
AT THE PINNACLE OF FAITH IS A PRAYER FOR A MIRACLE

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Abstract

Belief in the true power of prayer, i.e. in that which rises above the necessity of the natural order, above the facts of everyday experience and the evidence of reason, is tantamount to faith in the limitless power of miracles, often contrary to the laws of the Universe. Thus, prayer, as the most important component of religious worship, and a miracle, as a special object of religious faith, are truths and values of the highest order for religion. In the Christian religion, any sincere and true prayer is a miracle, a source of miraculous power. On the other hand, God works miracles at the request of the believer, expressed in prayer. The integrating factor of religious consciousness, uniting and bringing together these elements of religion, is religious faith. It is religious faith who unfolds the religious-symbolic environment in which ideas about the effectiveness of prayer and faith in the limitless power of miracles exist and function. This short article provides a religious analysis of religious faith, prayer and miracle as a special object of prayer practice.

Keywords: faith, God, prayer, miracle

1. Formulation of the problem

As the oldest cult act of most religions, prayer is at the same time a religious phenomenon that deserves the close attention of researchers. The study of prayer, in its broad sense as communication, interiorized dialogue is important and relevant to the general worldview problem of awareness of human communication in general, as the most important value of human existence. The miracle is a special subject of religious faith and functional cult in general. An unbiased look at prayer shows it not only as an important means of satisfying certain religious needs, activating religious images, ideas, arousing emotions, not only as a factor in the dynamics of religious experiences of believers, relieving excessive psychological stress, but also as an essential component of religion, just such a component of religion, which most fully embodies and reveals the whole essence of religion.

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Prayer is able to compensate, to fill the gaps of real life, to create certain positive counterbalances to the negative values of human existence. Therefore, in today's conditions, close attention to it as a powerful tool of religious consolation and the removal of excessive psychological stress is an urgent need of the time. The urgency of the topic is also due to the fact that despite the great interest of modern researchers in religious issues, components and manifestations of religion, it is prayer that has not become the object of special attention of scholars. Hence, the purpose of this article is to study the phenomenon of prayer, a miracle, as the most important acts of the religious faith of Christians.

2. Analysis of recent research and publications

A certain amount of knowledge has been accumulated in the study of the essence of religion, its components and manifestations. First of all, this refers to the methodological principles of the analysis of the religious phenomenon, formulated in the theoretical studies of J. Leuba, S. Averintsev [1, 2]. The analysis of the elements of religious rituals is based on theoretical studies of the cult side of religion I. Yablokov, S. Tokarev [3, 4]. Of great importance for the studies of the topic were works in which a general analysis of the prayer of W. Trillhaas, L. Feyebach was carried out [5, 6].

3. Presenting main material

The most important act of religion, which most fully embodies and reveals its entire essence, is such a ritual act as prayer. This is precisely the element of the cult where faith in the miraculous power of God, His essential ability to do the impossible is most fully expressed.

In the most general form, we can imagine the subjective plan of religious relations, because it is with it that we will deal, first of all, as with one that consists in a certain special relationship of believing individuals to supernatural beings. In this case, the specific religiosity of both an individual and a religious community is centred on the 'God-Man' relationship, which determines the degree of a person's religiosity. The inherent dialogic nature of these relations is realized in various religious traditions by numerous means, the dominant positions among which belong to the verbally expressed. That is, we are talking about both external prayer communication with the supernatural, and silent prayer practice (verbalized in essence), as an introverted experience and realization of the relationship 'I and You', 'man-God'. In this regard, prayer is an unmistakable indicator of the vitality of the believer's personal relationship with the supernatural, when it is the true guarantor of a true meeting with God, and the extinction of religious relations, the destruction of religious experiences inevitably affects the prayer practice of believers. Thus, prayer is the main act of religion, most fully embodying and revealing its essence. "Where there is no prayer, there is no religion", noted S. Bulgakov, "one should not replace prayer

with its theosophical surrogates: 'concentration, meditation, intuition', which deal not with God, but with the world, immerse a person not in the transcendent, but in the immanent, and the divine is substituted for God himself" [7].

