

# Defining The Concepts Of Religious Discourse, Religious Sociolect And Religious Style

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**Abstracts.** For the moment researchers of religious mass media texts face the difficulty of finding definition for their object of study. In our opinion the theory of discourse has all the necessary categorical forms to describe the peculiarities of various groups of religious texts. The discourse analysis helps to review the influence of the various factors of verbal communication on the development of the linguistic order in a particular text. We should note that we are talking about religious texts taking into consideration their cultural, historical, social, rhetorical aspects (spiritual code).

**Keywords:** religious discourse, religious mass media, acts of communication, spiritual code, strategies and tactics, mythology, religious sociolect and religious style

**Introduction.** It is natural that this linguistic phenomenon, that is, the religious lexicon, is an integral part of the existence of any society, an important factor of human development, as well as one of the forms of preserving the experiences of the ancestors. Religious lexicon is a specific layer of vocabulary in each language, formed under the influence of mythology and religion, with a wide scope. In addition, the religious lexicon can be characterized as a cultural relic of the people, both material and spiritual value, in terms of its relative stability and written record.

**Research methods.** The sharp growth of communication in the religious environment, the development of religious commerce and the service sector, religious educational projects, media, educational, advertising, exhibition projects require a special analysis of this phenomenon in the science of language. Religious communication is one of the oldest types of human communication, but its scientific study began relatively recently. Sociolinguistics has proposed its own approach

based on the concept of a religious sociolect[1], while researchers in communicative stylistics, cognitive science, pragmalinguistics and rhetoric have defined their attitude to this phenomenon as a special kind of discourse[2, 389–450]. If we study the phenomenon in line with the theory of discourse, then the object of study will be communication (an act of communication), which has as its goal the introduction of a person to faith or the maintenance of faith. At the same time, it is important to distinguish between the task of external, formal integration of the interlocutor (propaganda) and more trusting interaction (testimony), which aims not so much to achieve the interlocutor's formal adherence to a certain system of religious views, but to induce a person to internal, invisible spiritual work - an act of conscience, an act of repentance. etc.

**Results and discussions.** Over the millennia of communicative practice, the value system, which is the basis of religious discourse, has fully manifested itself and has been well studied. An

extensive system of genres of religious discourse has developed - from oral tradition and sermon to an official speech at a dispute or an editorial in an illustrated magazine. The specificity of linguistic characteristics, speech means used in institutional communication within the framework of religious discourse is quite obvious.

On the one hand, textual fragments of religious discourse in the form of prayers, sermons, parables, psalms, pastoral addresses, laudatory prayers become material for researchers. On the other hand, publications in the mass press and on the Internet are being studied. A separate area of research should be acts of direct verbal communication with the participation of believers, up to and including anecdotes.

Based on the analysis of the material, various researchers are making the first attempts to determine the constitutive features of religious discourse, identify and characterize its main functions, core values and basic concepts, define and characterize the system of genres of religious discourse, identify precedent phenomena in this discourse, and finally, describe communicative strategies specific to for religious discourse[3, 133].

Researchers of religious discourse note the frequency of specific discursive acts in all possible types of speech communications - argumentative, expressive, social, ritual.

On the one hand, the theory of discourse makes it possible to fully take into account, when considering church and near-church communication, the entire range of parameters offered by the pragmalinguistic school. Given that discourse reflects the mentality and culture, both national and universal, as well as private and individual, researchers study the pre-predicative component of discourse with special attention.

The speaker's desire for adequate perception, the "expansion" of the discourse on the listener leads to the fact that not only local-temporal conditions, but also the idea of the cultural level and spiritual values of the interlocutor or audience become decisive when choosing specific language means. Thus, the same information, being addressed to a member of a religious community or

an "outside" person, will receive a fundamentally different set of linguistic means.

On the other hand, it seems unclear how to assess, from the point of view of discourse theory, those acts of communication in the near-religious environment that are carried out with the help of the mass media and can only guesswork, in the most general terms, both specific local-temporal conditions of perception and the level of spirituality, intellectual language culture of the listener.

For example, a speech by a church figure on secular radio can be heard both by a monk in his cell and by a person who is far from the values of religious. In this situation, the impossibility of taking into account the pragmatic context of a speech act almost deprives the initiator of communication of any wide choice of speech means, and researchers of reliable criteria for assessing the structure and effectiveness of discourse.

However, when using mass media with large circulations and a diversified audience, forecasting the pragmatic context is much more difficult. It seems that this is what forces modern researchers of religious discourse to deliberately limit the scope of their research, leaving publications in the media beyond this scope.

