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RELIGION AND SOCIETY: DIFFERENTIATION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF PROTESTANT MOVEMENTS

This article deals with the social problem of transformation of traditional religious doctrines into quasi-religious movements, which is most clearly reflected in the process of differentiation and diversification of Protestantism in the form of post – Protestant, or rather pseudo-Protestant movements and cults. The author analyzes primarily social causes of the Church reformation, the history of the emergence and strengthening of the first Protestant movements – Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism and Anabaptism, highlights the social roots and key principles of the Protestant faith. Such an analysis allows us to conclude that, strictly speaking, Protestantism is a historically limited phenomenon, dating back to the reformation of the XVI century, at the same time, it provided an opportunity for any of its apologists to interpret the Bible in their own way. This led to the fact that Protestantism could not remain within the framework of a single doctrine and cult. It quickly began to appear as a large number of similar in spirit, but quite different directions and trends, since the most important criterion for understanding the various provisions of the Bible was considered the point of view of their founders. This circumstance contributed to the degeneration of the very spirit of Protestantism, the traditional Protestant ethics based on asceticism, hard work, modesty, honesty, etc. At the same time, the key motivation of the leaders of post-Protestant neoplasms of various kinds, the number of which is rapidly growing, is exclusively financial success. This circumstance generates a specific reaction from traditional Protestantism in the form of Protestant fundamentalism.

Key words: reformation, Protestantism, key principles of Protestantism, Protestant ethics, post-Protestantism, post-Protestant cult, new religious forms, mega-churches, Protestant fundamentalism.

Quite often, the sociology of religion is understood as a branch of sociology that studies religion as a social phenomenon, as well as the social functions of various religions, their influence on the moral values and worldview of individ-

uals and social groups. Although the subject of sociology of religion is quite extensive and multifaceted, it is based on the interaction between religion and society, namely, the influence of various forms of social behavior of people on their religious behavior and, conversely, the significance of religiosity and its social consequences for broad social groups and societies as a whole [12]. In this regard, a well-known scientific interest is the social problem associated with the transformation of traditional religious doctrines into non-religious movements, which is most clearly reflected in the process of differentiation and diversification of Protestantism to pseudo-Protestant movements and cults.

The term «Protestantism» comes from a protest made by German princes and a number of imperial cities against the abolition in 1529 by the Speyer Reichstag of the right to choose their religion, which they had achieved in 1526. However, in a broader sense, Protestantism is associated with the socio-political and moral protest of the rising but still disenfranchised third estate against the outdated medieval order and the Catholic Church that stood guard over it. At the end of the twelfth century, the Catholic Church became the ruler of most of the Christian world, but the gap between the laity and the clergy grew wider. Accordingly, the popularity of «heresies» of various types grew.

By the thirteenth century, when many territories of Western Europe were completely taken over by heretics, the question of the very existence of the Catholic Church in its traditional form was seriously raised. At the IV Lateran Council of 1215, all “heresies” were condemned, after which their representatives were subjected to persecution and reprisals, primarily by the Church authorities, in the form of the Inquisition. “Uncontrolled, peremptory, autocratic, not knowing any other law, except the only “so I want, so I command, and let the argument be my will,” the Inquisition for many centuries was a symbol of absolute power, an instrument of struggle with the freedom of conscience, religion, and especially with the freedom of thought” [18].

The main reason for the emergence of new Protestant movements, the most influential of which later became the Reform movement, was precisely the dissonance between the unlimited power of the Catholic Church and the abuse of its clergy. So, among the vices of the Catholic Church ministers, which were described in detail by G. Li in his book “History of the Inquisition. Modern version” [18], we can distinguish:

- simony – sale and purchase of Church offices or holy orders;
- the practice of benefices – the distribution of lucrative positions or plots of land to clergy as remuneration;
- the sale of indulgences, which has assumed a professional character.

In the circles of Catholic clergy, extortion flourished – often they refused to marry or bury, demanding payment of money in advance. Prelates did not hesitate to extract an impure income from the immoral behavior of celibate clergy, charging them a special tax, paying which the priest could live in peace with his concubine [18].

It should be noted that the personal and property integrity of clergy and their complete insubordination to secular justice contributed to the development of the abuses outlined above. The priests were subject to a special ecclesiastical court (*purgatio canonica*), through which the clergyman was either easily acquitted or subjected to minor punishment. The ecclesiastical courts were responsible not only for all ecclesiastical matters, but also for most of the secular ones, and the fines they imposed on citizens formed a prominent part of the clergy's income.