The history of world religions convincingly proves that the emergence and formation of prayer as such and its differentiation from magical and cult forms marked the formation of a new principle of human-supernatural relations - the principle of 'vertical orientation of a person', which, with the advent of Christianity, begins to dominate in human culture. The principle of 'vertical orientation of a person' is the principle of his openness to God, says S. Averintsev, analysing the features of the Christian tradition [2]. When magic is characterized by 'horizontal' connections, since it involves contact with purely material things and phenomena, prayer has always been known for its involvement in the divine - it directs a person vertically, to the highest of the worlds, connecting him with the transcendent. Such a vertical orientation of the worshiper in some way testified that the spiritual principle in a person becomes the leading determinant of his existence, all manifestations of his earthly existence.

With the advent of world religions, the moral component begins to dominate in the sphere of human communication with God, it fills both the semantic element of religion and ritual and liturgical practice. "Myths and rituals of a later origin, which were part of the new religions, were largely rethought in accordance with the new ethical content", notes researcher V. Sherdakov [8]. So, late Judaism, and later Christianity, in the sphere of cult practice, abandoned sacrifices, recognizing them as unethical. "Bring no more vain gifts", Jehovah says through the mouth of Isaiah, "wash yourself, cleanse yourself... Learn to do good" (Isaiah 1.13-17). With this process, changes in attitude to prayer were synchronized. First of all, the type of prayer that prevailed in the arsenal of means of connecting the individual with the supernatural changed. Verbal (prayer) formulas play an increasingly important role of mediation in the structure of the relationship 'I and You'. Thus, a person's connection with God is carried out both through verbal communication and through silent prayer practice, individual reflection, which is connected with the inner revelation and self-disclosure of God.

With the advent of universal religions, where there were ideas about the God-man, in the relationship between the believer and the supernatural, the motives of individual mystery begin to prevail, individual prayer begins to spread, which is an unmistakable indicator of the degree of religiousness of believers. The circle of subjects of prayer activity is becoming wider; purely male or exclusively female prayers appear and are distributed, as well as prayers that differ in the professional characteristics of the officials representing them.

The absoluteness of filling the relationship of faith inevitably leads to a change in the form through which they are realized. In contrast to the indecisive and timid attempts to approach the cruel idol of the religions of ancient societies, the concept of later communication and the idea of prayer inevitably takes the form of a doctrine of self-immersion, merging with God and dissolving in it. This. "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me." (John 14.10)

In his seminal work 'You and I', the Jerusalem thinker M. Buber argued that the focus on the eternal transcendent 'You' is a general tendency to organize religious life in a certain way, which, in the end, gives rise to faith, and then the practical unification of the community of believers with his God in a cult [9]. At the same time, the thirst for mastery of God, the constant reification of relations with God, spoil real religious experiences, destroy the purity of worship and, of course, do not act as a "faithful guarantor of the purity of faith" [9, p. 88].

In this regard, prayer is an unmistakable indicator of the end of a relationship of faith, an indicator of the disappearance of true, sincere religious feelings, when prayer no longer guarantees a real meeting with the Creator, but, according to M. Buber, is a surrogate phenomenon. "In true prayer", said Professor M. Buber, "faith and worship are united and purified in their relationship. The fact that true prayer lives in religions testifies to their true life; while she lives in them, they also exist. With the degeneration of religion, prayer also disappears; their ability to communicate is more and more obscured by their objectivity, and it is more and more difficult for all indivisible beings to turn to God." [4, p. 70-71]

The specificity of prayers is manifested in their ideological content and direction. However, religious consciousness not only determines the content of prayer activity, but also finds its direct reflection in it in the form of a prayer text, which is the inner, content side of prayer. And although the perception of the information load of a prayer text as a certain set of words that mediate communication with the divine essence is based not on objective verification, but on subjective certainty, faith, in addition to doctrinal and dogmatic, historical, ethical, aesthetic elements of religious culture are reproduced, i.e. relevant content.

The change in the essence, means, methods of worship, the specifics of all prayer communication depends on the level of development of ideas about the object of worship. The logic of this process necessarily followed the path of spiritualization. It was a process of development, the genesis of which was based on rather primitive incantations and spells, which were characterized mainly by manipulative influence on the supernatural and the absolutization of the connection of a magical ritual with the expected consequences. Later, this process gives rise to the earliest type of prayers - petitionary prayers that appear at the stage of animistic beliefs, as a verbal component and accompaniment of the sacrifice. The purpose of such prayers is already serving (worshiping) the supernatural (spirit or God). Then, in the interplay of epochs and cultures, they grow into laudatory, thanksgiving prayers of developed religions. It was a process of development, the genesis of which was based on rather primitive conspiracies and spells, which were characterized mainly by manipulative influence on the supernatural and the absolutization of the connection of a magical ritual with the expected consequences. Later, this process gives rise to the earliest type of prayers - petitionary prayers that appear at the stage of animistic beliefs, as a verbal component and accompaniment of the sacrifice. The purpose of such prayers is already serving (worshiping) the supernatural

