
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN MODERN HISTORY FROM REVOLUTION TO EVOLUTION

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Abstract

Man as a microcosm represents a combination of several spheres: inorganic, organic, psychological and spiritual. At the same time, the highest sphere of human nature is the spiritual one, which plays the role of a personal centre. It is in the spiritual realm that the human spirit can unite with the divine Spirit through our Lord Jesus Christ, and the person himself can find perfection and true realisation in God. At the same time, a human community based on the acceptance of Jesus Christ as a bearer of a new being is called the Church. One falls into idolatry when rejecting God and putting other values and ideas in His place. Finite values, put in the place of the infinite God, acquire demonic power, which is illustrated by the bloody history of the Russian revolution of 1917, the civil war and numerous repressions that followed the Bolsheviks' power grab. And yet, the Kingdom of God reappeared in the history of Russia, which coincided with the end of the Soviet rule and the arrival of the desecularisation age. This served as another reminder of any great earthly kingdom's temporary nature, and of the eternal nature of the Kingdom of God constantly present in history, represented in the world by the Church.

Keywords: church, state, revolution, history, Kingdom of God

1. On relationship of the Church, state and revolution

The Church has never existed without close interaction with the state. Sometimes the state and the Church were united, as, for example, the Vatican. Sometimes the state claims to be the Church. An example is England from the time of Henry VIII to this day and the Russian Empire. The Church can be

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separated from the state, which we see in most countries. However, this does not mean that the separation is complete and that the state does not interfere in the Church life, and the Church does not interfere in state affairs. In any case, the Church depends on the state, although not completely. But the state also relies on cultural traditions based on religious grounds. The state role in the Church life can be both negative and positive, which is due to the ambivalence of their very existence.

The life of the Church becomes especially dramatic during revolutions and periods of anarchy in public life. And it is no coincidence that the Bible interprets political power as follows: “Let every soul be submissive to the highest authorities, for there is no power except from God; the authorities that exist are established by God” (Romans 13.1). In essence, this statement requires consecration of the principle of power in general. After all, God has the highest authority. “But Peter and the Apostles said in answer: We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5.29).

Thus, in the light of biblical traditions a political revolution appears to be mostly a negative event, leading to chaos, through state destruction and sometimes its fragmentation. At the same time, the concept of revolution is very broad. A revolution is understood as a leap in the development of society, Nature, Science and technology, associated with an open break with the previous status. In this case, revolution is the opposite of evolution, a situation in which the development of the whole takes place without separating its parts. In a narrow sense, a revolution is understood as the overthrow of state authority by the people, mainly due to the oppression (political, social and economic) of the population majority or the government’s political incompetence [1].

Endowing history with religious meaning, we are able to make sense of the social revolution. At the same time, the answer to the question about the meaning of history raises the question of the universal meaning of being [2]. History (from the Greek word *historia*) firstly means research, information, message and only secondly - events that are to be investigated and reported in a proper way. In this vein, the subjective ‘precedes’ the objective, and historical consciousness ‘precedes’ historical events [2, p. 324]. At the same time, only events associated with specific intentions and goals of exceptional character should be classified as historical events. God’s providential function is always present in history. It is through providence that God directs history to its completion, and humanity - to its fulfilment. Providence as God’s guiding creativity is always realised through all creations’ freedom, spontaneity and structural integrity [2, vol. 1-2, p. 308]. From this perspective, revolution becomes a component of divine providence, leading us along the path of ultimate fulfilment, which, however, has an eschatological focus. The revolution rather quickly leads to the end of one historical process and the beginning of a new one. This serves as a warning that any history ends and any earthly kingdom has its limit, and only the Kingdom of God is eternal. The Kingdom of God has both intra-historical and supra-historical aspects. At the same time, its onset will occur not through historical development, not as a result of human activity or the

current historical situation, but through divine intervention and a new Creation, accompanied by the emergence of a new Heaven and Earth. The Kingdom of God, as an intra-historical phenomenon, participates in the history dynamics and manifests itself through the presence of God in the world [2, p. 393-404]. The Kingdom of God's main manifestation in history is the appearance of Jesus as Christ. In this historical event, history becomes aware of itself and its meaning (Joshua 2.11). As the supra-historical transcendent the Kingdom of God is identical with eternal life [2, p. 386-391; Luke 17.21]. At the same time, the Church founded on the appearance of Jesus as Christ that once happened, is the representative of the Kingdom of God on Earth [2, p. 393-404].