Historically, the reason for the emergence of Protestantism was the Catholic Church's deviation from the purity of Christian teaching, as well as the numerous changes that followed in the field of dogmas, worship, and the religious life of parishioners. Church innovations led to the fact that in many cases the Roman Catholic Church was unable to fully meet the religious needs of the faithful.

The primates of the Catholic Church tried to strengthen their influence on the secular authorities of the European states, as a result, the Western Church became more like an administrative organization than a spiritual organism. The sale of indulgences, the Inquisition, and the like went against the Christian religious outlook. In addition, due to a number of historical reasons, Church dual power has repeatedly emerged. For example, in 1378, ecclesiastical power was divided between two popes – Urban IV and Clement VII, each of whom claimed the legitimacy of his election and demanded unquestioning submission to himself.

The existing situation revealed the failure of Catholicism, and among theologians and prelates of the Roman Church matured the idea of the need to stop the schism and Church reforms. Attempts at internal reformation were made for more than two hundred years, but due to the resistance of the papal pulpit and the Inquisition, remained fruitless. This led to the fact that the reform movement could no longer be limited to intra-Church scales.

The forerunners of the reformation are Professor John Wyclif of Oxford University (1320-1384), who defended the priority of the Holy Scripture in relation to the Holy Tradition, as well as his follower Professor Jan Huss of Prague University (1371-1415). However, the outburst of general indignation found an expression in the person of the scientist, the heretic Martin Luther (1483-1546) [18], who in 1512 received the degree of Doctor of Theology and became a Professor of biblical studies at the University of Wittenberg. As early as 1510, M. Luther had to observe the licentiousness of the papal court and the Roman clergy. In 1516, in connection with the next activation of the sale of indulgences, M. Luther denounced this phenomenon. On October 31, 1517, he nailed to the door of the Wittenberg castle Church the famous “95 theses,” in which he stated his position against the abuses of the Catholic Church.

On the wave of popular discontent with all sorts of abuses that often occurred in the Church at that time, as well as the desire of a part of the German clergy for independence from Rome, M. Luther and his theses began to quickly gain popularity. Warnings from the Church authorities did not bring him to reason, but on

the contrary, led to even more sharp attacks on the Church. If at the beginning, the criticism of M. Luther was directed mainly against the practice of selling indulgences, now it also touched on issues of faith, gradually acquiring the character of heresy. At the same time, M. Luther had numerous supporters, mainly among the well-to-do citizens. Some of them were more radical than he was. As a Catholic clergyman and theologian, M. Luther was summoned to the ecclesiastical court to dismiss the charge of heresy. However, he refused to appear, which led to his final break with the Church in 1520. Luther was defrocked and excommunicated.

Gradually, M. Luther developed his own teaching, which differed significantly from the Catholic one. So, M. Luther came up with the idea of recognizing the absolute authority of the Bible (replacing the authority of the Church with the authority of the Bible) and rejected the personal right of the Pope to interpret the Bible, giving it to all lay people. According to the “95 theses” of M. Luther [20], the will of the man must unconditionally submit to God, and salvation is achieved only by personal faith in the intercession of Jesus Christ [7]. The only source of faith, according to him, was the Holy Scripture, and not all of it, the “second-canonical” Bible books were recognized by him as Apocrypha and thrown out of the Bible. M. Luther also attributed the Epistle to the Jews and the Apocalypse to the Apocrypha. By September 1522, he translated into German the New Testament, 1523 finished the translation of the Pentateuch, and by 1534 They translated the entire Bible. Although there were significant errors in the translation of M. Luther, it was unsurpassed for that time and quickly spread among Protestants, beginning a real boom in translations of the Bible into national languages. A special role in the doctrine of M. Luther is played by the doctrine “about justification only by faith” (*justificatio sola fide*), developed by him in contrast to the Catholic teaching about the merits of saints and the power of the Church to use these merits, in particular, through the distribution of indulgences. M. Luther rejected the veneration of saints (as well as icons, Holy relics, and everything related to the cult of the virgin and saints), stating that there should be no intermediaries between man and God, except for Christ Himself. The earthly Church is also not such an intermediary, so the Sacraments it bestows cannot be a source of grace. Luther denied all Sacraments except Baptism and the Eucharist.

