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# **RELIGION, SCIENCE AND ‘RELIGIOUS EDUCATION’ IN RUSSIA**

## **THE PECULIARITIES OF DIFFERENTIATIONS**

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(Received 30 April 2018, revised 7 May 2018)

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### **Abstract**

Explicitly the term ‘religious education’ enters the Russian language only in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whereas implicitly such education, being understood as the transfer of knowledge and practical skills of the relationship with the ‘unknown’ from generation to generation, has existed throughout the history of mankind. There are three radically different typological forms of social reality that stand behind the term ‘religious education’ in its implicit meaning: the ancient Slavic ‘oral tradition’, ‘Greek law’ (‘the science of the fear of God’) and ‘the era of the USSR’ (‘religion is the enemy of science’). ‘Religious education’ in its explicit form begins in Russia as ‘Ushinsky project’, when Konstantin Dmitriyevich Ushinsky (1824-1871) published an article ‘On the means of spreading education through literacy’ (‘Son of the Fatherland’, St. Petersburg, 1858). Ushinsky separated the new project of ‘religious education’ for everyone, from the ‘science of religious law teaching’, which was taught in schools (‘The Law of God’) since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Since 1989, in Russia there have been three forms of understanding of ‘religious education’: ‘religious instructions’, ‘religious studies’ and ‘culture studies education’ that have their own peculiarities of relations with science.

*Keywords:* religion, faith, belief, Orthodoxy, religious education

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### **1. Introduction**

The modern Russian Federation is the country of 85 regions, where live about 146,000,000 people, relating themselves to more than 190 ethnic groups, more than 80% of them being Russians. In the state there are more than 70 confessions registered, uniting more than 30,000 registered religious organizations, more than 16,000 of which are under the Russian Orthodox Church. History shows that the perceptions about religious education varied

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significantly during different periods of the development of society. Explicitly the term 'religious education' enters into the Russian language only in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whereas implicitly such education, being understood as the transfer of knowledge and practical skills of the relationship with the 'unknown' ('Unknown', 'Sacred', 'Gods', 'God', etc.) from generation to generation, has existed throughout the history of mankind. The ancient 'oral tradition' of the Slavs was radically transformed by the introduction of the 'Greek Law' as a 'science of the fear of God' (the 10<sup>th</sup> century), which existed until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second radically new form was the 'era of the USSR,' when 'religious education' was banned as 'hostile to the science.' The third form, beginning from 1989, saw the development in modern Russia of a 'religious (confessional) instructions', 'religious studies' and 'culturological educations' that have their own peculiarities regarding relations with the sciences. This article addresses matters of the general history of the formation of 'religious education' in Russia.

## **2. Explicit history of the term 'religious education' in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

The term 'religious education' can be viewed in two points - explicit and implicit. The first one, as the philological resource 'The Russian National Corpus' ('National Corpus of the Russian language') shows (by 25.11.2017), enters the Russian language from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, remaining very rare - it appears only in 27 documents, since 1858, whereas, for example, the word 'religion' appears in 1508 documents (since 1733), the word 'science' in 5217 documents (since 1735), and the word 'education' in 5728 documents (since 1752) [<http://www.ruscorpora.ru/>].

In 1858, Konstantin Dmitrievich Ushinsky (1824-1871), who is recognized as one of the founders of Russian pedagogy, published an article 'On the means of extension of education through literacy', where he compared Russia and the USA [1]. This was the period of Russian history, when from the idea of the 'Holy Alliance' ('Heilige Allianz', 1815), called to unite the population of Russia, Austria and Prussia as 'members of the united Christian nation' (where Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Lutheranism were viewed as 'folk talks', just as national languages were perceived as 'idioms' of universal Latin language), the Russian elite goes on to develop a new 'national project' in which the 'triad' of S.S. Uvarov ('Orthodoxy-autocracy-nation', 1834) was the antithesis of the triad of the French revolution 'Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood' ('Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité', 1790) [A.I. Miller, *Trine of Count Uvarov*, <http://polit.ru/article/2007/04/11/uvarov/>]. This Russian 'triad' was called to introduce 'the sons of the homeland' to 'sciences', including the 'science of piety', in which 'the faith of throne' ('вѣра престола') united into one whole 'the faith of archbishops' ('вѣра архипастырей') and 'the folk faith' ('вѣра народа'). The term 'science' in Russian literature has been spreading since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, having entered into the name of the new imperial institution - the 'Academy of Sciences and Curious Arts' (Peter the Great, 1724) [2]. It was used

