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Orthodox Church and State in Russia

The Russian Orthodox Church was and is the most numerous faith community in the Russian Federation, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine.¹ Eastern Christianity has been a fixed component of religious life for over a thousand years of Russian history. The Eastern Christian tradition in Central and Eastern Europe is rooted deeply in all forms of local life. Its influences are particularly conspicuous in the growth of the cult of holy images and monastic life, which strongly supported the religiousness of many nations. The Byzantine material culture was even more important. The second wave of its influence came after the fall of Constantinople, when many Greek masters of painting moved to the Balkans and the Ruthenian lands. The vast sphere of Byzantine intellectual culture, so inaccessible to western societies, was acquired and accepted in Eastern Europe in the Greek and Old Church Slavonic language versions. Byzantine culture was promoted and popularised not only by the Greeks but mainly by the Orthodox Serbs, Bulgarians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Romanians and Russians. At the end of the 15th century Russia assumed patronage over Orthodox Christianity and its rulers proclaimed themselves the heirs of Byzantine statehood and cultural tradition. The recognition of the constant presence of this great Christian tradition is essential to an understanding of the religious and national identity of the Russians and other local societies.

The first wave of Christianisation in the Ruthenian lands came with Byzantine missionaries ca. 866 A.D. Most likely it was also the foundation date of the first Orthodox church named by St. Elias and the missionary metropolis

¹ For the role of the Orthodox Church in the history of Russia cf. L. Bazylow, *Historia Rosji*, vol. I–II, Warszawa 1983; L. Kucharzewski, *Od białego caratu do czerwonego*, vol. I–II, Warszawa 1990; J. Ochmański, *Dzieje Rosji do roku 1861*, Warszawa 1986; R. Pipes, *Rosja carów*, Warszawa 1990; J. C. Roberti, N. Struvé, D. Popielovski, *Historie de l'Église russe*, Nouvelle Cité, Paris 1989; W. A. Serczyk, *Poczet władców Rosji*, Londyn 1992; Z. Wójcik, *Dzieje Rosji 1533–1801*, Warszawa 1981.

in Kiev.² The Greek Orthodox Church gained the opportunity to lead missions among the Eastern Slavs. Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959 A.D.) endeavoured to draw the vast Ruthenian territories under Byzantine power. The emperor took advantage of Kiev Princess Olga's, the widow of Prince Igor, stay in Constantinople (955 A.D.) to make her accept baptism on the Bosphorus.³ During the sacrament Princess Olga assumed the Christian name of Helena, after the then Byzantine empress.⁴ During her reign the first Christian churches were founded in the city of Kiev. After Olga's death, pagan tendencies regained prevalence in Ruthenia. The ultimate Christianisation of Kievan Ruthenia took place during the rule of Vladimir the Great (980–1015 A.D.).⁵

The adoption of Christianity by Kievan Ruthenia from Byzantium in 988 determined the history and culture of the Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians for the next several centuries. Mediated by the Orthodox Church, Byzantine culture took only two hundred years to spread all over Ruthenia, just as it had done before in Bulgaria and Serbia. In this way, in the late 10th century the vastest Slavic state of then-Europe was officially bound with Byzantine civilisation and its cultural legacy. The structures of the Orthodox Church developed dynamically. Besides the Kievan see, two other metropolises were established in Belgorod and Novgorod by the end of the 10th century. In the early 11th century, diocese cathedrals were founded in Polotsk, Chernihiv and Pereyaslav. From the second half of the 11th and through the 12th century, new Episcopal seats were established in Juriev, Rostov, Tmutarakan, Vladimir-Volynski, Turov, Smolensk, and Halich. In the mid-13th century the Ruthenian lands were divided into 15 dioceses, which in terms of territorial size equalled some countries of Western Europe.⁶ At that time, Ruthenia's adherence to Christianity ensured the country an important position in Europe. In the centuries that followed, it was Ruthenia that replaced

² *Powieść minionych lat. Charakterystyka historyczno-literacka*, translated and commented by F. Sielicki, Wrocław 1968, p. 248; O. M. Rapov, *Russkaja Tserkov v IX–pierwoj trieti XII v.*, Moscow 1988, pp. 77–90.

³ *Kroniki staroruskie*, F. Sielicki, ed., Warszawa 1987, pp. 43–45.

⁴ A. Poppe, *Olga*, [In:] *Słownik Starożytności Słowiańskich*, vol. III, Wrocław 1975, pp. 477–478; I. Ševčenko, *Byzantine Roots of Ukrainian Christianity*, Harvard University 1984; S. Senyk, *A History of the Church in Ukraine*, vol. I, Roma 1993.

⁵ A detailed reconstruction of Ruthenia's baptism has been recently made by: A. Poppe, *Ruś i Bizancjum w latach 986–989*, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, R. LI, issue 1, 1978, pp. 3–22; idem, *The Rise of Christian Russia*, London 1982; G. Podskalsky, *Christentum und theologische Literatur in der Kiever Rus' (988–1237)*, München 1982; M. Brajcheškyj, *Utverdzhennia Khrystyjanstva na Rusy*, Kiev 1988; O. M. Rapov, *Russkaja Tserkov v IX–pierwoj trieti XII v.*, Moscow 1988; S. Senyk, *A History of the Church in Ukraine*, vol. I, Roma 1993; J. Swastek, *Chrzest Rusi*, [w:] *Teologia i kultura duchowa starej Rusi*, red. J. S. Gajek, W. Hryniewicz, Lublin 1993, pp. 55–71.

⁶ A. Poppe, *Państwo i Kościół na Rusi w XI w.*, Warszawa 1968.

Byzantium in defending the Eastern Christian tradition against the threats posed by Asian and Turkic peoples.

Any nation, including the Russians, develops its hierarchy of spiritual values especially based on the cult of local saints. The cult of the first Ruthenian saints was not only a sign of the Christian maturity of the region but also a proof of the religious and cultural identity of its inhabitants. The first canonised saints of Ruthenia were Dukes Boris and Gleb, known by their Christian names Roman and David assumed during baptism. None of them were martyred for the faith outright, yet both faced their death in a Christ-like manner. Boris and Gleb were proclaimed saints in 1020 A.D. with the status not of martyrs but of Passion-bearers (*strastotierptsy*).⁷ A new type of sainthood was established, notorious in the Ruthenian lands. The status of Passion-bearers was later granted to prince of Kiev Igor Olegovich (+1147 A.D.), prince of Kiev Andrew Bogolubski (+1174 A.D.), prince of Muromsk Constantine (+1205 A.D.), prince of Chernihiv Michael Vsevolodovich (+1246 A.D.) and many others.⁸

Moreover, nations render a special worship to the Equal-to-the-Apostles, i.e. those saints who made people aware of the Gospel. The title of Equal-to-the-Apostles (from the Greek *isoapostolos*) in Byzantine tradition is usually attributed to the first missionaries of a country, for instance St. Nina in Georgia or Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Slovakia. In the Ruthenian lands the title was conferred on Princess Olga and Prince Vladimir. Both were granted this status not because of their own sanctity but in recognition of their role in Christianising the nation. Hagiographers have ever since compared Olga and Vladimir to the Byzantine saints, empress Helena and emperor Constantine the Great. The conversion of both was a gift of God to the whole Ruthenian nation. They were canonised relatively late, ca. 1240 A.D.⁹

Another group of the first Ruthenian saints comprises the God-bearers (*podvizhnikiy*). The name was given to both ordained and lay persons who undertook the heroic spiritual and ascetic effort in their lives. God-bearers became saints through fasting, prayer, and struggle with temptation and evil. On the other hand, the name of the Venerable (*prepodobniy*) was reserved to those who attained sainthood in monastic, ascetic toil and thus came to resemble the Lord. In relation to the living monks the title meant simply a monk worthy of veneration. The distinctions of Venerable and God-bearer were conferred on Antony and Theodosius

⁷ G. P. Fiedotov, *Sviatyje drevniej Rusi (X–XVII st.)*, New York 1959, pp. 18–31; J. Kologrivov, *Ocherki po istorii Russkoj Sviatosti*, Bruxelles 1961, pp. 21–27; J. S. Gajek, *U początków świętości Rusi Kijowskiej*, [In:] *Chrystus zwyciężył. Wokół chrztu Rusi Kijowskiej*, J. S. Gajek, W. Hryniewicz, eds., Warszawa 1989, pp. 97–99.

⁸ J. Kologrivov, *Ocherki...*, pp. 21–28; G. P. Fiedotov, *Sviatyje drevniej Rusi*, pp. 72–94.

⁹ J. Kologrivov, *Ocherki...*, pp. 63–66; E. Golubinsky, *Istorija kanonizacii sviatych w Russkoj Tserkvi*, Moscow 1903, pp. 57, 63.

