



## Religiosity in Context: towards a Deeper Understanding of the Phenomenon

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### Abstract

The article deals with the contemporary study of religiosity. The author addresses two core questions of the sociology of religion: what methods are appropriate for the study of religiosity, and what factors affect religiosity? Regarding the first question, contemporary multidimensional studies are described. The author emphasises the limitations of the quantitative method of scales and analyses the criteria of religiosity used in those studies. Considering the factors that affect religiosity and based on Robert Bellah's theory of religious evolution and Peter Berger's biographical approach, the author suggests that the historical, cultural, sociopolitical and biographical context should be taken into account in order to better understand the phenomenon of religiosity. Considering the limitations of quantitative methods, it is suggested that they be combined with qualitative methods. Special attention is paid to the studies carried out in the former Soviet Union.

**Keywords:** religiosity, religious evolution, biographical approach, multidimensional approach, criteria of religiosity, quantitative methods, qualitative methods, Pentecostalism in Russia

**Słowa kluczowe:** religijność, ewolucja religijna, podejście biograficzne, podejście wielowymiarowe, kryteria religijności, metody ilościowe, metody jakościowe, pentekostalizm w Rosji

One of the most notable trends in the sociology of religion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the secularisation thesis<sup>1</sup>. The disappearance of religion in the modern era due to progressive economic development has been and remains widely asserted by some scholars<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The first, shorter version of this article was presented at the Second International Krakow Study of Religions Symposium "Religions: Fields of Research, Methods and Perspectives" (25–27 November 2013).

<sup>2</sup> As examples see S. Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*, Oxford 2002; K. Dobbelaere, *Towards an Integrated Perspective of the Process Related to the Descriptive Concept of Secularization*, "Sociology of Religion" 1999, no. 60, pp. 229–247.

However, “the number of social scientists who criticize the secularisation thesis [...] is growing”<sup>3</sup>. According to them, the situation we are facing can be called “desecularisation”<sup>4</sup>, or “return of religions”<sup>5</sup>, etc. In fact, many processes contradict the secularisation thesis: the growing number of Muslims, the rapid development of Pentecostalism, “religious revival” in Eastern Europe – although the scale of this is often exaggerated<sup>6</sup>. And it is not only about the macro-level processes: Thomas Luckmann noted that religion did not lose ground, but just changed its form, deinstitutionalising and becoming “invisible”. Talcott Parsons’s suggestion that religion is not displaced but is modified in the modern world is logically connected with that of the German researcher<sup>7</sup>. In this regard, Robert Bellah seems to be right in saying that currently “the analysis of modern man as secular, materialistic, dehumanised, and in the deepest sense areligious” is misguided<sup>8</sup>.

At the same time, the study of individuals as non-secular, non-materialistic, and religious requires the understanding of distinctive characteristics of modern religion as a social phenomenon. Bellah identifies several stages of the development of religion, each of which is an ideal type, and unites them under the idea of religious evolution. These stages are primitive religion, archaic religion, historic religion, early modern religion, and modern religion<sup>9</sup>.

Unlike other stages, modern religion makes a fundamental break with the traditional historic symbolisation<sup>10</sup> and, along with archaic religion, does not reject the world<sup>11</sup>. Bellah relies on a local – American – example of religious life in building up his ideas about modern religion. In particular, he argues that “the American religious revival stems from motives quite opposite to world rejection”<sup>12</sup>. However, I find this true for Russia as well, as the most common values of Russians, 77%

<sup>3</sup> D. Pollack, D.V.A. Olson, Preface to *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies*, D. Pollack, D.V.A. Olson (eds.), New York 2008, p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup> *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religions and World Politics*, P. Berger (ed.), Washington D.C. 1999.

<sup>5</sup> M. Riesebrodt, *Die Rückkehr der Religionen: Fundamentalismus und der “Kampf der Kulturen”*, München 2000.

<sup>6</sup> For a critical analysis of “religious revival” in Russia using the example of Tyumen Protestant communities see: R.O. Poplavsky, *Tjumenskie protestantskie obschiny v kontekste “religioznogo vozrozhdeniya”*, “Vestnik archeologii, antropologii i etnografii” 2013, no. 1, pp. 118–123. It is worth noting that while in Eastern Europe the term “religious revival” is understood as restoration of religious life and religious freedom after the demise of repressive regimes, in the United States it is used to describe the growth of religious, especially Islamic, fundamentalism. This article, in particular, was suggested by Ralph W. Hood Jr. at the abovementioned Second Krakow International Symposium.

