

Natalia Sienko
Uniwersytet Wrocławski
natalia.sienko@uwr.edu.pl

The authority vs. the Orthodox Church – historical and contemporary role of the Russian Orthodox Church as an actor in the political system

Władza vs. Cerkiew – historyczna i współczesna rola Rosyjskiej Cerkwi Prawosławnej jako aktora systemu politycznego

Streszczenie:

Niniejszy artykuł jest analizą stosunków pomiędzy władzą a Cerkwią w Rosji w ujęciu historycznym. Autorka podjęła próbę wykazania wpływu doświadczeń historycznych i roli Rosyjskiego Kościoła Prawosławnego na współczesny model relacji pomiędzy władzą świecką a duchową w Federacji Rosyjskiej. Ważną część rozważań stanowi ocena szans i zagrożeń wynikających z podporządkowania Rosyjskiego Kościoła Prawosławnego obecnym elitom władzy.

Słowa kluczowe: Rosja, Kościół Prawosławny, religia, państwo świeckie

Summary:

In this article devoted to the relationship between the authority and the Russian Orthodox Church on the canvas of history. The author demonstrates the influence of historical experiences and the role of the Russian Orthodox Church on the current model of relations between secular and spiritual authority. An important part of the work is the assessment of the opportunities and threats stemming from the subordination of the Russian Orthodox Church to the current elites.

Keywords: Russia, Russian Orthodox Church, religion, secular state

1. Preliminary remarks

Since 988 when Prince Włodzimierz I Wielki was baptized the individual social strata inhabiting the Kievan Rus' at a faster pace than ever before began to accept the values and beliefs inscribed in the Orthodox (Byzantine) version of Christianity. When the Latin Church explained the adopted dogmas the Orthodox Christians celebrated the liturgies in the full of splendor and opulence of the Orthodox Churches. The Russian Orthodox Church, which rapidly developed its administrative structure began to penetrate all areas of the emerging Russian state. Therefore, it is no wonder that the rulers often used the Church as a political force ordering the community absolute obedience to a ruler. In addition, religion as a foundation of identity consolidated the state and passed on cultural patterns including the Slavic alphabet (Cyrillic alphabet) or influenced the development of education, literature, and art, so naturally, it became associated with Russianness in the same way¹.

However, nowadays, in spite of the constitutional principle of separation between the Church and politics, the active involvement of the Russian Orthodox Church in socio-political processes is more and more apparent. The church legitimizes the actions of the authorities, explains the causes of the economic crisis, and the state decision-makers offer financial support or urge society to spread and practice religion. Although their mutual relations often didn't resemble conflict-free coexistence over the years, today the ideological and political discrepancies have been reduced to a level of cooperation that brings tangible benefits.

The aim of this work is to assess the relations between the authorities and the Church on the basis of history and to demonstrate the influence of centuries-old experience on the role of the Church (Moscow Patriarchate) in today's state and society.

2. The denomination policy of the state versus the Russian Orthodox Church from the 9th to the 20th centuries

It would be a mistake to think that the history of Christianity in the Russian lands began in 988, if only because the Bible and the liturgy were translated into Old Church Slavonic much earlier. The prelude to events that took place almost 1030 years already in the 40s of the 9th century, when the centuries-old

¹ E. Acton, *Rosja. Dziedzictwo caratu i władzy radzieckiej*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 18–21.

process spreading Christian values among Eastern Slavs—the Christianization of Rus². From 988, the Orthodox Church became one of the metropolises subordinated to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and thus the Byzantine patriarch and the emperor, who supervised the Russian church organization and solved religious disputes³. Initially, secular power was so weak that it didn't realize its competence. It remained in favour of the Church offering its land, giving tithes of its income or transferring the right to function in political life, therefore the Orthodox Church was able to spread its influence not only in Kiev but also among other Slavic tribes. At the same time, it created a fertile ground for constructing the current order. The Metropolitan of Kiev, Mikhail, became the head of the Orthodox Church, while the next place in the hierarchy was occupied by bishops and priests from Constantinople and Korsuń⁴. The material support of the Church gave the princes permission to interfere in the inner affairs of the clergy. Often attempts were made to overthrow unfavorable hierarchs. Moreover, during the course of a series of fratricidal fights, political activities and religion were completely connected. The dukes demanded that the Church protect their interests, and the unwelcome bishops were brutally removed from positions⁵.

