments about themselves and the strength of their own beliefs. Certainly there are things that a person does not tell even in the confessional.

The second of the above indicators of religiosity - participation in religious rituals is measured quantitatively. Some individuals attend church meetings and participate in public religious ceremonies every week, while others - once a month, some - once a year, the fourth - do not go to church services at all, but sincerely consider themselves as believers. According to the degree of participation in public rituals, attending religious services, religious meetings distinguish intense religiosity - at least one visit per week, moderate - at least once a month, and low - a few times a year.

It is also necessary to take into account differences of public and private rituals. That's because a person may attend a church for a habit or under the influence of relatives or friends. Private rituals, first of all, prayers are personal appeals to the sacred forces. They show the strength of individual religiosity. Daily prayers are considered as high index of religiosity. For example if a Moslem prays five times a day.

Exploring the indicator "C" - membership of a denomination we turn to the question how a person becomes religious. In cases of natural or state religions individuals fall into certain religious group by birth, for example, through infant baptism or circumcision. If denomination implement is an outcome of personal choice, it's a result of a conscious belief or following the example of others. It has been noted that some individuals mentally identify themselves as members of particular denomination, not really taking part in affairs of a religious association. Identification, recognition of himself as a part of a religious group changes from a minor to high degree. In addition there is a spread of nondenominational religiosity in modern society. Some people believe the church organization is entirely earthly institution. It does not mean anything for the salvation. To have a faith is enough to be saved.

Turning to the last of main indicators of religiosity – faith influence on the style of life we see that significant portion of individuals show their religious activity only in order to establish cooperation with the sacred forces. In this case, religion does not affect everyday behavior. Only for a few their religion is the way of life. They are convinced believers who try to apply principles of faith in everyday circumstances, "acting with others as would like them to do to them."

Certain types of believers are constructed in Sociology of religion by combining characteristics obtained on indicators of religiosity. 5 - 6% are convinced believers. They are actively visiting, practicing and performing, in Sorokin words, those for whom God is the absolute value. Passive type believers (sleeping) - do not think about the content and the truth of religious principles, are converted by birth, are constantly involved in public and private

rituals. Moderate believers are distinguished from the mentioned before because religion does not affect their daily life. Finally, the fourth type - marginalized - those who are poorly versed in the scriptures, participate in religious rituals once a year, have no connection with the religious association, use principles of situational ethics in ordinary life.

There are two types of religious mentality described by Psychology of religion. People with external religiosity tend to use religion for non-religious purposes. Religion for them is a mean of comfort. Religious participation gives a possibility to improve financial situation to establish communication and have entertainment, gives legitimate way to vent accumulated hatred, inner aggression. In secret, personal sphere of their consciousness religion is the field of hypocrisy. A minority of believers are carriers of inner religiosity. They accept religious doctrine as a main value and follow it regardless of positive or negative sanctions. Their awareness and behavior are determined by the set of faith.

The assurance of salvation, awareness of belonging to influential group, material support, solace, approval of others, atonement, a search for truth are various aims of religious quest. Studies of Russian public opinion indicate the prevalence of external religiosity among those who consider themselves as believers. According to the survey of Levada Sociology Center performed in year 2012 73% of Russians believe that in their country many people want to show involvement in the faith, but few of them believe in reality (Russians about religion and churches, 2012).

Modern Russians have mostly ostentatious religiosity. Their faith is selective. People remember about religious duties if they have the time and the mood. For many, religion is - a sphere of hypocrisy. Calling himself a believer, a liberal or a communist does not mean to really be. There are many pseudo – Christians today like there were a lot of false communists in Soviet times.

The opinion poll "On religion and interfaith relations" organized and conducted by Russian Federal Security Service on February 19, 2016 gave representative results (On religion and interfaith relations, 2016). In response to the question: "Do you profess any religion" following groups were identified: Orthodox - 64, 7%; atheists - 12.5%; nondenominational believers - 11.9%; professing Islam - 7.2%; Buddhists - 0, 6%; Catholic - 0, 5%; Orthodox old ritual believers - 0, 4%; Gentile - 0, 4%; belonging to other faiths - 1.8%. Answers to the question: "How often do you attend worship services" was as follows: regular - 6, 2%; from time to time, with the possibility - 24, 1%; rarely, on holidays - 28%; I do not go - 41, 7% (On religion and interfaith relations, 2016).

