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DISCOURSE IN THE RUSSIAN MEDIASPACE**

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**Abstract**

The article is devoted to the coverage of issues of religion and spiritual life of society in the modern media space. The authors note that the media and religion, being autonomous entities, are in a complex interaction, in which one can find both features of cooperation and competition. At the same time, in the media epoch, religious confessions recognize the capabilities of the media for adequate and effective preaching. In contrast, the media often make religion a target of scanning and broadcasting. Mediatisation of religious discourse is of particular importance in the post-Soviet space. To study this phenomenon, materials from a high-quality domestic publication "Izvestia" were used. It is becoming obvious that Russian society is now going through an active process of the formation of religious ideas, carried out mainly through the media. It can be concluded that most of the publications have an obvious newsbreak and are tied to specific events or dates based on the thematic variety of materials on the religious agenda. Although some topics about the Religious processes are covered in the newspaper, it should be highlighted a number of articles that addressed to journalists to create a more balanced and summarized presentation of the Religious agenda. Firstly, it is expanding the range of denominations covered by the newspaper to form an objective Religious landscape; secondly, it is the increase in the number of analytical materials on the presented topic that will lay the foundation for the analysis of religious processes by society.

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1. Introduction

The modern communication space is formed by the sum of media texts and the meanings that they implement. Media texts is one of the most common forms in mass communication. At the same time, the corpus of texts produced and transmitted daily through the media channel continues to grow constantly. (Bernett & Moriarty, 2001).

The broad subject matter of modern media texts forms the content component of the media environment, in which news genres rightfully occupy the central place, mainly of political, economic and social orientation. Culture and education are often at the margins of the media agenda (Klyukanov, 2016). Even less attention in the modern Russian media space is paid to the issues of religion. In this regard, the subject-object area of religion and the media is a problematic field for researchers (Aitova, 2015, 2016; Lutsenko et al., 2016). This fact explains the novelty of the stated topic.

It should be noted that among philologists, culturologists and journalists, interest in the culturological text is growing. There are works related to the study of the media role in understanding cultural factors (Harrison & Huntington, 2000). Especially among such studies, those devoted to the religious themes of modern publications stand out. (Butler et al., 2011; Hoover, 2006, etc.). Many researchers rightly note the general nature of religious and journalistic discourses:

In fact, religion and media have been closely related at least since the Reformation, and if we take into account oral communication, the language of rituals and vestments, then communication is the basis for our understanding of religion and before Reformation. Therefore, when we reflect on the fate of religion today, in the information era, we must begin with the realization that the system of meanings and meanings of religion has been at all times inextricably linked with the forms of communication. (Hoover, 2006, p. 113)

In a number of works devoted to the issue of interaction between the media and religion, both of these social institutions are viewed as dualistic, opposing. The researchers note that this confrontation leads to an attempt on the part of the media to push the religious context to the periphery of the agenda. At the same time, such an assessment of the designated problem today seems to us one-sided and biased. At the present stage of media development, it is legitimate to talk about the dialogical interaction of these two institutions, their mutually beneficial cooperation.

2. Problem Statement

In the past few decades, a large number of scientific studies have appeared that raise questions about the representation of religious processes in the media and the mutual influence of media and religion. In general, most Western scholars dealing with this problem note that at present, religion is returning to the public sphere and actively interacting with other social institutions (politics, economics, health service, etc.) (Foundations and Futures in the Sociology of Religion, 2018).

A Danish researcher, Stig Hjarvard, in his work paid special attention to such a process as the mediatization of religion. By this process, the scientist means that in modern society the media are

becoming the main information resource on all religious issues, moreover, the mass media and religion in some cases complement and perform the functions of each other (Hjarvard, 2013).