Followers of M. Luther – Lutherans – formed the Lutheran Church. Lutheranism, which today is the dominant religion in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Estonia, as well as in Northern Germany and Latvia, is considered the first proper Protestant confession, since it is associated with the very beginning of the reformation.

Certainly, the views of Martin Luther played a leading role in shaping the ideology of the reformation and the birth of Protestantism. However, the supporters of the reformation initially did not agree with each other on many fundamental issues, which soon led to the emergence of many independent Protestant movements.

The movement to purify the Church was not limited to Germany. In Switzerland, the reformation movement was led by the Frenchman Jean Calvin (1509-1564), who, in matters of doctrine, which was an extreme direction in the reform movement, went much further than M. Luther in rejecting the Christian tradition. A special place in the teaching of J. Calvin is occupied by the doctrine of predestination to salvation. He taught that neither personal faith nor good deeds can change anything in a person's life. God has chosen some to be saved, and others to perish forever. The chosen ones receive the gift of faith and are born again, their free will playing almost no role.

According to J. Calvin, every person at any time and in any place is in the service of God and is responsible for the gifts given to him by God: time, health, property. The main form of service to God is work. The result of this work-material well-being-is perceived as God's blessing and an indication that a person is among those predestined to salvation.

The teaching of J. Calvin – Calvinism (reformation) – contributed to the formation of a special ethics of Calvinism, based on the principles of “worldly vocation” and “worldly asceticism.” The main virtue of his followers – Calvinists – considered work, and the sin-idleness, which resulted in a very negative attitude to any entertainment. Cities where Calvinism became the dominant religion were transformed into the semblance of giant barracks: the ringing of the bell indicated the common time for all residents to wake up, pray, go to bed, etc. Bright colored clothing was forbidden, and all holidays and entertainment were also canceled. Laughter was considered a grave sin. The only day of rest was Sunday, which was dedicated to prayers and singing of Psalms.

From Switzerland, Calvinism spread to other European countries: its supporters appeared in the Netherlands, some areas of France (Huguenots), Germany, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The ideas of Calvinism also had a great influence on English and Scottish Protestants. In England, on the basis of Calvinism, the puritans emerged. In the middle of the XVI century, Calvinists united with the supporters of another prominent figure of the reformation – Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), forming the Reformed Church of Switzerland [23].

The Protestant movement also penetrated to England, where it was called “Anglicanism.” The closest reason for the beginning of the reformation in England was a quarrel between Pope Clement VII and the English King Henry VIII, who under this pretext got rid of the centuries-old influence of the Vatican on English politics. Despite the fact that Anglicanism is closest to the Catholic Church, preserving certain traditional features in doctrine, in rites and in the Church structure, it is also one of the first trends of Protestantism. Anglicanism arose during the reformation and has all the doctrinal characteristics of Protestantism: denial of the primacy of the Roman Pope, denial of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, denial of the sacrament of the priesthood, etc.

From the point of view of its structure, the Anglican Church is a national and state Church. That is why Anglicans themselves usually do not refer to them-

selves as Protestants, and their Church is called simply “the Church of England.” Another Protestant movement that emerged in Germany during the reformation was Anabaptism. The name Anabaptism in Greek means “rebaptized,” because one of the main provisions of the teachings of the Anabaptists was the thesis about the need for a conscious perception of Christianity. Based on this, they denied infant baptism, and those who were baptized as children were rebaptized. The movement was started by the clothier Nicholas Storch (1483-1565) from Zwickau in Saxony, who knew the Holy Scriptures and was considered a “prophet.” He began to preach the new doctrine with Thomas Munzer and Mark Steubner around 1520.

The teaching of the Anabaptists was the most radical rejection of Catholicism, compared with other Protestant doctrines. His followers accepted only the New Testament and regarded the Old Testament as a secondary Appendix to it. According to their ideas, the Revelation contained in the texts of the Holy Scriptures continued in the modern era through mystical illumination from above. Therefore, in their environment, there were often people who considered themselves “prophets.” Salvation was understood by them only individually, so they denied the Church hierarchy and sacraments.

The Anabaptists spread throughout Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands as small autonomous communities. In each city, the creed was different, although there were also general provisions: a return to Apostolic times, adult baptism, and the rejection of the Church as an institution, as well as all rites and sacraments. Already in the XVI century, Anabaptists were divided into 40 different directions. Some of them preached the violent overthrow of the authorities and the establishment of the “millennial Kingdom” on earth. Gradually, Anabaptism lost its political character and acquired pacifist features. The ideas of the Anabaptists influenced the Moravian brothers and independents in England [8].

