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PHENOMENON OF PILGRIMAGE IN RUSSIAN CULTURE:
FROM ORIGINS TO PRESENT DAY

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Abstract

The paper considers pilgrimage as a phenomenon of Russian culture, exploring the history of the emergence and spread of pilgrimage in Russia, the time of its heyday and decline, and the current state. The authors identify several values that, according to Russian theologians of the 19th–20th centuries, St. Theophan the Recluse, Archbishop Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky), as well as an unidentified author of the religious and philosophical book “Outspoken stories of a wanderer to his Spiritual Father”, open pilgrimage for a believing Christian, they say about the significance of preserving the pilgrimage tradition for its subsequent transmission to future generations. Based on the analysis of a number of works by such representatives of. Analysis and comparison of a number of works by representatives of Russian religious thought of the 19th–20th centuries with the works of modern clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church and Orthodox publicists leads the authors to the conclusion that there is a problem of transforming attitudes towards pilgrimage in the culture of contemporary Russia, associated with a misunderstanding of its essence and purpose. The authors define the issue of distinguishing between pilgrimage and religious tourism, reveal internal and external criteria for their difference, and also outline a possible way to solve the problem of their identification. The conclusion about the return of interest in pilgrimage among domestic scientists, clergymen and Orthodox publicists is made in the paper.

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1. Introduction

The study relevance is dictated by the transformation of the “value” category that has occurred over the past few decades in the minds of modern Russians. For many centuries, the pilgrimage in the Orthodox culture of Russia was perceived as one of the highest spiritual values for a Christian. Many believers, regardless of their social status, considered it their duty to visit holy places, the main of which was Jerusalem. St. Luke Voino-Yasenetsky (2010) wrote about the purpose of the Orthodox pilgrimage that People went to honor those who had endured severe suffering for Christ Religious pilgrimage in Russia was equated to a feat, since many believers understood that they could die without reaching the holy place, the path to which was very long and exhausting, required a certain mental and physical endurance from the pilgrim. However, in recent years there has been a transformation of the “value” and together with it the loss of historical memory about the true meaning of pilgrimage for a Christian. As a result of a difficult spiritual situation caused by the authority fading of traditional Christian values in favor of new spiritual guidelines for human self-improvement, pilgrimage has become to perceive in modern Russian society as one of the varieties of tourism – religious tourism, a form of “Orthodox rest.” A miscomprehension of the pilgrimage essence can eventually lead to the loss of its original meaning, and in the future contribute to the complete disappearance.

2. Problem Statement

What are the differences between pilgrimage and religious tourism? The criteria for distinguishing religious pilgrimage from religious tourism can be both internal – essential, and external – formal. The external criteria that are subject to empirical verification include the method of pilgrimage, or rather the rejection of luxury during its implementation. The luxury of staying in a hotel and flying in business class are in conflict with the ascetic lifestyle of the first Christians, who are content with little in food, clothing, and shelter. However, this should not at all mean a complete rejection of modern technical achievements in the field of transport technologies for a faster arrival to the holy place. As E. Hobsbawm shows, any tradition is not static, the form transfer inevitably leads to the transformation of the tradition semantic content (Gerasimova, 2020). Another external criterion for distinguishing pilgrimage from religious tourism should be the religious nature of the organization that provides free assistance in accompanying pilgrimage trips. Religious organizations, unlike tourism organizations, should not charge money for the provision of transport and other services. Donations made by pilgrims must be exclusively voluntary. On the website of the pilgrimage center of the Diocese, we have found an announcement that the church does not bless trips to holy places organized by “private third-party organizers”, confirming the general position of the church on this issue. Pilgrimage trips should be organized by the church, having the goal of the spiritual enlightenment of believers, and their familiarization with religious shrines. The internal criteria for distinguishing pilgrimage from religious tourism, which cannot be empirically verified, include the presence of religious feelings in a person, his desire to acquire the Holy Spirit in those places where biblical history was made, where saints acquired it, where miracles were performed, as well as the presence of a spiritual the believer's work on himself. The purpose for which a religious pilgrimage is performed in Christianity is the complicated spiritual work of a believer on himself for the sake of

approaching the ideal that Jesus Christ stands for. Unlike religious organizations, tourist organizations are commercial that charge fees for accompanying tourists to places of religious shrines, for travel and accommodation in close proximity to religious sites. Unlike pilgrimage, religious tourism sets itself completely diverse goals, such as visiting religious shrines in order to get new impressions, recreation, acquaintance with religious history and art, and has cultural and entertainment nature without involving the spiritual work of the believer on himself.