<sup>7</sup> See R. Vanderstraeten, *Talcott Parsons and the enigma of secularization*, “European Journal of Social Theory” 2013, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> R.N. Bellah, *Religious Evolution* [in:] *The Robert Bellah Reader*, R.N. Bellah, S.M. Tipton (eds.), Durham 2006, p. 45. Thomas Luckmann also believes that it is impossible to understand a person without taking religion into consideration. See T. Luckmann, *Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*, New York 1967, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> R.N. Bellah, *Religious Evolution...*, pp. 28–49.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 25–26.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27.

of whom consider themselves to be believers<sup>13</sup>, are power, well-being, personal achievements, and safety<sup>14</sup>.

Bellah bases his model of religious evolution on two fundamental theses. Firstly, he argues that religious symbolisation of “the general order of existence” has been changing over time towards a greater diversity, complexity, and rationalisation. Secondly and respectively, the concepts of religious action, the nature of religious actors and associations, and the role of religion in society have been changing as well<sup>15</sup>. All these changes, increasing diversity and complexity of religion are largely to be found at the stage of modern religion resulting in that we are witnessing, “a great religious transformation when the old is no more, and the new is not yet”<sup>16</sup>. Peter Berger similarly argues that in today’s world an individual has an infinite number of options for how to deal with the world<sup>17</sup>.

Contemporary multidimensional studies of religiosity usually use scales which as a rule reflect the complex and diverse nature of the phenomenon. Still, this method is to a large extent irrelevant regarding factors which influence individuals’ religiosity. In this article I would like to address the question about these factors and the methods which can sociologically reveal them. Beforehand, I shall briefly analyse the strengths and weaknesses of using scales in research on religiosity.

## Contemporary Research on Religiosity

Research on religiosity is not confined to one area of studies. Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and philosophers are interested in this subject. A significant proportion of recently published articles and books deals with the influence of the degree of religiosity on various spheres of human activity. This is especially true for works on the psychology of religion, psychiatry and medicine, which can be explained by the practical value of such research and by the large influence of the American tradition, in which psychologists were the first to explore the subject. In these studies we find data about the impact of religiosity on health<sup>18</sup>, the mental and

<sup>13</sup> *Rossiyane o religii*, <http://www.levada.ru/24-12-2013/rossiyane-o-religii> [accessed: 25.12.2013].

<sup>14</sup> V.S. Magun, M.G. Rudnev, *Izuchenie bazovykh tsennostei rossiiyan na osnove Evropeiskogo sotsial'nogo issledovaniya*, <http://www.hse.ru/data/326/183/1240/present.pdf> [accessed: 25.12.2013]. For more about the European Social Survey see [www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org).

<sup>15</sup> R.N. Bellah, *Religious Evolution...*, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> R.N. Bellah, *Introduction* [in:] *Beyond Belief. Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditionalist World*, Berkeley–Los Angeles 1991, p. xi.

<sup>17</sup> P. Berger, *Religiya i problema ubeditel'nosti*, “Neprikosnovenny zapas” 2003, no. 6, <http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2003/6/berger.html> [accessed: 25.12.2013].

<sup>18</sup> See, for example F.K. Aaron, D. Levine, H.R. Burstin, *African American Church Participation and Health Care Practices*, “Journal of General Internal Medicine” 2003, vol. 18, no. 11, pp. 908–913; K.N. Amoako-Agyeman, *Adolescent Religiosity and Attitudes to HIV and AIDS in Ghana*, “SAHARA-J: Journal of Social Aspects of HIV / AIDS” 2012, vol. 4, no. 9, pp. 226–241; O. Anson, A. Levenson, B. Maoz, D.Y. Bonne, *Religious Community, Individual Religiosity, and Health: A Tale of Two Kibbutzim*, “Sociology” 1991, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 119–132; K. Assimakopoulos, K. Karaivazoglou, A.A. Ifanti, M.K. Gerolymos, H.P. Kalofonos, G. Iconomou, *Religiosity and Its Relation to Quality of Life in Chris-*

emotional state<sup>19</sup>, the decision-making process concerning abortion<sup>20</sup>, sexual behaviour<sup>21</sup>, one's political preferences<sup>22</sup>, the use of modern technologies<sup>23</sup>, family and gender strategies<sup>24</sup>, economic status<sup>25</sup>, etc.