It is known that the fathers of the reformation M. Luther, J. Calvin and others, called for the return of the foundations of the Christian faith, to the faith as it was in its original purity in the Apostolic times. The desire to purge the faith from cultural and political layers, borrowings alien to Christianity and “fruits of false reasoning,” “return to its foundations” became one of the core features of the Protestant worldview. As noted by the Russian researcher S. B. Filatov, “according to the Protestant doctrine, salvation is possible only from Jesus Christ. Nothing, no personal good deeds, no religious rites of the clergy bring salvation closer; only faith, freely granted by God is the source of salvation” [10].

Indeed, the key principle of Protestantism is salvation by personal faith. This principle was opposed to the Catholic principle of justification by works, according to which everyone who wants salvation must do everything that the Church needs, and, above all, contribute to its material enrichment. Protestantism does not deny that there is no faith without good works. Good deeds are useful and necessary, but it is impossible to justify them before God, only faith makes it

possible to hope for salvation. Therefore, all areas of Protestantism in one form or another adhered to the doctrine of predestination: every person is prepared for his fate before his birth; it does not depend on either prayers or activities, a person is deprived of the opportunity to change the fate of their behavior.

At the same time, Protestants rely on the exclusive authority of the Bible. They “recognize only one book – the Bible, in which to look for the expression of God’s will and God’s wisdom. The writings of theologians, prophecies and religious insights of the “saints” of the Catholic Church are no more than human fabrications, the value of which is doubtful” [10]. In accordance with the principle “only Scripture, only faith, only grace” (*Sola Scriptura, sola fides, sola gratia*), Protestants consider the only authoritative source of faith to be the Holy Scripture, completely rejecting the Holy Tradition (and, consequently, the entire tradition of the Church that preceded them) and the Teaching of the Church (the authority of the Pope and Ecumenical Councils).

It is known that any Christian faith recognizes the Bible as the main source of Revelation. However, the contradictions contained in the Holy Scripture led to the fact that in Catholicism, the right to interpret the Bible belonged only to priest. For this purpose, a large number of works were written by the Church fathers, and a large number of decisions of Church councils were adopted, which is collectively called the Holy Tradition. Protestantism deprived the Church of its monopoly on the interpretation of the Bible, completely rejecting the interpretation of Holy Tradition as a source of Revelation. It is not the Bible that gets its authenticity from the Church, but any Church organization, group of believers, or individual believer can claim the truth of the ideas they preach if they are confirmed in the Bible. This leads to another of the key differences in Protestantism-the recognition of the priesthood of all believers. Protestants believe that every person is directly connected with God. This leads to the rejection of the division of people into clergy and laity and the affirmation of the equality of all believers in matters of faith.

Every believer with a good knowledge of the Holy Scriptures can be a priest for himself and other people. Thus, the clergy should not have any advantages, and its very existence becomes superfluous. Thus, in Protestantism, the hierarchical structure of the Church, monasticism and celibacy were abolished, and the position of the priest became elective. Protestant Ministers are not called priests, but pastors (from the Latin pastor – “shepherd”), and some denominations do not have special ministers at all.

It should be noted that Protestantism has a number of significant differences from Orthodoxy and Catholicism not only dogmatic, but also organizational and religious.

In matters of **Church organization**, there are significant differences between individual Protestant denominations. In Anglicanism and Lutheranism, the episcopate remains, the communities of the Presbyterian Church (separated from

the Anglican) are headed by presbyters, and some Protestant churches do not recognize any centralized Church organization at all, arguing for full autonomy of communities (for example, Congregationalists, etc.).

Religious worship in Protestantism is significantly reduced and simplified. Protestants share common Christian ideas about the existence of God as the Creator of the world, about his Trinity, about the sinfulness of man, about the immortality of the soul and salvation, about heaven and hell. But they reject the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, Divine revelation, and some others.

The number of sacraments is reduced to two: baptism and communion; all worship is reduced to reading sermons, joint prayers, and singing hymns and Psalms. It abolished the right of Church servants to absolution of sins, since this is considered the prerogative of God, abolished the veneration of saints, icons, relics, and the reading of prayers for the dead, since these actions are recognized as pagan prejudices. The number of Church holidays is kept to a minimum. The veneration of the biblical saints remains unshakeable, but it was devoid of the elements of fetishism inherent in the cult of saints in Catholicism. Worship in Protestantism takes place in the native language of the faithful, usually in modest houses of worship.

