

Syncretism and Identity: The Integration of Lutheranism among the Mari People of Bashkortostan, Russia

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Abstract

Purpose of the Study: This study explores the intricate process of religious syncretism and identity transformation among the Mari people of Bashkortostan through integrating Lutheranism into their traditional and Orthodox Christian practices. **Methodology:** Employing a mixed-methods approach, this research combines qualitative insights from field observations, interviews, and sociological surveys with quantitative data analysis to examine the impact of Lutheranism on Mari's ethnic identity, cultural adaptation, and social dynamics. **Main Findings:** The findings reveal that culturally sensitive missionary strategies, including the use of the Mari language and incorporation of ethnic cultural elements into Lutheran worship, have facilitated the acceptance and integration of Lutheranism among the Mari, leading to the formation of a novel religious identity. This identity reflects a dynamic synthesis of traditional Mari beliefs and Lutheranism, embodying the broader phenomena of adaptation and resistance in a globalizing world. **Applications of this Study:** This study offers insights into the complexity of religious evolution and the role of syncretism in preserving cultural heritage amidst modern challenges. **Novelty/Originality of this Study:** The study contributes to the discourse on religious syncretism, cultural adaptation, and the resilience of ethnic identities, offering insights into the complexities of religious evolution and the role of syncretism in preserving cultural heritage amidst modern challenges. The research underscores the significance of intercultural dialogue and the adaptability of religious practices, highlighting the potential for mutual enrichment between global religious traditions and local cultural contexts.

Keywords: Cultural adaptation; ethnic identity; Lutheranism; Mari people; religious syncretism.

Introduction

The Mari people of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia, present a rich topic for research in the fields of history, sociology, and anthropology of religion as they navigate a complex and unique identity dilemma. Although predominantly Orthodox since pre-revolutionary times, the Mari have preserved many of their ancestral traditions in daily life, resulting in a dual faith system rooted in intricate syncretism between Orthodox Christianity and traditional religious beliefs. Their culture melds Orthodox beliefs with traditional religious practices and rites, creating a nuanced Christian-pagan syncretism. Among them exists a specific concept that describes this borderline religiosity - *marla vera*, or 'Mari faith'. In contrast, Orthodoxy is defined as *rushla vera* - 'Russian faith' (Jagafova, Danilko, & Kornishina, 2010, p. 77). Additionally, a significant number of individuals have not undergone formal Christianization and retain many traditions from the Mari ethnic religion ("Mari paganism"), identifying themselves as *Chiymari/Chimari* ("true Mari" or "pure") (Jagafova et al., 2010). Traditional religion remains prominent in

contemporary Mari culture, particularly among the Prairie and Eastern Mari, who have experienced a "pagan renaissance" since the 1990s (Jagafova et al., 2010). The late 20th century also saw the restoration of the Orthodox Church's previously lost position and the initiation of missionary activities by Protestant pastors (Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal, etc.) among the Mari people. Historically, some Mari conversions to Islam also led to a change in their ethnic identity, assimilating them into the neighboring Turkic nations.

This diverse religious landscape is significant not only in a religious context but also carries substantial social, economic, political, and environmental implications. On one hand, this phenomenon signifies a form of adaptation and resistance in the face of globalization and modernization; on the other, it prompts inquiries about the sustainability of ethnic identity and traditional beliefs in an ever-evolving world. The introduction of Lutheranism by Finnish missionaries since the 1990s has posed new challenges for the Mari people in maintaining their identity, providing a comprehensive case study on the dynamics of adaptation and change within a multicultural and multi-religious context. The amalgamation of these religions, from traditional Mari paganism and Orthodox Christianity to Lutheranism, underscores the complexity and ongoing evolution of the Mari's religious identity (Alybina, 2018; R. R. Sadikov, 2021).

Previous studies have highlighted the complexity of religious syncretism among Marians, with a particular focus on the interaction between traditional religious beliefs and Russian Orthodoxy. Research into how this syncretism manifests and is debated in a global religious context has challenged traditional religious categories, suggesting that Marian apparition is a complex and layered global phenomenon, which challenges traditional religious categories (Krebs & Laycock, 2017). The concept of syncretism, or the incorporation of various beliefs into a single religious system, has been a controversial topic in religious studies, with several studies highlighting the controversial dynamics of syncretism in the contemporary European context, especially regarding theological criteria for the limits of syncretism in the Christian faith (Koertner, 2013; Leopold & Jensen, 2016).

Furthermore, Marian devotion has been recognized as playing an important role in the development of early Christian beliefs and practices, providing insight into the "explosion" of Marian devotion in history (Shoemaker, 2016). The study of Marian shrines, especially in the context of US Catholicism, has revealed the dynamics of contestation of these holy sites and their role in shaping Catholic identity (Dugan & Park, 2024). However, research on the penetration and influence of Lutheranism among the Marians in Bashkortostan, especially from anthropological and sociological perspectives, is limited. Works by Klyashev (2009, 2013, 2020) and Sadikov (2020b, 2020a) have provided a solid foundation for this understanding, but there is still ample room for further exploration of how Lutheranism affects ethnic identity, cultural adaptation, and social dynamics among the Mari people.

The primary objective of this research is to bridge the existing knowledge gap by examining the impact of Lutheranism on both the religious and social dimensions of life among the Mari people of Bashkortostan. This investigation is designed to meticulously assess the ways in which Lutheranism's integration influences the Mari's ethnic identity, religious observances, social interactions, and cultural assimilation processes. Moreover, this study aims to contribute to the broader academic discourse by evaluating the implications of these findings on the prevailing theories of syncretism and ethnic identity, particularly within the ambit of an increasingly globalized world. Through this analytical lens, the research endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between religion and identity among minority groups, offering insights that may

extend beyond the specific context of the Mari people.

The argument of this study posits that Lutheranism, by incorporating cultural adaptation and leveraging the ethnic language within its religious practices, has effectively engaged a segment of the Mari population in Bashkortostan. This engagement is believed to have fostered the development of a novel religious identity, amalgamating elements of traditional Mari spirituality with Lutheranism. The research contends that this integration exemplifies the broader dynamics of adaptation and resistance encountered within the globalizing world, highlighting syncretism's role as an efficacious mechanism for preserving ethnic identity amidst evolving social and religious landscapes. Consequently, this investigation seeks to elucidate the nuanced ways in which religious adaptation acts as a conduit for identity retention and transformation, thereby contributing to the scholarly discourse on syncretism, identity, and the resilience of cultural practices in a rapidly changing world.