Thus, in assessing the revolution religious meaning, we must primarily consider this event not only because of the Church influence on history, but also in connection with the revolution impact on the Church as a representative of the Kingdom of God on Earth. In this article, we aim to show the Church influence on the revolutionary process and the impact of revolutionary changes in society on the life of the Church, based on the events in Russia in the early 20th century.

In this article, we aim to evaluate the interaction of Church and state during the period of revolutionary transformations, during the years of Soviet power and the functioning of the Church in the conditions of building a new society.

2. Russian revolutions of 1917 and the Church

Russian religious philosophers of the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century were devoted to the idea that it was the intelligentsia's renunciation of Christian ideas and religious truth replacement with social revolutionary ideology that led to two Russian revolutions in 1917. In addition, by the beginning of the 20th century the famous triad proposed in 1833 by Minister of Education Sergey Uvarov 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality' had almost completely ceased to function [3]. It was the result of a long historical process, initially generated by an internal ideological contradiction between the church and the state. As a result, 'Autocracy' swallowed up 'Orthodoxy'.

Very significant is the collection of the leading Russian philosophers' articles on the Russian Revolution, published in 1918. It testifies that the intelligentsia's non-religiousness, utilitarianism and denial of absolute values were the cause of the Russian revolutions' tragic consequences [1, p. 151-173]. On the other hand, the Church was seriously to blame for the fact that the intelligentsia and the masses of the then Russia became irreligious and nihilistic. For many centuries, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) was under the autocracy supervision, being one of the state structures. This status gradually transformed into political service [1, p. 20-54]. At the same time, the political crisis of 1917 was also a crisis of the Church as a state institution. On the other hand, the autocracy crisis aroused hopes for a change in relations between Church and state and among the episcopate. Therefore, on February 26, 1917 the Synod members refused to appeal to the people to support the monarchy.

Moreover, on March 6 the Synod published a message in which it called on ‘the Orthodox Church faithful children’ to support the Provisional Government [4]. After the autocracy overthrow, the ROC received a fairly wide autonomy. This circumstance was preceded by the Provisional Government adoption of Decree No. 109 of July 14, 1917 ‘On freedom of conscience’, providing for freedom of religious self-determination upon reaching the age of 14. A dual power was established in the country with a gradual increase of chaos in all spheres of its life. It began to spread to the Church environment. As early as April 1917, the term ‘ecclesiastical Bolshevism’ or ‘ecclesiastical Leninism’ became widespread in the religious milieu [5]. During a year, this term was transformed: at first it meant disobedience to Church authorities, and later, after the Bolshevik coup, it meant real cooperation between the clergy and the new government, up to the implementation of an anti-Church policy. Part of the clergy tried to rely on secular authorities to settle accounts with their opponents, which sometimes led to the dismissal of high-ranking church officials or even their arrests. The ruling bishop was typically dismissed or arrested upon false witness of deacons and other lower-level persons in order to seize property or power [6].

There were prerequisites for the emergence of ‘Church Bolshevism’. These were both a general revolutionary mood in society and many years of powerful revolutionary propaganda in the Church environment, preceding the revolutionary events. Thus, historical facts testify that students of seminaries were often carried away by revolutionary ideas and participated in street riots [6].

In addition, starting from the 1900s many casual people with religious views began to penetrate into the Church clergy, perceiving the Church as an obsolete state structure and ready to use revolutionary methods within the Church. Sometimes the Church became a place where young people tried to hide from military service. Therefore, the anti-episcopal protest sounded most strongly among the lower clergy in provincial dioceses [5, p. 78-88]. In the Church life of those years, the schism was caused by economic difficulties inherent in the time of war and revolution. General secularisation, including the Church, low morals of some of the clergy, monastics and laity, and their loss of Church canonical sense of justice should be recognised as the main factors in the Church decline. This was accompanied by a significant decrease in Church authority, and the revolutionary events became a catalyst for the Church crisis [5, p. 78-88; 6].