Pechersky and many other sacred monks listed in the *Kiev-Pechersky Patericon*.¹⁰ Antony and Theodosius Pechersky were both spiritual masters and models of the monastic life. Both were canonised, Antony after 1140 A.D. and Theodosius in 1108 A.D.¹¹ The Princess of Polotsk Euphrosyne, the founder of St. Spas (Holy Saviour) monastery, was one of the first canonised God-bearers in the Ruthenian territories. The holy nun hugely contributed to the development of education and monastic life. She was canonised before 1187 A.D.¹² The same group of saints includes also St. Martin (1120–1170 A.D.), a monk of Turov; St. Avraam (1172–1222 A.D.), the founder of monastic tradition in the Smolensk region, an ascetic and wonderworker; St. Ephrem (end of 12th century–1238 A.D.), a hagiographer and orator of Smolensk; and the princess of Lithuania, St. Kharitina (early 13th century–1281 A.D.).¹³

Hierarchal saints (patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops, and bishops) constitute another pantheon of the canonised. In the Orthodox tradition, the hierarchs are granted the status of Enlighteners (*sviatiteliye*) due to their priestly mission. Bishops were not proclaimed saints for their acts of heroic asceticism but mainly in recognition of their tireless care for the flock of the Church. Many Enlighteners of the first wave originated from among the monks of the Kiev-Pechersky Lavra monastery, including St. Nikita, duke of Novgorod (+1108 A.D.); St. Stefan, duke of Vladimir-Volynski (+1094 A.D.); St. Ephrem, bishop of Pereyaslav (+1110 A.D.); St. Nikifont, duke of Novgorod (+1157 A.D.); St. Constantine, bishop of Chernihiv (+1159 A.D.); St. Lavrentius, metropolitan of Turov diocese (+1194 A.D.).¹⁴ Hierarchal saints gained reverence for their missionary eagerness, defence of the true faith, preaching, social involvement and care for the sick and poor.

One of the most outstanding hierarchal saints for their sermons and literary legacy was St. Cyril of Turov. Another canonised bishop of Turov was St. Lavrentius (1182–1194 A.D.).¹⁵ The body of Enlighteners includes four bish-

¹⁰ G. P. Fiedotov, *Sviatyje drevniej Rusi*, pp. 32–60; *Pateryk Kijowsko-Pieczerski czyli opowieści o świętych ojcach w pieczarach kijowskich położonych*, L. Nadzyńska, ed., Wrocław 1993, pp. 152–257.

¹¹ E. Golubinsky, *Istorija kanonizatsyi sviatykh v Russkoj Tserkvi*, pp. 51, 60.

¹² *Zhytija sviatykh*, Nun Taisya, ed., vol. I, New York 1983, pp. 243–245; A. A. Mielnikov, *Put' niepiechalen. Istoricheskije svidietielstva o sviatosti Bielaj Rusi*, Minsk 1992, pp. 25–40; A. Mironowicz, *Święci w Cerkwi prawosławnej na Białorusi*, [In:] *Wilno i kresy północno-wschodnie*, vol. I, *Historia i ludzkie losy*, E. Feliksiak, A. Mironowicz, ed., Białystok 1996, pp. 81, 82.

¹³ *Zhytija sviatykh*, Nun Taisya, ed., vol. II, pp. 79, 108, 109, 223, 245; G. P. Fiedotov, *Sviatyje drevniej Rusi*, pp. 61–71; A. A. Mielnikov, *Put' niepiechalen*, pp. 52–54, 91–101, 171–174; A. Mironowicz, *Święci w Cerkwi prawosławnej na Białorusi*, pp. 83–88.

¹⁴ J. Kologrivov, *Ocherki...*, pp. 75–84; G. P. Fiedotov, *Sviatyje drevniej Rusi*, pp. 95–117.

¹⁵ J. S. Gajek, *U początków świętości Rusi Kijowskiej*, pp. 101–103.

ops of Polotsk, i.e. St. Mina (1105–1116 A.D.), St. Dionysius (1166–1187 A.D.), St. Ignatius (1197–1210 A.D.) and St. Simon (1266–1289 A.D.). The four bishops played an essential role in the development of Christianity in the Polotsk region, while their educational and social activities contributed to an increase in the importance of the Orthodox Church.¹⁶

A separate group of Russian saints consists of the Right-believing rulers (*blagovernii*). The title, apart from Vladimir and Olga, was conferred on rulers who supported the growth of Christianity and lived their lives according to Orthodox teachings. Prince of Smolensk, Rostislav (1126–1168 A.D.) belongs to this group of saints.¹⁷ The status of the Right-believers was also attributed to two other princes of Smolensk, Constantine (13th century) and Theodore (1240–1299 A.D.), and Grand Duke Alexander Nevsky (1220–1263 A.D.). Duke Alexander Nevsky defended the Ruthenian lands against the Swedish invasion (1240 A.D.) and the attack of the Teutonic Order (1242), owing to which Orthodoxy survived among the nation. Similar merits justified the sanctification of the duke of Muscovy, Daniel (+1303 A.D.).

In the first centuries of Christianity, there were a few canonised martyrs who had died in defence of faith in Ruthenia. Besides the above-mentioned missionary-dukes, Theodore of Novgorod and Leon of Rostov, murdered by pagans,¹⁸ another martyr was the legendary St. Mercurius of Smolensk. The holy knight, defender of the Christian faith was said to have been killed by Tatars in 1238 A.D. In the second half of the 13th and in the 14th century, the cults of the Equal-to-the-Apostles, the Passion-bearers, the Venerable, the God-bearers and the Enlighteners were replaced by reverence to the New-martyrs. This corpus of saints includes St. Elisey Lavrishevsky the Martyr (turn of the 13th//14th centuries), the founder of the Lavrishev monastery; and Sts. Antony, John, and Eustachius of Vilnius (early 14th century–1347 A.D.), who showed eagerness in promoting Christianity in Lithuania before 1386 A.D.¹⁹

Monastic centres hosted holy monks and hierarchs, and developed the Orthodox theological and philosophical tradition. There were strong connections between Orthodox monasteries and such saints as the princes of Smolensk, St. Theodore (1240–1299 A.D.), St. Andrew (1360–1390 A.D.) and St. Gleb

¹⁶ *Zytija sviatych*, Nun Taisya, ed., vol. I, pp. 95, 243–245; A. A. Mielnikov, *Put' niepiechalen*, pp. 21–25, 41–43; A. Mironowicz, *Święci w Cerkwi prawosławnej na Białorusi*, pp. 79–81.

¹⁷ *Zhytija sviatykh*, Nun Taisya, ed., vol. I, p. 154; A. A. Mielnikov, *Put' niepiechalen*, pp. 69–73; A. Mironowicz, *Święci w Cerkwi prawosławnej na Białorusi*, pp. 84, 85.

¹⁸ *Pateryk...*, pp. 172, 199.

¹⁹ *Zhytija sviatykh*, Dymitr Rostovsky, vol. III, Moscow 1905, pp. 693–696; vol. VIII, Moscow 1906, pp. 211–218; A. A. Mielnikov, *Put' niepiechalen*, pp. 69–73, 102–107, 140–152, 171–174; A. Mironowicz, *Święci w Cerkwi prawosławnej na Białorusi*, pp. 86–88.

(first half of the 14th century); the bishop of Smolensk St. Michael (1383–1402 A.D.), archimandrite St. Simon (1351–1392 A.D.), St. Elisey Lavrishevsky the Martyr (second half of the 13th century), and the princess of Lithuania, Kharitina (+1281 A.D.).²⁰

A revival of religious attitudes in Muscovy began in the 14th century. Monastic tradition thrived and Christianity infiltrated all the spheres of social life (politics, culture, etc.). A great part of the social elite accepted ordainment. New impulse to the spiritual life of the Muscovites was brought by St. Sergius of Radonezh (1314–1392 A.D.), a promoter of contemplative life and the founder of the Holy Trinity Lavra monastery. The monastery, later called the Troitsa-Sergiyeva Lavra, situated north-west of Moscow, became the spiritual centre of Russian Orthodoxy. St. Sergius succeeded in gathering a numerous group of hermits, among whom he was the unquestionable leader, with an authoritative opinion on political issues also to the dukes of Muscovy. Blessed by St. Sergius, Prince Dmitry of Muscovy in the battle of Kulikovo of 1380 A.D. defeated the Tatar Golden Horde led by Khan Mamai, thus initiating the liberation of the Muscovite lands from Mongol rule. It was St. Sergius who inspired the establishment of over fifty monastic centres, which became fountains of spirituality and cultural values. The spiritual development of Muscovite society was manifested in the emergence of two distinguished iconographers, Theophan the Greek, the painter of the frescos in the Holy Transfiguration Church in Novgorod, and Andrew Rublov (ca. 1360–1430 A.D.), the writer of the deeply symbolic icon of the Holy Trinity. They both strongly influenced the growth of iconography in Muscovy. North of Muscovy, the wonderworkers Sts. Sergius and Herman founded the Valaam monastery in 1329 A.D. which in the centuries that followed became one of the most famous monastic centres in Russia, attracting thousands of pilgrims.