Another large set of research focuses on the level of religiosity in a certain country or a certain social group. This type of research is conducted both by sociological agencies and by individual or groups of researchers<sup>26</sup>, and is particularly

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*tian Orthodox Cancer Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy*, "Psycho-oncology" 2009, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 284–289; B. Aukst-Margetić, M. Jakovljević, B. Margetić, M. Bisćan, M. Samija, *Religiosity, Depression and Pain in Patients with Breast Cancer*, "General Hospital Psychiatry" 2005, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 250–255; L.M. Chatters, *Public Health: Public Health Research and Practice*, "Annual Review of Public Health" 2000, vol. 21, pp. 335–367.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example A.M. Abdel-Khalek, *Personality Dimensions and Religiosity among Kuwaiti Muslim College Students*, "Personality and Individual Differences" 2013, vol. 54, no. 2, pp. 149–152; *idem*, *Religiosity, Subjective Well-being, and Neuroticism*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture" 2010, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 67–79; S. Nkansah-Amankra, A. Diedhiou, S.K. Agbanu, H.L.K. Agbanu, N.S. Opoku-Adomako, P. Twumasi-Ankrah, *A Longitudinal Evaluation of Religiosity and Psychosocial Determinants of Suicidal Behaviors among a Population-based Sample in the United States*, "Journal of Affective Disorders" 2012, vol. 139, no. 1, pp. 40–51; B. Aukst-Margetić, M. Jakovljević, B. Margetić, M. Bisćan, M. Samija, *op.cit.*; M. Band, S. Dein, K.M. Loewenthal, *Religiosity, Coping, and Suicidality within the Religious Zionist Community of Israel Thematic Qualitative Analysis*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture" 2011, vol. 14, no. 10, pp. 1031–1047; S.A. Christopher, *The Relationship between Nurses' Religiosity and Willingness to let Patients Control the Conversation about End-of-life Care*, "Patient Education and Counseling" 2010, vol. 78, no. 2, pp. 250–255.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example A. Adamczyk, *Understanding the Effects of Personal and School Religiosity on the Decision to Abort a Premarital Pregnancy*, "Journal of Health and Social Behavior" 2009, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 180–195.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example A. Adamczyk, J. Felson, *Friends' Religiosity and First Sex*, "Social Science Research" 2006, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 924–947; J. Ball, L. Armistead, B. Austin, *The Relationship between Religiosity and Adjustment among African-American, Female, Urban Adolescents*, "Journal of Adolescence" 2003, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 431–446.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example J.J. Al-Menayes, *Mass Media Use, Gender and Religiosity as Predictors of Attitudes Towards Israel in Kuwait*, "International Communication Gazette" 1997, vol. 59, no. 3, pp. 235–246; A. Ang, J.R. Petrocik, *Religion, Religiosity, and the Moral Divide in Canadian Politics*, "Politics and Religion" 2012, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 103–132; M.A. Barreto, D.N. Bozonelos, *Democrat, Republican, or None of the Above? The Role of Religiosity in Muslim American Party Identification*, "Politics and Religion" 2009, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 200–229; K. Collins, E. Owen, *Islamic Religiosity and Regime Preferences: Explaining Support for Democracy and Political Islam in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, "Political Research Quarterly" 2012, vol. 65, no. 3, pp. 499–515; J.R. Montero, K. Calvo, Á. Martínez, *El voto religioso en España y Portugal*, "Revista internacional de sociología" 2008, vol. LXVI, no. 51, pp. 19–54.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example G.G. Armfield, R.L. Holbert, *The Relationship Between Religiosity and Internet Use*, "Journal of Media and Religion" 2009, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 129–144; P.S. Bobkowski, *Adolescent Religiosity and Selective Exposure to Television*, "Journal of Media and Religion" 2009, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 55–70.

<sup>24</sup> L.A. Asamarai, K.B. Solberg, P.C. Solon, *The Role of Religiosity in Muslim Spouse Selection and Its Influence on Marital Satisfaction*, "Journal of Muslim Mental Health" 2008, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 37–52; A. Demaris, A. Mahoney, K.I. Pargament, *Doing the Scut Work of Infant Care: Does Religiousness Encourage Father Involvement?*, "Journal of Marriage and the Family" 2011, vol. 73, no. 2, pp. 354–368; M. Cornwall, *Reifying Sex Difference Isn't the Answer: Gendering Processes, Risk, and Religiosity*, "Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion" 2009, vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 252–255.

<sup>25</sup> R. Inglehart, P. Norris, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 219–225.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example A. Črnič, *Cult versus Church Religiosity: Comparative Study of Hare Krishna Devotees and Catholics in Slovenia*, "Social Compass" 2009, vol. 56, no. 1, pp. 117–135; K. Kääriäinen,

popular in Russia. A smaller number of articles deals with theoretical issues concerning religiosity<sup>27</sup>.

Theoretically, religiosity is understood as a complex phenomenon which includes religious actions, religious beliefs and knowledge (also often referred to as religious consciousness), and attitudes towards different problems and situations in both a religious and non-religious environment<sup>28</sup>. Among scholars, though, we can find those who focus on just one of these components due to the different understanding of religiosity itself.