The Bolsheviks, who came to power at the end of 1917, immediately took up a complete liquidation of the Church. Despite the tragic consequences for the Church of the Bolsheviks coming to power, on November 5 (17) 1917, a Patriarch was elected for the first time in more than 200 years of Russian history. However, already on January 20, 1918, the Pravda newspaper published two orders: the order of the People’s Commissariat for State Charity ‘On termination of funds issuance for maintenance of Churches, chapels, clergy and teachers and for performance of Church rites’ and the order of the People’s Commissariat for

Military Affairs of the RSFSR 'On dissolution of all spiritual department offices', which significantly worsened the situation of the Church.

3. Church life dynamics after the Church separation from the state to the present day

On February 5, 1918, the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR 'On the separation of the church from the state and school from the Church' was published, by which the Church was separated from the state and from the state school and deprived of legal entity rights and property. Religion has become an exclusively private matter of citizens. The Bolsheviks who took power in Russia openly proclaimed it their task to contribute to the "withering away of religious prejudices" [G. Kochetkov, *100 years ago, the Bolshevik campaign to open the relics began in Russia*, St. Philaret Institute, February 16, 2019, <https://sfi.ru/smi/100-let-nazad-v-rossii-nachalas-kampaniia-bolshevikov-po-vskrytiiu-moshchei.html>].

The tragic paradox of the Church existence in Russia was that the adoption initiator and one of the authors of this decree, whose most provisions clearly contradicted the Orthodox teaching, was the Orthodox priest M. Galkin (M. Gorev). The ROC position began to deteriorate rapidly. In many ways, this was facilitated by the atmosphere of betrayal within the Church itself. So, in January-February 1918, the same priest M. Galkin, who was working on the Decree 'On the separation of the Church from the state and school from the Church', continued to publish articles in the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn* (New Life). There he accused the Patriarch and his entourage of provoking a civil war in the country and proposed to consider the Moscow Patriarchate as the centre of attraction for all counter-revolutionary forces. In his articles, he argued that the Church is an enemy with whom one must not negotiate, but fight with all available means [7]. He admitted that the Church's anti-Soviet position was connected with the self-interest of the clergy [8]. Later, M. Galkin renounced his dignity, broke off relations with the Church, joined the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) and took the position of an expert and deputy head of the 8th Department for the implementation of the Decree on the separation of the Church from the state.

During the Civil War the conflict between the Church and the Soviets gained momentum, as Patriarch Tikhon first condemned the fratricidal civil war, and after 1919 sought to take a neutral position in the conflict of the parties. However, this position was unacceptable for the Bolsheviks. Several times the patriarch was placed under house arrest. The conflict between the authorities and the patriarch escalated in early 1922, when a campaign began to confiscate Church property in order to purchase food abroad. The reason for Patriarch Tikhon prosecution was his appeal of February 28, 1922 in connection with the seizure of Church valuables, which he directly called sacrilege.

Under the investigators' pressure, the patriarch wrote a statement of repentance for 'anti-Soviet actions' and the Supreme Court of the RSFSR stopped the investigation on March 21, 1924. However, despite the amnesty of the patriarch, the investigation into the 'Tikhon case' was continued and later the criminal prosecution was resumed [9]. The Soviet government tried to weaken the Church authority by stimulating contradiction and creating schismatic groups. The so-called Renovationism under the official name 'Orthodox Russian Church' received the state authorities' support in May 1922. At their council, held in April 1923, the Renovationists adopted a resolution in support of the Soviet socialist system, condemned the 'counter-revolutionary clergy' (the Patriarchal Church), and declared Patriarch Tikhon deposed. According to Patriarch Tikhon's testamentary order, after his death the Patriarchal Locum Tenens Metropolitan Peter Krutitsky (Polyansky) was the head of the Russian administration of the Patriarchal Church. From December 10, 1925, the actual head of the Church administration with the title of Deputy Patriarchal Locum Tenens was Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) of Nizhny Novgorod, who, like his predecessors, made attempts to normalise the Church and state relations.