by scientists, theologians and writers, specifying not only 'physics' ('mathematics', 'geography', 'astronomy', etc. as 'natural sciences'), but 'poetic science' (Trediakovsky, 1755) and 'the science of piety' ('the science of salvation', 'the science of morals', 'the training of honesty', 'the science of virtue', Archbishop Platon, 1765, 1780), which, at the same time distance from 'astrology', which is described as "something so awkward and so disgusting for sound mind" (нѣчто столь нескладное и здравому разуму столь противное) [<http://www.ruscorpora.ru/>]. The 'Philosophy' has been referred to the most important fields of knowledge in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but, since 1850, it was prohibited to teach it at Russian universities, which was reasoned by the thesis that "the usefulness of philosophy is very doubtful, and the harm is obvious" [3].

Konstantin Ushinsky, in this political context believed that the society would not be saved by literacy itself from philosophical 'freethinking' and social upheavals, but the upbringing of the 'sons of the homeland' through 'religious education', which had to "fall from the early years in the soul of man, as a straight pledge that he will not get off the path, as a safe anchor of salvation in the days of storms and spiritual anxieties", separating by the one from 'secular education', which acted as "a mental education, the communicating a whole lot of information as the results of an educated life of the man in all countries, the gymnastics of the mind, the extension of the perspective of concepts" [1].

Konstantin Ushinsky, describing the United States, took the term 'religious education' in the collective value, because in this country it was a variety of forms of 'confessional education', i.e. the introducing to the 'faith' ('вѣре') of adherents of many self-determining 'congregation' and 'denomination', which were constitutionally separated from the state ['Bill of Rights', 1791]. In Russia of that time, the introducing to the 'faith' ('вѣре') as the only 'safe anchor of salvation' was perceived, first of all, as an introduction to the dominant confession of the emperors, which in that time was called "The Christian Orthodox faith of the Eastern confession" [4]. Ushinsky separated the new project of 'religious education' for everyone, from the 'science of religious law teaching' taught in schools (the 'Law of God'), which he considered 'scholastic', on the one hand, and, on the other hand, separated from the professional 'theological education' of Church ministers in the 'Theological Academies', established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century ('Regulations or Statutes of the Spiritual Board', 1721) [5]. Such a 'project of Ushinsky', which pursued to establish 'religious education' in Russia as a new civilian 'safe anchor of salvation', reflected three global trends of that historical era, which we will discuss in more details later.

### **3. The challenge of 'science' and 'heterodoxy'**

The first one, in the spirit of the first Russian pedagogical texts, 'The Youth's honourable mirror, or the Testimony to everyday treatment, collected from different authors' (1717), acted as the desire of the ruling elite to introduce the Russian population to the 'primary science', i.e. science 'of knowledge about

good and evil' ('religious law teaching') [V.N. Tatischev, *Conversation about the benefit of science and schools*, [http://kirsoft.com.ru/mir/KSNews\\_399.htm](http://kirsoft.com.ru/mir/KSNews_399.htm)].

Historical and etymological studies show that the word 'science' of the modern Russian language, has an ancient Slavic origin, originally specifying those 'skills', i.e. practical skills that were propagated from one generation to another throughout millennia [6]. The baptism of Rus leads to the genesis of a new 'science' – 'the science of the fear of God', based on the Bible ('Book of the Books') as the basis of the ducal 'morality' (1076), which introduces residents of the 'Russian land' ruled by the Rurik dynasty to the global community of 'Christian peoples' [7]. The next important change in the meaning of the word 'science' happens, due to the result of the 'Gutenberg Revolution' (1448-1455), and the beginning of mass printing of books, including 'heterodox' ones, which led to the beginning of a dispute with the 'Jesuitical science', in which "the truth is not to be found, but ... the truth is buried with verbiage" (1650) [7]. The history of the new science of the 'guardians of the faith' begins. They demanded the introduction of strict legal norms of the 'Cathedral Code' (1649) and '12 articles of czarevna Sophia' (1685) in the spirit of the ideals of 'Domostroy' (1547), where it was only admissible to be introduced to 'shining piety' of Moscow, which at that time was becoming the centre of the new patriarchy (1589). On this basis, a global project of a distinctive 'Greek-Russian Orthodoxy' (1721-1917) was formed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, confronting the teachings of 'Latins' and 'Protestants' at the level of 'catechisms' [M.A. Korzo, *On the Sources and Evolution of the Russian Catechetical Tradition late 17<sup>th</sup> - first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries: Simeon Polotsky and Theophanes Prokopovich*, <https://iphras.ru/page26754461.htm>].