Methods

In this study, a mixed-methods approach was adopted to investigate the nuanced process of Lutheranism's adaptation within the Mari community in Bashkortostan. The research framework combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies, drawing upon a rich amalgamation of primary and secondary data sources to construct a multidimensional view of the subject matter. Primary data were meticulously collected through an array of fieldwork activities, including direct observations, comprehensive interviews with key community figures such as Pastor V.A. Abdullin, and detailed surveys administered to thirteen parishioners. These activities were complemented by the strategic use of photographic documentation to capture the visual essence of the community's religious expressions. Concurrently, secondary data were curated from an extensive review of relevant published materials, encompassing religious texts, doctrinal sermons, and featured articles in the "Church of Ingria" magazine, which collectively provided historical and doctrinal context to the study.

The selection of the Birsk parish of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria (ELCI) as the focal point of this study was informed by its significant historical and contemporary role in the religious life of the Mari people in Bashkortostan. This choice allowed for an in-depth exploration of both the community's engagement with Lutheran practices and the incorporation of Mari cultural elements into their religious life. The participants, including Pastor Abdullin, nine actively engaged parishioners, and thirteen survey respondents, were chosen based on their integral roles within the parish community and their willingness to provide insights into their faith practices, beliefs, and the interplay between their Lutheran and Mari identities.

The research unfolded in stages, beginning with an initial exploration in 2008, where R.R. Sadikov conducted interviews to gain historical insights into the parish's formation. This was followed by further fieldwork in 2010 by A.N. Klyashev, employing sociological methods to deepen the understanding of the community's social and religious fabric. A significant phase of data collection occurred in April 2019, involving participant observation at a worship service, in-depth interviews with Pastor Abdullin and nine parishioners, and the administration of a sociological survey to thirteen parishioners. This comprehensive engagement provided a robust dataset for analysis.

The data analysis process was meticulously designed to ensure a thorough examination of the collected information. Quantitative data from the surveys were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics to delineate the demographic and

religious profile of the parish community. Simultaneously, qualitative data from interviews and observations underwent thematic analysis, aiming to uncover underlying patterns and themes related to the community's acceptance of Lutheranism, their relationships with pagan compatriots, and the manner in which Mari cultural elements were integrated into their Lutheran practices.

This methodological approach enabled a holistic exploration of Lutheranism's adaptation among the Mari people, offering valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between global religious influences and local cultural identities. Through this study, we contribute to the broader academic discourse on religious syncretism and cultural adaptation, highlighting the intricate processes through which religious practices evolve and adapt in multicultural and multireligious contexts.

Results and Discussion

1. History of the preaching of Lutheranism among Mari

The emergence and the first stages of the formation of Mari Protestantism date back to the early 1990s, when the activities of religious preachers became possible due to the liberalization of religious policy in the country. At that time, Lutherans, Baptists and Pentecostals began to preach among the Mari people, and missionaries from the United States and Finland came. However, only the Lutheran mission resonated with the Mari people and the spread of this teaching can be called 'a phenomenon in the religious life of Mari El' (Filatov, 2017, p. 238). According to the religious scholar S.B. Filatov, 'The stricter and more attentive to ritual Lutheran order of worship was closer to the Mari people (Filatov 2017, 283). The main reason for Mari, both Orthodox and pagan, to adopt the new religion was that Lutheranism was promoted among them as a religion of kindred peoples - Finns and Estonians. The Ingria Evangelical Lutheran Church, reestablished in 1992 and independent of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, where it existed as the Ingermanlandian provostry, has as one of its objectives to carry out ethnically oriented missionary work among the Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia, where its parishes and congregations have been established (Klyashev, 2013; Smeds & Vyaiza, 2003, p. 11). The first similar Lutheran congregation outside of historical Ingria was registered in Mordovia in the city of Saransk back in 1991 (Filatov, 2018, p. 218).

The beginning of preaching Lutheranism to the Mari people is connected with the name of talented Finnish missionary Juha (Juhannes) Väliäho, who became the founder of many new parishes throughout the Ural-Volga region and Komi (Ural provostry). His wife Anu Väliäho, an Estonian, was his constant assistant in his missionary work (Figure 1). The first Mari Lutheran congregation was founded in the city of Yoshkar-Ola in 1993 on the initiative of Mari University professor Valery Patrushev. While on a scientific trip to Helsinki in 1991, he was baptised, got to know the Väliäho family and invited them to visit the Mari region. In June 1992, the preacher made his first acquaintance with the Mari people when he visited the Surem festival in the Morki district of the Mari El Republic and got acquainted with Mari pagan traditions. At the beginning of 1993 Juha Väliäho started to work as a preacher in Yoshkar-Ola and already on August 14 the constituent meeting of believers was held, where it was decided to form a Lutheran parish (today the Mari-Russian Evangelical-Lutheran parish in Yoshkar-Ola). In 1996 the congregation got its own church building (Church of the Holy Cross), built with the fraternal help of the Finnish Lutherans from Hyvinkää. Juha Väliäho was the rector and pastor of the parish in Yoshkar-Ola and the provost of the Ural provostry from its founding until 2005. Pastor

Vladimir Bochkov has been rector since 2005 and Pastor Sergei Pershin is currently rector (Bochkov, 2013, p. 3; Filatov, 2018).



Anu ja Juha Birskis 28.09.2011

Figure 1 Missionaries Juha and Anu Vyaliaho in Birsk. 2011.
<<http://hoimurahvad.misjon.ee>> accessed 18 March 2021

Lutheran groups have also formed outside the capital, in particular in the town of Zvenigovo and the township of Paranga, and the community in the village of Lupersola in the Soviet district of the Mari El Republic has acquired the status of an independent parish (Mari Evangelical-Lutheran parish 'Sorta'). Its first rector was Deacon Gennady Alexeyev, now Deacon Alexander Mityakov. These parishes use the Mari language and elements of ethnic culture (folk songs and musical instruments, traditional costumes, etc.) in their worship and preaching activities (Bochkov, 2013; Filatov, 2018).