However, even among the leading trends of Protestantism from the very beginning, there was no unity in matters related to the cult, with the external situation of churches. The number of Church holidays is kept to a minimum. The veneration of the biblical saints remains unshakeable, but it was devoid of the elements of fetishism inherent in the cult of saints in Catholicism. Worship in Protestantism takes place in the native language of the faithful, usually in modest houses of worship.

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The interpretation of the sacrament as a rite in which a miracle occurs is muted in Protestantism. At the same time, Lutheranism left only two of the seven sacraments – baptism and communion, and Calvinism – only baptism. Some areas of Protestantism conduct baptism only in adulthood, believing that a person should consciously approach the choice of faith; others, without refusing to baptize infants, conduct an additional rite of confirmation of teenagers, as if a second baptism.

In general, **as a result of the reformation movement** and the spread of **Protestantism** throughout Western Europe, the Catholic world, which used to unite all the peoples of Western Europe under the spiritual leadership of the Pope, ceased to exist as **a monopoly**. The United Catholic Church was replaced by a multitude of national churches that contributed to the growth of the national consciousness of the peoples of Europe, as well as their cultural, socio-political and economic development.

Thus, the main achievement of the reformation is its significant contribution to the change of the old feudal economic relations to the new capitalist relations. The desire for economy, development of industry, rejection of expensive entertainment (as well as expensive worship) stimulated the accumulation of capital, which was invested in trade and production. As a result, Protestant countries began to outpace Catholic and Orthodox countries in economic development. Even the very Protestant work ethic led to the development of the economy.

It is important to note that the term “Protestant work ethic” was coined by the German sociologist and philosopher Max Weber in his famous work “Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism” in 1905.

In this work, M. Weber justified the conclusion that in Germany, whose population is represented by both Catholics and Protestants, the best economic success was achieved by Protestants; they were the backbone of entrepreneurs and highly qualified technical specialists. In addition, Protestant countries such as the United States, England, and Holland were the most dynamic. At the same time, M. Weber emphasized the asceticism of Protestant entrepreneurs, many of whom were alien to ostentatious luxury and the ecstasy of power, and who considered wealth only as evidence of a well-performed duty to God.

From the point of view of M. Weber, the criterion for the usefulness of professional activity is, first of all, its profitability: “If God shows you this path, by following which you can earn more in a legitimate way without harming your soul and without harming others, than in any other way, and you reject this and choose a less profitable path, then you are thereby hindering one of the goals of your calling, you refuse to be God’s steward and accept his gifts in order to be able to use them for His benefit when he so desires. Not for the pleasures of the flesh and sinful joys, but for God you should work and grow rich” [28].

Protestantism spread rapidly and widely in Europe. It was particularly strong in Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland. Thanks to the counter-Reformation that began in the 40s of the XVI century, the population of a number of countries: France, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and southern Germany was able to return to the fold of the Catholic Church. Some of the most radical Protestants (puritans, Baptists, Quakers) fled from persecution to the New World, laying the ideological foundations of the future United States. It was America that later became the center of Protestantism.

Unfortunately, in modern popular literature, the history, origin and social essence of Protestantism are often significantly distorted, the theological foundations of this trend in Christianity are confused and generally incorrect, and the chronology of the development of this religious movement is blurred.

Strictly speaking, Protestantism is a historically limited phenomenon, dating back to the reformation of the sixteenth century, and in the proper sense of the word, Protestant denominations are Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism, and

Anabaptism. However, in Protestantism, the possibility of their own interpretation of the Bible by any of its apologists led to the fact that it could not remain within the framework of a single doctrine. Many similar in spirit, but quite different directions and trends quickly began to appear, since the most important criterion for understanding the various provisions of the Bible was considered the point of view of their founders.

First, the first Protestant denominations began to actively divide. Thus, more radical Protestant groups separated from the Anglican Church: the Presbyterian Church, as well as puritans, independents, Quakers, and others. The Reformed, Congregationalists, Presbyterian, and a number of other Protestant denominations adopted the main doctrinal provisions of Calvinism.

Secondly, in the XVII century, Quakers, Baptists, and many others currents of “second-wave of Protestantism” were formed.

Third, in the XVIII – XIX centuries, against the background of the movement of religious revival – “revivalism” – there were Protestant movements of the “third wave” – both original (for example, Methodism) and separated from previously created denominations (Adventism, etc.), collectively called “Evangelical Christians.”