At the same time, it is in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the word 'religion' and its derivatives enter into Russian language, reflecting the ideal of unity of constituted authorities ('Law, 'Faith'/'Закон', 'Вѣра') and personal reasons ('mind', 'heart', 'conscience') as moments of one dividing and exclusive whole – the exalted 'shining piety' ('faithfulness', 'orthodoxy') as part of the universal 'first science', i.e., 'teaching honesty', 'The Gospel science', acting "not with words but with deeds" [Archbishop Plato, *The Word about Education*, <http://old.stsl.ru/iv-deyatelnost>]. Archbishop Plato specifically notes that 'The Gospel science' as 'the wisdom of God secretly hidden', unlike 'the wisdom of this world and its princes', which disappearing with them and their death is a paradoxical 'quiescent science', which more important than any 'wordy' science of this century, by that only it is capable for 'inflaming hearts', acting as a 'science of piety' [<http://www.ruscorpora.ru/>]. In this century, in scientific and diplomatic literature, the term 'Orthodoxy' is first translated as 'Religion', i.e. identifying Russian 'faithfulness' with gentile 'confession' ('denomination', 'congregation', etc.), which was completely unthinkable earlier in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when they were all considered as 'heresies' [8]. The ruling elite of Russia, begins to define the country as an 'European Empire' (Catherine II, 'Nakaz', 1767). The 'original foundations of Christian law and morality' being introduced in 'people's schools', reflecting a new understanding of the universal

civil ideals of the global civilization of 'enlightened nations' [9]. At the same time, educational texts begin to distinguish 'Christian Law' and 'Orthodox Christian Law' [*Short Catechism for teaching youths to the Orthodox Christian Law, published at the constituting of national schools in the Russian Empire in the reign of the Most Pious Empress Catherine the Second, 1785*]. The values of 'Enlightenment' are being opposed by 'ignorance', 'superstition', 'discourtesy' and 'folly', which the imperial theatre begins to ridicule [O.L. Roganova, *The comedies of Catherine the Great 'The Cheater', 'Seduced', 'Siberian Shaman' in the context of history of the Russian Freemasonry of the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, [http://www.ekaterina2.com/konf/konf\\_058.php](http://www.ekaterina2.com/konf/konf_058.php)].

#### 4. The challenge of 'heterodoxies' and 'orthodoxy'

The second trend, which 'The Ushinsky Project' called to oppose, is connected with the fact that in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the 'heterodoxy' allowed in the Russian Empire begins to revive, for example, the "Muslim scholarship among Tatars" [*The history of the development of religious (Muslim) education in Tatarstan*, [http://magarifrt.ru/articles/articles\\_7.html](http://magarifrt.ru/articles/articles_7.html)]. The same centuries (17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> centuries) became the period, when Buddhism and Buddhist enlightenment from Mongolia, China and Tibet bordering with India, began to spread among the local population of Siberia and Zabaikalye, which became part of Russia (1580-1648), combining with traditional shamanism [Buryatia, <https://goo.gl/uGTrrc>].

