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## GENESIS OF WORSHIP PRACTICE IN RUSSIAN NEOPENTECOSTALISM

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**Abstract:** The forms of change in the practice of worship in the environment of Russian Neopentecostals are analyzed in the article, considering the diversity of its types and congregations. The social characteristics of the practice of worship as a basic part of congregational life are considered: the formation of a prayer tone in the congregation, which sets the normative context of prayer practices, the assertion of religious identity. The practice of worship is defined as prayer practice and is interpreted through the phenomenological paradigm as a form of transcendence of prayer intentionality, seen in Neopentecostal communities as a communicative act unfolding in the process of spiritual formation. The structure of worship is defined, its functioning in the everyday life of the congregation is considered, it is specified that the transition in the structure of worship from one segment of prayer practice to another is determined by the change of musical tone, which can be interpreted as a switch of actor. The specifics of typing the practice of worship in different types of Russian Neopentecostal churches are highlighted, as well as the hypotheses of theoretical explanation of the processes of change: typification is considered as symbolic structuring of congregational everyday life and forming of religious reality through the following processes: externalization, objectification and internalization.

**Keywords:** Neopentecostalism, practice of worship, religious daily life, prayer, Christian music.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the 80-ies neo-Pentecostal Western missionaries help actively the Soviet underground Pentecostal communities with literature, visiting and preaching in the western border regions. In the 90-ies Pentecostal missionary movements began to introduce Russian Pentecostals to charismatic forms of prayer and worship that reflected new musical trends in the global Christian world. Since the late 1980-ies and early 1990-ies, the communities of young neo-Pentecostal churches have been formed on the territory of present-day Russia. In Russian research literature, they are sometimes called “new” Pentecostals rather than “neo-Pentecostals,” since the history of the Pentecostal movement in America and Russia does not coincide, and some Russian neo-Pentecostals differ markedly from their American fellow believers. Russian neo-Pentecostals are closer in dogmatic terms to the classical branch of Pentecostalism, they are distinguished by a charismatic form of worship and a number of theological teachings that are not shared by all Russian churches, for example, the teachings of “prosperity” or “spiritual warfare”.(1-4).

The main part of the communal life of Russian neo-Pentecostalism is the practice of glorification, its form and direction reflect the “spirit of the church,” and the theological characteristics of the communities.(3).

The central position of worship practice is due to its functional load in the social life of Russian neo-Pentecostal churches. First, the practice of worship sets the tone for the state of prayer in the community. In each community, they develop an unspoken normative order of permissible freedom of religious experience manifestation during prayer. As a rule, it can be either complete freedom, when the full spectrum of religious dramatization is available (“holy laughter,” tears, dancing, ecstatic body movements), or the practice that only partially reflects the features of the dogmatic teaching shared by the community.

Second, the practice of worship allows the establishment of religious identity within the diversity of neo-Pentecostal communities. As was mentioned above, each community develops its own order of prayer worship, which is internalized by the believer and is perceived by him as the part of his own personality (which reflects the neo-Pentecostal ideas about a spiritual person who is born again). The normative order of neo-Pentecostal communities internalized into the structure of the believer's personality creates a stable religious identity.

Thirdly, the Sunday liturgy as a religious practice makes it possible to streamline the religious everyday life of the neo-Pentecostals and to actualize the basic values of the community through problematization in sermons, in the analysis of scriptures, and also through frequency reproduction in the songs of worship. Fourthly, the common church practice of praying praise creates a sense of community solidarity, which is further strengthened during joint prayers for the needs of each believer; thus, social ties between believers are consolidated.(8-11).

Despite the important social and religious significance that has the practice of worship in Russian neo-Pentecostal churches, it is worth noting that the form of worship is rather difficult to characterize as a sustainable religious practice. The form of worship reflects intradenominational differences in the movement of Russian neo-Pentecostalism, and directly depends on the processes of institutionalization and inculturation of the neo-Pentecostal movement in the country. Therefore, the purpose of our study is to study the nature of the change in the form of worship at Russian neo-

Pentecostal churches.(6).