Some researchers also identify the “fourth wave” of Protestantism or neo-protestantism, representatives of which include Protestant denominations formed in the XIX-XX centuries, such as Pentecostals, premillenarians, postmillenarians, etc.

In fact, the process of emergence of new Protestant trends, which began with the reformation, has not stopped until now. In this regard, the total number of Protestant and non-Protestant denominations cannot be calculated even approximately, because some independent churches have only a few dozen believers.

However, it should be emphasized that many denominations and religious groups that emerged later in the “second,” “third” and “fourth” waves, although they are sometimes referred to as Protestant, are not Protestant in nature. They are “quasi-denominations,” often called post-Protestant or post-post-Protestant, that arose from the initial disunion and subsequent differentiation of Protestant denominations.

First, Protestantism has never been a unified whole; it has always tended to divide. The reason for this, according to the British scientist N. Cohn, was that “the first reformers directly addressed the text of the Bible. But when these people began to read the Bible, they immediately began to interpret its truths in their own way, and their interpretations did not always agree with each other” [6].

Second, Protestant leaders have always considered it necessary to separate themselves (including organizationally) from those of their fellow reformers who were, in their opinion, insufficiently strict in their adherence to the basic principles of the Christian faith.

These circumstances led to the emergence of many incompatible militant reform movements, each of which was confident in the exceptional correctness of its own interpretation of the faith [19].

As has been shown above, as Protestantism spread, many major (Anglican, Lutheran, Calvinist) and large (Adventist, Baptist, Anabaptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, restorationist, etc.) Protestant denominations first emerged. Then smaller denominations emerged from them. Eventually, a number of Protestant churches was formed, each with its own distinctive theology and a sense of its chosen status in the eyes of God [26].

The tendency of Protestantism to fragmentation, which was established in Europe in the XVII century, has become a feature of religious life in many countries of the world, but especially in North America. As M. Ruthven notes, “religious America has become a divine universal where the Church can be found, adapted, or invented to suit almost any taste” [25]. So far, even a relatively small Church continues to divide further, as its supporters actively search for an even more “pure” set of basic principles to fit their behavior. In the relentless search for the true doctrine, this religious supermarket is constantly developing, and the range of its products continues to expand comprehensively to meet the requirements of changing demand [26].

Experts note that the existence of the very permissibility of faith “in a different way” has freed the hands of all sorts of lovers of delights in the field of religion. The dogmas of most of these new, post-Protestant movements do not have any theological grounds, evidence, or logic, and are based solely on the subjective opinions or even fantasies of their founders [27]. According to M. A. Noyle, Professor at the History Department at the University of Notre Dame, “modern Protestant diversity is much more than just a broad geography. Indeed, adherents of the Church’s Protestant tradition, dating back to the European reformation, are now scattered around the world. However, a much larger role in Protestantism has been played by local independent churches, which are the exclusive product of the last century” [22].

As has been shown above, Protestantism neglects such means of preserving Church doctrine as faithfulness to Tradition, and the sacralization of an authoritatively organized Church bureaucracy. For them, here are no infallible authorities, they require the believer to read the Bible and think independently about its meaning. All this contributes to a relatively easy and rapid liberalization, as well as secularization of Protestant consciousness [10].

In this regard, the problem of a kind of **degeneration of Protestantism** is currently quite acute. It finds expression in the loss of his characteristic aspirations to asceticism, hard work and honor, as well as in the immorality of the modern post-Protestant world.

In a broad sense, **post-Protestantism** is understood as a movement in Christianity of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that seeks to restrict itself from both the Roman Catholic Church and traditional Protestant denominations. At the same time, today it is hardly legitimate to declare the existence of any post-Protestant Church, since Protestantism originally did not have a single Church, but assumed a

network structure. In our opinion, the concept of post-Protestant churches is more correct, since the word Church in post-Protestantism is the trend name of a specific religious organization, accompanied by the words God, Christ, Bible, etc.

Today, post-Protestantism is a vast (many thousands) collection of independent, virtually unrelated churches, sects, and denominations.

The last major revision of Protestant Church life occurred in the 60s and 70s of the twentieth century. Because of the rapid development of science, the mankind upon getting new knowledge about nature, refused to believe in what he was taught in Sunday schools, and wanted to figure out everything on its own. This was the beginning of the renewal of religious forms and the emergence of a social phenomenon called “post-Protestantism” in sociology. This phenomenon, which has learned to adapt very well to the current mood of society, is radically different from the traditional Protestantism.