Let's take an example. Doctoral dissertation of E.V. Bobyreva, defended three years ago at Volgograd State University under the guidance of V.I. Karasik is called "Religious Discourse: Values, Genres, Strategies". The author defines the subject of research as communication, the content of which "are sacred texts and their religious interpretation, as well as religious rituals." At the same time, only clergy and parishioners can be participants, and "a typical chronotope is a church service"[4, 146-147].

Obviously, the discourse, the content of which is, for example, a discussion of a new movie, the participants are a secular journalist of the religious confession and non-religious youth, and the chronotope is a cable TV studio, does not fall under the above definition. At the same time, the recording and broadcasting of such a TV show, dedicated, for example, to the movie "The Island",

which was released several years ago, fully corresponds to the stated goal of religious discourse – “communication with the aim of introducing people to the Faith.” Unfortunately, the existing parameters for the study of religious discourse leave unattended a huge layer of ecclesiastical and near-church communication related to the activities of the media.

Perhaps that is why supporters of the theory of religious sociolect have repeatedly expressed the opinion that a discursive analysis of religious communication (liturgical discourse, confessional discourse, etc.) excludes the study of the speech of believers outside the topic of religion.

The problem of falling out of the scope of the study of religious discourse of essential layers of ecclesiastical and near-church communication is widely discussed. As if in an effort to solve this problem, supporters of the medialect theory emphasize that their approach is not limited to intrareligious communication, examining the speech of believers in different situations. In this case, the entire methodological apparatus of sociolinguistics is used. The triad “dialect - sociolect - social variant” is being built.

Unlike dialect, which today is understood as territorially limited linguistic states, sociolect means “a kind of language that is socially limited. These are the professional languages of hunters, fishermen, potters, shoemakers, programmers, etc. These are group or corporate jargons or slangs of students, students, athletes, soldiers and other, mainly youth, groups. These are secret languages, slang of declassed elements, as well as variants of the national language, characteristic of certain economic, caste, religious, etc. population groups”[6, 527].

Of course, the differences between the language of church and near- religious communication and professional jargon are obvious. The participants and initiators of communication are often not “professionals” - deacons, priests, monks, missionaries - but people of various professions who share the values of the religion. In addition, the clergy themselves display the characteristic features of speech not only when

discussing professional issues and by no means in order to simplify communication during worship.

Distancing themselves from the convergence of the religious sociolect with professional jargons, supporters of this theory emphasize that the sociolect of believers is, first of all, “a stable, socially marked subsystem of the national language”[7, 71]. This subsystem is characterized by its own value system, lexical, phonetic, derivational and grammatical features. In addition, she is under the powerful influence of the Slavonic language. I.V. Bugaeva in her monograph “The Language of religious Believers” defines a religious sociolect as “the speech of people united by value orientations in different communicative situations”[1].

In our opinion, it is obvious that this definition does not allow including the historically most important, fundamental genres of the religious word - missionary preaching and speech at the debate - into the circle of manifestations of the religious sociolect. In the first case, the speech is addressed to people who have not yet become members of the religious, their values differ from those of the speaker. Moreover, the genre of sermon-denunciation is known, when the speaker directly denounces the values of the audience. In modern communicative practice, some religious journalists are engaged in similar preaching among neo-pagans, unbelievers, agnostics. Following the logic of the supporters of the theory of religious sociolect, these speeches also cannot be attributed to the number of its manifestations.

In the second case, speaking at church disputes, of which there were a lot in the history of religious, the orator directly spoke out against the values of a significant part of the audience. Meanwhile, it is these speeches of the religious people of the seven Ecumenical Councils, directed against the Arians, Nestorians and other heretics, that are considered the best examples of church rhetoric. Thus, samples that are most interesting from the point of view of supporters of the pragmalinguistic approach fall out of the field of view of researchers of the religious sociolect.

In addition to “religious discourse” and “religious sociolect”, there are many terms

proposed to describe the sphere of religious communication - cult language, sacred language, spiritual literature, theolinguistics, etc. All of them to some extent underestimate or completely leave language out of the scope of research. mass media, focusing either on the language of direct human communication with God, or on intra- religious communication, including communication in small groups.

“In domestic science, the term “discourse” turned out to be introduced and superimposed on the already existing traditions of the functional-stylistic analysis of speech”[4].

The first attempt to single out a special religious style was made in our science by L.P. Krysin. He proposed the term “religious preaching style”. However, subsequently, many noted that there is no genre component in the name of other styles, because we do not say “officially contractual” style. And preaching is just one of many genres. Another version of the term - “liturgical style” - has also been criticized.

