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DIFFICULTIES IN EDUCATING THE THEOLOGICAL EXPERT REVIEW IN RUSSIA

DIFICULTADES EN LA EDUCACIÓN DEL EXPERTO TEOLÓGICO EN RUSIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper is devoted to identifying the complexities concerning the educating theological expert review. The institution for expert review has emerged relatively recently and is often a tool used by different interest groups in battles with each other, for example, with religious rivals or engaged leaders pursuing their own goals. The main attention in the paper focuses on the following problematic points: the lack of a unified comprehension of the nature of theological expert review, and also of a unified methodology for its conduct and typology, the issues of the determinism in the results of the expert opinion due the belonging of a researcher to a certain scientific school. The paper reveals factors that negatively affect the procedure for conducting expert research, and identifies the main prospects for the development of the institution of theological expert review. It states that the peculiarity of the development of theological discourse has a strong influence on the process of the formation of theological expert review in the Russian Federation and is largely the reason for the lack of uniform standardized criteria in relation to the methods and rules for its implementation. The paper is of interest for experts, researchers, teachers, as well as for those interested in the problems of understanding this institution and the prospects for its development, taking into account the existing law enforcement practice in Russia.

Keywords:

Theological expert review, neo-institutionalism, freedom of conscience and religion, religion, expert community, new religious movements, law enforcement practice.

RESUMEN

El documento está dedicado a identificar las complejidades relacionadas con la revisión del experto en teología educativa. La institución de revisión por expertos ha surgido hace relativamente poco tiempo y es a menudo una herramienta utilizada por diferentes grupos de interés en batallas entre ellos, por ejemplo, con rivales religiosos o líderes comprometidos que persiguen sus propios objetivos. La atención principal en el artículo se centra en los siguientes puntos problemáticos: la falta de una comprensión unificada de la naturaleza de la revisión teológica experta, y también de una metodología unificada para su conducta y tipología, las cuestiones del determinismo en los resultados del experto. Opinión debida a la pertenencia de un investigador a una determinada escuela científica. El artículo revela factores que afectan negativamente el procedimiento para realizar la investigación pericial, e identifica las principales perspectivas para el desarrollo de la institución de la revisión pericial teológica. Afirma que la peculiaridad del desarrollo del discurso teológico tiene una fuerte influencia en el proceso de formación de la revisión de expertos teológicos en la Federación de Rusia y es en gran parte la razón de la falta de criterios uniformes estandarizados en relación con los métodos y reglas para su implementación. El documento es de interés para expertos, investigadores, profesores, así como para aquellos interesados en los problemas de comprensión de esta institución y las perspectivas de su desarrollo, teniendo en cuenta la práctica policial existente en Rusia.

Palabras clave:

Revisión de expertos teológicos, neoinstitucionalismo, libertad de conciencia y religión, religión, comunidad de expertos, nuevos movimientos religiosos, práctica policial.

INTRODUCTION

In the late XX - early XXI century, a new subject of scientific research requiring purposeful study is being formed in Russia. This is an institute for theological expert review. Its appearance is due to the socio-political changes that took place after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the revival of the role of religion in society.

During this period, new religious movements emerged, most of which were founded in the United States and Western Europe. Their teachings and practices were at odds with the historically established religious tradition. This has led to the complication of situations of a legal, socio-psychological and ideological nature. Their opposition to society caused concern of the public and bodies of state power associated with their possible negative impact on individuals, on society, and on the state.

In this situation, the institution of theological expert review has become necessary. But well-trained personnel specializing in solving newly arisen problems in the religious sphere are needed for its formation. Theological education has regained its value. Only religious scholars have competencies that allow timely performing qualified diagnosis, analysis of changes in the religious situation in society, especially in a poly-confessional one, as well as uncovering illegal actions in a religious space, tracking newly emerging organizations on the religious field and determining their specifics.

However, the very process of the formation of theological expert review was complicated. At the present time, the theological expert review as an institution has not been finally formed. Therefore, the issues related to identifying the reasons that reduce the effectiveness of the theological expert review, determining possible directions in the field of improving the procedure of the expert process remain their relevance and require understanding.

This topic remains poorly studied in theoretical and methodological terms. Theological expert review and the process of its formation and development is not an independent subject of thesis research.

There are separate papers devoted to:

- Problematic aspects of conducting a theological expert review and methods of their resolution (Gerasimenko & Vavrukh, 2014).
- The problem of the legal status of the judicial theological expert review (Averin, 2016).
- Methodological foundations for conducting a theological expert review (Tomaeva, 2001).

- The issue of the state theological expert review (Zagrebin, 2010), and others.
- The institution of theological expert review is also poorly studied in foreign scientific papers and materials. We can find there only its some research subjects. For example:
 - Works devoted to the analysis of political cults (O'Toole, 1976; Dorraj, 2006).
 - Works devoted to the analysis of different types of cults, sects, and new religious movements (Carden, 1998; Iannaccone, 1988; Marty, 1960), etc.