More than three decades have passed since the establishment of the neo-Pentecostal churches in the late 80-ies and early 90-ies. Following the processes of community integration and of structural formation (formalization of the management system), there is a need for self-identification of Russian neo-Pentecostalism as a confessional community. In communities there is a need to decide for themselves which way to move in the development of community life and theology: to be guided by American trends or to create a unique Russian image of neo-Pentecostalism. This is how the intradenominational diversity of Russian neo-Pentecostalism takes shape, which reflects the main intentions in the development of glorification forms in churches.

## METHODS

In our study, we proceed from empirical data collected during participatory observation at Kazan communities in Kazan during 2012-2019, which include in-depth interviews, the diaries of included observations, and field notes by the author. Our field work is based on the anthropological method of "getting used to" in the field, i.e. gradual inclusion in the studied environment as its participant. The "participant" status allows to avoid the possible replacement (by the members of neo-Pentecostal communities) of religious everyday life representation for a socially desired image. The chosen research strategy involves the use of certain methods of empirical material collection. From the array of descriptive methods, we chose a rich description, which assumes that the researcher must record social discourse in such a way that he will retain all the relevance of the perfect in a field diary from a transitory event that exists only at the moment of accomplishment, which will make it possible to return to the happened event descriptions repeatedly.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Glorification practice genesis

If the form and the context of prayerful glorification, as well as the nature of changes, depend on the church direction, then the interpretation of prayer glorification process is interpreted as a communicative religious act, expressed in "striving for transcendental relatedness - as an ascent to the divine." Prayer intentionality implies a variety of forms of transcending in communication with God, but there are still important components for neo-Pentecostals in the interpretation of praise and worship understanding.

First, both glorification and worship are always a communicative act for a neo-Pentecostal. It is expressed as the intentional orientation of the believer himself towards the Divine, which we can observe in the songs of praise that open the Sunday prayer service: "Every morning we invoke your grace"; "Sing, soul, to my King"; "I exalt you, Holy One." Also, the communicative act implies, according to the neo-Pentecostals, the orientation of God towards people, which is often expressed in the formulas "God loves you", "God wants you to accept Him in your heart," "God wants you to know," etc.

Therefore, the practice of glorification is viewed as a mutual communicative act that is always personal (interaction take place only between the believer and God), despite the large number of participants in glorification and worship. At the same time,

such an interpretation does not exclude the possibility of considering the practice of glorification as a communicative act in which the whole church, "like the body of Christ," enters into communion with God. In worship and glorification, believers act, praying for the needs of the church or humanity, being the subject of sacred drama creation. A contact between people is not limited to actions; they agree in prayer intentionality. Secondly, the practice of worship is seen for neo-Pentecostals as the process of building a relationship between a man and God, therefore worship is not only a part of Sunday worship, but also an unfolding action of a "spiritual personality" development. Praise and worship are viewed as a stream of experiences, and the actions leading to "living communion with God."

### Practice development

At the dawn of the 1990-ies, Russian neo-Pentecostal communities did not have their own understanding of how worship should be developed. The glorification was structured as the Swedish missionaries of the "Volga 92" mission taught. According to the stories of believers who stood at the origins of neo-Pentecostalism in Kazan, the practice of worship was built according to the following scheme: 1) praise; 2) worship; 3) prayer for the word; 4) preaching; 5) praise songs.

Each of the elements of this scheme plays both a functional and a symbolic role in religious practice and corresponds to a particular state of a prayer. The structure of the indicated scheme is reproduced not so much by the actions of glorification and worship, assumed in the indicated elements, as by the character and the form of the musical accompaniment. Pentecostals do not use religious art and other church utensils in their everyday life to create a special liturgical atmosphere. Music plays this role in neo-Pentecostalism. The purpose of musical worship is to create an atmosphere in which believers can feel the presence of God and feel the work of the Holy Spirit.