2. Establishment of a Lutheran community among the Mari people of Bashkiria

The Mari people of Bashkiria were also gradually included in the orbit of Juha Väliaho's missionary work. The first neophytes were usually natives of Mari villages in Bashkortostan, who had studied or worked in Yoshkar-Ola and spread information about this religion among their relatives and fellow villagers (Väliaho, 2004, p. 123). The first groups of Lutheran followers among the Mari population of Bashkiria appeared in the late 1990s in the town of Neftekamsk and the villages of Baltachevo district. In June 1999, a Finnish missionary visited a Mari Lutheran group in Neftekamsk and the villages of Ivanaevo and Mishkino in Baltachevo district. In the village of Ivanaevo they visited a

Mari pagan sacrifice and a *Sabantuy* celebration, where he gave a sermon and handed out gospels. When visiting Mari villages in Bashkortostan, the preacher says, he gets the strange feeling that their inhabitants are practising a 'religion of nature', which has been outlived in Finland for centuries, but here still lives among the kindred people, and no one is baptised. He also notes that it is a weakening religion, leaving young people in a spiritual vacuum (Väliaho, 2004). In October 2001, the first confirmation school was organised in the village of Mishkino, Baltachevo district. The teacher was Hannu Pelkonen, a pastor and missionary from Hyvinkää, who baptised 8 villagers at the end of the training. A second confirmation school was organised here the following spring, and after its completion, 20 more baptised Mari people joined the Lutheran community (Väliaho, 2004).

In the summer of 2000 Juha Väliaho visited Birsk and made the acquaintance of the head of a local Mari public organisation, and at a later meeting in the summer of 2001 she already expressed her wish to be baptised. In October, she and a friend visited the parish in Yoshkar-Ola and were baptised. Hannu Pelkonen organised the first confirmation school in Birsk in November 2001, after which 8 Mari people were baptised (Väliaho, 2004). Initially members of the Lutheran congregation met at the home of Anna Aidonova, one of the first baptised local Mari where Juha and Anu Väliaho also lived in a flat. In 2002, the community bought a plot of land with a house.



Figure 2 House of Prayer of the Birsk parish of the ELCI

By the end of 2002 there were 18 adults and 5 children in the congregation, and in 2003 a further 38 adults and 36 children were baptized (Klyashev, 2013). On 14 April 2003, the Lutheran community of the town of Birsk was legally registered. In the summer

of 2005, with the help of co-religionists from Finland, construction began on a House of Prayer, which was completed in one year and consecrated by Bishop Arri Kugappi on 23 August 2006 (Figure 2). In 2007, construction began on a missionary house, which was consecrated by the bishop on 6-7 September 2008. In addition to the residents of Birsk, Mari believers from the villages of Akudibash, Kuzovo, Bakhtybayevo, Bazhenovo, Starobazanovo, Malosukhoyazovo, Chishma, Kulchubaevo, Mishkino and Ivanaevo of Baltachevo district, Birsk and Mishkin districts, the town of Neftekamsk were also baptised (Klyashev, 2013). From 2005 to 2012 Birsk Parish was the centre of the Uralian provostry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria (provost Juha Väliaho). Since 2010 the rector has been Pastor Vladislav Abdullin, a Mari man from the village of Tynbaevo in Mishkin district, who graduated from the Theological Institute in Koltushi.

3. Ethnic components in preaching and worship

Pastor Juha Väliaho attached great importance to the ethnic component in worship and missionary work. Sunday services were held separately in turns in Mari and Russian (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Information board in the House of Prayer, Birsk, 2019. Photo: Alexander Klyashev.

Following the teachings of Martin Luther, he believed that every nation should listen to the word of God in its own language. That is why he encouraged ministers to conduct services and preach in the Mari language (Pikkur). Women came to the festive services in their traditional attires. The pastor, together with active parishioners, visited neighbouring and distant Mari villages almost daily, preaching the Lutheran faith. On several occasions he attended Mari pagan sacrifices, in particular prayers in the sacred grove of *Sultan Keremet*. In preaching to the Mari pagans, the missionary did not confront traditional religion and Christianity, but approached the issue very carefully so as not to provoke aversion in his listeners. He explained that the Mari people live according to the Old Testament, but since the coming of the Messiah promised in Holy Scripture has already taken place, they must now live according to the New Testament, i.e. embrace

Christianity. In addition, the pastor constantly reminded us that Christianity in the form of Lutheranism is practiced by the Finns and Estonians, who are related to the Mari in language.

Music played a large part in the preaching activities. Anna Mishina, a graduate of the Chuvash State University and singing teacher, was invited as cantor. Well-known local musicians K. Zaynetdinov, V. Mikhailov and I. Fayurshina were welcomed into the community and organised the parish ensemble 'Sorta'. A special musical project was developed, which included a visit with concert performances of Mari folk and Christian songs accompanied by folk instruments. There was also a puppet theatre, which gave performances in the Mari language based on folk tales and biblical stories (Vjaliaho, 2011, p. 12). The active missionary work of the charismatic pastor contributed to the dynamic growth of the Mari Lutheran congregation in the Republic of Bashkortostan. Thus, in 2009, there were 240 members of the parish; in 2012, there were already 325 (Klyashev, 2013).

4. Current state of the parish

In 2019 there were 280 people in the Birsk Evangelical Lutheran parish of the Church of Ingria, most of whom were Mari. Since there are also Mari people in the congregation who do not speak their native language (the second generation of Mari residents), services are now conducted in Mari and Russian in parallel, and the sermon is preached in Russian only. Unfortunately, the singing of hymns in Mari is also left out, as there is no cantor. Sunday services are attended by about 10-15 parishioners, with more people gathering on holidays. On the second Sunday of each month, the pastor travels to Ufa, where he conducts a service for the Mari Lutherans of Ufa in the local historic church. On the third Sunday of the month he travels to Neftekamsk, where local Mari followers of Lutheranism hold a meeting at a private flat. Together with active parishioners, V. Abdullin also travels to rural settlements where churchgoers live. They are invited to home baptisms, weddings, funerals, the blessing of houses and wells, etc. There are also missionary trips, where they preach in the Mari language.

According to the pastor and parishioners, in recent years the number of people receiving baptism has decreased, and it is no longer the case that several people are baptised at once, as it used to be. The number of active parishioners has also decreased. According to them, this is due to the fact that part of the flock has converted to Orthodoxy, and some do not want to reveal their religiosity to their fellow villagers. The decline in the wave of general interest in religion, as well as the departure of the able missionary Juha Väliaho, has most likely also influenced this.

The Birsk parish maintains close links with co-religionists from Yoshkar-Ola and the village of Gurez-Pudga (Udmurtia). The Birsk parish maintains close links with fellow believers from Yoshkar-Ola and Gurez-Pudga (Udmurtia), with frequent visits from Finns and representatives of the central chancellery of the ELCI from Saint Petersburg.