The liberation of the Muscovite lands from Mongol oppression coincided with the fall of Constantinople. The inhabitants of Muscovy were convinced, in line with Byzantine tradition, that the state was necessary for salvation just as the Orthodox Church, while the close ties between the state and the Church symbolised God's covenant with people. After 1453, Orthodox society of Muscovy was commonly of the opinion that the legitimacy of the Byzantine Empire was vested in the new "Third Rome", i.e. Moscow. The process of sacralisation of princely power began from the time of Ivan III's marriage with Sophia, the niece of the last member of the Byzantine Paleologist Dynasty. The conviction that the Russian Orthodox Church was the protector of true Christianity while

²⁰ E. Golubinsky, *Istorija kanonizatsyi sviatykh v Russkoj Tserkvi*, pp. 76–109; A. A. Mielnikov, *Put' niepiechalen*, pp. 114–152, 171–174; A. Mironowicz, *Święci w Cerkwi prawosławnej na Białorusi*, pp. 86–94.

Moscow was the capital of the new Empire was clearly expressed in *The Epistle to Great Prince Vasiliï to Enforce the Proper Application of the Sign of the Cross by His Subjects and Suppress Homosexuality*, authored by the monk Philoteus of the Pskov monastery and addressed to Great Prince Vasiliï III (1505–1533). It was then that the monk of Pskov referred to Moscow for the first time as the “Third Rome”.²¹ That idea began assuming a more tangible shape during the reign of Ivan IV the Terrible. The ruler was officially crowned as Tsar; the abbot of the Volokolamsky monastery Josef (1439–1515) declared that the Orthodox Church and the state should unite in making the Kingdom of God come true on the earth. According to St. Josef Volokolamsky, an earthly ruler had his nature furnished with divine prerogatives due to his providential role. The then cooperation between the state and the Orthodox Church had been a long-established fact. However, it did not mean that the Russian Orthodox Church was free from internal dissent.

Russian Orthodoxy was torn by a disagreement over the issue of monastic life and the attitude toward earthly power. Nil Sorsky (1433–1508) and the hesychasts from the forest hermitages beyond the Volga river claimed that the Orthodox Church should be independent of the state and should not resort to state administration in religious matters. Per Nil Sorsky, monasteries should remain poor and denounce the ownership of land.

On the other hand, Josef Volokolamsky hailed the close relationship between the Orthodox Church and the state. The monk of Volokolamsk argued that monasteries were entitled to the ownership of land and should cooperate with lay rulers, as it was the only way for them to pursue their social mission.²² Under the influence of his teachings, when Muscovy was plagued in the late 15th century by numerous sects of the Barbers (*Strigolnikiy*) and the Judaisers (*Zhidovstvuyushchiye*), both the ruler and the Orthodox hierarchy undertook joint efforts to suppress them.²³

The development of spiritual life was essentially marked by Maxim the Greek of Epirus (1480–1556), brought to Muscovy with the task of translating liturgical texts. Maxim the Greek supported the arguments of Nil Sorsky’s disciples, which earned him imprisonment by Ivan IV. Ultimately, the Moscow Synod of 1551, under pressure from the Tsar, approved the cooperation between the state and

²¹ A. W. Serczyk, *Prehistoria imperium, czyli imperialne oblicze absolutyzmu rosyjskiego*, [In:] *Cywilizacja Rosji Imperialnej*, P. Kraszewski, ed., Poznań 2002, pp. 31–33; A. Mironowicz, *The Orthodox Church in Czarist Russia*, [w:] *Russia of the Tsars, Russia of the Bolsheviks, Russia of the New Time*, ed. J. Malicki, Warszawa 2012, s. 7–16.

²² J. A. Babinov, *Evolutsyja gosudarstviennno-tserkovnykh otnoshennii w Rossijskoj impierii*, [In:] *Cywilizacja Rosji Imperialnej*, P. Kraszewski, ed., Poznań 2002, pp. 265–266.

²³ J. Keller, *Prawostawie*, Warszawa 1982, pp. 183–184.

the Orthodox Church and succeeded in freeing Maxim the Greek. In 1996 the Russian Orthodox Church canonised Maxim the Greek after his relics were found. The Synod, called the Council of a Hundred Chapters (*Stoglav*), triggered a revival movement in the Russian Orthodox Church. The most outstanding figure of that movement was archpriest Avvakum, who established his own religious community beyond the official structures of the Orthodox Church, referred to as Old Believers (*starovertsy*). That time witnessed a dynamic development of the monastic centre on the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea. Solovetsky saints Savvatii (+1435), Zosima (+1478) and Herman (+1484) launched a magnificent spiritual centre of Russian Orthodoxy.

During the reign of Ivan IV the Terrible, Muscovy entered wars with Sweden and Poland, and began conquering Siberia. Conflict was unavoidable also between the ruler and the clergy. Metropolitan of Moscow Philip demanded that the Orthodox Church gain autonomy – and fell victim to the Tsar's fury (1568). Metropolitan Philip, besides the metropolitans of Moscow Peter (+1326), Alexy (+1378), and Iona (+1461), now belong to the saints that are paid special worship. Those metropolitans stood up for the independence of the Orthodox Church from state power. A similar position was assumed by archbishop of Novgorod St. Genadiy (+1504); Tsarevich Dmitry, prince of Moscow and Uglich, was also proclaimed a saint (+1591).

In the 16th century in the Muscovite lands the movement of the Fools-for-Christ (*yurodivy*) emerged. This specific group of prophets, who originated from different social classes, was famed for the great charisma that could influence the Tsar's decisions and the attitudes of his court. Theological thinking and iconography were at that time in decline. After Ivan IV's death, during the rule of Boris Godunov, in 1589, Moscow was granted the status of a patriarchate. Metropolitan of Moscow Job was appointed the first patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Muscovy was first named Russia in the late 15th century. The name was popularised during the 16th century and in 1721 it became the official designation of the state. Russia was a multinational country. Besides the Russians, the population included the Belarusians, Ukrainians, Germans, Tatars, Bashkirs and Mordvins. After the conquering of Siberia in the 17th century Russian society was extended with the Yakuts, Buryats, Evenks and others.

After Boris Godunov's death Russia had to challenge internal conflicts, in historical terms referred to as the Time of Troubles. During the period of Polish interventions in Russia, known as the Dmitriad wars, the state structure was undermined. The upheavals of peasantry and the Cossacks, Polish invasions, and the efforts of the Pope to enforce the ecclesiastical union left Russia ruined and its cities deserted. The Time of Troubles reunited the Orthodox Church and the state. Patriarch Hermogenes, before he was arrested and starved to death in Polish imprisonment (+1612), had called on people to revolt.

Shortly afterwards, Hermogenes was proclaimed Hieromartyr of the Russian Orthodox Church.²⁴

As foreign troops were expelled from Moscow in 1613, the Tsar's crown was offered to Michael Romanov, the son of patriarch Filaret, who established the Romanov Dynasty. Until 1694 the relations between the state and the Church were exemplarily harmonious. The state structures grew in importance during the reign of Alexy Mikhailovich, when after the war with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Russia acquired Left-bank Ukraine with Kiev, together with the Chernihiv, Bratslav and Siversk lands. At that time, there was an increase in religious awareness of the Russians. In 1652 Nikon was appointed patriarch and went on to reform liturgy and some ceremonies, and introduced certain corrections in the Russian Church books. The modifications covered the Orthodox Church orthography and the pronunciation of the word Jesus ("Iisus" instead of "Isus"). The patriarch essentially influenced the political life and choices of Tsar Alexy Mikhailovich. Nikon's reform met with the opposition concentrated around the above-mentioned archpriest Avvakum. The Moscow Synod convened in 1666, approved Nikon's reforms and anathematised Avvakum's supporters. Avvakum's supporters, the Old Believers, were to face persecution. Avvakum himself, held in imprisonment for a few years, was finally sentenced to the stake. In 1667 Nikon was tried by the Eastern patriarchs over his theocratic rule in the Orthodox Church and deprived of the dignity.

Religious life in Russia was overthrown during the reign of Peter I (1682–1725). The Russian Orthodox Church could not form an effective opposition to the political reforms of Peter I who, after the death of patriarch Adrian (1700), obstructed the election of his successor. Finally, Peter the Great abolished the patriarchate and replaced it with the institution of the Holy Synod, whose members were appointed by himself. The Holy Synod was in fact governed by a layman in the rank of a higher prosecutor. The abolition of the patriarchate of Moscow was an act contrary to the old structures of the Orthodox Church, against the Orthodox canons and the entire Byzantine and Ruthenian-Russian tradition. This decision of Peter I affected the activities of the Russian Church in a profound manner.²⁵

²⁴ *Sviashchennomuchenik Jermogen, patriarkh moskovski i vseja Rossii, chudotvorets*, [In:] *Pravoslavnyje sviatyni*, Moscow 2003, pp. 77–81.

²⁵ N. Pablenko, *Piotr Pervyj*, Moscow 1975, pp. 306–307; W. A. Serczyk, *Piotr I Wielki*, Wrocław 1990; B. A. Uspieński, W. M. Żywow, *Car i Bóg. Semiotyczne aspekty sakralizacji monarchy w Rosji*, Warszawa 1992, pp. 86–88; A. Mironowicz, *Polityka Piotra I wobec Kościoła prawosławnego w Rosji i w Rzeczypospolitej*, [In:] *Cywilizacja Rosji Imperialnej*, P. Kraszewski, ed., Poznań 2002, pp. 277–294.

