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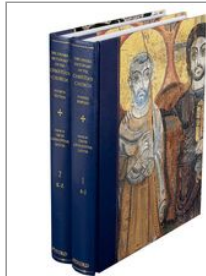
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Russia, Orthodox Church in

The history of the Orthodox Church in Russia is exceptionally complex. Despite lack of consensus regarding its periodization, there is broad agreement regarding several turning points in this history.

1. the grand prince of kyiv volodymyr's adoption of christianity in 988.

Despite the fact that elites among the Rus', including Vladimir's grandmother, Olga, had already embraced Christianity, the baptism of the Grand Prince Volodymyr in 988 marks the symbolic beginning of Christianity in Russia: the conversion of the multi-ethnic peoples, consisting mostly of Eastern Slavs, whom the Byzantines referred to collectively as the *Ros* (οἱ Ρῶς), who occupied the vast region the Byzantines termed *Rosia* (Ρωσία). Volodymyr's decision to embrace the Byzantine form of Christianity marked a 'revolution from above' (Evtuhov et al.), eliciting resistance and uprisings. Adopting the Eastern Roman (Byzantine)—the 'Orthodox'—form of Christianity, Volodymyr placed Rus' under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople. From 988 until the decline of Kyiv as the ecclesiastical centre of Rus' in 1240/2, only two of its 23 Byzantine-appointed metropolitans were native to Rus'; the rest were mostly Greeks.

Despite the formative role of Byzantine-Greek influence in the establishment of the Orthodox Church in Rus', as Rus' lay beyond the world of the Roman empire, its rulers' cultural and legal sensibilities corresponded little with those of their Byzantine counterparts. How or when the patriarchate of Constantinople established Kyiv as a metropolitanate is unclear; the Byzantine notion of *symphonia* is difficult to apply.

Christianization in Rus' involved a broad range of cultural influences, manifest in the earliest menologies, which reflect the religious life of Constantinople, Palestine, the Latin W., Bulgaria, and Serbia. Only in the late 12th cent. do local saints—such as the 'passion-bearers', Princes Boris and Gleb—and events from the principalities of Rus' begin to feature.

Essential Christian texts came largely via Bulgarian translations of Gk texts into Old Church Slavic, the language the Rus' adopted. These texts mostly belonged to liturgical culture. The Bible in the form of a single book was unknown. As the conversion of Rus' took place in the midst of ecclesiastical tensions between W. and E., and given that many of the earliest treatises produced in Rus' were penned by Greek churchmen, there was an anti-Western flavour to the Bulgaro-Byzantine inheritance of Rus'.

Icons were also an important conduit of Orthodoxy's influence in Rus'. The earliest iconographers were also primarily Greeks whose iconographic style filled Rus's earliest churches. The culture of icon veneration that developed in Rus' embraced a vibrant narrative culture, which by the 12th cent. took the form of tales (*skazaniia*) that recounted the place of icons in people's lives—from the personal to the national. The stories connected with some of Russia's most revered icons of Mary, the Mother of God—the Vladimir icon, the Smolensk-Hodigitria, and the icon 'of the Sign' in Novgorod—can be traced to this early period. Mediating Mary's intercessory powers, these icons became integral to Russia's Orthodox sense of the past, and the present.

Monasticism—for both men and women—appeared early in Rus'. Most monasteries were initially urban and founded mostly by members of princely families. In this respect, Kyiv's Monastery of the Caves, founded in the 11th cent., was unique. Little is known about local church life in this period. The first churches were also in cities like Kyiv and Novgorod. Rural churches began to appear in the 12th and 13th cents at the initiative of local residents, often led by ordained confessors and spiritual guides (both monastic and married priests), who served several communities.

Thus, although outliers of the Graeco-Roman empire, like their W. Christian counterparts, Kyiv and its northern counterpart Novgorod established their own 'micro-Christendoms'. In imitation of Constantinople, both cities constructed cathedrals in honour of Hagia Sophia and traced their apostolic roots to the apostle Andrew.

2. the mongol conquest and the fall of kyiv, 1237–40.

The Mongol invasions of Rus' began in 1237 in the NE principalities. In 1240, Batu Khan ravaged Kyiv, leading to its abandonment as the ecclesiastical centre of Rus'. Kyiv's metropolitan see embarked on a convoluted odyssey with two destinations: one in the NE around Vladimir and Suzdal (eventually merging into the grand principality of Muscovy), the other in the SW around Galicia (Halych) and Volhynia (eventually conquered by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania).

