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METHODS OF STUDY AND CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGIONS (ON THE WORKS BY PROFESSOR-PROTOIEREUS A.V. SMIRNOV (1857-1933))

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Abstract: *The article describes the initial stage of scientific knowledge development about the religion in Russia at the turn of the XIX - XX centuries. They highlighted the features of training course development on the history of religion in the Russian Empire and the fields of research approaches to the history of religion in theological academies. They describe the scientific and creative path of the Archpriest, Professor A.V. Smirnov at the Kazan Imperial University. Based on the analysis of the work "The Course on the History of Religion", the article highlights and characterizes the methodological principles that guided Professor A.V. Smirnov in the study of the history of religion, provides a detailed analysis of religion classification principles and morphological analysis of religion.*

Keywords: *The history of religious studies, Kazan Theological Academy, Kazan Imperial University, Classification of religion, The history of religions.*

INTRODUCTION

The scientific study of religion in Russia begins at the turn of the 19th - 20th centuries. In the pre-revolutionary history of Russia, the formation of the science about religion was associated with the system of theological academies, since any study of foreign religions, be it teaching a course or publishing a monograph, was subject to spiritual censorship and was possible only within the framework of theological academies with the aim of training missionaries and apologetics. The emergence of

scientific knowledge about religion in theological academies is associated not only with the social-political conditions in the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century, but also, first of all, with the presence of strong academic staff, the scientists who taught not only in theological academies, but also at universities (4). Theological academies had close ties with scientific centers in the world. Teachers and students underwent scientific internships abroad and had good language training, which allowed the teaching staff to get acquainted with scientific research even before they were translated into Russian.

A significant role in the formation of historical knowledge about religion was the acquaintance of Russian researchers with the works of the founding fathers of religious studies, Max Muller, Cornelius Thiele, Chantepie de la Sausset (1). The first foreign comparative studies on the history of religion caused a response in the Russian academic environment. The ideas of Max Müller and Cornelius Thiele were debated by Yu.F. Samarin, V.D. Kudryavtsev-Platonov, and V. Soloviev. By the end of the XIX century there were two directions of historical research of religion in the theological academies of the Russian Empire. The first direction served the needs of the church. The history of religion within the framework of this trend was viewed as "an apologetic argument for denouncing foreign religions." "The entire historical process of spiritual life development was conceived by theologians as the divine economy of comprehension, which is necessary for the believing mind only to comprehend the divine plan" (11). Within this direction, two hypotheses about the origin and development of religion were the leading ones. The first is called "pramonotheistic" in the history of religious studies. Monotheism was recognized as the primary form of religious consciousness, which after the Fall was damaged, which led to paganism and idolatry. The second hypothesis is that "natural religions" arose out of sin and are not pleasing to God.

The second trend in the studies of the history of religion in theological academies can be considered as strictly scientific, it is based on the principles of historicism and comparative studies. Chrysanth Retivtsev offers a historical approach to ancient religions, showing the role of religious concepts in the formation of the ancient world as compared with the role of Christianity in the history of civilization (4). Since the beginning of the XX-th century Western approaches are being rethought in the academic scientific space. The evolutionist principle of religion development is adopted by the liberal part of the university professors. One of these researchers was the Archpriest A.V. Smirnov, Professor of theology at the Kazan Imperial University, the teacher at the Kazan Theological Academy.

Over the years of study and work at the Kazan Theological Academy, the Archpriest A.V. Smirnov showed himself to be a consistent "church-academic" liberal. The Archpriest believed that the ideal of a liberal society is the society built on Christian foundations of morality and ethics. The Professor A.V. Smirnov believed that society and the church should conduct an open discussion on the issues of "freedom of conscience" and church policy. With these goals in mind, the liberal part of the Professors of the Kazan Theological Academy established the journal "Church and Social Life". When preparing the course of lectures on theology, the Professor A.V. Smirnov actively used the materials on the history of religions; thus, by 1908, the "Course in the History of Religions" was prepared and published at the Kazan Imperial University.