After the death of Peter I Russia was struck by an internal crisis. The state regained power during the reign of Empress Elisabeth (1741–1762) and Empress Catherine II (1763–1796). Russia annexed south-eastern Finland, won two wars with Turkey, succeeded in diminishing the position of Prussia and France, and participated in the partition of the Commonwealth. The territorial gains of Russia extended its population with followers of other Christian and non-Christian denominations. In 1796 the Russians accounted for 48.9% of the total headcount of 41,175,000 people. Besides the Russians, the Empire was inhabited by Ukrainians (19.8%), Belarusians (8.3%), Poles (6.2%), Tatars (2.2%), Finns (2.2%), Lithuanians (2.0%), Latvians (1.7%), Jews (1.4%), Estonians (1.2%), Mordvins (0.8%), Chuvash (0.8%), Germans (0.6%), Bashkirs (0.5%) and other nationalities (2.9%). The national divisions reflected the denominational differences. The followers of Orthodoxy prevailed among the Russians, Armenians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians. A part of the Belarusians and Ukrainians adhered to Greek Catholicism and some of the Russians were Old Believers. The Poles and Lithuanians, together with a share of the Germans and Armenians, were Roman Catholics. Protestantism dominated among the Latvians, partly the Germans, Finns, and Estonians. Islam was the religion of the Tatars and other peoples in the Asian region of Russia. The Jews followed Judaism. The remainder of nationalities adhered to Buddhism, Lamaism and pagan religions.²⁶

In the 18th century subsequent spheres of activity of the Orthodox Church were much suppressed, especially during the reign of Catherine II. The “enlightened empress” in 1764 succeeded in eliminating ca. 75% of the monasteries, while their property was secularised. Metropolitan of Rostov Arsenius was defrocked and imprisoned for opposing the persecution. A deep clash emerged between the rulers of Russia, moved by western ideas, and the clergy and common people, which remained faithful to the old Eastern Christian tradition. That gave a fertile ground for a broad-scale sectarian movement to thrive on.

The 18th century witnessed another revival of religious life in Russia, accompanied by the growing importance of the Orthodox Church in the public sphere. The Russian theological school was stimulated by the more and more popular teachings of bishop of Voronezh St. Tikhon Zadonsky (1724–1783). Inspired by the Gospel and the works of the Holy Fathers of Orthodoxy, his preaching promoted the idea of the common character of human salvation. Owing to his efforts new monastic centres, specialised in contemplation and prayer, were founded in the 19th century. Russian monasticism was increasingly moved by the institution of Elderhood (*starchestvo*), the body of monks of eminent piety

²⁶ W. M. Kabuzan, *Narody Rossii v pervoj polovinie XIX v. Chisliennost' i etnicheskij sostav*, Moscow 1992, p. 125; P. Eberhardt, *Geografia ludności Rosji*, Warszawa 2002, pp. 87–88.

and wisdom. The revival of monastic life was instigated by the monk St. Paisius Velichkovsky, who lived in the 18th century (1722–1794). He is also claimed to have reinstated intellectual work in monasteries and cultivated the study of the teachings of the Orthodoxy Holy Fathers. The work by St. Paisius Velichkovsky *Dobrotolubiye*, which is a collection of extracts from the writings of the Greek Orthodox Fathers, has been the basic study-book on the infallible principles of Christian life.

The views of the charismatic elderly who had the gift of prophecy (the disciples of St. Paisius Velichkovsky, monks of the Optina hermitage),²⁷ and especially those of St. Seraphim of Sarov, influenced the Russian elites, including the Tsar himself. St. Seraphim (1759–1833) preached the joyful gospel of Christ's resurrection. He would welcome the visitors to his hermitage near Sarov with the phrase: "Let us rejoice, Christ is risen, indeed He is risen!" The Optina hermitage was visited for advice by philosophers and writers, including Nikolay Gogol (1809–1852), Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1911), Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900), Leo Tolstoy (1828–1911) and others.²⁸ Their works were satiated with Christian ethics and philosophy. Pavel Florensky and Sergei Bulgakov discovered the universe and God's love of man precisely in Orthodoxy. The elites of St. Petersburg were much under the charm of nun Xenia who came from an aristocratic family but by physical work and prayer attained the gift of healing.²⁹

The power of Russia grew under the reign of Alexander I (1800–1824), after Napoleon's army was beaten at Moscow in 1812. The Russian Tsar was the instigator of the Holy Alliance and Russia was nicknamed the Gendarme of Europe. Alexander I maintained a policy of toleration towards other denominations. During the reign of Nikolay I Russia annexed Azerbaijan (1828), Bessarabia (1829) and vast territories in Central Asia with their non-Christian peoples. In order to secure support on the part of the Russian citizens, the Tsar promoted the ideology of an Orthodox state based on a symbiosis of "Orthodoxy, absolutism and nationality". Contrary to his predecessor, Tsar Nikolay I favoured the integrist tendencies in the Orthodox Church.

In the 19th century the Russian Empire was struck by multiple national upheavals and peasant unrest. In this situation, Tsar Alexander II enfranchised the peasantry (1861) and introduced reforms of the army, judiciary and state administration. Alexander III substantially reduced the depth of those reforms. The Tsar supported the development of capitalist social relationships. New industrial centres were established in the Donetsk region and in Baku. The Orthodox Church

²⁷ *Optina Pustyń*, [In:] *Pravoslavnyje sviatyni*, Moscow 2003, pp. 302–308.

²⁸ *Istochnik sviatogo Serafima*, [In:] *Pravoslavnyje sviatyni*, pp. 8–12.

²⁹ *Chasovnia blazhennoj Ksenii Pietierburgskoj*, [In:] *Pravoslavnyje sviatyni*, pp. 44–48.

opted for the liberation of peasants from their feudal bonds yet was resistant to any revolutionary and socialist tendencies, so popular among the Russian intelligentsia. The circles of the higher clergy recultivated the ideas of the Church's independence from the state. Metropolitan of Moscow Filaret (+1867) was an ardent supporter of the Church's autonomy. Other bishops, faced with the failure of any efforts to free the Orthodox Church from dependence on the state, chose to live a monastic life, as for instance St. Ignatius Branchaninov (1807–1867), St. Ambrosius of the Optina hermitage (+1891), or Theophan the Hermit (1815–1894). The isolation of the Russian clergy was much due to its rooting in families of priests. Another movement among the clergy was represented by St. Ioann of Kronstadt (1829–1909). The priest hailed the participation in everyday liturgy, support to the poor, and the need for educating the social masses.³⁰

In the late 19th century national movements prevailed in the Russian Empire and nationality and religion converged. In 1897 the Russian territories were dominated by Orthodox population (75%), which inhabited mainly the European part of Russia and the Siberian regions colonised by the Russians. Orthodoxy was rather weak in the peripheral provinces of the Empire. The Congress Kingdom of Poland was dominated by Catholics; Finland, Estonia, and Latvia featured mostly Protestants; while Muslims prevailed in Central Asia. In total, Russia of 1897 had 87.121 million Orthodox believers, 11.468 million Catholics, 2.199 million Old Believers, 1.218 million Armenian Orthodox Church followers, 3.764 million Protestants, 13.906 million Muslims, 5.214 million Jews and 170 thousand Buddhists and Lamaists.³¹

In the early 20th century the Orthodox Church raised the demands of independence and reactivation of the patriarchate. In 1904 the decision was taken to convene the Synod. Presynodal commissions began their works with the view to reforming the Orthodox Church and determining its position in the state. Meanwhile, the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese war (1904–1905) and the revolution of 1905–1907 prompted political reform. The Tsar's October Manifesto of 1905 introduced religious toleration, extended the scope of civil freedoms, limited censorship and established a surrogate of the parliament, the State Duma. Tsar Nikolay II was under the strong influence of Rasputin, who claimed to be an elder. Rasputin's advice had a negative effect on the rule of the last member of the Romanov Dynasty. A sharp conflict emerged between the Orthodox hierarchs and the court.³²

³⁰ O. Clément, *Kościół prawosławny od roku 1054 do współczesności*, [In:] *Encyklopedia religii świata*, vol. I, Historia, Warszawa 2002, pp. 465–466.

³¹ P. Eberhardt, *Geografia ludności Rosji*, pp. 117–119.

³² J. A. Babinov, *Evolutsyja gosudarstviennno-tserkovnykh otnoshennii w Rossijskoj impierii*, pp. 270–271.