The period of the great splendor of the Russian Orthodox Church dates back to the time of the Golden Horde. In a country controlled by the Mongols, the Orthodox church was released from the obligation to pay tribute, and the church's wealth was not plundered, thanks to which as early as in the 14th century the church property included 1/3 of arable land in the north-eastern part of the country. The reason for providing the Church with a number of freedoms was to see an ideological power in it. The Khans believed that through the spiritual development of the Russian lands, they could easily subjugate the populations of ancient Rus⁶. The relatively high position of the Orthodox Church during the „Tatar slavery” caused, however, that the Orthodox Church played a significant role in the unification of the Russian principalities and the establishment of the Grand Duchy of Moscow, encouraging opposition to the Mongol–Tatar yoke and centralization of power⁷.

² А.В. Кореньский, *Христианизация Древней Руси*, <http://rostoveparhia.ru/stati/10564/>, [accessed: 7.08.2017].

³ В.И. Цыганов, Е.Е. Мезина, *Взаимоотношения государства и церкви: от симфонии властей к цезарепапизму*, 2012, no. 6, часть 1, p. 245.

⁴ П.В. Знаменский, *История Русской Церкви*, https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Petr_Znamenskij/istorija-russkoj-tserkvi-znamenskij/, [accessed: 7.08.2017].

⁵ А.В. Карташёв, *Очерки по истории Русской Церкви*, Париж 1959, t. 1, pp. 133–134.

⁶ J. Kazimierczyk, *Zrozumieć Rosję. Uniwersalizm w kulturze Rusi od IX do XVI wieku*, Kraków 2008, pp. 105–106.

⁷ В.И. Цыганов, Е.Е. Мезина, p. 246.

With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Russia, an independent Orthodox state, granted itself succession to the Byzantine heritage and experiences developed by the Empire, even the recognition that the Church and the state should be one („symphony”), based on mutual support and responsibility for society. However, the rules adopted in Russia departed from the Byzantine basis of the theocracy. In the 16th century, the mission of each successor from Ivan the Terrible⁸ became the spreading of Christianity. Jolanta Kazimierczyk describes the period of the Russian autocracy, meaning the creation of a totalitarian–repressive regime as „Tsaroslav” because Orthodoxy was strongly subordinated to the tsar as a representative of God on Earth, thus eliminating the sovereignty of the Church⁹. Significant reforms were introduced by Peter I, who in 1700 after the death of the last Patriarch Adrian handed over to the Metropolitan of Ryazan Stefan Jaworski the supremacy over the Church and established the Saint Ruling Synod as a collegial institution allowing the tsar to control the church administration. From then on, the clergy would be strictly obedient to the oberprocurator’s orders. In May 1722 Peter I announced an ukase in which he ordered the spiritual denunciation of confessors for failure to comply with the law in force, and in particular for opposing the ruler. Anyone who provided information (even falsified) offered significant benefits. For failing to comply with the adopted regulations, they were threatened with a secular court, and ultimately also with the death penalty. The synodal period lasted until 21st November 1917, when the patriarch’s office was again returned¹⁰.

During the spread of imperial ideology in Tsarist Russia, a kind of nationalistic missionism developed, that is faith in the doctrine of a Philothean monk who proclaimed that with the fall of ancient Rome and Byzantium, „Moscow as the Third Rome” will bring mankind closer to the Kingdom of God on Earth¹¹. Thus, it will be the last empire which, thanks to God’s Opportunity, can be treated as a „bastion of true faith”¹². In this sense, Moscow has become a symbol of power in the eyes of the Russians and Russia has transformed itself into a place where:

⁸ In 1547 Ivan IV Groźny declared himself the head of the Church. Т.Е. Воронина, Историческая роль Ивана Грозного в централизации русского государства (XVI в.) на основе парадигмы Православная, „Историческая и социально-образовательная мысль”, 2014, no. 3 (25), p. 78.