Addressing to the 'Russian National Corpus' shows that the familiar terms for today, 'Islam' and 'Buddhism' will be distributed only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century [<http://www.ruscorpora.ru/>]. For example, for the first time Islam is implicitly referred to as 'faith' in the well-known topic of the 'choice of confession', when, according to legend, in 986 ambassadors from Volga Bulgaria, which accepted the 'Divine Revelation' of Prophet Muhammad in 922, came to Knyazh Vladimir [I.V. Nikolaeva, *Semantics of "ethnic" indications of the "Tales of Bygone Years": the image of "alien"*, <http://www.zpu-journal.ru/e-zpu/2010/9/Nikolaeva/>]. Later, following the Byzantine polemical literature, an assessment of Islam appears in the texts as a 'Hagarian heresy' and a 'false belief' [10]. So, for example, in the first Islamic monograph of Dimitrie Cantemir (1722), written on the personal instruction of Peter the Great, in the context of relations with the neighbouring Ottoman Empire, he called it 'wicked belief' and 'laws of infidels' [11]. Only Catherine the Great (1729-1796) introduces the new term 'citizens of the Mohammedan law', making equal these 'heterodoxies' with 'citizens of the Christian law' [*About the permission of the subjects of the muhammedan law to choose Ahuns by themselves*, The nominal decree, given to Lieutenant-General Kamensky, January 28 1783, <http://constitutions.ru/?p=2725>]. Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century they begin to write about the "Mohammedan confession of their religion" [I.R. Gabdullin, *From the serving Tatars to the noble Tatars*, <http://forum.vgd.ru/post/37/72470/p2062869.html>]. In the dictionary of Vladimir Dahl (1881) the word 'Islam' was explained precisely as a 'path to

salvation', which reflected the policy of the authorities to recognize it as one of the acknowledged religions in the country [12].

These processes coincided with the earlier pointed 'turn to the national' 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Romanov empire, when the 'Greek-Russian Church' (as the 'Church of Christ' how was called in many documents of the 18<sup>th</sup> century), begins to be called in the documents of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the 'Orthodox Russian Church', 'Russian Orthodox Church', 'Orthodox Greek-Russian Church', 'Russian Eastern-Orthodox Church', etc. [Archpriest Vladislav Tsy-pin, *Administration of the Orthodox Confession*, <http://www.pravenc.ru/text/150023.html>]. The term 'Orthodoxy', which spreads in the Russian language in the context of the Reformation era (1517-1648) and the life of Ivan the Terrible (1530-1584), is gradually becoming a 'marker' and a dividing 'denominationalism', defining not just a local understanding of the 'Church of Christ' and emphasizing on 'the proper praising of God', but the special standard 'radiant piety' that became the 'dominant confession' of the Russian Empire, the exclusive 'religion of Russians' [13].

## 5. The challenge of 'science' and 'academics'

The third trend was specified by M.V. Lomonosov (1711-1765), who wrote that the European 'Religion', which appeared as a result of the Reformation era as 'local' communities ('faiths'), united with 'assurances', radically different from the universal 'science', was resting on the evidential 'solid ground', the development of which was handled by the global 'republic of scientists' ('*Respublica literaria*') [14]. In this context, it is important to indicate that from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the word 'religion' in Russian language begins to have not only the dividing ('high') meaning of the 'safe anchor of salvation' and 'dominant confession', but acquires a collective meaning that includes 'folk' ('low') forms of 'pagan superstitions', Siberian 'shamanism', etc., acting as knowledge and practical skills of dealing with the 'unknown' ('mysterious', 'sacred', 'supernatural'), being studied by ethnography and the new 'science of religion', separating itself from Theology (1870, Friedrich Max Müller).

So, for example, in 1855, Metropolitan Filaret (V.M. Drozdov, 1783-1867) dismissed from the Moscow Theological Academy the emerging professor at the Department of 'Church Archaeology and the History of the Schism in Russia' N.P. Gilyarov-Platonov (1824-1887), because in his lectures on the course with the indicative for the 'spirit of the era' title 'The Science about Religions', he inadmissibly gave "justice to the Russian schismatics" [A. Pokrovsky and N.P. Gilyarov-Platonov, <http://www.runivers.ru/lib/authors/author64337/>]. These words of the Metropolitan were issued by N.P. Gilyarov-Platonov as an epigraph to the publication of the book 'Logics of the Schism' (1885), where the author, recognizing this folk phenomenon as the 'natural product of our history', called for a truly scientific comprehension of its 'essence' [15].

## **6. The challenge of 'writers'**

In the Russian Empire, 'Orthodoxy' neighbored not only with 'heterodox', 'adherents of different faith', 'old-believing', 'idolatrous', 'shaman', etc. traditions of the nations of the country, but also with 'freethinking' and 'mystical practices', including 'spiritualism', which spread among the 'educated community'. 'Mysticism' is gaining popularity in this 'educated community' through interest with literature inspired by the teachings of 'masons', 'illuminators', 'martinists', etc., popular from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially intensified in the period of the reign of Alexander the First (1777- 1825). Publicists and writers create characters of their contemporaries as 'cold-believing', 'superstitious', 'double religious', 'infidels', etc. fellow citizens in such literary writings as, for example, forgotten today the 'heroic comedy' of M.M. Kheraskov 'Godless man' ('Безбожник', 1761) or the world-famous novels of F.M. Dostoevsky 'Demons' ('Бесы', 1872) and 'The Brothers Karamazov' (1880), in the latter of which is given the character of Rakitin, a symptomatic 'the godless seminarian', ready to become a radical publicist [L. Saraskina, *Dostoevsky in Japan: Run on "Demons"*, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/57369.html>].