On July 29, 1927, under the authorities' pressure, Metropolitan Sergius issued a message known as the 'Declaration', in which he testified to unconditional support for the Soviet government, asked for eliminating renovationist structures and electing a patriarch. The reaction to Metropolitan Sergius' statement in the Church circles was extremely contradictory and sometimes hostile. At the same time, the metropolitan and his supporters' hopes in relation to the Soviet authorities did not come true. The patriarch election was allowed only 16 years later, in 1943. The Synod, headed by Sergius, did not receive legal recognition and in May 1935 was forced to 'dissolve itself'.

After 1929, arrests of clerics and Church closures became more frequent, reaching a climax in 1937-1938. In 1937 alone, more than 8,000 Churches were closed, and 70 dioceses and vicariates were actually liquidated. Renovationists suffered no less from the repressions. So, at the beginning of 1938, renovationists had 49 ruling bishops and 11 who were retired. By the summer of 1941, there were only 2 renovationist ruling bishops, and the remaining survivors were at rest or in prison [V. Tsy-pin, *Russian Orthodox Church under the Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne, Metropolitan Sergius (1936-1943). History of the Russian Church 1917-1997*, https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Vladislav_Tsy-pin/istorija-russkoj-tserkvi-1917-1997, accessed on 03/10/2023; 10; 11]. In total, from 1931 to 1941, about 80-85% of the priests of both the Patriarchal and the Renovation Church were shot or imprisoned, that is, more than 45,000 people. And from 1918 to 1929, only 5,000-10,000 clergymen were repressed [11, p. 94]. At the same time, the Moscow Patriarchate rehabilitation commission testifies that a total of at least 140,000 clergy had been repressed by 1941. Most of them were shot [11, p. 100]. In fact, by 1939 the Church structure had been practically destroyed throughout the country. Dioceses as administrative units actually disappeared, most of the clergy were exterminated physically or were in camps. Nevertheless, by 1939 it was clear to the country's

leadership that attempts to solve the task of completely eradicating religion in the USSR were unsuccessful [11, p. 101-109]. Some researchers believe that the existence of the underground Church in the USSR was one of the important, if not the main reasons why the Patriarchal Locum Tenens managed to save several hundred parishes and a minimum of Church administrators by 1939 [11, p. 116]. The situation seriously changed after 1939, when, as a result of annexation to the USSR of the eastern territories of Poland, Western Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, the USSR received several million Orthodox believers organised in dioceses and parishes [11, p. 137]. Due to the need to integrate these lands into the USSR, anti-Church actions were temporarily curtailed. In this process, the government needed Moscow Patriarchate's help. For the first time since he headed the Church, Metropolitan Sergius found himself in such a position that he could demand compromise from the government. There are no exact and reliable statistics of Churches operating on the eve of the Great Patriotic War. According to some information, their number before the start of the war was 3,732. Those were Christian Churches of all denominations, including Renovatianist, Uniate and Catholic ones. Of these, about 3,350 were in the newly annexed western republics. The number of clergymen, according to TASS, was 5,665. Of these, about 90% belonged to Western Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the Baltic states [11, p. 116].

Further curtailment of the anti-Church policy occurred during the Great Patriotic War. This happened for several reasons. Firstly, despite the anti-Church propaganda, many Soviet citizens remained secret believers. So, Orthodoxy 'legalization' helped preserve the ideological unity of the warring nation, which was crucial to victory. Secondly, the repressions against the Church created a negative image of the USSR in the eyes of the allies (USA and Great Britain), who urged Stalin to stop the repressions. Thirdly, in 1943 the Red Army returned the Soviet lands previously occupied by the Germans. The occupiers, seeking to enlist public support, reopened Churches closed by the Bolsheviki. Another closure of Churches in the integrating lands would create significant tension in society [11, p. 183-195]. Thus, on September 4, 1943, at a meeting with Patriarchal Locum Tenens Sergius, Metropolitan Alexy of Leningrad and Metropolitan Nikolai of Kiev, Stalin stated "that the Church can count on the full support of the government in all matters related to its organisational strengthening and development within the USSR" [12]. Already on September 8, 1943, a Council of Bishops was held, which elected Sergius Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'. On the same day, the Holy Synod was formed under the patriarch, which became an organ of Church authority. And the Patriarchal Church was legalised and received the name of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). Renovatianist structures simultaneously began to be abolished. And the final ROC consolidation took place in the early 1950s [11, p. 183-195].