⁹ J. Kazimierczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–23. В.И. Цыганов, Е.Е. Мезина, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

¹⁰ И.К. Смолич, История Русской Церкви (1700–1917 г.), 1994, https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Igor_Smolich/istorija-russkoj-tserkvi-1700-1917/, [accessed: 10.08.2017]; К. Chojnicka, *Cerkiew prawosławna w reformach Piotra Wielkiego*, „Krakowskie Studia z Historii Państwa i Prawa”, 2010, no. 3, pp. 283–285.

¹¹ A. de Lazari (ed.), *Mentalność rosyjska. Słownik*, Katowice 1995, p. 54.

¹² В. Кантор, „Москва–третий Рим”: реалии и жизнь мифа, 2013, т. XXXVI, p. 146.

state power without shields strengthens its unique absolutism, making the Church an attribute of nationality and an obedient tool of earthly power, where this rejection of divine authority is not even (...) the freedom of the human spirit¹³.

At the same time, the idea of Holy Rus' was developing, that is the belief in entrusting a Christian spiritual mission, after which Russia would lead humanity to salvation. The cult of Russian holiness refers to the treatment of Ruthenia as a sacred land–„Promised Land” or „New Jerusalem”¹⁴. The reason for believing in the messianic vision of Rus', which was the bastion of Christianity, was liberation from the domination of paganism, independence from Constantinople in 1448, or the unity of the whole Orthodox world, which can occur after the fall of Byzantium only thanks to Russia¹⁵. Moreover, the popularity of such a belief was possible thanks to the idea of the antinomicity and at the same time the importance of the Russian space towards the Western world. The mystery and greatness of the Russian ruler cemented the transcendental role of the empire, and the used mythologization justified the need for strong rule of the tsar treated as viceroy of God¹⁶. Therefore, for the purposes of creating an imperial ideology, the visions of Holy Rus' and the Third Rome were interconnected. God has set a mission for Russia years ago, and Moscow as the Third Rome should bear the burden of this destiny. Undoubtedly authoritarian relations between authority and society were reflected in the brutal subordination the Orthodox Church to the authority, similarly in pre–Mongolian times or in the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and Piotr I, and also had a significant influence on the position of the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union, when the „emperor and patriarch's office” was one leader¹⁷. The greatest pressure was felt by the Orthodox Church after the Bolsheviks seized power, when thousands of Orthodox clerics and faithful were killed, and the Orthodox estate was devastated. At that time, Russian Orthodox Church in the USSR was divided into institutional–dependent on the state and constituting its ideological and independent basis, with which it was successfully fought¹⁸. Lenin was aware, however, that the cult

¹³ A. Ticholaz, *Platonizm w Rosji*, Kraków 2004, p. 155. Cit. for: В.С. Соловьев, *Русская идея*, [in:] *Сочинения в 2 томах*, В.С. Соловьев, Москва 1989, t. 1, p. 219.

¹⁴ S. Szostakiewicz, *Święta Ruś i Trzeci Rzym*, „Fronda” 1998, no. 11/12.

¹⁵ A.B. Карташев, *Судьбы „Святой Руси”*, «Православная мысль», 1928, no. 1, pp. 134–156.

¹⁶ A. Rażny (ed.), *Idee konserwatywne w Rosji*, Kraków 2010, pp. 14–15.

¹⁷ I.M. Пасепа, R.J. Rychlak, *Dezinformacja: były szef wywiadu ujawnia metody dławienia wolności, zwalczania religii i wspierania terroryzmu*, Gliwice 2015, p. 21.

¹⁸ S. Bielen, *Tożsamość międzynarodowa Federacji Rosyjskiej*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 146–147.

of the ruler was connected with religion in the eyes of society, so he proclaimed that „socialism is a religion”. Moreover, for the needs of Bolshevik ideology, the infallible Lenin and Stalin became further divine anointed and would remain „eternally alive” in the consciousness of the Soviet people:

the characteristic combination of the elements of the sacred and profane present in Tsarist Russia revealed itself in its new incarnation—initially a collegial and then a one-man party leadership, equipped with the attribute of infallibility¹⁹.