(spirit or God). Then, in the interplay of epochs and cultures, they grow into laudatory, thanksgiving prayers of developed religions. These prayers completely lose their mercenary character and are aimed at finding personal relationships with the supernatural, they are also focused on achieving a sense of closeness, merging with it, and their consequences are visible both in miracles and in the field of the moral and psychological life of the individual.

The subject of prayer to God is only desired or imagined, but it lacks the necessary predicates of reality. In this sense, the miracle becomes the end point reached as a result of the prayer act, for it is in it that the eternal and highest religious truths affirm themselves and faith in the objective power of prayer finds its external manifestation. Here faith in this sense, as in a broader sense, objectifies and asserts itself, not limited to the testimony of reason and not constrained by the facts of experience. For theologians are convinced that he who recognizes experience as the highest authority does not have true faith.

In this respect, the true relationship between prayer and miracle is this: prayer is the subject, and the miracle is the predicate. In other words, the object of faith in the objective power of prayer is a miracle. It is religious faith that reveals their true relationship, because for it, as L.A. Feuerbach convincingly showed, there are no boundaries, no laws, just as there is no need for it and even nature itself, for it seeks and recognizes only the will of God, and everything else for her it is secondary and insignificant [6].

Along with a change in the nature and direction of cult actions, the essence of which is personal sincere relations with the supernatural, achieving a feeling of closeness to it, merging with it, prayer itself becomes more complicated. The American psychologist D. Leuba emphasizes that prayer is not always exclusively pleading [1]. It becomes more and more important to realize it as the only means of direct, sincere communication with God. Moreover, the realization of God as the most perfect being makes believing Christians doubt the necessity and legitimacy of petitionary prayer in general, on the grounds that its practice is, in fact, ignoring the most important dogma about God as an omniscient God. These doubts are reinforced by the fact that such prayer, in fact, causes the unchanging God to reconsider his divine plans and act in accordance with the will of man. The German psychologist W. Trilhaas draws attention to this in his study of prayer [5].

The history of world religions provides extensive and varied material for generalizing statements that in the system of a religious complex prayer is inevitably endowed with miraculous power, and a miracle is the result of zealous, genuine prayer. Faith is the factor that enlivens the letter of religious dogmas and fills ritual and liturgical actions with inner burning.

Exploring the genesis of Brahmanism, in the period of the growing role of the professional caste priesthood - Brahmins, the famous scholar S. Tokarev emphasizes that prayer in Brahmanism as a verbal component and verbal accompaniment of sacrifice becomes so significant that the whole world submits to such prayer. The power of prayer is embodied in the image of the greatest Brahma, as the almighty creator of the Universe. Moreover, at the everyday level of religious consciousness of that time, the following ideas became widespread:

the world obeys the gods, the gods listen to prayers and prayers are in the power of the Brahmins, and therefore the true gods are Brahmins [4].

Miracles as a result of prayer and God in a religious sense are different from each other, like an action and an active being - one is the source of the other, but their nature is the same. Miracles only indicate that the being that initiates them is omnipotent, capable of satisfying the deepest and most secret desires of a person, because otherwise "God who does not work miracles, does not listen to prayers, God who does not satisfy desires is an unnecessary, useless God" [3, p. 75].

Thus, faith in an omnipotent God, who freely suspends the natural development of processes, a God who can act contrary to natural laws, creating the impossible, and therefore miraculous, is a necessary condition for a functional cult, various divine services and prayers, as well as the existence of religion as such. For such a God, nature is only an endless field of manifestation of his omnipotence; for if God fulfilled only those prayers, requests and desires of believers that were fulfilled without his intervention and exclusively within the limits and power of natural causes, if he exhausted his divine possibilities and means before the necessity of natural laws, then this would be nothing else, as a natural necessity, called by the name of God [6, p. 481]. However, having overcome hesitations and doubts, the believer still continues to turn to such a God, who is not bound in his definitions by natural necessity, but implements them in accordance with his unlimited will. Such a God reigns in the world order with unlimited freedom, He is not bound in his plans and actions by external factors, but is able to act miraculously, both by natural factors and against the latter, or without them - arbitrarily, exclusively through himself. Such a God is also capable, for quite ordinary reasons, of inferring effects other than those which are in accordance with their quality and nature. He, in the end, tries to significantly modify the state of processes, i.e. to change, destroy, soften or strengthen the result of existing natural causes [6, p. 351-352]. According to Feuerbach, "The omnipotence of God's will is the omnipotence of the human spirit, devoid of any definitions and laws of Nature. This omnipotence is exercised through prayer. Prayer is omnipotent." [6, p. 352]