The outbreak of World War I and the defeats suffered in the first years of the war made revolutionary tendencies imminent. Unemployment, an ever-growing influence of social-democrat parties among Russian society, and domestic crisis led to the February Revolution followed shortly by the October Revolution in 1917. The latter overthrew the democratic government and proclaimed a communist dictatorship, which lasted until 1991. In the times of both revolutions the Orthodox Church remained faithful to Tsar. After the subversion of the monarchy but before the Bolshevik persecution of the Orthodox Church began, the Kremlin Synod managed to restore the canonical electability of bishops and reactivate the patriarchate. Archbishop of Vilnius Tikhon was appointed patriarch of Moscow in 1918.

Until 1941 the Communist regime suppressed the Orthodox Church and other Churches and faith communities. Christians, especially Orthodox believers, suffered vehement persecution. In 1918 Lenin proclaimed the division of the Church from the state and issued a decree on the confiscation of the Church's property. Almost all monasteries and church schools were closed. The activities of theological academies and seminaries were banned together with catechesis. In 1922 liturgical vessels were seized. The Constitution of 1918, even if it guaranteed the freedom of conscience and confession, remained a virtual reality. Patriarch Tikhon excommunicated all the baptised who took part in the persecution of the Church and called on people to pray and resist passively. The patriarch moreover condemned those priests who had cooperated with the communists to establish a "reformative" movement within the Orthodox Church.³³ Most of the bishops, including patriarch Tikhon, were imprisoned in the years 1920–1923 on the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea, which thus became the biggest Bolshevik gulag. Only in the first period of Soviet rule approximately 50 bishops and thousands of priests were killed. Many of those murdered bishops and priests have been canonised and proclaimed Hieromartyrs in recognition of their merits. Among them there was metropolitan of Petrograd Benjamin, murdered in 1922.

Under the pressure of public opinion, patriarch Tikhon was released from prison in 1925, after which in his last declaration before death he called on the faithful to comply with Soviet rule. A similar voice was heard in 1927 from Metropolitan Sergius, who was the guardian of the patriarch's throne. Those declarations made it feasible for the Orthodox Church to retain its structures in the period of the most intense atrocities held against it. The attitudes of common people essentially helped this defence. According to the reports of the Red Army Political Staff, in 1924 most soldiers wore crosses and prayed

³³ Ibidem, pp. 273–274; D. V. Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime 1917–1982*, New York 1984.

regularly. A substantial part of them refused to shoot priests, which was why the commanders of firing squads were selected from among followers of other religions (Jews or Roman Catholics).³⁴

Another wave of repression of the Orthodox Church rose in 1929. The Church's competences were reduced exclusively to liturgy, while pedagogical, cultural, and charity activities were forbidden. Pursuant to the amendment to the Constitution of 1929, Marxism was the only permissible viewpoint. Priests were deprived of civil rights and refused ration-cards, while their children were barred from education. The authorities supported the League of the Militant Godless in its activities to enforce atheism. In 1929 alone over a hundred bishops and 80% of priests were deported to the northern regions of the country. Over 1400 Orthodox churches were destroyed. In 1932 monks were killed in multiple pogroms.³⁵ Despite the mass repression against the Orthodox clergy, most Russian society remained faithful. According to the latest research by Russian historians, based on the archives of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Bolshevik Communist Party, in 1929 80% of society declared being religious believers, which makes over 120 million people.³⁶

The terror directed against the Russian Orthodox Church was mitigated only in the years 1934–1936. The Constitution of 1936 restored civil rights to priests. Those minor benefits did not make the Russian Orthodox Church any better. From the mid-1930's, the Bolsheviks began working on the bases of communism, with one of the objectives being cultivation of a "new man". In practice, that meant a further suppression of the Orthodox Church. The Great Purge of 1937–1938 left the Orthodox clergy in a deplorable condition, with any signs of religious life forbidden, twelve thousand churches closed and thousands of priests shot dead or deported, the outstanding theologian Pavel Florensky among them. In total, ca. 40 thousand priests (i.e. 85% of all the clergy) and over 600 bishops (95%) were killed in labour camps. This number should be increased by the tens of thousands of people who died just because they were Christians. In 1939 only several hundred parishes remained operational, out of 54 thousand on record in 1917.³⁷ The repression affected other denominations as well. The census of 1937 gives an indirect indication of the scale of social

³⁴ N. A. Kirova, *Vlast' i Tserkov v 1922–1925 gody*, Moscow 1997, p. 221.

³⁵ O. Clément, *Kościół prawosławny od roku 1054 do współczesności*, pp. 468–470.

³⁶ A. L. Jelisiejew, *Politika Sovjetskogo gosudarstva po otnosheniju k Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi v 20–30-je gody*, Moscow 1997, p. 167; K. W. Tsechanskaja, *Rossija. Tiendientsyi rieligioznosti v XX viekie*, "Istorichesky Viestnik", issue 5, 2000; <http://www.krotov.org/library/ts/tsehans.html> [online].

³⁷ *Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov v sovietskoje vrijeme (1917–1991). Materialy i dokumenty po istorii otnoshenij miezhdu gosudarstvom a Tserkov'ju*, G. G. Sztrikker, ed., vol. II, Moscow 1995.

atheisation. Orthodoxy was declared by 42.3%, Protestantism by 0.5%, Roman Catholicism by 0.5%, Islam by 8.4%, Judaism by 0.3%, Buddhism and Lamaism by 0.1% of society. Atheists accounted for over 42.9% of the population. The census proved, however, that two thirds of society were religious believers, with the share of Orthodox adherents among the elderly over 70%. No wonder then that this data was classified and kept secret, as it testified to the failure of the atheisation policy imposed on Russian society.³⁸ The adherence of the Russians to Orthodoxy was described in the 1930's by Metropolitan Sergius of Voskresensk: "People in Russia developed a hidden religious life – conspired priests and monks, catacomb churches and sermons, unseen baptisms and confessions, veiled Eucharist, privy weddings, secret theological courses, church utensils, icons and liturgical books kept in secrecy, concealed contacts between communities, dioceses and heads of patriarchate." According to the hierarch, the faith was too strong for atheism to subdue.³⁹ The small percentages of followers of other religions among the total number of believers according to the 1937 census were conditioned by the changes of state borders, mainly the 1918 loss of the Polish and Lithuanian lands, inhabited mostly by Roman Catholics, Protestant Finland, Estonia and Latvia, Orthodox Bessarabia, West Belarus and Ukraine, together with the communisation of the Jews.

The situation of the Orthodox Church changed during World War II. After the 1939 annexation of the eastern provinces of the Second Polish Republic inhabited by Orthodox people, the number of parishes increased. Until the outbreak of the Soviet-German war in 1941, the authorities' efforts to destroy the Orthodox Church organisation in Belarus and Ukraine appeared void. Relations between the Orthodox Church and the state improved during World War II. In the beginning of the war, Metropolitan Sergius called on the faithful to defend the motherland. The Orthodox Church played an essential role in the "patriotic war" by supporting the state financially and morally. This role was acknowledged by Stalin, who, on September 4, 1943, consented to Sergius' election to the patriarch office, the return of priests from labour camps, and further banned support to dissenter movements inside the Orthodox Church.⁴⁰ The 28th Council of People's Commissars adopted the resolution "On the way to open the Orthodox Church". The resolution, although it limited the restoration of churches to Orthodoxy, led to an increase in the number of parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church from 3,021 before the War to 9,829 in September 1943, out of which 6,500 churches were located in the occupied territories (West Belarus and Ukraine).

³⁸ *Vsiesojuznaja pieriepiš nasielenija 1937 g., Kratkije itogi*, Moscow 1991, pp. 104–115; P. Eberhardt, *Geografia ludności Rosji*, pp. 120–122.

³⁹ Quoted after V. Tsypin, *Istorija Russkoj Tserkwi (1917–1997)*, Moscow 1997, p. 258.

⁴⁰ "Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii", issue 1, 1943, p. 5.

Churches were returned to Russian Orthodoxy also in the next years. In 1944 208 and in 1945 510 Orthodox churches reopened.⁴¹ The time of the War witnessed a revival of religious life. Sermons were attended even by officers of the Red Army, and members of the Communist party were baptised.⁴² After the death of Sergius in 1945, Alexy I was appointed patriarch of Moscow. On April 1, 1946, the number of opened churches reached 10,547, of which 6,077 were in Ukraine, 2,927 in the Russian Federation, 621 in Belarus, 582 in Moldavia and 343 in the Baltic countries. Apart from those, 75 monastic centres were operational, with 4000 monks and nuns.⁴³ The number of parishes increased in 1949 to over 14 thousand mainly due to the extension of the Soviet territory after World War II and inclusion of the Greek Catholic parishes in Ukraine to the Russian Orthodox Church (1946).

Repressions against the Orthodox Church were suspended until the 1960's. In the era of Nikita Khrushchev persecution of the Church was reinstalled. In 1961, Nikita Khrushchev proclaimed his programme of the future Communist state. The same year priests were deprived of their responsibility for parishes and replaced by lay administrators. The clergy met with repression again. The Council for Religious Matters to the Council of Ministers controlled the Orthodox hierarchs altogether. Thus, many parishes and churches, which had been opened to the faithful during World War II, were closed again. The number of operational parishes was reduced to fewer than 6,500.⁴⁴ Higher schools and universities were installed with departments and institutes of scientific atheism, with the view to educating the intelligentsia in the spirit of atheism. Despite all the limitations, in the 1960's the number of believers who accepted sacraments remained at a stable level, especially in Belarus and Ukraine. The faithful undertook pilgrimages to holy places and monasteries in Zagorsk (the Troitsa-Sergiyeva Lavra), Kiev, Pochaev, Zhyrovitse, and the Optina hermitage.