In the 1980s, there was a thaw in relations between the Church and the political elite in the USSR, which allowed the gradual revival of religious communities²⁰. An expression of this was the possibility of unequivocal condemnation of the Moscow coup in August 1991 by the Moscow Patriarch and all Russia—Alexius II, as well as his blessing of Boris Yeltsin on the day of taking over the presidency²¹. The improve of the relationship between the authorities and the Church also resulted in the adoption of article 14 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which recognizes Russia as a secular state. In 1997 the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations, which only partly reproduced the constitutional entry came to force. In 1997, the law on freedom of conscience and religious unions, which only partly reproduced the constitutional entry, came into force. In its introduction, the religions constituting the historical legacy were omitted—Old Believers or Catholics, who in the times of the reign of Catherine II began in Russia to build their own church—administrative system. However, it was found that:

(...) the Russian Federation is a secular state, recognizing a special role of the Orthodox Church in the history of Russia, the formation and development of its spirituality and culture, having respect for the Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other religions constituting an integral part of the historical heritage of the peoples of Russia (...)²².

When the constitutional provisions assume that the four religions remain equal to each other, the law adopted by Boris Yeltsin in 1997 recognizes the

¹⁹ M. Broda, „Zrozumieć Rosję” o rosyjskiej zagadce-tajemnicy, Łódź 2011, p. 184.

²⁰ J. Afanasjew, *Groźna Rosja*, Warszawa 2005, p. 52; S. Bielen, p. 148.

²¹ М.Я. Яхьяев, Е.Г. Камышова, *Власть и религия в современной России: метаморфозы взаимодействия*, Исламоведение. Серия «Политика и политические науки», 2013, no. 1, p. 8.

²² T.J. Szyszlak, *Ustawa federalna Federacji Rosyjskiej „O wolności sumienia i o zjednoczeniach religijnych” z 19 IX 1997 r. z późniejszymi zmianami*, „Wschodnioznawstwo”, 2007 no 1, p. 549; *Konstytucja Federacji Rosyjskiej przyjęta w dniu 12 grudnia 1993 roku*, <http://libr.sejm.gov.pl/tek01/txt/konst/rosja.html>, [accessed: 11.08.2017].

superiority of Orthodox Church over other denominations. Therefore, due to the historical heritage of the Orthodox Church, the centralizing state and subordinating authority, as well as supporting obedience among Russian society, the Russian Orthodox Church remains today the leading and strongest church in the Russian Federation²³.

Analyzing the position of the Russian Orthodox Church from the 10th century, it is worth paying attention to the existence of clear, often contradictory periods shaping the relations of the state–the Church. Experts in the field of theology distinguish, for example, the phase of separation of the state–the Church, „symphonies”, caesaropapism, „two swords”²⁴ or cooperation. Regardless of relations between these two entities, one should remember that presented models of mutual relations have one thing in common: namely, there was never a situation in which they would be completely isolated, which resulted from mutual benefits–secular authority subordinated to itself Orthodox church and vice versa, when in the in the 4th–12th centuries the church was dominated. In this connection, it is hardly surprising that contemporary relations correspond to historical experience, and both entities interact with each other in the area of common interests, thanks to which politics and religion permeate each other²⁵.

3. The authority vs. the Russian Orthodox Church – contemporary relations

Orthodox Christianity Russia is treated as a religion that played a special role of the state–building and made effective cultural, ethnic and linguistic identification. In addition, this denomination enjoys a social authority. It is not surprising, therefore, that public opinion polls indicate that the major proportion of Russians profess Orthodox Christianity.

²³ И. Осокина, *Взаимоотношения церкви и государства на современном этапе российской истории*, <http://www.historicus.ru/463/>, [accessed: 11.08.2017].

²⁴ The secular and spiritual sword is the property of the Church because it comes from God.

²⁵ В.И. Цыганов, Е.Е. Мезина, *op. cit.*, pp. 245–250. К.В. Ильич, *Взаимоотношения церкви и российского государства: статус-кво и перспективы*, „Теория и практика общественного развития”, 2013, no. 1, p. 278.