Attempts to highlight the features of the “religious style” run into an insurmountable obstacle. The fact is that the real practice of the speech of believers is far from being limited to prayers, sermons and epistles. The features of such speech are manifested in all genres of all functional styles without exception - official business, scientific, newspaper and journalistic, in colloquial language and the language of fiction. Obviously, the task of witnessing about God is taken into account by the speaker and writer in any genre. Therefore, many scholars argue that the sphere of religion is, as it were, above functional styles.

It seems to us necessary, within the framework of our research work, to specify what meaning we put into the concept of “religious discourse”.

If discourse is understood as a set of thematically related texts (in our case, these are acts of communication that are aimed either at introducing a person to faith or at maintaining it), then the content of the discourse, or topic, is revealed “not as a separate text, but intertextually, i.e. in the complex interaction of individual texts.

Moreover, it seems to us that even the use of the intertextual approach is not enough to describe religious discourse, since the intertextual approach sets itself the task of analyzing the semantic relationships between the most diverse texts. After all, if we describe discourse as a content-thematic community of texts, then we must also characterize the “communicative-pragmatic, social conditions in which texts function and which determine their thematic community in a particular area of communication, i.e. is the reality reflected in speech, the subjective-authorial beginning and the potential of perception (perception), as well as general (supra-individual) cognitive strategies embodied in texts” [5].

At the moment, the main strategies and tactics within the framework of discursive analysis are a variety of interdisciplinary studies, “which are characterized by a variety of both ways of posing interpretation problems and their solutions in terms of interpreting the content of texts”[4].

Therefore, within the boundaries of the problem field we are considering, it is assumed that it is possible to correlate with each other such qualitative methods of studying texts that are part of religious discourse, such as rhetorical, verbal, social-role, genre, historical, cultural types of analysis, ethno-, cognitive-linguistic analysis, as well as the analysis of communicative strategies (by which we mean the general pragmalinguistic principles for the implementation of illocutionary meaning. K.F. Sedov distinguishes two global communicative strategies of speech behavior: representative, or pictorial, and narrative, or analytical) [5].

Based on all of the above, we note that we see the contextual approach to the description of discourse as the most ambitious and performative.

Within the framework of this direction, it is considered that “the text is woven into a kind of “web of meanings” - a network “woven” by both the author and the addressee, as well as society and culture, in which communication between them became possible. History itself is revealed in the text and its interpretations, since any statements, discourses and “discursive complexes” acquire a

certain meaning only in a specific historical situation”.

Due to all of the above, in our study we cannot agree with E.V. Bobyreva, who in her work “Religious Discourse: Values, Genres, Strategies” limits the thematic field of religious discourse in such a way that the temple is the chronotope, the participants in religious discourse are only clergy and parishioners, and the topics of discourse are connected only with worship, rituals and their interpretation.

In our understanding, religious discourse necessarily includes the media, the discourse chronotope is determined by the situation in which the addressee is located, and only people cannot be participants in religious discourse. The main thing that distinguishes religious discourse is the indispensable presence of God and communion with him. The themes of discourse are connected with divine services, and with the sacraments, and with rituals, and with the history of religion, and with the cultural characteristics of addressees and addressees, as well as with all acts aimed at maintaining faith or joining it.

As part of the study of religious discourse, we can talk about the existence of the religious discourse of Islam, the religious discourse of Christianity, Judaism, and so on.

V.E. Chernyavskaya, based on the concept of Michel Foucault, proposes to single out separate special discourses or types of discourses, which the French researcher called discursive formations. They are considered as “separate socio-historically formed spheres of human knowledge and communication”[4].

O.G. Revzina notes that “discursive formations (varieties of discourse) are formed at the intersection of the communicative and cognitive components of discourse. The communicative component includes possible positions and roles that are provided in the discourse to native speakers - linguistic personalities. The cognitive component includes the knowledge contained in the discursive message. Discursive formations are intertwined with each other, partially coinciding in

communicative and cognitive features, in the genres used. For discourse, the principle of “family resemblance” is relevant”[7].

**Conclusion.** Types of religious discourse cannot correspond to different religious denominations, since there are few, but fundamentally important differences in the structure of the cognitive component. Yes, and the communicative component will have significant differences related to the pragmalinguistic principles of the implementation of the illocutionary meaning. Therefore, we propose the separation of types of discourse, or rather, subdiscourses, within the framework of religious discourse. Interest in the study of the language of ecclesiastical and near-ecclesiastical communication has increased dramatically among researchers in communicative stylistics and pragmatic linguistics, cognitive science, and sociolinguistics. A convergent approach may allow us to study a rich range of value, genre, and linguistic phenomena in this rapidly expanding area of communication.

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