Some of them focus on beliefs as the main aspects of religiosity. That is to say, if we want to know if somebody is religious, and to what extent, we need to ask them if they believe in God, in hell, in heaven, in angels and so on. These studies are based on the understanding of religiosity where meanings are prior to actions, and where “actions stem from beliefs”<sup>29</sup>. For Joseph H. Fichter, actions are consequences and manifestations of beliefs. He argues that the religiosity of a Christian can be measured in terms of beliefs, attitudes and actions, because if a person is a Christian this will necessarily be manifested<sup>30</sup>. The priority of beliefs to actions is also found in the works of Edward Jarmoch<sup>31</sup>. The Russian researcher O.S. Bazhenova supposedly thinks in the same way, as she comments in one of her articles that religious actions are characteristics of religious consciousness<sup>32</sup>. The very broad approach whereby a person is considered religious only by his or her self-identification as a believer, a Christian, a Muslim, etc., is generally criticised, and this religiosity by self-identification is called “subjective”<sup>33</sup> or “cultural”<sup>34</sup>.

In this regard I agree with Mark Chaves, who argues that beliefs and values can be unstable, and one’s behaviour is not always logically connected to them<sup>35</sup>. In fact,

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*Religion in Finland and Russia in a comparative perspective* [in:] *Church and Religion in Contemporary Europe. Results from Empirical and Comparative Research*, G. Pickel, O. Müller (eds.), Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 49–63.

<sup>27</sup> O. Breskaya, *Izuchenie religioznosti: k neobhodimosti integral'nogo podhoda*, “Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya” 2011, no. 12, pp. 77–87; S.G. Karaseva, E.V. Shkurova, *Mnogomerny krosskonnfessional'ny podhod k issledovaniyu religioznosti v Belarusi: aktual'nost' i kontseptualizatsiya*, “Sotsiologiya” 2012, no. 3, pp. 123–133, <http://religious-life.ru/2012/12/issledovanie-religioznosti-v-belarusi/> [accessed: 26.12.2013]; I. Borowik, *Why has Religiosity in Poland not Changed since 1989? Five Hypotheses*, *Politics and Religion* 2010, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 263–264.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example *Rossiyskaya sotsiologicheskaya entsiklopediya*, G.V. Osipov (ed.), Moscow 1998, p. 444; I.N. Yablokov, *Religiovedenie*, Moscow 2000, p. 242.

<sup>29</sup> I. Borowik, *op.cit.*, pp. 263–264.

<sup>30</sup> See E. Prutskova, *Operatsionalizatsiya ponyatiya “religioznost” v empiricheskikh issledovaniyah*, “Gosudarstvo, religiya, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom” 2012, no. 2, p. 278.

<sup>31</sup> See O. Breskaya, *op.cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>32</sup> O.S. Bazhenova, *Buddizm kak etnointegriruyushchiy faktor glazami zhiteley Respubliki Buryatiya*, “Nauchnyie vedomosti Belgorodskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Seriya Filosofiya. Sotsiologiya. Pravo” 2010, no. 14, p. 97.

<sup>33</sup> J.R. Montero, K. Calvo, Á. Martínez, *op.cit.*, pp. 25–26.

<sup>34</sup> R.N. Lunkin, S.B. Filatov, *Statistika rossiyskoy religioznosti: magiya tsifr i neodnoznachnaya real'nost'*, “Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya” 2005, no. 6, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> M. Chaves, *Rain Dances in the Dry Season: Overcoming the Religious Congruence Fallacy*, “Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion” 2010, vol. 49, no. 1, p. 2.

I found evidence for Chaves's assertion in my research on Protestant and Orthodox religiosity. One of my interviewees became a believer in 1992, but did not go to church until 1995. Then, he started to attend the Pentecostal "Gospel" ("*Blagaya Vest'*") Church, but he says:

when I came to the church for the first time, I came, I stayed there, I looked around. But [...] I came because my wife wanted to very much. And I stayed there, and I left without understanding anything. And only after three months did I come back consciously<sup>36</sup>.

Another interviewee began to attend a Baptist church because a friend had invited him<sup>37</sup>; one Orthodox believer attended the same Baptist church because he made friends with some of the church-goers<sup>38</sup>. Among those who enter Orthodox churches in contemporary Russia are people who just visit the church to contemplate icons or wall-paintings, and I suppose that the number of such people will be growing due to the devolution of some museum exhibit items to the Russian Orthodox Church.

Another group of researchers deal with actions as the main aspects of religiosity. This means that if we want to know if somebody is religious and to what extent, we should ask them about certain practices and their frequency. Among the authors who favour this point of view we can name Stephanie Christopher<sup>39</sup>, John K. Cochran<sup>40</sup> and the Russian researcher L.N. Galimova, who, for instance, understands religiosity in a very simple way as visible manifestations of beliefs and participation at public religious services<sup>41</sup>.