Tabela 3. Religions in Russia in 2013

%	1989	1991	1996	2002	2007	2011	2013
Orthodoxy	17	37	50	56	60	69	68
Islam	<1	<1	<1	4	4	5	7
Catholicism	<1	-	-	<1	<1	<1	1
Protestantism	-	-	<1	<1	1	<1	1
Judaism	-	1	4	<1	<1	<1	<1
Another	1	<1	1	1	1	1	<1
I don't consider myself a believer	75	53	37	32	29	22	19
I don't know	7	9	8	6	4	4	4

Źródło: Chawryło K., *Sojusz ołtarza z tronem. Rosyjski Kościół Prawosławny a władza w Rosji*, Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, Warszawa 2015, no. 54, p. 11 [in:] <http://www.levada.ru/2013/12/24/rossiyane-o-religii/>, [accessed: 11.08.2017].

According to data from the Levada Center, in 2013 68% of Russians professed Orthodox Christianity, however, as many as 35% of those declaring their faith never attended religious services, and a large percentage of declared Orthodox Christians didn't commune. At the same time, the number of Muslim followers rose, which in 2013 was 7%²⁶. To a large extent, Muslims living in Russia were drawn into it by incorporation of numerous areas²⁷. Large-scale conquests have made Russia a multi-religious state and multi-denominational at the meeting point of three cultures and civilizations: the East Roman Empire, the Christian and Islamic world²⁸. Islam is treated as a „traditional religion” and an integral part of Russian history, which ranks second in terms of the number of believers after Orthodoxy. Muslim nationalities in Russia include, for example Tatars, Bashkirs, Chechens, Inguses and other nations of Dagestan²⁹. On the one hand, the increasing number of Muslims in Russia is an undeniable challenge for the state, on the other hand, Islam isn't seen as a threat unless it is related to religious extremism and can be effectively con-

²⁶ On the basis of a rough calculation, it is estimated that the Muslim community in Russia can account for up to 20% of the population and continues to increase due to the inflow of economic migrants. Россияне считают себя верующими, но в церковь не ходят, <http://www.levada.ru/2013/12/24/rossiyane-schitayut-sebya-veruyushhimi-no-v-tserkov-ne-hodyat/>, [accessed: 12.08.2017].

²⁷ The origins of Islam in Russia date back to the time of Prophet Muhammad, when the descendants of Kazan Tatars, Bulgarians took over Islam. Ф.А. Хайдаров, *Ислам традиционный и вымышленный*, Москва 2013, p. 7, <http://nac.gov.ru/sites/default/files/islam.pdf>, [accessed: 12.08.2017].

²⁸ A. Kuczyńska, *Bezpieczeństwo kulturowe w Federacji Rosyjskiej*, [in:] *Federacja Rosyjska–Wspólnota Niepodległych Państw*, ed. T. Kapuśniak, Lublin–Warszawa 2011, t. 2, p. 134.

²⁹ Ф.А. Хайдаров, p. 7.

trolled. An attempt to support moderate Islam, which according to the ruling apparatus is to prevent radicalization, remains visible in terms of co-financing in the field of education and spiritual development, participation in the role of the state-observer in the Organization of Islamic Conference or the construction in 2007 of a hospital for Muslims³⁰. Therefore such actions cause opposition among Russian nationalists and are associated with dissatisfaction from the Orthodox Church, which is against the support of Muslims or the Catholic Church. Despite the significant increase in the number of Muslims in Russia, the Orthodox Church still occupies a privileged position. An expression of this is the declaration adopted on 1st November 2014 during the XVIII World Russian National Council, on the basis of which the features of the national identity of a real Russian were formulated:

The Russian is a man who considers themselves a Russian; not having other ethnic preferences; talking and thinking in the Russian language; recognizing Orthodox Christianity as the basis of national spiritual culture; feeling solidarity with the fate of the Russian nation³¹.

The current Russian political elite realizes that the Soviet ideology has gone to the past, so the image of the state can be built on Orthodoxy which is part of the identity of Russia and differentiates the state from the West. As a result, the Russian Orthodox Church is increasingly activating its own initiatives in the post-Soviet Russia. The lack of a demarcation line between the authorities and the Church proves that they have become partners that implement each other's political, economic or cultural goals³². Vladimir Putin willingly allows himself to be photographed during his participation in Orthodox services, participates in the celebration of religious ceremonies, without embarrassment meets with representatives of the Orthodox clergy, who rewards him with unanimity in decisions making by the political elite³³. In 2012 during the meeting commemorating the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus', the President admitted that the Russians and Ukrainians are heirs of the events of 988 which united them. The words spoken in 2012 refer to Putin's adopted geopolitical concept of

³⁰ A. Kuczyńska, p. 132; R.S. Czarnecki, *Islam w Rosji*, <http://www.racjonalista.pl/kk.php/s,7061/k,3>, [accessed: 12.08.2017].

