

Coverage of Orthodoxy in Russian Mass Media: Comparing TV Channels and Websites

Mass media somehow forms society, legitimize prevailing ideas, facilitates or complicates communication between different social groups. Josef Klapper pointed out that if individual has a small initial knowledge about the problem, his/her point of view would be influenced by media in a high degree. In many cases the public understanding of religion and religious communities is formed by mass media. The aim of our project is to analyze how Orthodoxy and public activity of the Russian Orthodox Church (the ROC) are covered by mass media and what media image of Orthodoxy is offered to the Russian society. It is also important to compare the ways Orthodoxy is presented on TV and in cyber space. During the period of three month we collect news about Orthodoxy from the most popular federal TV channels (*Rossia 1, Perviy kanal*), from popular among bloggers news resource lenta.ru, gazeta.ru, meduza.io; the methods of content analysis and discourse analysis are applied.

Post-secular processes in Russian society are characterized, on one hand, by using Orthodoxy as a carrier of national identity, and on the other hand, by complete and rooted contradictions between liberal and conservative parts of the society. The religious monopoly of the ROC provokes the split of Russian society into liberal and conservative parts. In the coverage of Orthodoxy events in Russian mass media the two main tendencies can be observed: neutral and critical. The first is mainly used by the federal TV channels (*Rossia 24, NTV*) and implicitly maintains the status of Orthodoxy as a cultural and ideological basis of society. The neutral approach concentrates on coverage of events connected to institutionalized religion such as twelve feasts of the Christian year, formal visits of the Church hierarchs, etc. This neutral approach well corresponds with the conservative discourse which presents Orthodoxy as a key element of the Russian civilization pattern and of well-being of Russian society. Critical tendency is peculiar only to the web resources which cover as regular Orthodoxy news as corruption scandals around the ROC, its intervention into public sphere; it prevails on cyber space and it is oriented towards liberal audience.