Figure 4 Administrative building with the hotel of the Birsk parish of the ELCI. Birsk, 2019. Photo: Alexander Klyashev

The Sunday service on 14 April 2019, which we visited for research purposes, was attended by about 15 parishioners (3-4 men, the rest women), as well as two preachers from Finland (Figure 4). The reading of the Bible during the service was carried out by V. Abdullin in Mari and Russian, the singing of hymns was in Russian, and the sermon was delivered in Finnish with a Russian translation. The pastor was dressed in a white alb and girded, with a stola (wide ribbon) on his shoulders and a four-pointed cross on his chest. Services are held in a wooden two-storey blockhouse. The service hall is designed according to the Lutheran Church in the Swedish-Finnish tradition: the altar with the crucifix is located by the window, there is an altarpiece depicting the ascended Christ on the side wall, the altar table is surrounded by a banister with a soft padding for kneeling during communion and there is a preaching pulpit to the left of the altar (Figure 5, 6). Separate chairs are provided for the churchgoers. Opposite the chancel is a cantor's corner with a piano and a synthesizer. At the entrance there is a table and shelves with religious literature (the Bible, the Psalter, hymn books in Mari and Russian). The floor is lined with homespun mats.



Figure 5 The Sunday service. Birsk, 2019. Photo: Alexander Klyashev



Figure 6 The Participle. 2019. Birsk. Photo: Alexander Klyashev

5. Socio-demographic and ethno-cultural characteristics

The material provided (appendix) shows that more than half of the respondents are women. The community of the Birsk parish of the ELCI is characterised by a gender imbalance. Regular members of the ELCI parish in Birsk are of mature and older age - more than half of the respondents are believers over 45 years old. The vast majority of respondents were born in rural settlements, more than half of the respondents live in cities. The overwhelming majority of respondents in the sample are of Mari ethnicity, one respondent is of Udmurt ethnicity. Slightly more than half of the respondents are married and have many children (who have three or more children). The results of URC RAS IEI research indicate that 30.8% of respondents have higher or incomplete higher education, the same number of persons with secondary special education. 61.6% of the ELCI parish members in the town of Birsk have higher than secondary education. The results of a study by R.G. Kuzeyev Institute of Ethnological Research of the Ufa Scientific Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences indicate that 30.8% of respondents have higher or incomplete higher education, the same number of persons with secondary special education. 61.6% of the ELCI parish members in the town of Birsk have higher than secondary education. Research material demonstrates that the largest group among the parishioners of the Birsk parish of the ELCI are pensioners (30.8%), pensioners and working pensioners together account for 38.5%. Highly qualified specialists (clerks and skilled workers) account for 30.8%. Regular members of the Birsk parish of the ELCI cannot be classified as a wealthy group. The largest group (38.5%) out of 92.3% of respondents chose the position 'We spend money only on the essentials, we live from paycheck to paycheck'; 23.1% each account for respondents who chose the positions 'There is enough money for everyday expenses, but spending beyond that is problematic' and 'There is mostly enough money, but not for expensive durable goods'. 'There is enough money for everyday expenses, but spending beyond that is problematic' and

'There is mostly enough money, but not for expensive durable goods'. Of the 69.2% who answered the question, 30.8% had attended a religious seminary and 23.1% had attended Sunday school. Thus, 53.9% of the respondents have a religious education. Of the 69.2% of respondents who answered the question, 30.8% had attended a religious seminary, while 23.1% had attended Sunday school. Thus, 53.9% of the respondents have a religious education. The materials of the survey showed that regular members of the Birsk parish of the ELCI demonstrate a high level of participation in the religious life of the church: 77.0% of respondents in the sample attend church at least once a week and more often, 23% attend church at least once a month and more often.

The vast majority of respondents (84.6%) read the Bible regularly, 15.4% read it from time to time; religious literature of Protestant authors is regularly read by 30.8% of 92.3% of those who answered the question, the largest number of those who do not read at all: 38.5%. An overwhelming number of respondents from the sample are parishioners (84.6%), 15.4% are ministers of the church; more than half of the respondents (61.5%) confess once a week and more often, the next in number are believers who confess once a month and more (23.1%); also, as in the case of confession, more than half of the respondents (61.5%) practice communion once a week and more often, the next in number are believers who confess once a month and more (23.1%). Almost all respondents in the sample (92.3%) pray regularly. Of the 84.6% of respondents, a minority (23.1%) observes the fast. The majority of believers in the sample (61.5%) do not fast. More than half of the respondents in the sample (61.5%) do not observe religious clothing injunctions; 23.1% of believers always dress according to religious injunctions. Of the 76.9% who answered the question, more than half (46.2%) of the pre-Lutheran believers could be described as 'non-denominational theists' - people who 'simply believed in God'. In second place are former pagans - 15.4%. Former Orthodox and atheists are the least numerous, with one respondent for each position.

Most of the 92.3% of those who answered the question were those who had been contributed to coming to the Lutheran church by their friends, and those who had come to church on their own - each group comprised 30.8%. Spouses contributed 23.1% of the respondents, one respondent (7.7%) came to the Lutheran church with the assistance of parents. The overwhelming majority of 84.6% of respondents came to the church between 1997 and 2008 (77.7%), with a peak in 2008. (four respondents), after 2008 only one respondent came to the Birsk parish of the ELCI in 2018.

Most of the respondents in the sample (69.2%) primarily consider themselves Christians. In second place, 84.6% of respondents chose civic identity, with family identity coming in third (30.8%), with 76.9% of respondents. The survey results show that the vast majority of respondents do not hold the 'health and wealth' doctrine - only one respondent believes that the realisation of values such as material wellbeing, education, career, etc. - is an indispensable attribute of a Christian. 53.9% of respondents prioritise spiritual values. Slightly more than half of the respondents are prepared to endure grief (illness, material hardship, conflict with others, etc.) in the course of their faith practices and are, in our view, potential 'heroes of faith'. The vast majority of respondents (84.6%) have a positive attitude towards Orthodoxy and Catholicism; 38.5% of respondents have a neutral attitude towards other traditional religions in Russia (Islam, Judaism, Buddhism), 23.1% have a positive attitude; only one respondent has a negative attitude; there is virtually no conflict potential in the respondents' attitude towards Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. 38.5% of respondents have a negative attitude towards new

religious movements (neo-pagan, pseudo-eastern and occult religious groups) - thus it can be noted that there is a conflictogenic potential in respondents' attitudes towards new religious movements.