The policy to suppress the structures of the Russian Orthodox Church continued to be valid in the time of Leonid Brezhnev. In 1970 Metropolitan Pimen was elected patriarch of Moscow. The patriarch was loyal to Communist rule in his policies, which often made him carry criticism on the part of the young intelligentsia, who had returned to Christianity since the mid-70's of the 20th century. In 1971 the structures of the Russian Orthodox Church comprised 18 monasteries and 7,274 parishes.⁴⁵ Despite all kinds of repression, religious life persisted

⁴¹ K. V. Tsechanskaja, *Rossija. Tiendientsyi rieligioznosti v XX viekie*, p. 4.

⁴² V. Tsypin, *Istorija Russkoj Tserkwi (1917–1997)*, p. 337; S. Gordun, *Pravoslavnaja Tserkov v pierijod s 1943 po 1970 g.*, "Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii", issue 1, 1993, p. 45.

⁴³ K. V. Tsechanskaja, *Rossija. Tiendientsyi rieligioznosti v XX viekie*, p. 5.

⁴⁴ V. Tsypin, *Istorija Russkoj Tserkwi (1917–1997)*, pp. 397, 397, 417.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 412.

among believers. The Council for Religious Matters recorded that monasteries drew thousands of pilgrims. Sermons during the chief Orthodox holidays at the Troitsa-Sergiyeva Lavra in Zagorsk were attended by up to 15 thousand pilgrims and those at the Pochaev Lavra over 5 thousand believers.⁴⁶

In the early 1980's, the young intelligentsia who tended to return to Orthodoxy gave rise to the eminent Christian theologian Fr. Alexander Mien, who was treacherously murdered in 1990. The attitudes of the young intelligentsia and the clergy were essentially shaped by the emigration centres, especially that in Paris. St. Sergius Theological Institute in Paris and St. Vladimir Seminary in New York, Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, Nikolay Berdaev, Leo Shestov, George Florovsky, Vladimi Losky, Alexander Shmemman, Nikolay Afanasyev, Leonid Uspensky, Leo Gillet, Boris Bobrinsky and John Meyerdorff founded the bases for contemporary theological thought of the Russian Orthodoxy and essentially influenced the teachings of other Eastern Churches.⁴⁷

A remarkable shift in state policy towards the Russian Orthodox Church took place only in 1988. Since the solemn celebrations of the 1000th anniversary of Kiev Ruthenia's baptism, the Church has gradually regained its freedom. The first publications have been issued on the new martyrdom of Orthodox priests and believers during Communist rule. The authorities were forced to grant concessions. Thousands of churches and monasteries returned to their original function. The number of Orthodox parishes has risen three fold. An Act of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union of 1990 guaranteed full freedom of confession, conscience, gathering, and expression. The Orthodox Church, much weakened by totalitarianism, was struck by separatist movements. Followers of Russian Orthodoxy established the Free Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church lost the dioceses in Ukraine, the Baltic countries and Moldavia. The Church faced the new challenge of evangelisation of the post-communist materially oriented society.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the state in its new geographical shape returned to the historical name of Russia (Russian Republic). In 1990, after the death of Pimen, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, metropolitan of St. Petersburg, Alexy II, was appointed new patriarch of Moscow. In recent years, the range of the Russian Orthodox Church covers the territories of the Russian Federation, Belarus, and Ukraine. Dioceses and parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church are also scattered all over the former Soviet Union, in Western Europe and North America. In the last decade, the Church has experienced a dynamic growth of its organisational structure. New dioceses, theological

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 419.

⁴⁷ O. Clément, *Kościół prawosławny od roku 1054 do współczesności*, pp. 472–473.

schools, church communities, monasteries, aid centres and alms-houses have been founded. These changes have been confirmed by statistical data on the property status of the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1988 the 67 dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church featured 6,893 parishes and 18 monasteries. The number of dioceses and parishes rose in the year 2000 to 130 thousand and over 19 thousand, respectively. Moreover, the Russian Orthodox Church has ca. 9,000 parishes in Ukraine. The number of monasteries increased to 569. In the millennium year, the Church had 150 bishops, 17,500 priests and 2,300 deacons.⁴⁸

The last years have witnessed numerous canonisations of venerable figures from different periods of the Russian Orthodox Church's history. Besides Maxim the Greek (1996), who died in the 16th century, canonisation encompassed the murdered family of Nikolay II, the last Tsar of the Romanov Dynasty, and thousands of new martyrs of the Soviet era. Those saints pay testimony to the sufferings and martyrdom of the Russian Orthodox Church and confirm the endeavours of the Russians undertaken in defence of their faith.

Within the last decade there have been essential changes in the organisation of Orthodox church education. Matters related to the education of priests are now the responsibility of the Scientific Committee to the Moscow Patriarchate. Currently, the Russian Orthodox Church's jurisdiction covers 5 Ecclesiastical Academies with university status, 30 seminaries and 45 theological schools. Moreover, the latest achievements include the establishment of two Orthodox Universities with theological departments, 9 formation schools for priests, 3 theological diocese schools for girls, 7 schools for catechists and 3 schools for psalmists. In Russia, there are also 11 schools for choir conductors and 4 schools of iconography. The total number of students at Orthodox church universities and schools exceeds 6,000. Religious education is in charge of Sunday schools established at Orthodox parishes. There are 123 Sunday schools at churches and parishes in Moscow alone. The matters of laymen are handled by the department of religious education and catechisation at the Moscow Patriarchate.⁴⁹

Religious education and catechisation of lay believers has become of the utmost importance in a society which only quite recently defined itself as atheistic. The Russian Orthodox Church carries out "secondary evangelisation" using several different educational means, including Sunday schools at parishes, educational societies for adults, baptism preparatory courses for adults, religious classes in church kindergartens and in Orthodox groups in state-run nurseries, Orthodox lower and upper secondary schools, supplemented by courses for

⁴⁸ <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/today-ru.htm> [online]; K. V. Tsechanskaja, *Rossija. Tiendientsyi religioznosti v XX viekie*, p. 8.

⁴⁹ <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/today-ru.htm> [online].

Orthodox catechists and missionaries. Thus, the number of the youth involved in the Orthodox church educational programme reached, dependent on the region, from 30% to 45% of the total number of students.⁵⁰

The Russian Orthodox Church has regained the right to carry out broad-scale social and charity activities. For coordination of these activities the Moscow Patriarchate established the department for charities and social aid programmes. The Central Clinical Hospital of the Moscow Patriarchate, named by metropolitan of Moscow St. Alexy, is pivotal to these initiatives. All the medical services provided in the hospital are free of charge. As important is the activity of the Psychiatric Centre at the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences. The Centre provides free-of-charge medical help to those referred to treatment by the parishes of the Moscow diocese.⁵¹ All the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church establish their own health care centres, while nuns are employed in hospitals and organise alms-houses for sick persons and invalids.

In December 1990, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church founded the All Orthodox Youth Movement, whose principal objective is to help return children and the youth to Orthodoxy. An important task of the Movement is the integration of Orthodox youth based on Christian values, providing social help, supporting the restoration of churches and monasteries, organising pilgrimages of the youth and maintaining contacts with Orthodox youth organisations from other countries. The All Orthodox Youth Movement was accepted among the members of the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth and Theological Schools "Syndesmos".

International contacts belong to the responsibilities of the Department of Ecclesiastical External Affairs at the Moscow Patriarchate. The department has overseen administrative and financial aid programmes targeted at the heads of dioceses, monasteries, parishes and other institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia, decision-making processes concerning church-state relations, contacts between the Russian Orthodox Church and other Orthodox Churches and religious, political, cultural, academic and economic organisations, and the mass-media. Since 1989 the Department of Ecclesiastical External Affairs has been chaired by metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad Cyril.

In recent years, there have been observed signs of rapprochement between the Russian Orthodox Church and the armed forces of the Russian Federation. The Moscow Patriarchate established a department for cooperation with the armed forces of Russia, with the chief goal to prepare for the reactivation of the Military Ordinariate.

⁵⁰ K. V. Tsechanskaja, *Rossija. Tiendientsyi rieligioznosti v XX viekie*, pp. 9–10.

⁵¹ <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/today-ru.htm> [online].