During the Mongol period (early 13th to mid-15th cents), the patriarchate of Constantinople continued to appoint the metropolitans of Rus'. New political realities made it more difficult for those in Constantinople to understand the intricate relationships that both bonded and divided Rus' principalities and the logic of its internal system of political succession and governance. According to the Rus' chronicles, Kyiv ceased being a working ecclesiastical centre in 1299. Yet its decline can be traced earlier, to the Byzantine-appointed Galician monk from SW Rus', Kirill II (1242/7). For practical reasons, he in office mostly resided mostly in Vladimir. Likewise, his successor, the Byzantine-Greek Metrop. Maximus (1283–1305), moved permanently to Vladimir. In order to preserve its centralized oversight of Rus', the patriarchate of Constantinople appointed the next metrop. of Kyiv and Rus', Peter (1308–26), to reside in Vladimir; Peter, however, moved to Moscow, which was rapidly emerging as a strong principality. Concurrently, Constantinople also negotiated with the rulers of SW Rus', who, effectively deprived of any metropolitan guidance, attempted to persuade the patriarchate to grant them a metropolitanate of their own. The patriarchate's efforts to keep track of the ecclesiastical situation in Rus' straight are evident in its eventual list of Rus' dioceses, divided into two: 'Great Rus'' (the NE dioceses), and 'Little Rus'' (the SW dioceses)—terms that stuck though their meaning changed.

Until the mid-14th cent., Mongol khans were generally religiously tolerant, exempting church leaders from taxes and not intervening in internal church affairs. With the end of the Byzantine–Mongol alliance in 1341, the Mongol relationship with Rus' church leaders deteriorated. At the same time, the Mongols' intervention in power struggles among Rus' local

prince-rulers affected the Church; its bps began to be involved directly in state affairs, changing dynastic succession from the traditional lateral system to a more vertical system to limit internecine strife. They also mediated among the princes and between them and the Mongol khanate, and often backed princes' campaigns against Mongol rule.

In the SW, in 1386 the marriage of Lithuania's Grand Duke Jogaila (1377–1434) and Queen Jadwiga of Poland (1373/4–99) created a political union between Poland and Lithuania. The union, entailing Jogaila's conversion to Catholicism, resulted in a large, powerful state with strong Catholic bonds, incorporating much of the S. and W. regions of Rus'. Orthodox Christians, then a majority in Lithuania, found themselves in a very different situation from their counterparts to the E., making more urgent their need for a separate metropolitanate. Facing political extinction, the patriarch of Constantinople resisted, and seeking further to strengthen the NE regions—by recognizing the metropolitan of (now) Moscow as of 'Kiev (Kyiv) and All Rus''—contributed to the rise of Moscow.

Some 200 years of Mongol rule (1237–1448) and internecine warfare caused widespread destruction of Russia's Orthodox churches and material culture. Nevertheless, monastic initiatives spanning the mid-14th–early 15th cent. produced at least 150 new communities in Russia's northern regions, many linked to the name of Sergii of Radonezh, notably the famous Trinity monastery close to Moscow. Sergii enjoyed close ties with Moscow's ruling elite: with the metrop. of Moscow, Alexei (1354–78), as well as with Dmitrii Donskoi (1350–89), the eventual grand prince of Vladimir. Sergii's monastic spirituality was inspired by the contemporary hesychast movement. Originating on Mt Athos, the movement flourished in south Slavic monasteries that had close ties to Athos. Sergii's decision to adopt a coenobitic form of monastic life has also been traced to Byzantine influence.

Russia's golden age of iconography in the late 14th and early 15th cents also evolved under hesychast influence. Byzantine-born iconographers, e.g. Theophanes the Greek (1340–1410), at this time gave way to indigenous Rus' iconographers, among whom the most renowned was Rublev.

In contrast to medieval Europe, where numerous sources testify to female mystics, monastics, even theologians in their own right, far fewer such sources exist for Rus'; such neglect of women is characteristic of the Byzantine tradition in general.

3. THE COUNCIL OF FERRARA-FLORENCE (1438–9) AND THE AUTOCEPHALY OF RUSSIA'S ORTHODOX CHURCH (1589).

The Council of Ferrara-Florence further exacerbated the increasingly complex relationship between the patriarchate of Constantinople and its metropolitanate of Rus'. In 1431, following the death of the Gk metrop. of Rus', Photius (1408–31), the patriarch of Constantinople appointed another Greek, Isidor (1380–1463), metrop. of Kiev and All Rus', passing over the Grand Prince Vasili II's nominee, Jonah. Vasili II met with Isidor (who spoke Russian), and supported Isidor's journey to the council.

The council's decisions reverberated across the Orthodox Christian world in various ways. Orthodox Rus' hierarchs in Poland–Lithuania generally embraced the union as it gave them equality with their Catholic counterparts. The principality of Moscow, on the other hand, was firmly opposed to the conciliar decisions, joining numerous other Orthodox critics of the council's decisions, such as the metrop. of Ephesus, Mark Eugenikos. Isidor's official reading of the council's decree in Moscow's Dormition Cathedral led to imprisonment by the grand prince in the Chudov monastery, from where Isidor—reportedly with the grand prince's knowledge—subsequently escaped.