METHODS

This article uses the historiographic method of description within the framework of intellectual history, i.e. the history of ideas and analysis of the social-cultural context. We use the works by A.V. Smirnov.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The course on the history of religion by Professor A.V. Smirnov is interdisciplinary in nature and can rightfully be considered as one of the first courses in comparative religious studies of the Russian Empire. The course materials show that the Archpriest was well acquainted with the situation in the field of foreign religious studies. He expounds the theoretical material on the study of religion quite confidently, not limiting himself exclusively to retelling the main provisions of theories about the origin of religions and basic definitions: the author is involved in a scientific discussion, criticizing and giving his arguments both in refutation and in confirmation of the theories under consideration. At the same time, it is decisively worth abandoning the idea that the Archpriest builds his understanding of the religion phenomenon solely based on Western theories. The author actively includes the positions and opinions of prominent Russian scientists and philosophers of his time in the scientific discussion that unfolds on the pages of his course (V. Soloviev, V.I. Neshmelov, V.V. Bolotov, V.D. Smirnov, etc.). The task of the course is seen by A.V. Smirnov in a comprehensive and holistic comprehension of the religion phenomenon. He writes the following: "The task of the history of religion is to illuminate such a major phenomenon of human life as religion" (6). The comparative-historical approach at the time of the course development has already made it possible to come to knowledge about the unity of the historical process of religion development. According to the author, the next task in the history of religion is the identification of its development stages, which would allow to get an idea of development laws concerning the spiritual life of a person and, ultimately, would lead to the essential foundations of religion understanding.

Throughout the course material, the author's ideological and methodological principles are traced. At the very beginning of the introduction, A.V. Smirnov criticizes the position adopted in theological academies that the history of religion should be of practical importance and serve for the building of faith, as an apologetic argument. Scientific knowledge is an end in itself, it is important in itself and should not be of practical use. He calls for scientific objectivity, arguing that "science ceases to be a science if it renounces purely scientific tasks, and from scientific impartiality" (6). We would call the second principle the phenomenological attitude. In the preliminary definition of the phenomenon of religion, Professor A.V. Smirnov resolutely refuses to reduce the essential foundations of religion to the external forms of its manifestation. He sees the origins of religion in the very nature of a man. Religion is a psychological need or a spiritual need for familiarization with a prototype. Religious ideas are presented to the author by categories that reflect the spiritual development of mankind. Considering the history of religion, the author believes that we observe the spiritual development of a man and essential changes in the relationship between a man and God. The third methodological principle can be considered evolutionism. Professor A.V. Smirnov notes

that "while studying religion, it is not difficult to notice that religion in different periods of its history has undergone quite noticeable changes, and these changes, according to the general law of development, brought religion to a greater height" (6). In other words, the changes in the history of religion are progressive, complicating and developing religion. Referring to K. Thiele, the Archpriest writes that "progressive development can be represented as the evolution of a religious idea, as the progress of a religious person" (6).

The Archpriest notes that all religions are subject to the laws of historical development, Christianity is no exception. Although the religion of revelation contains immutable truths that the church preserves and transmits, but the outer side of religion, concerning religious worship, the formulation of religious concepts, changes with a person. The evolution of religion is based on the laws of psychic evolution. He identifies seven laws: the law of the human spirit unity; the law of organic growth; the law of a person's spiritual life dependence on the surrounding nature; the law of subjectivation; the law of stability; the law of imitation; the law of interaction of psychic forces.