In recent years, there has been strong criticism towards one-dimensional interpretation of religiosity in empirical research. According to critics, it is necessary to treat religiosity as a compound phenomenon not only theoretically but empirically as well<sup>42</sup>. In fact, the very first classical approaches to the study of religiosity were multidimensional: first four- and five-dimensional scales by Joseph E. Faulkner and Gordon de Yong, then a seven-dimensional one by Charles Glock and Rodney Stark, and finally a nine-dimensional scale by Morton B. King and Richard A. Hunt<sup>43</sup>. Most recent scales are multi-dimensional as well<sup>44</sup>. Among the criteria used in religiosity

<sup>36</sup> Interview with A.V. Knyazhev, pastor of the "Gospel" ("*Blagaya Vest'*") Church, 23 August 2011, Tyumen.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with E. Koval'zhin, a believer from the "Light to the World" ("*Svet miru*") Pentecostal Church, 03 February 2012, Tyumen (conducted by the author and Vera Klyueva).

<sup>38</sup> Interview with M.G. Agapov, 29 September 2011, Tyumen (conducted by Vera Klyueva).

<sup>39</sup> S.A. Christopher, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>40</sup> J.K. Cochran, *Another look at delinquency and religiosity*, "Sociological Spectrum: Mid-South Sociological Association" 1989, vol. 9, no. 2, p. 151.

<sup>41</sup> L.M. Galimova, *Rol' pravoslaviya v zhizni provintsial'nogo kupechestva*, "Vestnik Chuvashskogo universiteta" 2010, no. 4, p. 279.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example: S.V. Ryazanova, *Religioznoe okruzhenie veruyuschih zhenschin kak faktor formirovaniya i realizatsii konfessional'nyh predstavleniy*, "Vestnik Kemerovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta" 2011, no. 2, p. 186; O. Breskaya, *op.cit.*

<sup>43</sup> For an overview see: E. Prutskova, *op.cit.*, pp. 270–278.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example: K. Kääriäinen, *op.cit.*; *idem*, *Religiousness in Russia after the Collapse of Communism*, "Social Compass" 1999, vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 35–46; L.J. Francis, M.T. Stubbs, *Measuring attitudes towards Christianity: from childhood into adulthood*, "Personality and individual differ-

scales we can usually find church or mosque attendance; frequency of prayer; frequency of fasting; reading of the Bible or Quran and religious literature; belief or disbelief in God, hell, heaven, etc.; self-identification with a certain religious tradition.

Every method obviously has its own limitations. Regarding scales, I find the analysis of religiosity by the means of this quantitative method alone problematic because people can supposedly lie in their answers to questions. This is a serious issue when conducting surveys especially in the countries of the former Soviet Union, where being an atheist is very unpopular and is even blamed, because atheism is primarily associated with the Soviet past. Those atheists who do not want to be atheists in public may therefore say that they believe in God<sup>45</sup>. Alternatively, a believer may lie that s/he goes to church/mosque in order to seem a “good Christian” or a “good Muslim”.

Though classic and contemporary religiosity scales share some core, principal criteria, there are notable differences in which criteria are chosen for specific research and in the way they are used. I found that some research lacks important criteria in a study of a certain religious group. For example, Yuliya Sinelina, in her research on Muslim religiosity in Russia, does not take Muslim fasting for Ramadan into account as one of the basic requirements of Islam, narrowing the criteria of religiosity to mosque attendance, frequency of prayer, and reading of the Quran<sup>46</sup>, which she compares with the respective practices in the Orthodox tradition: church attendance, frequency of prayer, and Bible reading. Yet these practices have different meanings in these religious traditions, and imply different religious activity. In particular, traditionally women are not obliged to attend the obligatory *jumma-salah* on Friday<sup>47</sup> (this is one of the reasons for such low rates of mosque attendance among women in Tyumen, for example<sup>48</sup>). Cross-confessional comparison of “quantitative indicators of religiosity” (as suggested by Belarusian scholars<sup>49</sup>) inevitably requires a certain level of generalisation and minimisation of the number of compared variables, “basic

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ences” 1987, vol. 8, no. 5, pp. 741–743 and its version for a survey among Muslims in A.M. Abdel-Khalek, *op.cit.*, pp. 149–152; the scales of the World Values Survey (<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/> [accessed: 02.02.2012]), European Values Study (<http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/> [accessed: 2.02.2014]), European Social Survey (<http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/> [accessed: 2.02.2014]), and International Social Survey Program (<http://www.issp.org/> [accessed: 2.02.2014]). For an overview of the last four scales see E. Prutskova, *op.cit.*, pp. 284–292.