³¹ K. Chawryło, *op. cit.*, p. 33; Декларация русской идентичности, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/508347.html>, [accessed: 13.08.2017].

³² М.Я. Яхьяев, Е.Г. Камышова, pp. 8–9.

³³ It is not known whether Maria Iwanowna–Putin's mother, a deeply Orthodox believer who secretly baptized son and raised him in accordance with the principles of the Christian faith, instilled in him a deep faith whether Vladimir Vladimirovich used Orthodoxy only for political purposes.

the „Russian World” (Ruskij Mir)–the conviction that all Orthodox are part of one „Orthodox nation”, and Russia as the heir of „Holy Rus” can unite the territories of present Ukraine or Belarus. However if Putin united Orthodoxy in the post–Soviet area, he would win a historic victory not only in the ideological, but also in the image issue. If Russia is pursuing business in the „near abroad” area, it uses a consolidation factor which could be a common religion³⁴.

In the elections to the State Duma and the President of the Russian Federation, in December 2011 and March 2012 religious hierarchs were officially involved in the electoral process. Vladimir Putin (like the future deputies) was presented as the right candidate to take the office of president not only by the Russian Orthodox Church, but also other leaders of religious communities. The support for his candidacy is thus demonstrated by the participation of religious organizations in the formation of a state apparatus, or rather a political activity focused on the benefits guaranteed by future decision–makers of legal and financial interests³⁵.

The statements of the head of the Russian Orthodox Church also bear witness to the mutual cooperation of the political elite and the Church. In March 2014 the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Kirill³⁶, spoke about the developments in Ukraine, claiming that the Orthodox faithful were in favor of two different sides, in which the Church would not be involved, but worries about those who were in danger³⁷. Therefore, Kirill didn’t condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. On the other hand, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, at a meeting in Geneva in 2015 uttered a firm wording that „Holy War” is going on in Ukraine:

³⁴ The concept of the „Russian World” is also promoted by Patriarch Kirill, who often stressed in his statements the need for unity of the Orthodox world. K. Jarzyńska, *Ukraińska gra patriarchy Cyryla*, „Komментарze OSW”, 2014, <http://inosmi.ru/russia/20120630/194330143.html>, [accessed: 13.08.2017].

³⁵ И.А. Крисанов, Теоретико–правовая коллизия участия религиозных организаций и их членов в избирательном процессе в современной России в условиях отделения государства от церкви, «На пути к гражданскому обществу», 2012, no. 3–4, pp. 30–31.

³⁶ Patriarch Kirill, like Vladimir Putin, has a „Soviet pedigree.” Together with the Metropolitan of Minsk, Filaret (pseudonym „Ostrowski”) and Metropolitan of Kaluga Kliment (pseudonym „Topaz”), he was treated as a tool of contemporary propaganda by cooperating with the KGB under the pseudonym „Michalkow”. Thanks to his contacts, Cyril became the representative of the World Council of Churches in 1971 and has been the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church since 2009. I.M. Пасепа, R.J. Rychlak, p. 273.

³⁷ In May 2017 in Russia prepared draft laws which give the right to the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the process of electing metropolitans and bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as authorize the change of jurisdiction of Ukrainian religious communities. Since 2014 40 temples have been taken over this way, but legalisation such solutions will lead to a significant deepening of the problem. Патриарх Кирилл сделал заявление по Украине, <http://www.vz.ru/news/2014/3/2/675113.html>; *Nowe ustawy kościelne na Ukrainie to próba przeformatowania świadomości obywateli*, https://pl.sputniknews.com/radio_w_polu_widzenia/201705225516010-sputnik-radio-ukraina-kosciol/, [accessed: 13.08.2017].

The Orthodox believers are persecuted not only in the Middle East. In Ukraine, where the fratricidal war was unleashed after the anti-constitutional coup, radical nationalists began to fight religious conflicts³⁸!