The works on the religious field by P. Bourdieu and I. Hoffmann are no less important. At Hoffmann's work is noted that in this field, stigmatization of certain religious practices or groups is possible. This theory in relation to Russian reality was developed by the Russian researcher N.V. Shangin (2015), who noted significant imbalances in the development of the religious field in Russia at the present time, the stigmatization of a number of new religious movements, the impoverishment of the country's religious landscape even in comparison with the 1990s, as well as the politicization the religious sphere, where the exploitation of certain stereotypes or fears leads to an increase in religious tension, marginalization of a number of religious groups (Shangin, 2015).

Stuart Hoover, an American scientist and head of the Center for the Study of Religion, Media and Culture at the University of Colorado, speaks about the significant role and connection between religion and communication. In his work "Religion in the Age of Media" (Hoover, 2006), he notes that in the 21st century religion takes an increasingly significant place in the media, not only as an object of coverage, but also at the value level. Like Hjarvard (2013), he draws attention to such an important process as the mediatization of religion. The researcher notes that religion is gaining institutional strength in the modern public sphere (Hjarvard, 2013). An equally important process, according to the author, is that modern media (film, television and music industry) provide access not only to monolithic world religions, but also give the audience access to a variety of spiritual practices. He also proposes to abandon the approach that media is just a tool for disseminating information, and move to a new approach, which assumes that media is an integrated part of any living religious system.

A number of linguists have made a great contribution to the study of religious communication, having developed the concept of religious discourse. The leading researchers in this area were V.I. Karasik and N.B. Mechkovskaya.

So, according to Karasik (1999), religious discourse is a special type of institutional discourse with its inherent components. But if we talk about the forms of setting the religious agenda in the secular media, then it should be noted that "the implementation of religious discourse through the mass media differs significantly from its implementation in the church and near-church communicative environment, both in the form of its presentation and in such aspects as the chronotope and addressees (Chumakova, 2012).

At the same time, there are no works in modern science devoted to the analysis of the modern Russian media space and its interaction with the activities of various confessions. It seems expedient to conduct such a study on the materials of the federal publication *Izvestia*, in which the agenda often includes issues of religion and spiritual life of the Russian Federation.

3. Research Questions

Questions of religion and spiritual life of society in the modern media space occupy a special place among the issues of culture.

The researchers note that the media and religion, being autonomous entities, are in a complex interaction, in which both features of cooperation and competition can be found. At the same time, in the era of media, religious confessions recognize the capabilities of the media for adequate and effective

preaching. Conversely, the media often make religion scanned and broadcast. Mediatization of religious discourse is of particular importance in the post-Soviet space. This is due to the fact that Russian society is now going through an active process of the formation of religious ideas, carried out mainly through the media. It is difficult for confessions operating in the Russian Federation to ignore the modern role of the media in the religious content dissemination. That is why many religious organizations actively use the opportunities of the media to carry out their activities, however non-media means of Religious communication are no less relevant (Drugova & Zhelnovakova, 2020). For example, religious subjects create websites for their audience, the press and television with content for believers exist not only in a traditional, but also in a digital format, and the capabilities of messengers and social networks are involved in mediatization.

It must be admitted that the media do not just broadcast religious consciousness and preaching meanings: the media construct the audience's perception of religion. They regulate the volume, content and structure of its publicity. The “agenda-setting” theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) has had a significant impact on understanding the role of the media in covering religious issues. The religious agenda, despite the fact that freedom of conscience has existed in the Russian Federation for almost thirty years, is still in the stage of formation and does not always fully reflect the processes taking place in this area. Moreover, a number of conflicts arising on religious or ethno-confessional grounds are associated with misunderstanding or incorrect coverage of these issues in modern media.

It should be noted that at the moment, the process of forming a religious agenda has practically not been studied by both foreign and domestic scientists, which makes the presented study relevant and in demand.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine the formation of religious discourse in the Russian media space based on the materials of the federal publication *Izvestia*, to identify the features of the religious agenda in newspaper publications, to study editorial approaches to covering religious and spiritual issues.