<sup>45</sup> E.A. Kublitskaya, *Osobennosti izucheniya religioznosti v sovremennoy Rossii*, “Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya” 2009, no. 4, p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> Y.Y. Sinelina, *Pravoslavnye i musul'mane: sravnitel'ny analiz religioznogo povedeniya i tsennostnykh orientatsiy*, “Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya” 2009, no. 4, pp. 91–92; *eadem*, *Izmenenie religioznosti naseleniya Rossii: pravoslavnye i musul'mane: suevernoe povedenie rossiyan*, Moscow 2006, pp. 54–58.

See an example of using questions about fasting for the analysis of Muslim religiosity in G.F. Gabdrahmanova, *Osobennosti sotsial'no-ekonomicheskikh vzglyadov pravoslavnykh i musul'man i perspektivy izucheniya (po materialam issledovaniya v Respublike Tatarstan)*, “Voprosy kul'turologii” 2010, no. 11, p. 51.

<sup>47</sup> G.M. Kerimov, *Shariat: Zakon zhizni musul'man. Otveti shariata na problem sovremennosti*, St Petersburg 2007, pp. 54–68.

<sup>48</sup> See R.O. Poplavsky, M.S. Cherepanov, *V poiskah “real'nogo” soobshchestva: otsenka chislennosti prihozhan mechetey goroda Tyumeni*, “Vestnik arheologii, antropologii i etnografii” 2012, no. 3, pp. 153–158.

<sup>49</sup> S.G. Karaseva, E.V. Shkurova, *Mnogomerny krosskonfessional'ny podhod...*

forms”<sup>50</sup>, and may be inaccurate, as a certain difference in meanings needs to be taken into consideration.

Other researchers demonstrate an inaccurate usage of the criteria of religiosity. In a study of youth religiosity, P.A. Kulakov asks students if they read the Bible, without mentioning any other holy book, although there are non-Christians among his respondents<sup>51</sup>. The same outlook is found in an article by M.A. Gurevich and co-authors<sup>52</sup>. Another example is about one of the Levada centre surveys, where a question about the presence of religious books at home was used to analyse Russian religiosity<sup>53</sup>. First of all, these are probably not respondents’ books. Secondly, having a book at home does not equate to reading it. Finally, the answers to this question are very difficult to interpret without additional information: we cannot say if a person is currently interested in a certain religion, or if there is no more interest but the book is still kept. Therefore, this criterion is theoretically irrelevant to religiosity. In order to sustain my theoretical speculations empirically I included the question about sacred books and other religious literature at home in a survey among Russian “New” Pentecostals<sup>54</sup>. The answers revealed three possible reasons for having books of other religious traditions (writings of the Fathers of the Church, Quran, Bhagavad Gita, Talmud, Torah) at home: presence of religious education (53.5% of those who have them at home); different religious affiliation of relatives (40.8%); previous religious search (59.2%). One ethnically Tatar believer blamed himself for attending a “Russian church”, and therefore bought the Quran. Upon reading the book, however, he found out that “the Quran confirms the Bible”<sup>55</sup>.

A multidimensional approach to the study of religiosity gives us a deep understanding of its complex nature. The criteria used in the analysis describe to us to what extent an individual is religious or not and in what spheres of their lives people are more religious. Still, one of the main objectives of sociology in general, and of sociology of religion in particular, is to understand why a social phenomenon is the way it is. What factors shape it? When speaking about religiosity, what factors influence individuals’ religious practices?

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> P.A. Kulakov, *Uchschaiasya molodezh i religiya*, “Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya” 1995, no. 11, p. 94.

<sup>52</sup> M.A. Gurevich, T.Y. Radilovskaya, Zh.A. Kalabaeva, *Dinamika urovnya religioznosti sredi molodezhi g. Chelyabinska*, “Chelyabinskiy gumanitariy” 2010, no. 10, p. 145.

<sup>53</sup> *Obschestvennoe mnenie – 2009*, Moscow 2009, p. 139; *Religioznogo vozrozhdeniya v Rossii tak i ne proizoshlo za 20 let, schitaet rossiyskiy sotsiolog*, <http://newsru.com/religy/13jun2012/dubin.html> [accessed: 27.12.2013].

<sup>54</sup> The survey was conducted in 2012 among Russian Pentecostals from 14 Pentecostal churches in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region (West Siberia, Russia) (N = 552).

<sup>55</sup> S. Scharifullin, *Koran podtverzhdaet Bibliyu*, “Slovo Zhizni” 1.01.2002.