The incident had lasting repercussions for the Orthodox Church in Russia both domestically and internationally. It compelled state and church officials in Rus' to take unilateral action. At an episcopal council in Dec. 1447, Rus' bps objected to Isidor's actions and appealed for the right to choose their own metropolitans. Meanwhile the metropolitan see

in Moscow remained unoccupied as princely internecine warfare once again erupted. In 1448, another episcopal council—though internally divided on the issue—convinced the grand prince of Moscow to allow the unilateral consecration of the bp of Riazan, Jonah, as metrop., based on assurances to Jonah in 1436 that he would be next in line, should anything happen to Isidor.

Five years later, in 1453, the fall of Constantinople ushered in the *Tourkokratia*: subjection of the Church to the Ottoman sultan. Regular communication with the Rus' practically ceased, though it is unclear that this testified to a rift in relations. Between 1448 and 1589 Orthodox bps in Rus' consecrated their own metropolitans while still technically subject to the jurisdiction of Constantinople. In addition, in 1472 the grand prince of Moscow, Ivan III, married Sophia Palaiologina, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, raised in Rome under the eye of the pro-Union, Greek-born Catholic cardinal bishop Bessarion. Had Constantinople imposed any sanctions on the principality of Moscow, they were forgotten once E. patriarchates began to send delegations to Moscow requesting financial support.

In 1588, during a visit to Moscow, the patr. of Constantinople, Jeremias II, acquiesced to pressure for a self-governing, autocephalous Church in Russia and consecrated Job as patr. of Moscow and All Rus'. A council in Constantinople in 1589 subsequently ratified the decision, and reconfirmed it in 1593. Thus the Orthodox Church in Russia was recognized as an autocephalous Church, ranking fifth among the existing Orthodox patriarchates.

Nevertheless, the incident with Isidor over Ferrara-Florence led to a lasting division of a single metropolitanate of Kyiv and All Rus': one centred in Moscow, the other, which retained Kiev (Kyiv) in its title, in the city of Navahrudak (Novogrudok) near the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius.

Finally, the 140 years between Moscow's refusal to accept Metrop. and Card. Isidor's missive from Ferrara-Florence and the establishment of a patriarchate in Moscow saw real consolidation of the Orthodox Church in Rus'. At least 46 significant episcopal councils or synods met, the most important the so-called 'Stoglav' or the 'One Hundred Chapters Council' (1551). The council's proceedings covered a broad range of topics—from parish life and lay devotional customs to the parish's role in the ordination and support of their parish priests; from monastic life to diocesan administration; from liturgical practices, the continued correction and standardization of liturgical texts to bell-ringing, church chanting, and the regulations governing iconography. It was also the first church council to raise the issue of education of the clergy, not least rural clergy, who served the majority of the population.

Many disputes discussed at councils could be traced to variations in textual translations. The compilation of the first Church-Slavonic Bible—the so-called Gennadius Bible, named after the abp of Novgorod (Gennadii [Gonzov], 1410–1505)—dates to this period. His project reflected the paradoxes typifying the history of Orthodoxy in Russia. Though under Constantinopolitan jurisdiction, Rus' churchmen generally had little knowledge of Greek (let alone Hebrew). Yet despite Rus's Byzantine inheritance of 'anti-Latin sensibilities', Gennadii gathered a group of translators among whom were 'Latins' whose translation work was based on the Vulgate. Consequently, the Gennadius Bible was a compilation of Slavonic texts that contained not only translations of many biblical texts from the LXX, dating from the 9th to the 12th cents, but also 15th-cent. translations of remaining texts from the Vulgate along with a portion of Esther from the Masoretic Text. This Bible was the basis for the first printed Old Church Slavonic Bible (the Ostrog Bible), issued in 1581 in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. An even more ambitious project involved the compilation of extra-biblical and extra-liturgical 'sacred texts', collected from across Rus' principalities. Its architect, the metrop. of Moscow Makary (1482–1563), oversaw the production of a vast menologion in twelve volumes, which condensed the hitherto disparate local cults of saints and icons into a unified liturgical calendar for all of Rus'. This nurtured the further development of sacred arts, including liturgical compositions, church construction, and iconography, in Rus'.