Prayers are a means of direct influence on the minds of believers, the functional purpose of which is that they are compiled with the aim of instructing, guiding and influencing individuals in matters of dogma, doctrine and the specifics of religious traditions in general. The above is especially true for the most authoritative prayers-symbols of various religions, where the content of religious ideology, positions of faith are mediated, systematized and conceptualized. The lightness, familiarity, publicity, universal nature of prayer make prayer an effective educational phenomenon, because the conscious repetition of prayer texts is the mastery of the semantic side of religion (the transfer of information from theoretical religious consciousness to everyday life) and the transfer of information to others during religious communication. In addition, certain ideas, representations, reproduced in the texts of prayers, in themselves give a person solutions to certain worldview, moral issues of his

existence, set certain canonical norms, norms, maxims, interpersonal regulators that ensure his purpose and meaning.

Prayer is a factor in the dynamics of religious feelings, the transformation of negative feelings into positive ones, emotional release – catharsis. Prayer is a powerful means of relieving excessive psychological stress and achieving peace, satisfaction, in which a significant functional role belongs to such mental phenomena as imitation, suggestion, emotional contagion. However, the dynamic stereotype of religious experience during worship, which causes religious catharsis, is not the only one of its kind - religious consolation is also based on religious processes that occur during confession and repentance (including prayer).

Dialogue as a means of communication, translated into the subjective plane, plays a significant role in the formation of personality, because the formation of self-relationship involves, first of all, dialogue, relationships with someone else. For believers, according to Yablokov, the attitude towards supernatural beings, although it is an “attitude towards”, and not an attitude, the believers themselves perceive it as an attitude, communication [3, p. 107]. In the development of personality there is always a need for introspection, the search for the meaning of life. Thus, self-knowledge (reflection, communication with oneself, introspection), i.e. an internal dialogue, is organized by the believer in the conditions of a dialogue with God, which in itself is subjectively perceived and evaluated as a miracle.

4. Conclusions

For believers, there is no doubt that the God of true faith works miracles for man. Such his providential activity is a response to prayer requests addressed to him or a consequence of the satisfaction of the innermost, sometimes even outwardly not expressed, secret desires of the believer. Therefore, the miracles of Geology, Paleozoology and paleobotany are not real miracles, since they do not directly concern humans. The believer, hoping for a miracle, turns in prayers to God not as a distant cause, but as the direct cause of all things, phenomena and processes in the world. The believer bases his actions on faith in the sacred, supernatural power of prayer, which leads to a miracle and is in extreme, affective states of the human psyche, at the peak moment of tension of all its spiritual forces. It is then that a person, experiencing a situation of altered states of consciousness, partially loses touch with reality and, ignoring natural necessity and all mediating natural forces and factors, enters into a direct connection with the object of his worship. Hence the subjective confidence in the identity of the objective and the subjective, in the superiority of the supernatural will over earthly necessity, in the superiority of the spiritual over the natural.

5. Prospects for further study

Paying tribute to the scientific significance of the works of the above authors, it should be noted the importance of a comprehensive and systematic study of the phenomenon of prayer and miracles. After all, there are almost no broad fundamental studies on this problem, nor special studies devoted to a holistic and logically complete vision of prayer and miracles. Given this, it is important to consider prayer more broadly and universally, and approach it not only as a religious ritual, but also as a process of communication with a transcendent entity, as a text of this communication. The functions of prayer and miracle, the channels of their influence both on the individual and on the group of co-religionists, and the elucidation of their role in the structure of the religious complex require special attention. There is no detailed and detailed comparative study of prayer. The subject of special attention should be the question of the cultural-translational function of prayer, the specifics, channels and conditions of its impact on culture.

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