Worship was seen as a spiritual breakthrough for the young Russian neo-Pentecostal churches in the 1990-ies. Divine presence became possible for perception in all possible forms: "holy laughter", "holy crying", "spiritual dance", "spiritual childbirth". The musical accompaniment had to reflect the full range of spiritual experiences experienced by the "born again" converts. The worship music, on the one hand, expressed the religious feelings of the worship leaders: "We played as we ourselves felt the Divine presence." On the other hand, it had to create a prayerful state of worship. Any emotional states in the neo-Pentecostal environment were considered normal. "A man experiences God as God responds in his heart," therefore "holy anger," "tears," "holy laughter," or "spiritual warfare" are just the forms of experience.

A breakthrough is needed for the release of these experiences, for the transition to them from routine everyday life, and this breakthrough is music. The change in its tone determined the transition from one structural element of worship to another. A switching of the actor takes place, which is experienced as an integral process of changes in moods and motivations of worship. There is a systematic transformation of the initial schemes during switching, first - individual images, actions, and later - the whole scheme of experiences and sacred interaction. The same function is performed by musical accompaniment today. The typification of the religious life of Russian neo-Pentecostal churches over more than three decades of operation has led to the formation of internal diversity, which, in turn, has led to a variety of approaches to the interpretation of prayer worship.

O.V. Kuropatkina distinguishes the following trends among Russian neo-

Pentecostals: "intellectuals", "fundamentalists", "the bulk", and "official Pentecostalism." The main disagreements in the interpretation of worship practice exist between such movements as "fundamentalists" and "intellectuals." "Fundamentalists" choose the American neo-Pentecostal churches with eccentric charismatic worship, where music plays an important role, which forms a special state of prayer.

In the research literature, this form is referred to as the dramatization of the "sacred theater", "where religious norms, ideas and expectations are not just the subject of verbal and action communication, but are also "played out" through singing and dancing, expressive gestures, emotional or automated speech. A counterbalance to charismatic forms of glorification and worship is the "intellectual" trend of the Russian neo-Pentecostals, within which glorification is the process of a "religious language" of symbolic prayer formula development that reflects the internal church needs. The main role of worship in such churches is played not so much by musical accompaniment, as by the work of the worship teams on the lyrics, which, in turn, form the internal theological discourse of church life.

Robin A. Shoaps, examining the formation of intracommunal theological discourse through the analysis of praise songs, comes to the conclusion that songs not only express the theology of communities (as if it had been formulated already), but create this theology, constantly re-creating and shaping the symbolic discourses through the reproduction of worship songs. Turning to God during worship through prayer formulas expressed in their native language, believers feel a sense of belonging to the religious experience of the community. The feeling of closeness to the Divine is created not through a state of prayer, but through awareness.

## CONCLUSIONS

The practice of praise and worship, as the central prayer practice of the neo-Pentecostal churches, was developed in two forms. In some communities classified as the "fundamentalist wing" of Russian neo-Pentecostalism, glorification is experienced as a prayerful intentionality, for the implementation of which a spiritual breakthrough is required, which involves the use of the entire spectrum of charismatic forms of glorification. In the neo-Pentecostal churches, classified by scholars as "intellectuals," worship is an ongoing basic process of community life, and song lyrics reflect the consolidated experience of church life.

## SUMMARY

The processes of two forms of worship practice development in Russian neo-Pentecostal churches reflect two forms of religious everyday life typification. In the case of glorification process dramatization, a symbolic structuring of everyday life occurs, in which glorification breaks the routine of everyday life and appears as the event in relation to which all other events are built; glorification acts as a coordinate relative to which the living space of believers is structured. Glorification as the reproduction of the church life in a consolidated communicative act can be interpreted in Berger's interpretation of reality development as an externalization of religious experience, objectification of its meaning in symbolic form through the words of praise songs, and internalization of praise song words into individual meanings and experiences of the divine.

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