In 1945, a publishing department was opened at the Holy Synod, and religious educational institutions began to open. In 1946, religious organisations' employees (except for the clergy) were treated as ordinary workers and employees in matters of taxation. The clergy paid a high tax for worship (up to

65%). From teaching or other employment, priests paid taxes as Soviet workers and employees, and the patriarch was exempt from taxes [Presidium of the Superior Soviet of the USSR, Decree of April 30, 1943, *On the agricultural tax*, https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/Указ_Президиума_ВС_СССР_от_30.04.1943_о_подходном_налоге_с_населения]. There was an increase in the number of Orthodox parishes. So, if before the Great Patriotic War there were about 8,000 parishes in the country, by January 1, 1947 there already were 13,813 ones. Moreover, in just 3 years: from 1944 to 1946, 1,085 Churches were opened [13]. By January 1, 1948, 14,329 functioning Churches and prayer houses were registered in the USSR (11,897 Churches and 2,432 prayer houses, which was only 18.4% of the number of Churches, prayer houses and chapels compared to 1914, when there were 77,767 ones). Nevertheless, the ROC position, worsened again in 1948: arrests of the clergy resumed, from 1948 until Stalin's death not a single Church was opened, and their number began to decrease. From February 1949, consecrations ceased, with the exception of a small number for Ukraine and foreign dioceses. As of January 1, 1952, only 13,786 Churches remained in the USSR, of which 120 were not in operation. At the same time, only in 1951, out of 62 operating monasteries, 88 were closed [*History of the Russian Church*, in *Encyclopaedia Russia.ru*, <https://encyclopaedia-russia.ru/article/istoriya-russkoj-cerkvi>]. After Stalin's death, some of the clergy were returned from exile and camps. As of January 1, 1957, the number of registered Orthodox parishes was 13,477, which was slightly less than in 1952. For a short period of time, the situation of the Russian Orthodox Church employees was improved by the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR 'On the extension of labour legislation to persons working in religious organisations' adopted in 1956. In accordance with it, the Soviet workers' labour rights were extended to them with the obligatory joining a trade union and an employment contract conclusion [14].

In 1958 the ROC position significantly worsened again. Due to the anti-religious campaign started by Khrushchev, 30 monasteries were closed in 1959-1960 alone. At the same time, only 266 out of 1,013 monks were transferred to other monasteries, 26 were employed, 7 were sent to hospitals and nursing homes, while the rest were left to their own devices [11, p. 359-393]. In 1962, the struggle against Church employees was continued by the resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU 'On Limiting the Circle of Persons Working in Religious Organisations Covered by Labour Legislation'. In accordance with this, on August 21, 1962, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Trade Union of Workers of Local Industry and Public Utilities revised the category of persons working in religious organisations subject to professional service. A new procedure for membership in trade unions for religious organisations' employees was adopted. Now the labour legislation concerned only a small part of the low-paid Church workers: cleaners, watchmen, janitors and stokers. At the same time, the number of parishes continued to decline [15]. During the years of Khrushchev's persecution of the Church (1958-1964), the number of parishes decreased significantly. Five theological seminaries out of eight were closed,

and admission to the remaining ones was limited. The number of active monasteries decreased from 56 in 1958 to 16 in 1965 [14]. By 1965, the number of registered Orthodox societies had reduced to 7551, which was almost half the level of the late 40s, and again returned to the pre-war period [16]. Beginning from 1965, the ROC position began to gradually improve. There was a significant increase in receipts to the Church: from 85 million roubles in 1966 to 211.1 million roubles in 1985. The clergy continued to pay high taxes (from 20 to 85% of earnings), and rent and utilities were charged from them at four times the usual rate. However, in 1980 there was a reduction in tax, rent and utility payments for the clergy. Low-paid ROC workers, who were subject to labour legislation, began to receive pensions. Priests, members of executive bodies, parish choir singers, accountants and other employees were paid pensions on a general basis in accordance with p. 172 of the Pension Insurance Regulations [17].