Interviews with parishioners in April 2019 also revealed that they are all Mari, having observed 'pagan' Mari rites and customs before adopting Lutheranism. Among the main reasons for converting to a new religion, the interviewed church members mentioned the following: personal acquaintance with Lutherans or preachers who persuaded them to be baptised: 'We worked together on the building of a house of worship, asked them to drop in for services and Bible hour. In April I started working, in June I was already baptized'; 'Grandma Anna persuaded me to convert. She had Juha and Anu living with her, we prayed at her house'; 'My wife has been a Lutheran for a long time, I started slowly. My acquaintances are also Lutherans'; 'Baptized the whole family, me, mother, two sons, daughter. Finns Juha and Anu Väliäho started travelling. They stayed at my place. Before the baptism, they invited me to a Bible hour. I saw a picture of Christ flying. I got interested. They gave me books, I started to read prayers, and I felt better. Then I was offered baptism. At first I attended classes, they taught for a week. Confirmation, only then I was baptized'; 'Abdullin invited me from the heart, I started going'; 'I knew Slava before, he invited me everywhere. I have always been interested in knowing about God. My sister-in-law started going, we started going together. God was gradually revealed', intellectual and spiritual interest in the Lutheran religion: 'Even during my studies I started to get interested in Lutheranism. I found out that there were Lutherans in Birsk, so I came', difficult life situation: 'Life situation was difficult, I wanted to change my life. Juha Väliäho came to the village, started talking about God, I listened, I needed it'. However, all the noted circumstances of accepting the new religion are mutually cross-cutting and are derived from one another.

Almost all the parishioners interviewed noted that their relatives and fellow villagers were uncomfortable with the change of religion: 'The villagers said that I betrayed my faith', 'The fellow villagers are surprised, you betrayed us, they say, they are not satisfied'. According to those interviewed, it is the fear that relatives and fellow villagers will disapprove or ridicule their religious choice that stops those ready to convert to the Lutheran faith from being baptized: 'They are afraid that people will say that relatives will misunderstand, that they have gone crazy. Some say we should keep the Mari traditions'.

According to Mari Lutherans themselves, their church: 'A very good, loyal church, it is not fanatical. Some national activists advocating the revival and development of traditional religion see the spread of Lutheranism as a threat to the identity of Mari people in Bashkiria. They believe that the acceptance of Christianity in any form by Mari pagans will only strengthen the position of Orthodoxy among them and accelerate the process of Russianization. And indeed, the Orthodox Church is working to incorporate the baptized Mari into its fold, as a result of which some of the parishioners of the Lutheran Church have converted to Orthodoxy.

Although paganism and Christianity are not opposed in preaching and traditional Mari customs and rites are not criticised, neophytes are made aware that their observance is contrary to Christian teaching and is the worship of evil entities, i.e. essentially sin. New converts are faced with the difficult task of abandoning traditions they have known since childhood, which they associate as part of their ethnicity and which, in turn, can lead to confrontation with relatives and fellow villagers. In such a situation, those who have embraced the new religion act according to their level of faith and religious knowledge. Some continue to observe them, seeing no contradiction in this, while others leave only what they believe is not forbidden by the new religious rules: 'On the semyk I

put a candle to the dead, like a Christian. Going to the village, people may say he has no respect for his ancestors. I don't go out on holiday.'; 'I don't go specially to the holidays. In Ufa we put food on the table, we put candles, pancakes are baked, on Kugeche and on *semyk*'; 'I bake pancakes, put a candle for everyone on the dining table. We don't go out like we used to. I realised that's how we pray to other gods and spirits'; 'We don't say "shujo". It is not allowed to do that. We only place candles. We don't say the names of the spirits. A lot of people keep doing it, maybe they don't know'. The interviews showed that none of the respondents had completely abandoned the celebration of traditional customs such as *kugeche* (great day, Easter) and *semyk* (semik), for example. Thus, by maintaining the veneration of these customs, but without the traditional religious-mythological component, the Mari'i Lutherans avoided conflict, both with their relatives and fellow villagers who were 'pagans', and with their new religious beliefs.

The most controversial issue of old traditions is observed in funeral and memorial rites, known to be the most conservative area of traditional culture. When a Lutheran dies, his relatives, who are even pagans, notify his fellow believers. A pastor arrives and performs a funeral service, reciting Christian prayers. Still, the relatives bury them according to 'pagan' traditions. In order to avoid conflict, church ministers and congregation members are not opposed to this, but try to observe some of their own rituals as well: 'They have their way, we have ours'. Lutheran rules suggest reciting special prayers only on the fortieth day and on the anniversary of a person's death. However, Mari Lutherans also celebrate the third and seventh days. At this time, a candle is lit and prayed in front of the altar, and after the prayer there is a communal meal (Izibaeva 2018, 199). Whenever possible, they try to place crosses on graves, usually orthodox ones, as Latin ritual crosses are not commercially available.

While the traditional ('pagan') rites and customs of Mari Lutherans try to eliminate, other elements of ethnic culture and language seek to preserve and develop, bringing them into community and church life. On big holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, the women wear traditional attire. When the parish had its own cantor, hymns were sung in Mari during the service. The hymn book 'Yumylan Champuro', prepared by Gennady Alekseev, a deacon in the parish of the village of Lyupersola, and published in Yoshkar-Ola in 2003, was used. Unfortunately, there is currently no singing in Mari, explaining this by the fact that there is no cantor. At the time when Juha Väliaho was the pastor in the parish, independent Sunday services were organised in the Mari language. The language was also widely used in preaching activities. The parishioners have performed concert numbers in the Mari language in various localities. In recent years there have been no separate services in Mari; the pastor conducts services in two languages in parallel. The parishioners believe that the Mari language should definitely be used in worship services, including those who do not speak it. The current situation with language use is due to the fact that the second generation of Mari Lutherans, mostly city dwellers, do not speak Mari or know it poorly. Spiritual literature is also read by the congregation in two languages. The library of the church has books in Mari, published by the Institute for Bible Translation and the Yoshkar-Ola Lutheran parish. But, as parishioners note, religious books in the Mari language are few and far between, and 'some words are incomprehensibly translated, so it is easier to read in Russian'. Noting the ethnic character of their congregation, the parishioners call their church *mari cherke*, i.e. 'Mari church'. According to them, 'Finns built the church on purpose so that the Mari would be saved'.

6. Discussion

This research reveals how Lutheranism was introduced and developed among the Mari people of Bashkortostan, highlighting Lutheranism's unique adaptation to Mari ethnic components. The research shows that culturally sensitive missionary approaches and the use of Mari language and cultural elements in Lutheran religious practices have facilitated the acceptance and integration of Lutheranism among the Mari people. It illustrates the formation of a new religious identity that combines elements of traditional Mari beliefs and Lutheranism, marking the dynamics of adaptation and resistance in the context of globalization.