## Contextualised religiosity

Berger asserts that “society not only controls our movements, but shapes our identity, our thoughts and our emotions. The structures of society become the structures of our own consciousness”<sup>56</sup>, and our practices become organised according to these structures and symbols and meanings imposed by them. Every society has its own historical, cultural, and sociopolitical special aspects which should be taken into account in order to better understand the phenomenon of religiosity and to choose appropriate variables for its analysis.

We can clearly see the importance of putting religiosity into historical, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts with the example of a number of studies conducted in the former Soviet Union. For example, Kathleen Collins and Erica Owen note that the most commonly used criteria for Muslim religiosity – mosque attendance and reading the Quran – are not relevant for Central Asia and the Caucasus because these practices were suppressed by the Soviet regime. On the contrary, they name living according to Islamic principles, prayer at home, and visiting shrines as more relevant for the region<sup>57</sup>. Similarly, during the Soviet era Orthodox believers could not take communion very often, and some of them still take it once a year, although today there are no restrictions. As Sinelina points out, the criterion of church attendance is not always relevant either, because there are still towns and villages in Russia where there are no church buildings<sup>58</sup>.

A surprising finding I made in the above-mentioned survey among Russian “New” Pentecostals was that the members of Russian Pentecostal churches do not usually identify themselves as Pentecostals! Some 66.8% of those who answered the open question “Who are you?” (49.3% of the sample) said they were “Christians”; 11.3% called themselves “believers”; 15.2% wrote down “child of God”. Only one person called himself “Pentecostal”, and three more respondents called themselves “Charismatic”. The term “Pentecostal” is used in selected communities when speaking about classical Pentecostal churches which at the beginning of the 1990s gave rise to “new” ones.

The answers to the question about self-identification also have a sociopolitical explanation. The use of more common self-identifications in comparison with narrow ones may be interpreted as the willingness of Russian Pentecostals to smooth differences they have with the Russian Orthodox Church. Furthermore, the self-identification “Christian” makes it easier to establish communication with people and public authorities<sup>59</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> P. Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*, Garden City–New York 1963, p. 121.

<sup>57</sup> K. Collins, E. Owen, *op.cit.*, p. 507.

<sup>58</sup> Y.Y. Sinelina, *O kriteriyah opredeleniya religioznosti naseleniya*, “Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya” 2007, No. 1, p. 95. In fact, Kathleen Clark and her co-authors criticise this criterion as it describes not only religiosity but serves as “an indicator of other things such as one’s physical capacity to be active”. See K.M. Clark, H.S. Friedman, L.R. Martin, *A Longitudinal Study of Religiosity and Mortality Risk*, “Journal of Health Psychology” 1999, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 384.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with L.P., 19.07.2011, Nizhnevartovsk; Interview with A.P., 23.07.2013, Liantor; Interview with I.K., 26.07.2013, Russkinskaya (conducted by Vera Klyueva).

The study of religiosity requires consideration of not only historical, cultural and sociopolitical characteristics of society, but personal features and individuals' biography as well. This is because religious knowledge is assimilated by a person individually, due to the refraction of this knowledge through the biographical stock of an individual's knowledge and experience, to use Berger's terms<sup>60</sup>. Following this idea, I suggest that this assimilated knowledge manifests itself individually in different life spheres and is individually applied by a person to different situations.

Kimmo Kääriäinen smartly included a question about the religiosity of respondents' parents in one of his studies of Russians' religiosity, and discovered that "parents' and grandparents' religiousness has had a clear influence on Russians' religiousness"<sup>61</sup>. The questions about religious affiliation of parents, as well as the questions about their church attendance and about the religious affiliation of spouses, are included in the questionnaire of the International Social Survey Programme. As in Kääriäinen's study, my respondents among Pentecostals tend to name women more frequently among believing relatives: 42.8% of respondents' mothers and only 14.9% of their fathers; 15% of grandmothers and only 4.9% of grandfathers. Similarly, many Protestant interviewees in Tyumen relate their first reminiscences of religion to the image of their grandmothers<sup>62</sup>.

In the survey among Pentecostals, I found out that one of the factors which impedes the believers in regularly attending church is their work schedule, in particular special-shift work at oil and gas wells among men, as they themselves wrote this down on the margins of the questionnaire they completed. Some of the interviewees among Khanty people did not read the Bible or any other religious literature because they cannot read<sup>63</sup>.

All these examples demonstrate the complex nature of religiosity not only regarding religious practices in the framework of one religious tradition, concerning the complex nature of humans' relationship to the outside world. In order to better understand one's religiosity its analysis should be put into the context of history, cultural, sociopolitical characteristics and personal biography. It is possible to partially achieve this goal by including relevant personal questions in the questionnaire, but obviously we cannot endlessly enlarge it, nor can we predict all situations and factors that could possibly influence one's religiosity.