The first all-Russian census of population of 1895, however, reduced all this complicated variety in accordance with the scientific understanding of religiosity in that period, to their 'nature' (origin, family tradition), i.e. to the official 'dominant Faith' ('господствующей Вѣре') or other 15 statistically less representative 'headings' at that time [16].

## **7. The term 'religious education' in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by an affray with Leo Tolstoy and the infamous 'Determination with the message of Holy Synod No. 557 of February 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 1901', the exasperation of the confrontation of the 'dominant Faith' with 'false teachers', 'godless people', 'secessionists', 'atheists', 'sectarians', 'heretics', and the like. The decree of Nicholas II 'On strengthening of the beginnings of tolerance' (17.04.1905) is being published. However, as M.A. Reismer has noted, in Russia "still does not exist ... of the human person with its world of moral spiritual freedom", with sincere "spiritual enthusiasm" and with opportunity to choose a "religion for self-conscience", which being satisfied by "none of the existing faiths" [17]. Nevertheless, this decree, the fall of the empire and the transfer of power to the Bolsheviks in 1917, became a period of a brief 'golden age' for the Old Believers and other religious minorities who received the rights for 'the freedom of faith' and 'freedom of conscience', which created the legal opportunity to organize their own educational institutions.

A new situation already arises at the beginning of 1918, when "the school is being separated from the Church" and "the teaching of religious beliefs in all state and public, as well as private educational institutions, where general

education subjects are being taught, is not allowed”, although it is recognized that “citizens can teach and receive an education in religion privately” [Decree of the Council of People's Commissars, *About the separation of Church from the state and school from the Church*, <http://constitution.garant.ru/history/act1600-1918/5325/>]. The first Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR, 1922) recorded as specific elements of crime – “teaching to children and minors the religious doctrines in public or private educational organizations and schools is punishable by compulsory labour for the term of one year” (art.121) [*Criminal Code of the RSFSR 1922*, <http://constitutions.ru/?p=5341>]. In literature and journalism, powerful propaganda campaign against all kinds of ‘religious superstitions’ is being enhanced, a metaphor ‘opium for the people’ (the character Ostap Bender, ‘Twelve Chairs’, 1928) is being devised, a special ‘newspeak’ is designed, labelling citizens involved in this ‘opium’. Such an innovation was the ‘Resolution of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars on Religious Associations’ (from 08.04.1929), which states the concept of ‘religious association of believing citizens of all cults’, after which the word ‘believer’ becomes a collective normative definition of adherents of any religion as ‘cult’ (‘Orthodox’, ‘Jewish’, ‘sectarian’, ‘heretical’, ‘shamanistic’, ‘pagan’), but ‘teaching religious beliefs’ and ‘religious education’ they begin to be considered in the context of the above-mentioned Article 122 of the RSFSR Criminal Code (1922), as a criminal ‘introduction to opium’, figuratively depicted, for example, in ‘Antireligious Alphabet’ (Антирелигиозная азбука, 1933) [*Antireligious Alphabet*, <http://antidotte.com/viewtopic.php?t=3381>]. ‘Believer’ for Soviet ideology came out as an empirical incarnation of ‘religion’ (‘obscurantism’, ‘enemy of science’, etc.), i.e. obstacles on the path of the development of society to ‘communism’, which has a lot of obvious and hidden forms, that needed to be set in accordance with the new ‘soviet ideals’.