The findings from this study resonate with broader research on religious syncretism and cultural adaptation, demonstrating religion's capacity to mold itself to fit the contours of local cultures, thus ensuring its continued relevance. This parallels other research which shows how different religious traditions have similarly adapted to local contexts, underscoring the critical role of cultural context in religious practices. For example, Norenzayan & Shariff (2008) highlight how religions can promote prosocial behaviors that align with local communal needs, suggesting a pathway for religion to adapt and maintain relevance within diverse communities. Similarly, Atran & Norenzayan (2004) describe religion as a cultural by-product that interacts with and adapts to human cognitive, emotional, and societal landscapes, allowing it to resonate across varied human experiences.

Furthermore, the incorporation of spirituality and religion into counseling practices, as discussed by Evans & Nelson (2021), exemplifies the adaptive potential of religion in therapeutic contexts, by integrating faith into healing processes. This is complemented by Jasperse et al. (2011), who advocate for culturally sensitive therapies that respect religious backgrounds, facilitating the adaptation of immigrant populations in Western societies. Rounding et al. (2012) contribute to this discourse by suggesting that religion's role in replenishing self-control and encouraging moral behavior can be seen as a cultural adaptation that enhances individual well-being. This is echoed in studies by Homan & Burdette (2021), which illustrate how religions provide community, solidarity, and support, addressing diverse individual needs and enhancing psychological well-being. Lastly, the work of Sosis & Alcorta (2003) on the cognitive and evolutionary psychology of religion underscores how religious communities benefit individuals by addressing communication challenges, further highlighting the adaptive nature of religion in human societies.

The implications of this study underscore the significance of recognizing and valuing diversity within religious practices and the pivotal role of religion in preserving and enhancing ethnic identity. This research suggests that missionary approaches should pay closer attention to the nuances of local cultural contexts, emphasizing the importance of intercultural dialogue in fostering social and religious harmony. Furthermore, it highlights the need for religious institutions to adapt and integrate elements of local traditions to remain relevant and supportive of community identities. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on the dynamics of religious syncretism, offering insights into how religions can evolve and interact within multicultural settings to promote inclusivity and understanding.

The findings of this study reflect the complex interplay between religion, culture, and identity in multicultural and multireligious societies. The adaptation of Lutheranism to Mari culture represents a response to the need for a religious identity that resonates with local traditions while offering a new pathway for the expression of authentic and relevant spirituality. This underscores the dynamic nature of religious practice and its capacity to evolve in response to changing cultural landscapes, highlighting the

importance of cultural sensitivity in the practice and dissemination of religious beliefs.

Future actions necessitate the expansion of interfaith and intercultural dialogue programs that not only foster cross-cultural tolerance and understanding but also value and reinforce ethnic and religious identities. This approach demands collaborative efforts among religious leaders, scholars, and policymakers to establish inclusive spaces that embrace diversity as both a social and spiritual asset. Furthermore, additional research is required to comprehend how various religions adapt to distinct cultural contexts and the implications of these adaptations for ethnic identity and social harmony. This calls for a multifaceted strategy that integrates academic inquiry with practical initiatives, aiming to build a more cohesive and respectful society that acknowledges the complex interplay between religion, culture, and identity.

Conclusion

This research elucidates the significant adaptation and integration of Lutheranism among the Mari people of Bashkortostan, showcasing a unique case of religious syncretism where a global faith tradition is localized to resonate with the ethnic and cultural nuances of the Mari community. The study highlights the pivotal role of culturally sensitive missionary work, the utilization of the Mari language, and the incorporation of traditional Mari elements into Lutheran practices, which collectively facilitated the acceptance and integration of Lutheranism.

This research enriches the scholarly dialogue on religious syncretism and cultural adaptation by illuminating the processes through which global religious traditions, such as Lutheranism, are recontextualized within local cultural frameworks. It underscores the dynamic nature of religious syncretism, demonstrating how a global faith tradition can be seamlessly integrated with the ethnic and cultural specifics of the Mari people in Bashkortostan. This investigation provides nuanced insights into the mechanisms of religious adaptation, revealing the complex interplay between global religious influences and local cultural identities in a diverse and multi-religious setting. Through this lens, the study enhances our comprehension of the multifaceted nature of religious syncretism, contributing a conceptual framework for understanding the evolution of religious practices in the face of cultural diversity and global interactions.

The present study, while providing valuable insights into the adaptation of Lutheranism among the Mari people in Bashkortostan, acknowledges certain limitations that suggest avenues for future research. One notable limitation is the study's concentration on a singular religious community within Bashkortostan, which, while in-depth, may not encapsulate the extensive range of dynamics associated with religious adaptation and syncretism observed in varied contexts or among other Mari populations. This specificity raises the potential for broader investigations into the processes of religious adaptation among different Finno-Ugric peoples, offering a comparative perspective that could enrich our understanding of cultural and religious syncretism. Future studies might also benefit from examining how diverse global religions adapt within similar cultural milieus, thereby expanding the scope of inquiry into religious syncretism and adaptation. Moreover, an exploration into the long-term viability of syncretic religious identities, along with the possible fluctuations in religious affiliations over time, could yield further critical insights into the continuous evolution of religious beliefs and practices within multicultural and multi-religious societies. Such investigations promise to contribute significantly to the nuanced comprehension of the intricate relationships between religion, culture, and identity in an increasingly globalized

world.

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Appendix

Information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the members of a religious association was obtained using sociological methods: surveys of members of Protestant religious associations by means of questionnaires. The surveys were conducted using closed-type questionnaires.

The respondents of the ELCI in the town of Birsk were regular members of the community - believers with high indicators of religious behaviour and participation in religious life (including visiting temples and mosques at least once a week, regularly reading prayers and texts from the Bible).

The size of the studied community (the general population) is 16 people; the number of respondents (the sample population) is 13 people (81.25 %). SPSS software was used to process the field materials.

Socio-demographic characteristics

Gender composition. The results of the research show that more than half of the respondents out of 92.3% are women (61.5%). A gender imbalance is characteristic of the congregation of the Birsk parish of the ELCI.

Age composition. The regular parish members of the ELCI of Birsk are mature and elderly - more than half of the 92.3% of respondents (61.6%) are believers over 45 years old, 30.8% of respondents are over 60 years old (Table 1).