Thus, in spite of the fact that certain aspects of the formation and functioning of the institution of theological expert review were covered in the works of scientists, there are still many questions about the further prospects for the development of this institution. For this purpose, it is necessary to determine what difficulties have arisen in the process of the formation and development of the institution of theological expert review. This is the purpose of this paper.

METHODOLOGY

When writing the paper, the neoinstitutional paradigm described by North (1997), was used, which allows us to consider theological expert review as an institution from the point of view of formal norms and informal rules of the game. They ultimately form a continuum of complex organizational relations, and forms of interaction that support the existence of the foundations of a stable socio-political and religious field. Theological expert review is an important integral element of state and confessional relations, which has a complex internal structure and has certain capabilities in solving socially significant problems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the central and most significant problems in the theological expert reviews, two of them can be distinguished. The first is their theoretical and methodological underdevelopment. The second is the difficulty of selecting experts who can make them. However, at the moment these problems are intractable due to the following reasons.

Firstly, it is the specificity of the methodological tools design, and a different periodization of research of new religious movements. As a result, the experience of domestic researchers and experts in the field of theological expert reviews is radically different from the experience of their foreign colleagues. The first new religious movements appeared in Russia in the early 1980s, and the first attempts to study them were made only in the 1990s. In the United

States and Western Europe, new religious movements began to be studied as early as in the 1960s.

The problem of the theological expert reviews methodology could be solved by reflecting of the empirical experience accumulated by domestic researchers and experts over the past twenty years. However, scientists in the field of studying the methodology of modern theological expert review state that this assumption is now near-impossible due to the fact that theology in Russia and the theological community itself are at the stage of rethinking.

The problem of understanding by the present theological community of its role in society is largely complicated by the lack of demand for practical research among theological scholars who concentrate their efforts on bringing the existing discourse to a common understanding. This gives rise to an understanding of religion not as a phenomenon, but as a category of a term, a word. As a result, there is a tendency in modern theology expert reviews not to create a unified methodology aimed at a unified understanding of the categorical theology apparatus, but rather to reflect on this process, and to create requirements for the research methodology.

However, the theoretical interpretation of the fundamental theological terms does not remove the question of the methodological equipment of the procedure for theological expert review. Its complexity is due to the polyparadigmatics of theology as a science. The lack of standardized methodological principles of theological expert review can lead to difficulties, for example, when choosing and justifying the methodological tools of expert research.

For example, one of the reasons for the existing conflict in the domestic expert community of religious scholars is a different understanding of the phenomenon of religion, as a result of which the expert community is split into several groups, each of which criticizes the methodology of conducting expert research. The lack of uniform criteria for evaluating the expert opinions carried out leads to the transformation of a theological expert review into a market for expert services.

Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the development of methodological principles of expert research and ethical and professional requirements for the personality of an expert. The essence of expert activity lies in the direct combination of specialized knowledge and the ability of their practical application to solve specific problems. Attempts are being made in the scientific community to define the expert activity of a religious scholar as a profession that requires special skills, knowledge, and abilities.

The professionalism of an expert characterizes the presence of knowledge regarding the subject of expert activity. Their specificity lies in the fact that they do not appear as purely theoretical. They must be scientifically proven and tested in practice and be an integral part of the professional experience. This imposes an ethical obligation on expert religious scholars for their continuous professional improvement, which involves the use of all available forms of additional professional training, the study of specialized literature on the subject of the examination, as well as the assimilation of the experience of their colleagues in the field on similar and related issues.

There are a lot of directions and research subjects in theological expert review. Therefore, specialists who do not have long-term research experience on the subject matter of theological expert review cannot be recognized as persons who have the necessary knowledge to give an expert opinion. This should become a fundamental criterion when appointing expert reviews, since the current legislation does not indicate which specialist should be considered professionally competent for the making of a religious expert review.

The solution of the existing problems arising in the process of making a theological expert review is currently one of the most pressing issues. To increase the efficiency of the functioning of the theological expert reviews institution in our country, it is also necessary to improve the quality of the procedure for conducting expert research. One of the most important is the question of the possibility of verification, assessment of the expert's opinion, and the development of formal criteria to which they must comply.

This method is called meta-examination (expert review examination) and is intended to determine whether the choice of the expert study methodology is justified, as well as to determine how reasonable the arguments underlying the expert opinion are. Let's consider the main criteria for evaluating expert opinions.

The first criterion for assessing the quality of an expert opinion is the impartiality of the expert's position. An indicator of an expert's objectivity will be the extent to which, in the course of the examination, the expert is able to disengage from his or her own personal position to remain a researcher taking into account only the criteria of truth and reliability, and not the interests of specific persons, particularly the customer of the examination.

The researchers indicate the completeness of the analysis as the second criterion for assessing the quality of the expert opinion. It characterizes the extent to which the expert saw the possible options for reasoning, argumentation, how the problem situation was covered by him/her in