First, Martin Luther, Jean Calvin and their closest followers set their goal to achieve “purity of faith” (in their understanding), the search for religious truths. Modern post-Protestant movements are characterized mainly by the desire to achieve personal goals that lead to enrichment, and to satisfy their own ambitions.

Secondly, representatives of traditional Protestant denominations, although guided by the thesis of salvation through faith, led a fairly modest life, tried to follow the biblical commandments and thought more about saving their souls than about the earthly life. Post-Protestants kept this thesis but began to interpret it differently: “since we are already saved, we should focus on the temporary things.”

Third, Protestantism does not care much about the experience accumulated by the Church, they care more about the experience of an individual, subject to certain religious (Church) dogmas and requirements. Post-Protestants developed this idea even further, they argue: if the main thing is to have faith in the soul, then why do we need Church? From here, the post-protesters get the right to choose how to profess their faith.

Fourth, the Protestants preserved sermons, although in a somewhat simplified form (compared to Catholicism and Orthodoxy). Among post-Protestants, the Church “service” has become very peculiar, resembling a secular entertainment event. There is an opinion among them that if people feel God differently now, and not in the same way as, say, in the time of King David, then it means that religious feelings must be expressed in a new way.

However, the key difference, in our opinion, is that post-Protestants have lost the perception of God, typical for traditional Protestant denominations, primarily as a punishing judge, cursing sinners, etc. Therefore, the post-Protestant never strives for moral purification and Holiness. He remains as he is, wants to feel comfortable everywhere and satisfy, first of all, his urgent, sometimes very low needs. In order to be considered a member of the post-Protestant Church, it is not even necessary to agree with the Church’s dogmas. A person may not believe in the Trinity, but at the same time be considered a parishioner and participate in

the Church services – meetings. The purpose of such meetings is to share positive emotions, good mood, communication, dating, and preaching, which helps you better navigate through modern life and become a “successful” person. This post Protestant service is often called a celebration or an event [16].

A parishioner comes to the place where the service is supposed to be, “receives a program, takes coffee, a cookie or doughnut, and sits down in the half-lit hall. Light modern music plays, and song lyrics appear on the monitors installed in the hall (for example: “Christ, thank you for everything, I’m happy”). The program of such services is approximately as follows: lunch with the pastor, reading the Scripture (5 minutes), preaching (from 3 to 40 minutes), “communion” (5 minutes), collecting donations (5 minutes), singing together (10-30 minutes). Thus, the entire service takes about one hour. At the same time, the key point of such meetings is the atmosphere. For the sake of such atmosphere, attributes from almost all world cultures may be brought to the Church: for example, in the Episcopal Church, many people practice yoga. In other communities, rooms are decorated with candles, as in an Orthodox Church, or an image of the labyrinth, typical for Catholic churches, is spread on the floor” [16].

Meetings of post-Protestants are not only a joint prayer, but a desire to have a good time with like-minded people, people who are interested in the same things as you, the same music or literature. Parishioners do not have to visit the Church at all. You can just meet at someone’s apartment, turn on music and talk about topics related to religion.

According to E. A. Ivanova, in the United States, such pseudo-religious organizations have all the opportunities to earn a lot of money: they do not pay taxes and get loans without problems. With proper marketing, the “post-Protestant” Church in America is a very profitable business, available to anyone, because according to the US Constitution, any person can open a Church [17].

Post-Protestants are very well represented in the society mainly due to the books that their pastors publish in huge quantities. For example, pastor Joel Austin’s book “Your best life today” was published in 4 million copies. Mostly post-Protestant literature combines theses of popular psychology with attractive and catchy titles: “Seven steps to improve your life,” “Become better,” “Meaningful Life”, etc. Their authors are famous people, media figures, and the churches themselves actively use television, radio, and the Internet.

Thus, religious practice widely uses the terms from popular psychological books on self-help, and theological questions are reduced to a set of rational steps, practices that bring maximum satisfaction (previously – “Systematic theology,” now – “Seven steps to a successful life”). The most successful PPCS define themselves as organizations with “a clear mission and ready for novelty” [15].