Thus, V.G. Furov, in terms of the ‘enemy encirclement theory’, noted that religious schooling and education is a system of “the training of ministers of religious cults, theological specialists, teachers of Theology in theological schools and religious education of the population”, which “is being used by Churches and missionaries to spread religion among unbelievers and gentiles, and for recruitment of proselytes” [18]. The ironic-caricature description of the fundamental indescribability of the dynamic and polymorphic ‘diversity of believers’, and the relevant forms of ‘teaching religious beliefs’ in the late USSR was presented by M.N. Epshtein in the well-known monograph ‘New sectarianism: the types of religious philosophical mind-set in Russia. 1970s-1980s’ [19]. The author showed that this kind of ‘commitment’ is being formed by ‘flashing up’ and ‘fading away’ almost daily, and, accordingly, it is impossible to trace, describe and ‘protocol’ in the archives of one or another ‘national security institutions’, though, however, it is possible to construct such kind of ‘phantoms’ artificially, receiving budget financing for the ones for decades.



A fundamentally new situation arises with the beginning of the celebration of 'The Millennium of the Baptism of Rus' (1988), in the USSR under the auspices of UNESCO, the liberal reforms of the 'Perestroika period' and the contradictory tendencies in the formation of post-Soviet Russia. The term 'religious education' was explicitly recorded in art. 6 of the Law 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations' (No. 1689-1, of 01.10.1990), passed by the Supreme Council of the USSR [<http://www.r-komitet.ru/vera/26.htm>]. This term, however, was not included in the RSFSR law 'On Freedom of Conscience' (25.12.90), which referred to 'teaching doctrines' and 'religious upbringing'.

## **8. Modern understanding of the term 'religious education' in Russia**

In modern Russia, the law of the Russian Federation 'On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations' (No.125, 26.09.1997) is adopted, where the term 'religious education' is delivered into the title of Article 5, stating that "everyone has the right to receive religious education of their choice individually or along with others" (section 5.1). Continuation of strengthening of this right became the Federal Law 'On Education in the Russian Federation' (2012, No.273-Ф3), which deals with this issue in Article 87 ('Peculiarities of studying the foundations of the spiritual-moral culture of the nations of the Russian Federation. Features of obtaining a theological and religious education'), where the term 'religious education (religious component)' is present. These laws created a legal framework for the implementation of the opportunity to study religion in state educational institutions, since polemics on these issues from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century acquired the nature of a dispute "about the new national idea and a new ideology of the state school" [20]. Three subcultures were distinguished in the mass media, where, according to the 'pro-Orthodox consensus' set by sociologists, it was considered necessary to forcefully involve the population into the 'saving faith', while others perceived it as a challenge to the secular nature of the state, and 'a crime against the foundations of the constitutional order', the third ones preferred a compromise synthesis, which was embodied in the standards of the new 'law No.273' [*Crimes against the foundations of the constitutional order and state security*, in *Criminal code of the Russian Federation*, Chapter 29, 06.06.1996, <http://base.garant.ru/58060470/30/>].

In general, as the 'The Russian National Corpus' shows, it is the literature of the last three decades that accounts for almost 80% of the cases of explicit use of the term 'religious education'. F.N. Kozyrev, following well-known authors from Great Britain (Michael Grimmitt and others), proposed to adopt a convenient classification from three forms that distant from each other [20, p. 52]. We will follow this approach, dividing the forms which are often mixed in our literature, where the term 'religious education' can cover as an 'umbrella':

- 1) 'learning religion', presented in the doctrinal-confessional training of adherents of a particular religion;

- 2) 'learning about religion', represented by religious, cultural, etc. 'confessionally neutral' concepts of various sciences;
- 3) 'learning from religion', which is an introduction to the 'spiritual-moral' content of religions as the traditions of the nations of Russia, and civil ethical ideals within the framework of the federal courses called 'Foundations of the spiritual-moral culture of the nations of Russia', 'Foundations of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics', etc.

These issues are addressed specifically in different regions of Russia, due to the historical and local features of their development in the leading urban centres of religious education, but, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Constitution (1993), according to which 'The Russian Federation is a secular state' (Art.14), such education should form the guidelines for sincerely tolerant, respectful and neighbourly relations between diverse spiritual traditions of the nations of the Russian Federation, preventing the 'plague of the 21<sup>st</sup> century' - extremism and terrorism, often seeking to justify themselves by the 'religious' grounds.

## Acknowledgement

This work has been supported by the grant of Russian Foundation for Basic Research & Deutsche Forschungs Gemeinschaft grant under the project 'Image of Religion in Russia: Educational Projects and the Construction of Religious Tolerance' (15-23-06002, 2015-2017).

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