The author calls for a systematic analysis of the religion phenomenon, not limiting himself exclusively to one essential element identification. The Professor A.V. Smirnov writes that "religion does not refer to any one ability of the human spirit and embraces the entire spiritual life of a person" (6). In the study of religion, he identifies three main elements: epistemological (dogmatic), cult (liturgical) and moral. The author also notes that religion plays an essential role in the formation of culture. "The history of the religion of each individual nation and tribe largely reflects the degree of its cultural development during a certain period of its historical existence." Explaining what role religion plays in culture, the author notes that religious concepts and categories affect the nature and mentality of the peoples who profess them, which, in turn, determines their way of life and lifestyle. Thus, the level of cultural development is directly related to the level of religious concepts and belief development.

A.V. Smirnov singled out the classification method as the leading method in the historical research of religion. At the very beginning of his work "The Course in the History of Religion," the author notes how difficult the typological and classification work is: "If we take into account the significant uncalculated number of various religions professed and still professed by different peoples and tribes, it will not be difficult to understand how difficult it is to understand this dense forest" (6). Only by the XXI-st century the classification of religions has been established, which is recognized, in any case, by most of our domestic researchers and the teachers of the science about religion. But, as it turns out, the path to it was long and difficult. We can say that the formation of its classification is included in the study of the history of religion. This difficult path is indicated by many classifications of religions that have appeared over the past century and a half. The most prominent of them are cited by A.V. Smirnov in his work. He gives their description and reveals their positive aspects and shortcomings via analysis. The reasons why certain classifications do not stand up to criticism are also revealed.

In all the diversity of religions, applying the dialectical principle of universal connection and the unity of opposites and the comparative method, it was easy for researchers to notice their similarities and differences. But the issue immediately arose, one of the main in typological and classification work: what principles or criteria reveal similarities and differences? A.V. Smirnov pays great attention to them, analyzing the classifications compiled before him. Some researchers have classified religions based on an ethnographic principle, attributing to one class those religions that were professed by

the peoples related in origin and language. However, as Smirnov notes, with this principle, Christianity and Buddhism should remain outside the classification, as religions are not national, but universal; they have the confessors among all races and peoples. Thus, the specified criterion of ethnographic kinship is completely accidental and is not very typical for religions (6).

At that time, the principle of dividing religions according to the method of their origin was popular. There were different religions that naturally originated in a certain people and were founded by individuals or, as we say, by spiritual leaders (they were also called prophetic). However, according to Smirnov, "this principle cannot form the basis of the scientific classification of religions, since we do not know anything about the origin of many religions" (6). True, having in mind modernity - especially the twentieth century, when many creators of non-traditional religions with prophetic inclinations appeared in the world, this principle is actively used by modern religious scholars.

A.V. Smirnov also divides religions into monotheistic and polytheistic. With an established distribution of religions by faith in a particular number of deities, Fr. Alexander asks himself the following question: "Where can we attribute, for example, the dualism of the Persians, the atheism of the original Buddhism, the catenoteism of some naturalistic religions, etc.?" Finally, one of the most successful classifications, according to A.V. Smirnov, is the classification compiled by the German scientist Johann Sebastian Drey, who proposed the division of religions into national and global. Without full acceptance of any of the proposed classifications, A.V. Smirnov supplemented Drey's classification and divided religions into tribal, national and world ones.

CONCLUSIONS

Summing up, it should be noted that the beginning of comparative religious studies both at the Kazan Imperial University and in the Russian Empire is related with Professor A.V. Smirnov. His course in the history of religion is one of the first which revised the evolutionary approach drastically while maintaining respect for religion as an object of the study. The ideas about the morphological analysis of religion and the identification of religion elements lay the foundations for a religious complex and methodological principles of comparative religious study development for Soviet scientists.

SUMMARY

Thus, the Archpriest Alexander Smirnov, the Professor of the Kazan Theological Academy and the Kazan Imperial University, analyzed and generalized the previously proposed methods of researching the history of religion and the principles of religion classification at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. After his activity, the systematic work on comparative religious studies was created, which can be presented on a par with the foreign textbooks on the history of religion. In the work "The Course on the History of Religion" the classification was presented, based on which the process of religious creativity is studied and modern systematic courses on the history of religion are presented.

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