Statements of the political elite give testimony to the existence of a specific Russian decalogue. All military activity on the part of Russia is treated as counteracting social and religious injustice, threatening Russian security. The values of the political Orthodoxy in Cyril's mouth refer in the modern world to events in Georgia and Ukraine, Russian bombing in Syria, the embargo on food products or sanctions imposed on Russia³⁹. The Kremlin, „restoring” international justice and peace, communicates with the society through the Church, which authenticates to the actions of authority thanks to the „sacred” legitimacy stemming from Byzantium⁴⁰. In this connection, the contemporary sphere of cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate and the state corresponds to the model in which the Church obtained the status of a public-law corporation, and in exchange for certain prerogatives committed to fulfill the imposed burdens⁴¹.

4. Lack of autonomy of the Russian Orthodox Church—opportunities and threats

While analyzing the relations between the state and the Church one should pay attention to one important detail. Warming of relations between these two entities can be a series of opportunities as well as threats for both of them, but contemporary communication structure has to be described as a triad, bearing in mind another important element—society. According to results of the survey conducted by the Levada Center in 2016, 1/3 of Russians state that the authorities should take into account their religious beliefs when making decisions, and 24% recognize that the Church must have a real influence on the government's decision-making process. In addition, 21% of respondents are convinced of the need

³⁸ A similar rhetoric was used by the patriarch Cyril, who called the war in Syria the „Holy War”, thus appealing for the support of Russia's „peaceful” actions. Сергей Лавров: Христиане на Украине подвергаются гонениям со стороны национал-радикалов, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/77652.html>, [accessed: 13.08.2017].

³⁹ A. Melkow, *Cerkiew polityczną bronią Kremla*, <http://obserwatormiedzynarodowy.pl/2016/05/08/cerkiew-polityczna-bronia-kremla/>, [accessed: 13.08.2017].

⁴⁰ K. Chawryło, p. 28.

⁴¹ А.В. Исаев, *Роль и место Русской Православной Церкви в развитии государства: история и современность*, 2010, no. 1, p. 139.

to introduce legislative privileges for Orthodox Russians⁴². Nowadays, the Russian Orthodox Church seems to implement a policy corresponding to this part of society. Nevertheless, when the clergy integrate with the political elite, they should be aware that apart from material and ideological benefits supporting the promotion of their activities, they will bear a similar responsibility to the demographic and economic crisis. So the key question remains: does the relationship between the authority and the Church increase the number of the faithful? Or maybe the Orthodox Church would fail without cooperating with the elites?

In December 2013 the Act on the Foundations of Providing Social Services to Citizens in the Russian Federation was introduced, which granted the right to financial support from the state budget for projects, including those organized by the Church. In addition to the visible subsidies for religious activities, it also benefits from a number of other privileges. The Orthodox Church received permission to recognize each parish as a separate legal entity and religious non-governmental organization, and was exempt from paying taxes on the sale of religious literature, donations received, as well as income resulting from celebrated rituals. It isn't surprising that church material and spiritual property grows more and more from year to year, including cultural monuments, hotels, health centers, theological departments, TV channels, and even sea vessels used in impassable areas by access roads⁴³.

Therefore, it cannot be denied that without material support from the political elite, the Orthodox Church couldn't extend infrastructural and social influence to the present degree. Nowadays, „partner” relations seem to imply a number of benefits—they legitimize common activities, so they remain politically profitable and through the media publicity of church activities they activate believers. The problem in mutual relations between the two entities lies in the fact that Russian decision-makers, investing in this social force which constitutes the present Church expect in exchange a moral evaluation of their political decisions. The situation will change, however, when the government observes a lack of loyalty from the Russian Orthodox Church. Then all manifestations of political opposition will be automatically suppressed by a direct attack by means of legislative works on church privileges or church property. Undoubtedly, therefore, the characteristic features of these relations remain

⁴² Церковь и государство, <http://www.levada.ru/2016/02/19/tserkov-i-gosudarstvo-2/>, [accessed: 13.08.2017].