The objectives of the stated research are:

- presentation of the results of content analysis of the materials of the *Izvestia* publication;
- revealing the role of the publication in shaping the reader's attitude towards religion and spiritual life of Russians;
- genre and thematic analysis of publications on the activities of religious subjects of the Russian Federation;
- research of the linguistic features of the presented materials in order to identify the verbal and modal components of the discourse.

5. Research Methods

The methodology for studying the media text of religious topics in this work is presented by the method of content analysis (sociological and statistical method of content analysis) and by the method of discourse analysis aimed at studying the methods of production and perception of mass media texts,

linguistic methods (structurally comparative and structurally descriptive), historical -cultural and cultural-comparative methods.

Izvestia (a newspaper and a multimedia information center (MIC)) were chosen by us to analyze the modern religious agenda, since it is the oldest high-quality publication (published since 1917), which, in the context of media convergence, managed to create a universal platform for the production of multi-format information content - for TV, print and Internet, which also includes a new Internet portal IZ.ru (Official website of the newspaper *Izvestia*, 2020), combining the capabilities of a round-the-clock news TV channel and a socio-political publication.

We analyzed 105 issues of the newspaper from May to September 2018. During this time, 28 materials were published on religious topics or containing linguistic units of this topic. That is, almost a third of all issues contain one or another religious content presented on different newspaper pages - from one page, where material is usually announced with a continuation on other pages, page 6 Society (continued for a full page), up to page 7 with a permanent section "Culture". Other sections (newspaper strips) containing similar materials: "News" (2 pages), "World" (2,3 or 4 pages), "History" (6 pages) and even "Economy and Business" (4 or 5 page). However, basically, materials on religious topics are published in the "Opinion" section (16 out of 28 publications), in the "Society" section.

The authors of the "opinions" are famous clerics of different confessions, political scientists, public figures who share their thoughts on the eve of famous religious holidays or social events. In terms of genre and stylistic features, this is usually *an essay* or *a word*. The latter is a rather exotic genre for printed periodicals. But in this case it has all the features inherent in this genre: a written version of a solemn speech delivered on especially significant social events or a "round date" of this event.

Of the 16 "Opinions", exactly half (8) belong to the clerics of the Russian Orthodox Church. These are 6 ministers of local churches, as a rule, the city of Moscow and the Moscow region and 2 representatives of the church administration. 2 "opinions" belong to Ravil Gainutdinov, Chairman of the Council of Muftis of Russia and 1 publication to Alexander Boroda, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia.

In quantitative terms, most of the opinions belong to the ministers or followers of the Christian church, then the Muslim and Jewish. This is probably correlated with the number of people professing traditional religions and living in the territory of the Russian Federation. According to the Public Opinion Foundation (POF) in Russia, 73% of citizens consider themselves believers, of which 63% of those surveyed consider themselves to be Orthodox, 8% profess Islam, 1% of citizens consider themselves to be other Christian confessions (73% of Russian citizens..., 2018). *Izvestia*, as an all-Russian publication, cooperates mainly with traditional religions, not providing newspaper space to other, smaller confessions - Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, etc.

The authors of materials on religious topics are professional journalists working or collaborating with *Izvestia*. Out of 28 materials on religious topics, they prepared 12 publications. The most popular genres of journalistic materials are correspondence (5), interviews (4), reportage and photo reportage (2), and article (1).

Thus, we can conclude that journalists as well as specialists - clergy, writers, political, scientists - pay their attention to religious topics. Significant public events, problematic situations or interesting

personalities become the subject of their professional materials, written according to the laws of journalistic genres. In this sense, the religious agenda does not differ from other subject-thematic areas and attracts "pen workers" by their relevance, topicality and informational reason.

As for the subject matter of the materials, it is quite diverse, but mostly tied to certain events or dates. First of all, this applies to religious holidays, calendars, anniversaries. 18 out of 28 articles were devoted to this. Religious and secular holidays became the informational occasion for them: the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Children's Day, Muslim holiday Kurbanbayram, the beginning of the New Year according to Jewish tradition - September 9, and results of the Year of the Volunteer.