The perestroika period was marked by the Church life flourishing. Since 1987, for the first time in many years, the number of operating Churches began to grow. This was due to the return to the Church of buildings and property that had been in Church jurisdiction before the withdrawal. In 1987, the obligatory presentation of parents' passports at the baptism of a child was abolished so that it could not be used against parents [18]. In 1988, the Vvedenskaya Church was consecrated in the village of Sukharevo, Belgorod Region, which became the first capital newly built Church in the history of Russia after 1917 [*Church of the Entry of the Blessed Virgin into the Temple in Sukharevo. Temples of Russia*, <http://temples.ru/card.php?ID=9485>]. Already in 1988, about 1,000 Orthodox Churches were opened [19]. In 1987, an amnesty was declared for convicted dissidents and priests arrested or exiled for their religious activities. In 1988, rehabilitation of illegally repressed clergymen began. On January 28, 1988, the Council for Religious Affairs abolished the normative acts that restricted Church parishes' activities [A. Minzhurenko, *Perestroika: a course towards restoration of the rights of the clergy*, RAPS.06/18/2019, https://rapsinews.ru/incident_publication/20190618/300617005.html].

The turning point in the Church and state relations was the celebration in 1988 of the 1000th anniversary of the baptism of Rus', in which more than 500 high-ranking guests from different countries took part, and which UNESCO recognised as an outstanding event in the world culture history. Starting with these events, the ban on television coverage of religious life in the USSR was lifted. For the first time in the Soviet Union's history people were able to watch divine services live broadcasts on TV. A confirmation of the fundamental change in the religious policy of the state under the conditions of perestroika was the election in 1989 of about 300 ministers of various religions, including 192 Orthodox ones, as people's deputies [https://rapsinews.ru/incident_publication/20190618/300617005.html]. In addition, on May 30, 1991, the ROC acquired the official status of a religious organisation and the rights of a legal entity [*Internal life and external activity of the Russian Orthodox Church from 2009 to 2019*, Official website of the Moscow Patriarchate, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5359105.html>].

In December 1990 the RSFSR Supreme Soviet resolution declared Christmas a non-working day. On December 31, 1991, the order of the President of Russia ‘On the return of buildings and religious literature to the Russian Orthodox Church’ was issued.

According to the results of a survey conducted in the RSFSR in 1991 on the basis of the VTsIOM information network, the share of Orthodox believers doubled over the past two years alone and amounted to 38%. During five years, from 1985 to 1990, 3,402 Orthodox parishes (a 49% increase) and 40 monasteries (their total number reached 57) were opened [19]. The anti-religious campaigns carried out in the USSR did not lead to a significant reduction in the believers number. So, the baptisms statistics show that in the mid-60s of the 20th century, about half of all children were baptised. The number of children baptised was associated with the social position of their parents. So, for example, in the families of collective farmers and workers, the number of baptised children exceeded 70%, whereas in the families of teachers, state employees, workers in the sphere of cultural promotion, medicine, engineering and technology it did not exceed 30-40%. And even in the absence of Churches, the baptisms rate remained unusually high, which is explained by home baptisms, which were often performed by outsourced priests [19]. In general, the official number of baptisms in the USSR was rather underestimated for political reasons, since according to the results of an all-Union poll conducted in 1990 as part of the research project ‘Soviet Man’, 66% of the country’s population were baptised [https://rapsinews.ru/incident_publication/20190618/300617005.html].

Thus, the need of Soviet residents of traditionally Orthodox regions for a symbolic introduction to Christianity was stable throughout the entire post-war period of the country’s history [20].