It should be noted that in the United States, specialized Christian channels has been developed, in addition, other channels are willing to sell their airtime for the so-called “sermons,” which made a number of televangelists – TV evangelists, for ex-

ample, B. Graham and J. D. Fawell – exceptionally popular [13; 14]. The night time is particularly valuable for preachers. At that time, TV is most often watched by people who are either depressed or lonely. To pass time and distract themselves from their problems, they often switch from one channel from to another and come to a “Christian program” with the logo “Come to us – and everything will be arranged.” Every sermon in the Church ends with the words: “Next time bring your friend to save him,” and, as experts say, this appeal has a significant success.

Scientists see the reasons for the popularity of post-Protestant churches in the fact that they are very well-promoted structures that use not only modern marketing strategies for their “promotion,” but even resort to the services of special agencies for Church marketing.

When the Church becomes popular and the number of parishioners increases, services are held more often and are accompanied by entertainment and educational programs for children and adults, different courses are opened, etc. In a few years, if the Church is developing steadily, the leaders open another similar Church, for example, in another part of the city or another city. It offers its parishioners exactly the same set of services, programs, and courses as the first.

Thus, a network of churches appears offering their parishioners a certain, convenient lifestyle under the fashionable guise of “religion”. It should be noted that the practice of faith in these churches involves teaching their parish how to earn money, so they usually organize a lot of business courses aimed at “unexpected financial success.” At the same time, the emphasis is not on the labor process itself, as with traditional Protestants, but on the result, primarily, quick and tangible financial result [17].

In turn, the financial result is achieved by the scale of simultaneous coverage of a large number of parishioners during sermons combined with the regular collection of donations. For this purpose, the so-called mega-churches are built, it is an American phenomenon, meaning buildings similar to large cultural or entertainment centers, which have everything: service rooms, gyms, movie theaters, beauty salons, bars, restaurants, etc. [17].

In the scientific literature, “mega churches” refer to congregations with a weekly membership of 2,000 people or more. By 2010, scientists counted more than 1,400 such organizations in the United States, including 195 in California and 191 in Texas. At the same time, only a few of them identified themselves with Lutheranism, Presbyterianism or Methodism, and a little more with Baptism. However, the vast majority, including the largest, with a weekly congregation of 20,000 or more, considered themselves Pentecostal, and more often “outside of any denomination” or “independent” [22].

If the number of parishioners is relatively small, then, along with the appearance of mega churches, the creation of new religious forms is actively practiced – from mission, kindred and emergent religious organizations to the emergence of “home groups”. Thus, mission churches reject the Ministry of pro-

fessional missionaries and prepare everyone to preach. Kinship churches focus on strengthening and maintaining close relationships and family atmosphere within the community. Ambient churches serve as platforms for the dialogue of different worldviews – Buddhist meditations and yoga classes, Orthodox candles, various pagan cult attributes, and even ritual ones for performing black magic rites are used at such services. “Home groups” consist of several people and proclaim a radical break with any centralization. PPC is also an educational psychotherapy group. PPC offers educational, counseling programs, trainings, group psychotherapy, small group meetings, etc. At the same time, 84% of US mega churches include small meeting groups, “40% of Americans regularly participate in such support groups” [15].

We should also agree that quite often a number of post-Protestant movements, especially sectarian ones, carry out anti-state and anti-social attitudes through their structures. At the same time, their relative competitiveness in the market of religious services is a known threat to both traditional religions and public morals. In many respects, this applies to the United States, where the overall level of religiosity is relatively high (the number of active believers exceeds 50% of the population), so religious processes that have a mass and more emotional nature continue to have a significant impact on the socio-political and cultural life of the country [10].

It should be noted that the reaction of traditional Protestant denominations to such “Protestant new formations” finds expression in consistent Protestant Orthodoxy, including in the form of Protestant fundamentalism. The Protestant reform was intended to restore Christianity to its “fundamental” spirit, to purge the Church of all the means of power and administration that the papacy had created over 500 years [9]. Paradoxically, the Protestant movement, which had the intention of fighting the totalitarianism of medieval Catholicism, became a haven not only for quasi-religious (post-Protestant groups), but also for religious fundamentalists [2; 21]. Thus, religious scholars have noted “the anti-modernism and traditionalism of Protestant fundamentalists, who are characterized by extreme adherence to their religious group, strict discipline and the desire to convert everyone to their faith” [11; 29].

In our opinion, it is important for sociologists to focus on the possible negative social consequences that are the result of overly active activities of a number of pseudo-religious movements that pass themselves off as Protestant, only hiding behind pseudo-religious rhetoric, pursuing goals destructive for the society, but, nevertheless, becoming, for a number of reasons, very attractive to the wide population.

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