⁴³ The untaxed profit of the Orthodox Church in 2014 amounted to 5.6 billion rubles. РПЦ рассчитывает на финансовую поддержку своих социальных проектов со стороны государства, <http://tass.ru/obschestvo/2232226>; С. Рейтер, А. Напалкова, И. Голунов, Расследование РБК: на что живет церковь, <http://www.rbc.ru/investigation/society/24/02/2016/56c84fd49a7947ecbff1473d>, [accessed: 15.08.2017].

their movability or dialectic, which is also aware of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill I:

We always use freedom—as it was not in the history of the Russian Church. We determine ourselves what is needed by the Church and no one interferes in the decisions made by the synods, councils, and bishops. This freedom is given to us as a kind of relief—we must be prepared for everything that can change in the future⁴⁴.

In the case of a change in the current model of relations, the Church—the ruling elite state could separate society from the Church, stopping the religious activity of the Church. Another visible threat of mutual penetration of religion and politics is the already mentioned responsibility for the third force—society, which is the „subject” of actions of both entities due to undertaken manipulations of social consciousness and attempts to resolve any social and political conflicts⁴⁵. The faithful, dissatisfied with the current state of affairs, may blame the Church for economic or social problems, often resulting from the Church’s opposition to Christian values of political activity⁴⁶. One should pay attention to one regularity—the weak position of the ruling elites means, in this case, the depletion of the church’s influence.

5. Summary

Russian culture has undergone many transformations at every stage of development and is binary in nature at present. The nomadic and sedentary life, pagan and Christian worlds, spiritual and secular powers, collectivity and individuality are just a few antonyms that can describe Russian history. The antinomy of individual historical experiences proves that the national identity derives from different periods of history, often contradictory—Kievan Rus’, Mongol–Tatar Rus’, Moscow Principality, Petersburg–Imperial (post-race) Russia and Soviet Russia. All these cultural and historical periods directly influenced the forms of shaping the relations between the state and the Church, and the Russian Orthodox Church itself often contributed a great deal to the development of national identity, uniting society in the political, cultural or educational

⁴⁴ К.В. Ильич, р. 277.

⁴⁵ It is unlikely that a similar scenario would be implemented in Russia, because „hard” governments were inscribed in the historical and cultural conditions of the Russian Federation. Society, therefore, surrenders to the authoritarian system.

⁴⁶ К.В. Ильич, pp. 277–281.

sphere⁴⁷. However, a special stage in which different models of mutual relations have evolved is medieval Europe. When the Western part of the continent struggled with the conflicts between secular authority and church hierarchy, the model of „symphony” was practiced in the East. A separate approach to the issue of the clergy in Russia has created fertile ground for this territory to consolidate the functions of the Church and politics, often for Western public opinion violating the principle of secularism of the state⁴⁸. Although Kirill admits that the Church cannot be „drawn into political struggles”, it wouldn’t be a mistake to say that mutual support makes the spiritual power more a subordinate party. Therefore, today the demarcation line mentioned by Kirill is becoming more and more unclear despite the constitutional principle of the separation of the Church and the policy, if only thanks to the participation of the Church in socio-political processes.

The reason why the relationships discussed in this work have adopted the current model of relations is the fact that along with the „religious renaissance” that took place in the 1990s, no legislative work was carried out to help to determine the interaction between the authorities and the Church, which nowadays leaves a wide field for mutual cooperation. It seems that in this matter the Russian Federation has not developed a new consciousness yet, and as a mental heir of previous epochs, it used historical experience. As a result the position of the Russian Orthodox Church continues to weaken, which results not so much from controlled material assets as from the limited ability to properly shape the Russian society. The mere fact of avoiding spiritual deliberation on topics related to Stalinist crimes, consent to Putin’s implementation of the concept of spiritual and moral education, and lack of commitment to the democratic ideas of the opposition makes that the contemporary Orthodox Church balance between what is moral and what is necessary from the point of view of present ideological and economic benefits.

⁴⁷ Ментальность русской культуры, <http://www.countries.ru/library/countries/russia/rusment.htm>, [accessed: 16.08.2017].

⁴⁸ М. И. Шишова, Проблема государства и церкви в религиозно-философской концепции метафизики культуры, 2014, Том 15, Выпуск 4, p. 260.

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