After the 1991 Soviet power fall and the desecularisation onset in modern Russia, the ROC experienced significant growth and is currently a very large organisation with developed structures. So, in 2019, there were 40,514 clerics in the Russian Orthodox Church. Of these, 35,677 were presbyters and 4,837 - deacons. The actual clear growth for the previous 10 years alone amounted to 9,844 people. In 2019, the Russian Orthodox Church owned 38,649 churches. In 2019, 474 monasteries and 498 convents were registered. Over the previous 10 years, the number of monasteries has grown by 79 and convents - by 89. As of 2019, 5,883 monks and 9,687 nuns (including rassophore ones) live in monasteries. From 2009 to 2019, a unified system of Orthodox general education was formed. At the beginning of 2009, the list of Orthodox educational institutions included 60 schools and gymnasiums. The number of churches in the previous 10 years reached 9,386. At present, after the confessional accreditation, the ROC register includes 113 Orthodox schools and gymnasiums. By 2019, the ROC had opened 6 theological academies and 55 theological seminaries (in 2009 there were 38). In addition, there are 6 Orthodox universities and 34 religious schools. From 2009 to 2018 over 15,000 people graduated from ROC religious educational institutions [<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5359105.html>]. In the 2021-2022 academic years 8,003 people

completed undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, preparatory undergraduate courses, as well as courses for icon painters and regents [M. Kozlov, *The results of the applicant campaign in theological educational institutions in 2021: the myth of a sharp drop in the number of applicants is not confirmed by real figures*, 10/26/2021, Pravoslavie.ru, <https://pravoslavie.ru/142571.html>] (Table 1).

Table 1. The main ROC statistical indicators in the history dynamics.

| Number | 1914 | 1940-1941 | 1964-1965 | 2019-2022 |
|-----------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Monasteries/ convents | 1025 | 64 | 16 | 972 |
| Monks | 29128 | 3000 | 1500 | 15570 |
| Churches | 54174 | 3722 | 7551 | 38649 |
| Priests | 51105 | 5665 | 6694 | 35677 |
| Deacons | 15035 | n.a. | 653 | 4837 |
| Theological academies | 4 | - | 2 | 6 |
| Theological seminaries | 57 | 8 | 3 | 55 |
| Theological schools | 184 | - | - | 34 |
| Theological universities | - | - | - | 6 |
| Students | 53163 | - | 745 | 8003 |

4. Conclusions

Any social revolutions, including the Russian revolution of 1917, which ended with the Bolsheviks coming to power, has always a religious basis. Without a religious aspect in the life of society, it is impossible to understand the meaning of the revolution. It grew out of the social injustice that prevailed in society, the hardships of the First World War and the poverty of the main part of the population. But nevertheless, the people who prepared the revolution were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of its ideals, which were certainly of a sacred or religious nature. They were atheistic, but under the cover of secularity there was an eschatological striving for the advent of the kingdom of justice, a classless society as the goal of history, i.e. a kind of surrogate for the Kingdom of God. The Bolsheviks' fanatical desire to build such a realm of equality and justice prevailed over the sacred union with the ever-existing God [21]. The communist ideology also contains elements of mysticism, which testifies to its religious nature. Thus, ancient pagan eschatologism with its idea of the world eternal and cyclic renewal through chaos was revived in Marxism. In accordance with this doctrine, it became possible to provide a moral explanation for violations of any ethical norms in order to achieve the ultimate goal. Thus, the communists were sure that good could eventually be created from evil. And the Bolsheviks' life principle was an opportunity to commit crimes and transgress

any commandments, if required by political expediency [22]. Socialism is characterised by the emergence of the secular-utopian idea of a ‘classless society’ as a historical goal and the expectation of a ‘new order of things’ that will come in the era of communism. This is quasi-religious in nature, since here God is replaced by the ideology, whose purpose is the unconditional submission of individuals to the collectivist system requirements. But despite its atheism, sometimes militant, socialism and the idea of communism are still rooted in the Abrahamic tradition, which is characterised by prophetism about the advent of the kingdom of goodness and justice. At the same time, any idea without love for a single person is spiritually fruitless. “...And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13.1). At the same time, everything that is built without connection with the creative foundation of being, which is God, is doomed to failure and destruction. The symbol of this destruction is the Tower of Babel, and its embodiment in modern history is the Soviet socialist system. The building of a post-Soviet society opened up prospects for strengthening the role of the ROC in the formation of religious self-consciousness, the realization of the need to realize common goals with the state in achieving and preserving traditional values and human life. At the same time, the emerging fundamental disagreements between the state and the Church can significantly complicate the life of the state and society.

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