3. Research Questions

The pilgrimage history in Russia dates back to the 12th century. At that time, one of the first pilgrimage works “Life and walking of Abbot Daniel from the Russian Land” appeared. However, the pilgrimage reached its peak in Russian culture much later in the 19th century, which was reflected in the theological writings of that time. The Russian Emperor Alexander III founded the “Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society” to ensure the movement safety of pilgrims in the Holy Land. Nevertheless, the road to the holy place continued to be hard: “What awaited a pilgrim in the 19th century who decided to go to the Holy Land? A journey of several months, or even a year, through the entire Russia, two weeks by steamboat in third-class cabins, and the unknown” (Mikhailova, 2015, p. 72). Support for pilgrimage at the state level, the evolution of scientific and technological progress contributed over time to an easier, safer and faster road to holy places, now the pilgrim could make his way not only on horseback, as was the case for many centuries, but also on a steamboat.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, representatives of Russian theology, St. Theophan the Recluse, St. Luke of Crimea (Voino-Yasenetsky, 2010), as well as the author of the religious and philosophical book “Outspoken stories of a wanderer to his Spiritual Father”, whose name will remain unknown, expressed their attitude towards religious pilgrimage. Saint Theophan the Recluse repeatedly addressed the pilgrimage issue in his writings, declaring its significance for the Orthodox Christian, and called for moderation in the accomplishment of this virtue. The theologian urged believers to refrain from making frequent pilgrimages in the book “Holy Places”, since many Orthodox Christians, abandoning their household duties and forgetting the words from the Holy Scriptures about the omnipresence of God, sought to visit holy places. If a person was spiritually ready to make a pilgrimage, then the Saint did not dissuade, but rather instructed him, urging to make a pilgrimage to Valaam and Solovki. Another representative of Russian theology, St. Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky, 2010), repeatedly emphasized the concern of the Christianity adoption by Russia and called on believers to make a pilgrimage to the Kiev Caves, Trinity Sergius and Pochaev Lavra.

The mentioned thinkers declared the pilgrimage to be one of the main values for a Christian and associated such spiritual values as the consecution of the feat of Jesus Christ and his followers, the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, the preservation of historical memory, the possibility of concentrating for prayer in solitude and acquaintance with the culture and craft of other peoples, while warning believers against identifying pilgrimage with vagrancy.

Approximately at the same time, such works as “The Tale of the Wandering and Journey through Russia, Moldavia, Turkey and the Holy Land of the Tonister of the Holy Mount Athos Monk Parthenius”, “A Brief Description of the Journey to the Holy City of Jerusalem and Other Holy Places” by

Archimandrite Paul, "Journey in the Holy Land" by Markova, appeared. It should be noted that Russian theologians and religious thinkers of the late 19th – mid-20th century rarely mentioned the terms "pilgrimage", "pilgrim" in their works, as well as the term "pilgrim", which has a slightly diverse meaning, preferring to apply such synonyms and expressions close in meaning as a wanderer, hermit, "a stranger in "alien lands"", and a traveler, "visiting holy places." Solovyov, one of the representatives of Russian religious and philosophical thought of the 19th century, used the term "pilgrim" in his works.