As proposed by Sam D. Sieber, if a technique has weaknesses they can be compensated by using other techniques' strengths, which will provide a better understanding of social phenomena<sup>64</sup>. I agree that methods used in a study "are merely tools that are

<sup>60</sup> P. Berger, *Religiya i problema ubeditel'nosti...*

<sup>61</sup> K. Kääriäinen, *Religiousness in Russia after the Collapse of Communism...*, p. 41.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example: Interview with A.V. Kniazhev, pastor of the "Gospel" ("*Blagaya Vest*") Pentecostal Church in Tyumen, 6.09.2011, Tyumen; Interview with S.E. Lavrenov, pastor of the "Light to the World" ("*Scet Miru*") Pentecostal Church in Tyumen, 3.03.2011, Tyumen; Interview with E.V. Zubkova, pastor of the "Salvation" ("*Spasenie*") Methodist Church in Tyumen, 27.09.2011, Tyumen (conducted by Vera Klyueva).

<sup>63</sup> Interview with D.T., 23.07.2011, a Khanty camping ground (conducted by Vera Klyueva).

<sup>64</sup> S.D. Sieber, *The Integration of Fieldwork and Survey Methods*, "American Journal of Sociology" 1973, vol. 78, no. 6, pp. 1335–1359.

designed to aid our understanding of the world”<sup>65</sup>. In the survey among Pentecostals in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region I combined scales with interviews among both common believers and church leaders with the analysis of religious mass media published by Pentecostal communities, pastors’ sermons and notes on the margins of the questionnaire made by the respondents. This helped to give a better understanding of religiosity among Pentecostals in Russia, specifying figures with details achieved by usage of the above-mentioned qualitative methods and revealing factors which influence religiosity<sup>66</sup>. Elsewhere, I successfully used the method of calculation of believers attending Protestant, Orthodox churches and mosques in order to find out the factors affecting attendance of churches and mosques in Russia<sup>67</sup>.

## Conclusion

Contemporary multidimensional studies of religiosity treat it as a complex social phenomenon. The results of surveys with the usage of different scales give us an understanding of the diversity of religious practices and beliefs in the world in general and in certain countries in particular. Still we need not only to analyse this diversity but also to understand the reasons for why it differs even in the framework of one religious community. These differences are to a large extent explained by the complex nature of humans’ relationship to the outside world, where we have an infinite number of choices and attitudes to it<sup>68</sup>.

People are not autonomous of the world they live in. They are influenced by the particular characteristics of the society and by their biographical background. If we take into account these characteristics, i.e. if we put religiosity into the context of history, culture, sociopolitical life and one’s biography, we will be able to understand why individual religiosity is the way it is, why it is manifested in certain spheres of individual life, and why and how it is changing.

It is impossible to include on one scale knowledge of the history of the region regarding its religious life and state-church relations, of its culture and sociopolitical life as well as of the biographical background of a believer, without making it unmanageable and difficult for respondents to deal with. I agree with Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Nancy L. Leech, who assert that “mono-method research is the biggest threat to the advancement of the social sciences”<sup>69</sup>, and I am convinced that the

<sup>65</sup> A.J. Onwuegbuzie, N.L. Leech, *On Becoming a Pragmatic Researcher: The Importance of Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methodologies*, “International Journal of Social Research Methodology” 2005, vol. 8, no. 5, p. 377.

<sup>66</sup> See a detailed analysis of Pentecostal religiosity in V.P. Klyueva, R.O. Poplavsky, I.V. Bobrov, *Piatidesiatniki v Yugre (na primere obschin RO TsKhVE KhMAO)*, Saint Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo RKhGA 2013.

<sup>67</sup> See R.O. Poplavsky, *Dinamika chislenosti prikhozhan pravoslavnykh tserkvey goroda Tyumeni (2005–2010)*, “Elektronny nauchno-obrazovatel’ny zhurnal Istoriya” 2013, no. 7, pp. 223–249; R.O. Poplavsky, M.S. Cherepanov, *op.cit.*; R.O. Poplavsky, *Tiumenskie protestantskie obschiny...*

<sup>68</sup> R.N. Bellah, *Religious Evolution...*, p. 45.

<sup>69</sup> A.J. Onwuegbuzie, N.L. Leech, *op.cit.*, p. 375.

limitations of the method of scales in studying religiosity can be compensated by using qualitative methods (interviews, analysis of respondents' commentaries on the margins of the questionnaire) which can provide us with important details needed to understand why a person's religiosity is the way it is. Qualitative methods are more adequate in finding out the meanings of religious practices, which need to be taken into account for a more accurate comparison of variables, which cannot be achieved by a simple comparison of figures.