Part of the materials - 6 out of 28, were devoted to problematic situations that are part of the world general political processes, for example, obtaining autocephaly in Ukraine - 3 materials out of 6. The topic of 3 more materials was socio-political and social problems: the insufficient number of synagogues in Moscow, amendments to the law "On a special assessment of working conditions" to release clergymen from the obligate and the scandalous proposal to reuse the abandoned graves in the government bill on the funeral business.

Another 4 materials in their theme are not related to any calendar events or current social problems. Rather, these are "eternal" topics related to concepts such as "life", "death", "happiness", patriotic education, insult to religious feelings and help in illness/

Investigating the thematic diversity of materials on the religious agenda, we can conclude that most of the publications have a pronounced informational reason and are tied to certain events or dates. The authors of these materials, as a rule, are professional journalists or they are ordered by the editorial staff of the newspaper for certain dates. In some cases, journalists interview experts to broaden the subject matter and turn it in different angles. The situation is similar with problematic topics. Either these are analytical materials in the genres of correspondence or analytical interviews prepared by professional journalists, or this is a view (commentary) of political scientists on a problem situation / process. Eternal themes become the lot of publicists, in this case, clergy, who, having a certain life and practical experience, can talk about faith, culture, moral values. Journalists avoid eschew such topics, preferring specifics and linking to news feeds.

6. Findings

Analysis of the CGM (compositional-graphic model) of the newspaper shows that the religious agenda is not a priority in the newspaper Izvestia. The frequency of occurrence of materials on this topic from 2 (in June) to 10 (in September) on different newspaper pages from 1 to 7 pages. However, given that the Izvestia newspaper is a business secular publication, it can be concluded that the religious agenda is not some narrowly focused topic "registered" in one place of the newspaper. Since religious topics relate to different spheres of life, materials containing the key words: faith, religion, church, appear in different sections / pages of the newspaper "Society", "World", "Economy and Business", "News", "Culture", "History". That is, religion is an integral part of the country's social, political, economic and cultural life. Not a corner, a place to satisfy the religious needs of readers.

We can say that the topic is not a priority, but it is quite in demand by readers and updated by the editorial policy of the newspaper. The level of stylistic and genre expressiveness of materials - analytical,

journalistic, is quite high, the topics are diverse and topical. As for information materials on religious topics in the genre of note, extended note, they are published on-line on the Internet portal IZ.ru, where practically the news is updated every hour and contains multi-format informational content of TV, print and the Internet. In 2018, the IZ.ru Internet portal published 215 religious news items. This is almost four times more than in the offline media of the Izvestia newspaper. That is, the topic "Religion" was covered almost every day or every other day.

7. Conclusion

Thus, at present, the religious agenda is being established largely thanks to the mass media, since the formation of public opinion on the topic presented depends on their interpretation of religious processes. Having examined the publications of the Izvestia newspaper on the chosen topic, it should be assumed that such an analysis is applicable to the coverage of religious processes in other high-quality publications.

Religious discourse that is emerging in the media space of modern Russian publications retains the linguistic features of confessional structures (dogmatism, emotionality, argumentation), while it acquires its own characteristics, which include colloquial vocabulary, methods of manipulating consciousness, mythologization. Thanks to the media, the religious agenda is becoming relevant for a wide audience, and the mediatization of religious content makes it as accessible as possible not only for representatives of various faiths, but also for those who are just beginning to be interested in religious issues. Today, a religious text in the media space is becoming a media product that has its own characteristics and specific ways of implementation.

Despite the fairly broad coverage of religious processes in the analyzed publication, we can single out a number of problems that should be paid attention to by journalists in order to form a more balanced view of this topic: firstly, it is the expansion of the range of confessions covered by the newspaper in order to form an objective religious picture; secondly, this is an increase in the number of analytical materials on the topics presented, which will lay the foundation for the analysis of religious processes by wide layers of society.

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