Outstanding Russian religious thinkers Florenskij, Karsavin, Berdyaev, Vysheslavcev devoted their works to revealing the essence of the pilgrimage phenomenon in the 20th century. Reasoning about the phenomenon essence of pilgrimage in Christianity can be found in the works of Florenskij. The philosopher believes that a pilgrimage can change a Christian's view of the world around him, help a believing Christian to discern the uniqueness of nature. The pilgrimage theme was also reflected in the writings of Karsavin. In the work "On the Essence of Orthodoxy," the philosopher points out that the craving for wandering is a characteristic feature of the Russian person mentality, whose way of thinking significantly differs from a Western person. A Russian person is aimed at inner spiritual self-improvement, at his rapprochement with God. If he fails to achieve it within the walls of his own home, then he is ready to wander the world in search of the Holy Spirit acquisition. Karsavin believes that "the type of wanderer from the people is the most remarkable Russian type. But people of the highest cultural stratum, Russian writers, and Russian thinkers were wanderers with us, everybody was seeker of God's truth." (Karsavin, 1924). The ideas Karsavin about wandering as a characteristic feature of the Russian mentality is in many ways consonant with the ideas of Berdyaev. Berdyaev writes in his work "The Russian Idea": "A wanderer walks on the vast Russian land, never settles and is not attached to anything. The wanderer seeks the truth, seeks the Kingdom of God, he is directed into the distance" (Berdyaev, 1990, p. 123). According to Berdyaev, wanderers have always been in Russia, the thinker is talking not only about physical wandering, but also about spiritual wandering as a constant spiritual search. Berdyaev classifies famous Russian writers as spiritual wanderers, such as Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Solovyov, as well as figures of the Russian revolutionary movement. The book about the pilgrimage "Outspoken stories of a wanderer to his Spiritual Father" made a great impression on another famous Russian thinker – Vysheslavcev. Reading this book and writing a preface to one of its foreign editions contributed to the thinker's interest in the history of religious pilgrimage in Russia.

Therefore, representatives of Russian religious philosophy, as well as representatives of theology, considered pilgrimage to be one of the main values for a Christian, were interested in the essence and history of the phenomenon emergence in Russia, and called the desire to make it an integral part of the Russian person mentality.

Beginning in 1914, most of the Soviet society refused to make pilgrimages and other religious traditions of the Russian people under the pressure of the new political ideology of the state. The tradition returns to Russia only after a few decades, but the given phenomenon appears in an updated form under the influence of scientific and technological progress. According to Gerasimova V., the revival of the pilgrimage tradition from Europe to Palestine among Russian emigrants takes place in 1952 due to Bishop Methodius, who has organized a number of trips to Orthodox holy places, which ultimately contributes to

the formation of a “psychological unity” among pilgrims who are unable to return to Russia after the Great Patriotic War.

Historical, cultural and philological aspects of the pilgrimage phenomenon are currently reflected in the papers of Kaluzhnikova, Gudkova, Tinina. The most complete modern study of pilgrimage belongs to the Russian historian and culturologist Zhitenev., who devoted his monograph “Religious Pilgrimage: Intercultural Communications and Civilizational Context” to the history of pilgrimage emergence in such world religions as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. A significant contribution to the study of the pilgrimage phenomenon was also made by contemporary ministers of the church, Metropolitan Mark of Ryazan and Mikhailovsky, as well as priest Sergiy Kruglov. The clergy in their writings testify to the phenomenon significance for an Orthodox Christian. They write that contemporary believers often confuse pilgrimage with religious tourism and urge them “not to make this mistake”; it was just directed against the “tourist” approach to visiting the holy places of Palestine by people who, out of idle curiosity or vanity, came to the places of the earthly life of the Lord and the Virgin” (Zhitenev, 2012). Currently, representatives of modern Orthodox journalism Dorofeev and Mikhailova dedicate their papers to the phenomenon description of religious pilgrimage in Russia.

Popularization of the pilgrimage value in Russia, in our opinion, should be facilitated by identifying the essential criteria for the difference between pilgrimage and religious tourism, which is essential for the Russian Orthodox Church, for believing Christians and people in spiritual search. It is required to rely on the places of Holy Scripture, the works of saints and Christian theologians, which speak of its appointment when highlighting essential features of the pilgrimage. The problem of distinguishing between pilgrimage and religious tourism at various levels was raised in the articles of Hegumen Serapion (Mitko) and Korpusov. However, the methodology for studying the pilgrimage phenomenon needs to be more thoroughly refined, considering the socio-political changes that have taken place in Russian society over the past two years caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and several other events. The pilgrimage study is also complicated by the fact that it has a status of indeterminate for a Christian. In 2020, many pilgrimage trips, including trips to Jerusalem for Christians, have been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the vaccine invention, wear of protective masks, social distancing, and an active vaccination campaign in Russia and other countries in 2021 made the return of pilgrimages possible. The temporary suspension of pilgrimage organizations' activities only contributed to the revival of scientific and religious discussions on the importance of working to preserve this tradition in Christianity. Thus, on March 31, 2021, a scientific and practical seminar on the development of modern religious tourism and Orthodox pilgrimage was held at the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society. The words of Hieromonk Arseny (Minin) “Start a new life, blessed, revived by visiting holy places” (Minin, 2012) became the motto of the seminar. On May 20, 2021, a round table on the topic “Vaccination: Ethical Issues in the Light of the Orthodox Faith” was held at the Sretensky Theological Academy.