The Russian Orthodox Church may boast of a long-established tradition of missionary activities. Russian missionaries have carried out their activities from Poland and the Baltic countries in the west to Alaska and California in the east, from Murmansk in the north to the Caucasus, Central Asia and China in the south. Many missionaries initiated the triumph of Christianity in those regions and their names were included in the pantheon of saints. Examples of the outstanding achievements of the Russian Orthodox Church in the missionary field encompass the activities by bishop St. Stefan of Perm, venerable Trifon and Herman, missionaries of Alaska, monks of the Valaam and Solovky monasteries, Equal-to-the-Apostles St. Nikolay, archbishop of Japan; Metropolitan St. Innocent, the Apostle of America; and archimandrite Makary Glukharev, the Apostle of the Altai. In the second half of the 19th century the Orthodox Missionary Society of the Russian Orthodox Church was established. Throughout the 19th century, missionary activities were intensified in Siberia, the Far East, and Middle East regions. Missions were led among pagans, Muslims, and Buddhists. In Jerusalem and Palestine, the Russian Society supported Orthodox Arabs and took care of many holy places. These missionary initiatives were stopped by the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. After the period of Communist repression, the missionary field has been able to develop its capabilities only since 1988.

Currently, over 85% of Russian society declare their adherence to the Orthodox Church. The State Duma has recognised Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism as traditional Russian religions. However, the act of 1990 guarantees relevant rights also to other Churches and faith communities. Today, Russia is still forming its new religious realm after years of indoctrination. Traditionally, Orthodoxy is the dominant denomination in the entire territory of the Russian Republic. Its followers, apart from the Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians, encompassed Christianised non-Slavic peoples, namely Karelians, Chuvash, Komis, Maris, Udmurts, Mordvins, Khakas, Vensi and some Ossetians. This group should be further extended by the numerous Georgian, Greek, Moldavian, Romanian and Bulgarian diasporas. The adherents to the Roman Catholic Church are found mainly among the descendants of the Poles, Lithuanians, and Germans. Roman Catholic communities play only a minor role in Russian religious life. There are 220 Roman Catholic parishes in the territory of the Russian Federation. The traditional Protestant communities consist of the Finns, Estonians, Latvians, and, partly, the Germans. In the recent period, there has been a dynamic development of other Protestant Churches, which were founded only in the 19th and 20th centuries in the United States, namely The Adventists, Methodists, Baptists, and various religious (Jehovah's Witnesses) and non-religious sects. The regions north of the Caucasus, on the Volga river and in the south Ural Mountains are inhabited by Muslims. Virtually all Muslims in Russia adhere to the Sunni branch. Islam is the dominating religion among the Chechens, Tatars, Bashkirs, Kabards, Adyghes, Cherkes, Ingush, Kumuk, Balkars, Karachay and peoples of

Dagestan, and in the diasporas of the Kazaks, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and Azerbaijani. The number of Muslim communities has exceeded 3 thousand. Buddhism and Lamaism are followed by the Kalmyks, Tuvin, Buryats and partly by the Evenks.⁵²

Since 1991 the Russian Federation has experienced essential changes in religious life. The most conspicuous figures relate to the share of believers and atheists in Russian society. While in the early 1990's (1991) atheists outnumbered believers two-fold (62% vs. 31%, respectively), the proportion had been reversed at the end of the current decade. In 1999 the share of atheists was 30% in comparison to 54% of the Russians who declared adherence to Orthodoxy.⁵³ The return to the Orthodox Church is by no means a fixed but rather an intermittent phenomenon. The rising trend occurs in crisis situations, such as an economic slump or political and social disturbances. In the early 1990's, the number of adherents to the Russian Orthodox Church swelled mainly by those unprivileged, of a lower financial and social status. Women prevailed in this group. In the second half of the 1990's the numbers of believers increased not only with adults (over two-fold) but also with the youth (in the same proportion). The number of men who declared their adherence to Orthodoxy increased more than twice. The group of intelligentsia believers expanded almost three times. It should be noted that the observations point not only to the increased massiveness of Orthodoxy declarations but also to changes in Russian religiousness. The number of those participating in sermons and accepting the sacraments rose ca. 2.5 times. The shift in religiousness is reported among all the social classes and groups.⁵⁴

While discussing the issue of religiousness among Russians, due account should be taken of the huge dynamic of the return to Orthodoxy of the educated youth who live in cities. According to sociological research, a declaration of adherence to the Orthodox Church does not necessarily mean true participation in religious life, i.e. regular attendance to sermons, acceptance of the sacraments or involvement in the parish community. Everyday attitudes of the youth do not always have anything to do with Christian values. For those Russians who identify themselves with Orthodoxy, the Christian faith is of great psychological importance, even if it is often limited to the mere declaration of adherence. The declaration alone, in the opinion of a major part of believers, does not imply any religious obligation nor assumes any personal responsibility towards the faith

⁵² P. Eberhardt, *Geografia ludności Rosji*, pp. 123–126.

⁵³ K. V. Tsechanskaja, *Rossija. Tiendientsyi rieligioznosti v XX wiekie*, pp. 8–9; B. Dubin, *Massowoje pravoslavie v Rossii*, p. 1 [In:] <http://www.index.org.ru/journal/11/dunin.html> [online].

⁵⁴ Ibidem, p. 2; A. Mironowicz, *Cerkiew prawosławna w dawnej i we współczesnej Rosji*, [w:] *Bizancjum – Prawosławie – Romantyzm. Tradycja wschodnia w kulturze XIX wieku*, pod red. J. Ławskiego i K. Korotkicha, Białystok 2004, p. 55–74.

community; it does not result in a shift of everyday life. This group of believers are strongly convinced that faith may only stimulate them to ponder about the sense of life.

However, there is another, much more numerous group of followers, who perceive their participation in Orthodox rituals a manifestation of their faith. Their involvement in religious life is frequently limited to external expression, without a more profound understanding of the sacraments and dogmas. Their adherence to Orthodoxy is particularly remarkable in mass-media speeches. Orthodoxy has become for Russians a decisive part of their national and cultural identity. Orthodoxy is deemed the category of values that is able to distinguish “true” Russians from the others. In both group types, there is a growing tendency towards the external expression of their adherence to Orthodoxy.⁵⁵ A peculiar type of activity in this respect is observed among the “new converts”, frequently former members of the Communist party, who will outspokenly stress their adherence to Orthodoxy even if they do not take part in any sermons. In an era when the issue of confession is becoming ever more an issue of personal choice, it is precisely that group of Russian citizens that generates ardent supporters of the state-church symbiosis. They have started to consider Orthodoxy a symbol of the state, which at once creates a temptation to use the Church instrumentally for political purposes.⁵⁶ This phenomenon of politicisation of religion is observed in other post-Communist countries as well. However, the instrumental use made by the “new converts” of confession in political or state-related spheres will always have a negative effect on the Orthodox Church and the faith community.

An analysis of the current religious situation in Russia yields the following conclusions: there has been a rapprochement between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state government; xenophobic and isolationist tendencies have emerged among the Orthodox community; the notions of “an Orthodox believer” and “a Russian national” have come to be synonyms in the Russian state. Similar tendencies would have been unthinkable in Russia before the 1990’s⁵⁷. Currently, the issues of Orthodoxy are being discussed in the mass-media on an ongoing basis, also as attributes of today’s state government, just as before 1917. A comparable phenomenon can now be observed in the Republic of Poland, where the notion of “Polish” is identified with Roman Catholicism, and the history of the Roman Catholic Church constitutes an integral part of the legacy of the Pol-

⁵⁵ B. Dubin, *Zierkalo i ramka. Natsyjonalno-politicheskiye mify w kolektivnom voobrazhenii siegodniashnej Rossii*, “Znanije – sila”, 1999, issue 9/10, pp. 51–58.

⁵⁶ B. Dubin, *Massovoje pravoslavie v Rossii*, p. 3.

⁵⁷ A. Verkhovsky, *The role of the Russian Orthodox Church in nationalist, xenophobic and antiwestern tendencies in Russia today: Not nationalism, but fundamentalism*, “Religion, State & Society”, no. 304 (2002), pp. 333–345.

ish state. In Russia, although its territories are inhabited by various ethnic and national groups, the traditional spiritual culture is determined by the Orthodox Church.

Orthodox circles in contemporary Russia are resuscitating the historical tradition of Moscow as the Third Rome. Such ideas are pronounced not only by lay politicians who make use of nationalist slogans (Vladimir Zhyrinovsky, Eduard Limonov, Victor Aksyuchits) but also by a major part of the Orthodox clergy. Archimandrite Constantine wrote in a Moscow periodical *Russkij Vestnik* (issue 12, 1992): "At the beginning of this century the conscience of the Russian nation was deprived of the idea that our motherland was not Great Russia but Holy Russia, embellished with the national and statehood power chosen by God's Providence to serve a magnificent aim: to be the last fortress of all world Orthodoxy and to suppress world evil. Thus, the title of the Third Rome conferred on Moscow. [...] It is but apparent that the Western world is now ripening to accept Antichrist. [...] Our worst enemy is the last, most threatening stage of the western untruth, waiting ready to accept Antichrist. The resurrection of the ruined Orthodox Russian Empire as the Third Rome alone may prevent him from coming." A similar voice was heard from this weekly (issue 39, 1992) from metropolitan of St. Petersburg Ioann.⁵⁸ Even though many priests and laymen renounce this nationalist missionism, one cannot help noticing that such ideas are close to a substantial part of Russian society.⁵⁹

The policies assumed both by the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church and the state government with the view to transforming Orthodoxy into a state religion have resulted in the joint action of the state and the Church against sectarian and dissenter movements, and even tendencies that drift away from traditional Russian culture and identity.⁶⁰ It is now much stressed in the opinions of both priests and politicians that the Russian Orthodox Church was and is an integral part of the state structure of Russia. The evangelisation of the Russian lands was effected with the support of the state administration. The Russian Orthodox Church, similarly to the Byzantine Church, was closely connected to the state. Russian rulers, except for the Communist period, have always endeavoured to consolidate the state and society with the help of the Church. Christianity has reinforced the existing social tissue and made cultural and intellectual development feasible and accessible to all Russian citizens. The covenant of the state and the Church was initially rooted in Apostolic principles and for the last three

⁵⁸ Quoted after A. Lazari, *Współczesny nacjonalizm rosyjski i prawosławie*, [In:] *Katolicyzm w Rosji i prawosławie w Polsce (XI–XX)*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 335–336.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 338.