Table 1 Age composition

	Number of respondents	Percentages
Up to 25 years old	1	7,7
35-40 years old	3	23,1
45-60 years old	4	30,8
	Number of respondents	Percentages
60 years of age and over	4	30,8
Total respondents to the question	12	92,3
Respondents who did not answer the question	1	7,7
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Place of birth. An overwhelming number of respondents (76.9%) out of 92.3% were born in rural areas (village, village, district centre).

Place of residence. More than half of the respondents - 61.5% - out of 84.6% of those who answered live in cities.

Nationality of the respondent. Of the 92.3% of respondents, 84.6% are of Mari ethnicity, and 7.7% (one respondent) are of Udmurt ethnicity.

Marital status of respondents. Slightly more than half of 92.3% of the respondents are married - 53.8%. Accordingly, 38.5% of respondents are single (or are not married).

Number of children. Slightly more than half of the respondents (53.9%) out of 92.3% are parents with many children (who have three or more children) (Table 2). Results of the 2010 National Population Census revealed that childless married couples make up 30.5% of the country's population, while large family units with 3 or more children under 18 make up 2.47% of family units with children under 18, which make up 42.5% of the Russian population. The total number of family units with children in the Russian Federation is 69.5% (including single parents). Private households are home to 99% of the total Russian population. The number of households consisting of 5 or more people living together (including children or parents, other relatives or non-relatives) was 4.0% according to the 2010 All-Russian Population Census. Based on this data, the number of large families in Russia (with 3 or more children) can be assumed to be around 5.0% of the total population.¹ The table 2 data allows us to conclude that the number of parents with many children among the members of the Birsk parish is almost ten times higher than in the Russian Federation as a whole.

Table 2 Number of children

	Number of respondents	Percentages
1	2	15,4
2	3	23,1
3	4	30,8
4	2	15,4
5	1	7,7
Total respondents to the question	12	92,3
Respondents who did not answer the question	1	7,7
Total number of respondents	12	100,0

Level of education. The results of a study by R.G. Kuzeyev Institute of Ethnological Research of the Ufa Scientific Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences show that 30.8% of respondents have higher and incomplete higher education, the same number of persons with secondary special education. 61.6% of the ELCI parish members in Birsk have higher than secondary education (Table 3).

¹ All-Russian population census 2010 [Vserossijskaya perepis' naseleniya] <http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm> accessed 25 March 2021.

Table 3 Level of education

	Number of respondents	Percentages
Primary education	1	7,7
Incomplete secondary education	1	7,7
Secondary education	2	15,4
Secondary specialised education	4	30,8
Incomplete higher education	1	7,7
Higher education	3	23,1
Total respondents to the question	12	92,3
Respondents who did not answer the question	1	7,7
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Professional composition. Research materials show that the largest group among parishioners of the Birsk parish of the ELCI are pensioners (30.8%), pensioners and working pensioners together account for 38.5%. Highly qualified specialists (clerks and skilled workers) account for 30.8%. (Table 4).

Table 4 Professional composition

	Number of respondents	Percentages
Civil servants	2	15,4
Qualified workers	2	15,4
Peasants	1	7,7
Entrepreneurs	1	7,7
Housewives	2	15,4
Pensioners	4	30,8
Working pensioners	1	7,7
Total respondents to the question	13	100,0

Respondents who did not answer the question	0	0,0
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Level of well-being. Regular members of the Birsk parish of the ELCI can't be counted among the wealthy group of the population. Out of 92.3% of respondents, the largest group (38.5%) is those who chose the position 'We spend money only on the essentials, we live from paycheck to paycheck'; 23.1% each account for respondents who chose the positions 'There is enough money for everyday expenses, but spending beyond that is problematic' and 'There is mostly enough money, but not for expensive durable goods' (Table 5).

Table 5 Level of well-being

	Number of respondents	Percentages
We spend money only on the essentials, we live from paycheck to paycheck	5	38,5
There is enough money for everyday expenses, but spending beyond that is problematic	3	23,1
There is mostly enough money, but not for expensive durable goods	3	23,1
For expensive purchases, we will have to take out a loan or credit	1	7,7
Total respondents to the question	12	92,3
Respondents who did not answer the question	1	7,7
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Doctrinal specificities

Level of religious education. Of the 69.2% who answered the question, 30.8% had attended a religious seminary and 23.1% had attended Sunday school. Thus, 53.9% of respondents have a religious education.

Regularity of church attendance. The survey materials showed that regular members of the ELCI parish in Birsk demonstrate a high level of participation in the religious life

of the church: 77.0% of the respondents in the sample attend church at least once a week and more often, 23% attend church at least once a month and more often.

The regularity of Bible reading. The overwhelming majority of respondents (84.6%) read the Bible regularly, while 15.4% read occasionally.

Regularity of reading religious literature by Protestant authors. Religious literature by Protestant authors is regularly read out of 92.3% of those who answered the question 30.8%, most of those who do not read at all: 38.5% (Table 6).

Table 6 Regularity of reading religious literature by Protestant authors.

	Number of respondents	Percentages
I read regularly	4	30,8
I read from time to time.	3	23,1
I never read	5	38,5
Total respondents to the question	12	92,3
Respondents who did not answer the question	0	0,0
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Status in the church. The overwhelming number of respondents in the sample are churchgoers (84.6%), while 15.4% are ministers of the church.

Regularity of confession. More than a half of respondents (61.5%) confess once a week and more often, with believers who confess once a month and more often in second place (23.1%) (Table 7).

Table 7 Regularity of confession

	Number of respondents	Percentages
Several times a week	1	7,7
Once a week and more often	8	61,5
Once a month and more often	3	23,1
I never confess	1	7,7
Total respondents to the question	13	100,0
Respondents who did not answer the question	0	0,0

Total number of respondents	13	100,0
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Regularity of communion. Similarly to confession, more than half of the respondents (61.5%) practise communion once a week and more often, followed by believers who confess once a month and more often (23.1%) (Table 8).

Table 8 Regularity of communion

	Number of respondents	Percentages
Several times a week	2	15,4
Once a week and more often	8	61,5
Once a month and more often	3	23,1
Total respondents to the question	13	100,0
Respondents who did not answer the question	0	0,0
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Regularity of prayer. Almost all respondents in the sample (92.3%) pray regularly.

Observance of fasting. Out of 84.6%, a minority - 23.1% of respondents - observe fasting. The majority of believers in the sample - 61.5% - do not observe fasting.