4. Purpose of the Study

Establishing the pilgrimage value in the culture of modern Russia requires the solution of several research issues. The main thing is a comparison of views on the value of religious pilgrimage by

representatives of Russian theology and Russian religious philosophy of the 19th century as the heyday of religious pilgrimage in Russia and modern Russian theologians, Christian publicists, aimed at comprehending the specifics and the value of pilgrimage in the culture of contemporary Russia. Another equally crucial task, to our view, is the need to develop criteria for the essential difference between pilgrimage and religious tourism.

5. Research Methods

The solution of the set tasks seems to be possible due to the application of particular methodological approaches of scientific research. It is planned to apply the methods of description, analysis, synthesis, and generalization of knowledge. Comparative-contrastive and comparative-historical methods of scientific research should serve as tools for identifying the specifics of modern domestic pilgrimage. Owing to the appliance of the given methods, it is planned to search for and compare ideas about the role and essence of pilgrimage in the representatives' studies of Russian religious thought of the 19th–20th centuries and modern religious and scientific sources.

6. Findings

Nowadays, the trend of the Orthodox values revival is being updated in the national culture, despite the forced restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pilgrimage trips are organized, scientific conferences are held, articles are published, and books on pilgrimage are published. Large-scale scientific and technological changes in people's lives lead them to a situation of spiritual crisis, the way out of which can be an introduction to the Orthodox tradition of pilgrimage. A necessary condition for the further growth of the scientific community interest in the phenomenon of pilgrimage is the development of a methodology for its study. Awareness of the differences between the phenomena of pilgrimage and religious tourism by the church and part of Russian society contributes to the revival and preservation of its true meaning.

7. Conclusion

The papers' analysis of Russian theologians and representatives of religious and philosophical thought of the 19th – early 20th centuries devoted to comprehending the phenomenon of religious pilgrimage in Russia, as well as their comparison with the works of modern church ministers and representatives of Orthodox journalism, allows us to draw several conclusions:

1. Pilgrimage is an integral part of the Orthodox culture of the Russian people, as indicated by both the works of Russian theologians and philosophers of the past, and the works of modern scientists, clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church and Orthodox publicists dedicated to the given phenomenon.

2. According to the works of Russian religious thinkers of the 19th-20th centuries, it has been established that, being one of the most significant values for an Orthodox Christian, pilgrimage entails a number of such values in relation to the believer as following the feat of Jesus Christ and Orthodox saints, acquiring the Holy Spirit, preserving the memory of the biblical history events, concentration in reading a

prayer, and gaining new knowledge about the life and activities of representatives of other peoples and cultures.

3. The analysis of the studied texts allows distinguishing pilgrimage from religious tourism due to essential and formal sides. Moreover, the presence of religious feelings and the desire for spiritual work on oneself represent internal criteria for the variety between the concepts, since they are not subject to empirical verification, as well as external, empirically verifiable criteria for difference: the non-commercial nature of the trip and the accompaniment of pilgrims to Christian holy places, and the mandatory participation of Christian churches in the pilgrimage organization.

4. A number of changes have been identified regarding the formal side of the pilgrimage. The changes are related to the development of transport technologies that allow pilgrims to get to the holy place faster, as well as the observance of certain sanitary measures by pilgrims caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, namely maintaining social distance, wearing medical masks, the need for vaccination, preserving the health of the pilgrim and contribute to further implementation and conservation of the pilgrimage tradition in Russian culture.

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