⁶⁰ M. Patyna, *Rosyjska Tserkov Pravoslavna*, [In:] <http://www.rosjapl.republika.pl/cerkiew/kosciol.html> [online].

centuries, apart from Communist rule, the symbiosis of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state has been based on mutual interests.⁶¹

In 2009, after the death of Alexy II on January 27, 2009, the Russian Orthodox Church Local Council elected Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus, with 508 votes out of 700. He was enthroned on February 1, 2009. Patriarch Kirill introduced significant changes in the administrative structure of the Church: On 27 July 2011, the Holy Synod of the Church established the Central Asian Metropolitan District, reorganizing the structure of the Church in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. In addition, on 6 October 2011, at the request of the Patriarch, the Holy Synod introduced the metropoly, an administrative structure bringing together neighboring eparchies. In February 2011, the official spokesman of the Synodal Department of the Patriarchate denied reports that the Church was about to merge with the Russian State. He said, "The Russian Church has never in its history been so independent of the state as it is now. It treasures this independence. However, it also treasures the dialogue that it has with the modern state. No doubt, this dialogue cannot be called easy, but it can be called constructive". At a conference at the Moscow State University on September 2012 Patriarch Kirill said the church is not interested in obtaining state powers or even state status "as in certain European countries". The Church has close ties with the Kremlin, including the patronage of Vladimir Putin, who has mobilized religion both inside and outside Russian borders. In cultural and social affairs Putin has collaborated closely with the Church. Patriarch Kirill endorsed Putin's election in 2012, stating Putin's terms were like "a miracle of God."⁶² Now Kiril is leading the faithful directly into an alliance with the state.

The Russian Orthodox Church is the largest of the Eastern Orthodox churches in the world. Including all the autocephalous churches under its supervision, its adherents number more than 150 million worldwide – about half of the 300 million estimated adherents of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Among Christian churches, the Russian Orthodox Church is second only to the Roman Catholic Church in terms of numbers of followers. Today the Russian Orthodox Church has 303 dioceses and about 30 000 parishes, 829 monasteries, 203 bishops, 30 670 priests and deacons, 3 universities and 87 theological schools.⁶³

⁶¹ J. A. Babinov, *Evolutsyja gosudarstviennno-tserkovnykh otnoshenii w Rossijskoj imperii*, pp. 272–276.

⁶² M. Woods, *How the Russian Orthodox Church is backing Vladimir Putin's new world order*, "Christian Today" March 3, 2016.

⁶³ Official website the Russian Orthodox Church (in English).

Orthodox Church and State in Russia

Summary

The Russian Orthodox Church has always been and remains the largest religious community in the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine. Eastern Christianity has been a permanent element of religious life for more than a thousand years of the Russian state's history. Eastern Christian tradition in Central and Eastern Europe has taken root in all forms of people's lives. Its special influence can be noticed in the development of the cult of miraculous icons and in monastic life, which has had a strong influence on the religiosity of many nations. The Byzantine material culture was even more important. Its derivative impact occurred after the fall of Constantinople, when many Greek masters of painting managed to reach the Balkans and the Ruthenian lands. The vast sphere of Byzantine intellectual culture, so inaccessible to Western society, was accepted in Eastern Europe in the Greek and Church Slavonic language versions. Among the promoters of Byzantine culture, apart from Greeks, there were mainly Orthodox Serbs, Bulgarians, Belarussians, Ukrainians, Romanians and Russians. At the end of the fifteenth century the Russian state took on the role of a guardian of Orthodox Christianity, and its rulers started considering themselves heirs of the Byzantine state and its cultural tradition. The awareness of the permanent presence of this great Christian tradition is of fundamental importance for understanding the religious and national identity of the Russians and other nations living in the state.

The policy of the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church and state authorities, aiming at the promotion of the Orthodox Church religion to the level of the state religion, results in the combined activities of the State and the Church against sectarian movements, dissenters and even tendencies incompatible with the traditional culture and identity of the Russians. It is particularly strongly emphasized in the statements of the clergy and politicians that the Russian Orthodox Church has always been an integral part of the state structure of Russia. The evangelization of the Ruthenian lands was carried out with the help of the state apparatus. The Russian Orthodox Church, like the Byzantine Church, has been closely connected with the state. Those who prevailed in Russia, except for the communist period, have always sought to consolidate the state and society with the help of the Church. Christianity strengthened the existing social structure and gave the possibility of cultural and intellectual development to all inhabitants of the Russian state. Whereas initially, apostolic principles constituted the source of the state and the Orthodox Church covenant, during the last three centuries, excluding the period of communism, the symbiosis between the Russian Orthodox Church and the State in Russia has been based on mutual interests.

Key words: Orthodox Church, Russia, State, religious relations, authority

Cerkiew prawosławna i państwo w Rosji

Streszczenie

Rosyjska Cerkiew Prawosławna była i pozostaje największą wspólnotą wyznaniową na terenie Federacji Rosyjskiej, Białorusi i Ukrainie. Chrześcijaństwo wschodnie było stałym elementem życia religijnego w ponadtysiącletniej historii państwa rosyjskiego. Wschodnia tradycja chrześcijańska w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej zakorzeniła się we wszystkich formach życia ludności. Szczególne oddziaływanie widzimy w rozwoju kultu cudownych ikon i w życiu monastycznym, które miało silne oddziaływanie na religijność wielu narodów. Jeszcze większe znaczenie miała bizantyjska kultura materialna. Jej wtórne oddziaływanie nastąpiło po upadku Konstantynopola, kiedy wielu greckich mistrzów sztuki malarskiej udało się na Bałkany i na ziemie ruskie. Ogromna sfera bizantyjskiej kultury umysłowej, tak niedostępna społeczeństwu zachodniemu, w Europie Wschodniej była przyjmowana w greckiej i cerkiewnosłowiańskiej wersji językowej. Propagatorami kultury bizantyjskiej byli nie tylko Grecy, ale głównie prawosławni Serbowie, Bułgarzy, Białorusini, Ukraińcy, Rumuni i Rosjanie. W końcu XV stulecia Rosja przyjęła rolę opiekuna prawosławnego chrześcijaństwa, a jej władcy uważali się za spadkobierców bizantyjskiej tradycji państwowej i kulturalnej. Uświadomienie sobie faktu stałej obecności tej wielkiej tradycji chrześcijańskiej ma fundamentalne znaczenie w zrozumieniu tożsamości religijno-narodowej Rosjan i innych mieszkających tam narodów.

Polityka hierarchii Rosyjskiej Cerkwi Prawosławnej i władz państwowych, zmierzająca do stworzenia z prawosławia religii państwowej, powoduje wspólne wystąpienie państwa i Cerkwi przeciwko ruchom sekciarskim, innowierczym, a nawet tendencjom niezgodnym z tradycyjną kulturą i tożsamością Rosjan. Szczególnie mocno akcentuje się w wypowiedziach duchownych i polityków, że Rosyjska Cerkiew Prawosławna była i pozostaje integralną częścią struktury państwowej Rosji. Ewangelizacja ziem ruskich była przeprowadzana przy pomocy aparatu państwowego. Rosyjska Cerkiew Prawosławna, podobnie jak Cerkiew bizantyjska, była ściśle połączona z państwem. Panujący w Rosji, z wyjątkiem okresu komunistycznego, zawsze dążyli do konsolidacji państwa i społeczeństwa przy pomocy Cerkwi. Chrześcijaństwo wzmacniało istniejącą strukturę społeczną oraz dawało możliwość rozwoju kulturalnego i intelektualnego wszystkim mieszkańcom państwa rosyjskiego. Źródłem przymierza państwa i Cerkwi początkowo stały się zasady apostołskie, a w ciągu ostatnich trzech stuleci, wyłączając okres komunizmu, symbioza Rosyjskiej Cerkwi Prawosławnej i państwa w Rosji opiera się na obopólnych interesach.

Słowa kluczowe: Cerkiew prawosławna, Rosja, państwo, stosunki religijne, władza

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