Observance of religious injunctions in the wearing of clothing. More than half of the respondents in the sample (61.5%) do not observe religious clothing injunctions; 23.1% of believers always dress according to religious injunctions. (Table 9).

Table 9 Observance of religious injunctions in the wearing of clothing

	Number of respondents	Percentages
I dress according to the injunctions	3	23,1
I dress according to the injunctions for holidays and church	2	15,4
I do not observe religious clothing injunctions	8	61,5
Total respondents to the question	13	100,0
Respondents who did not answer the question	0	0,0

Total number of respondents	13	100,0
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Respondent's confession before adopting Lutheranism. Of the 76.9% who answered the question, more than half (46.2%) of the pre-Lutheran believers can be described as 'non-denominational theists' - people who 'simply believed in God'. In second place were former pagans - 15.4%. Former Orthodox and atheists are the least numerous - one respondent for each position (Table 10).

Table 10 Respondent's confession before adopting Lutheranism

	Number of respondents	Percentages
I just had faith in God	6	46,2
Orthodoxy	1	7,7
Atheist	1	7,7
Paganism	2	15,4
Total respondents to the question	10	76,9
Respondents who did not answer the question	3	23,1
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Who contributed to coming to the Lutheran church. The majority of 92.3% of respondents to this question were those who were encouraged to come to Lutheranism by their friends and those who came to church on their own - each group accounted for 30.8%. Spouses contributed 23.1% of respondents, one respondent (7.7%) came to the Lutheran church with the assistance of parents (Table 11).

Table 11 Who contributed to coming to the Lutheran church.

	Number of respondents	Percentages
Spouse (husband or wife)	3	23,1
Parents	1	7,7
Friends (friend, girlfriend)	4	30,8
Came himself/herself	4	30,8
Total respondents to the question	12	92,3

Respondents who did not answer the question	1	7,7
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Year of adoption of Lutheranism. The vast majority of 84.6% of respondents came to the church between 1997 and 2008 (77.7%), the peak was in 2008 (four respondents), after 2008 only one respondent came to the parish of the town of Birska, ELCI in 2018 (Table 12).

Table 12: Year of adoption of Lutheranism.

	Number of respondents	Percentages
1997	1	7,7
2000	1	7,7
2002	1	7,7
2003	1	7,7
2006	1	7,7
2007	1	7,7
2008	4	30,8
2018	1	7,7
Total respondents to the question	11	84,6
Respondents who did not answer the question	2	15,4
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Ranking of identities. The majority of respondents in the sample (69.2%) primarily consider themselves Christians. In second place, 84.6% of respondents chose civic identity, with family identity coming in third (30.8%), with 76.9% of respondents (Table 13).

Table 13: Ranking of identities.

	Number of respondents	Percentages
I am primarily a Christian	9	69,2

Total respondents to the question	13	100,0
Respondents who did not answer the question	0	0
Total number of respondents	13	100,0
Secondly, I am a citizen of the Russian Federation	5	38,5
Total respondents to the question	11	84,6
Respondents who did not answer the question	2	15,4
Total number of respondents	13	100,0
Thirdly, I am the husband, father (wife, mother, member of my family)	4	30,8
Total respondents to the question	10	76,9
Respondents who did not answer the question	3	23,1
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

The role of values such as material well-being, education, career, etc. in the life of a Christian. The survey results show that the overwhelming majority of 92.3% of respondents do not hold the 'health and wealth' doctrine - only one respondent believes that the realisation of values such as material wellbeing, education, career, etc. - is an indispensable attribute of a Christian. 53.9% of respondents prioritise to spiritual values (Table 14).

Table 14: The role of values such as material well-being, education, career, etc. in the life of a Christian.

	Number of respondents	Percentages
The realisation of these values is an indispensable attribute of a Christian.	1	7,7
In the life of a Christian they play neither a positive nor a negative role	4	30,8
They are desirable, but their realisation in the life	1	7,7

of a Christian is not at all necessary		
The practical realisation of these values should not be the meaning of a Christian's life	2	15,4
I find it hard to answer	4	30,8
Total respondents to the question	12	92,3
Respondents who did not answer the question	1	7,7
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

The role of grief (illness, material difficulties, conflicts with others, etc.) in the life of a Christian. Slightly more than half of the 92.3% who responded were willing to endure grief (illness, material hardship, conflict with others, etc.) in the course of their faith practices (Table 15) and are, in our view, potential 'faith heroes'.

Table 15: The role of grief (illness, material difficulties, conflicts with others, etc.) in the life of a Christian.

	Number of respondents	Percentages
These moments in a Christian's life are Satan's influence and must be confronted	3	23,1
Grief is God's instrument for man's salvation	7	53,8
I find it hard to answer	2	15,4
Total respondents to the question	12	92,3
Respondents who did not answer the question	1	7,7
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Attitudes towards other Christian denominations (Orthodoxy and Catholicism). The overwhelming majority of respondents (84.6%) have a positive attitude towards Orthodoxy and Catholicism (Table 16).

Table 16: Attitudes towards other Christian denominations (Orthodoxy and Catholicism).

	Number of respondents	Percentages
Positive	11	84,6
Neutral	1	7,7
I find it hard to answer	1	7,7
Total respondents to the question	13	100,0
Respondents who did not answer the question	0	0,0
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Attitude towards other traditional religions in Russia (Islam, Judaism, Buddhism). 38.5% of respondents have a neutral attitude towards other traditional religions in Russia (Islam, Judaism and Buddhism), 23.1% have a positive attitude; only one respondent has a negative attitude; there is virtually no conflict potential in the respondents' attitude towards Islam, Judaism and Buddhism (Table 17).

Table 17: Attitude towards other traditional religions in Russia (Islam, Judaism, Buddhism).

	Number of respondents	Percentages
Positive	3	23,1
Neutral	5	38,5
Negative	1	7,7
I find it hard to answer	4	30,8
Total respondents to the question	13	100,0
Respondents who did not answer the question	0	0,0
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

Respondent attitudes towards new religious movements. 38.5% of respondents have a negative attitude towards new religious movements (neo-pagan, pseudo-eastern and occult religious groups) - thus it can be noted that the potential for conflict in respondents' attitudes towards new religious movements is present (Table 18).

Table 18: Respondent attitudes towards new religious movements.

	Number of respondents	Percentages
Positive	3	23,1
Neutral	4	30,8
Negative	5	38,5
I find it hard to answer	1	7,7
Total respondents to the question	13	100,0
Respondents who did not answer the question	0	0,0
Total number of respondents	13	100,0

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