Thinking about the features of religiosity in modern Russia, we may conclude believers show their faith mostly by participating in religious rituals outside of ordinary course of life. The type of marginal believer prevails at present. Most Russian citizens live as if in two worlds: sincerely believing themselves as religious persons they leave their faith behind temple threshold going out of it. In such case religion does not affect a behavior outside the church.

The spirit of the new century corresponds to a situation where the streets of Russian towns would be occupied by Russian Orthodox individuals carrying images of God in their hands, calls to faithful to prayer would fly from tops of minarets, Krishna Consciousness people would dance and sing their Maha – mantra in parks and all of them would have worm greetings from atheists sitting on the benches with books of Vladimir Lenin and Denis Diderot.

Discussion

It should be kept in mind the craze of new ideology may be a result of a disappointment in the former if it has been used by political elites have lost the trust of a population. Pendulum changes are taking place in public consciousness: "If people associate a responsibility for a crisis with religious orientation of rulers, they seek refuge in atheism. If the responsibility for this crisis they attribute to atheistic views of rulers, then the naturally seek salvation in religion" (The synergetic philosophy of history, 2009, p. 246). There were periods of destruction of churches, now monuments to Lenin are destroyed on the part of territories of the former USSR. It is possible the "Law of God" teaching will be recovered in Russian schools. But this does not mean "Fundamentals of scientific atheism" will not replace this discipline again with the passage of time.

It's hard not to notice that the interaction of religion with other social phenomena, its influence on the history and current state of humanity is contradictory. Outstanding Indian scholar Swami Vivekananda offered to evaluate the historical role of religion dialectically: although there is nothing brought to the mankind more blessings than religion, there is also nothing brought more horror. Nothing has contributed to a degree of goodness and love, as a religion, but also nothing had filled the world with so much blood (Eerdmans' handbook to world's religions, 1982, p. 177).

In October 25, 2016 I took part in the meeting of the Committee on Constitutional Legislation and State Building of the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation "Buddhism as a factor of development of civil society, inter-religious peace and

harmony in the Russian Federation". It was declared at the meeting religious tolerance is not quite adequate slogan for modern Russian society. The tolerance is a neutral refer to a strange, perhaps even unpleasant neighbors. According to the Constitution of the Russian Federation there are no first and second grade believers. Russian believers of different faiths are not strangers, but fellow citizens of the same country. They are supposed to be Russian patriots. So at least they are friends and as a maximum brothers. They all accept basic moral values of modern Russia - patriotism, freedom, justice.

Results

History and modern role of religion can't be ignored in the sphere of secular education. It is useful to take courses of religious knowledge for students of all specialties not only humanitarian. There are two main principles to follow. First, religious courses do not proclaim the truth or falsity of particular religions. Second, the courses should assert and extend religious tolerance.

It might be assumed that high level of external religiosity remain in Russian schools, colleges, universities. Most Russian religious students are not fundamentalists. They call themselves Orthodox Christians or Moslems because attend churches or mosques during major religious holidays. However, their behavior is determined not by Christian or Moslem ideas but by principles of situational ethics. At the same time there is real threat students may be influenced by extreme religious propaganda. We know such examples in modern Russia and other countries. This real danger should be neutralized by secular religious education.

Religious studies at secular schools and universities aim at the disclosure, comprehension of laws, trends, driving forces, main stages of religious history. But also, as we see, they fulfill important role in ensuring the consolidation of Russian society, the establishment of a single Russian nation.

Suggestions

XXI century is the historical time of multi-confessional society. Unfortunately prospects for the unity of its citizens, as well as co-religionists of different countries on the basis of religious faith are absent. Confessional membership does not provide social unity. It is not a significant factor of solidarity both within the countries and in international relations.

The only way to prevent dangerous development of events through religious conflicts rise is a compliance with the constitutional principles of freedom of conscience and separation of the church and state, the school and church. One of directions of development of modern spiritual

culture should be the assertion of religious tolerance, the presence of which is a sign of a democratic society.

The purposes of religious courses taught in secular educational institutions is the formation of tolerance, commitment to dialogue, friendly attitude to unbelievers, religious agnostics, representatives of various denominations. Humanistic ideals are designed to unite people of different ethnic groups, social groups and views. Their consistent implementation contributes to mutual understanding of individuals with different beliefs.

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