Rus' had also inherited Byzantine collections of church law through Slavonic translations of the Nomocanons (*Kormchaia kniga*, 'pilot's book' or 'Rudder') from as early as the 11th–12th cent. The Gk term *symphonia* was conveyed through the Slavonic *soveshchanie*, which carries a conciliar connotation (Sinitsyna 1998). In the 16th cent., *symphonia* was also

rendered with the term *soglasie*, implying a dialogic engagement by which harmony is reached. This principle remained an ideal, as in Byzantium, for much depended on political circumstances, the personalities of tsars and patriarchs, and their understandings of ‘harmony’. The notion of *symphonia/soveshchanie* entails the freedom of both prince and hierarch; there were hierarchs who defied (and even publicly castigated) state leaders, often at the cost of their own lives. Even the monastic leader Joseph of Volokolamsk maintained that state rulers who do not follow the teachings of Christ should be seen as ‘antichrist’. Finally, the Council of Ferrara-Florence ushers in the period that saw the production of texts which centuries later were cited as proof-texts for the idea of ‘Moscow—the Third Rome’, often assumed to reflect a state-formulated ideology embodying messianic and imperialist ambitions. Not only did these so-called ‘proof-texts’ emerge in church, as opposed to state, circles, none of them carried expansionist or imperialist overtones. Indeed, scholars have repeatedly argued that the very formulation ‘Moscow-the Third Rome’ was inconsequential at this time. Much more prevalent was a biblically informed view of historical events formed, as with Christians elsewhere, through the lens of biblical notions of ‘Israel’ and ‘Jerusalem’.

4. PATRIARCH NIKON AND CHURCH SCHISM.

Between the years 1589 and 1700, eleven patriarchs oversaw the Orthodox Church in Russia. Of these, Patr. Nikon was not only the most influential, but also the most controversial, leaving his mark in three broad realms of Orthodox Church life.

First, Nikon’s term as patriarch proved pivotal in the history of Church–state relations, now largely determined by the personal relationship between the grand prince/tsar and metropolitan/patriarch. Nikon only accepted nomination as patriarch after extracting a public vow from the Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich (1629–76) to follow the gospel precepts and the ‘rules of the holy fathers’, and to adhere to Nikon’s counsel as a pastor in sacred matters. No consensus exists as to the sources for Nikon’s views on the ideal relations between patriarch and tsar. In any case, for the six years of Nikon’s tenure as active patriarch (1652–8), the tsar abstained from unilateral interference in church affairs, and also consulted Nikon on many state-related matters. By 1658, personal relations between tsar and patriarch had deteriorated, and Nikon defiantly abandoned the patriarchal see to live in a monastery, only subsequently to face a staged trial that Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich orchestrated.

Secondly, Patr. Nikon’s name is indelibly linked with a major schism in the Orthodox Church in Russia: the Old Believers’ schism. Upon his arrival in Moscow as a young hegumen, Nikon joined a church reform movement—‘zealots of piety’—led by the protopresbyter Stefan Vonifat’ev—the tsar’s confessor—to reinvigorate church life in accordance with the Hundred Chapters Council, which gained Tsar Alexei’s support. Soon, however, the tsar’s support took on an added imperial, political dimension. A Graecophile from youth, Alexei Mikhailovich’s self-perceived role as guardian of Orthodoxy was at this time largely cultivated by the rhetoric of visiting E. delegations. In this role, Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich sought to coordinate Russia’s Orthodox liturgical practices and texts with those in other Orthodox lands, since for him unity meant uniformity. Consequently, well before Nikon was consecrated as patriarch, Tsar Alexei was already inviting educated Ruthenian monks to Moscow to ‘correct’ Russia’s liturgical texts using current Gk texts, printed in Venice, assumed to be the most ‘authentically’ Orthodox. Hoping for enlightenment from the Greeks, instead Alexei Mikhailovich ‘got the beginning of the Ruthenianization of Muscovite Orthodoxy’ (Plokhly 2001: 245).

Whatever Nikon thought about ‘the Greeks’ and church reform before arriving in Moscow, as patriarch, his interests aligned with those of the tsar. In 1653, on the eve of Lent, he issued a unilateral directive regarding changes in long-standing ‘traditional’ Lenten ritual practices. Nikon’s changes—also based on contemporary Gk practices—were widely resisted, even among the reforming ‘zealots of piety’ and members of the educated elite. Perhaps the best-known figure within Moscow’s upper circles who rejected Nikon’s reforms was Feodosiia Morozova (1632–75), who was eventually martyred for her beliefs.

Those who resisted became known as Old Believers or Old Ritualists, categorized by the state as ‘schismatics’ (*raskolniki*). This broader, ill-defined group also included those who rejected the official Orthodox Church for other reasons. Considered seditious by the state, they were initially subject to harsh persecution. Old Believers, who subsequently splintered into various groups, continued to face state discrimination, if not oppression until 1905. Among the population at large, especially in rural areas, Old Believers often commanded respect; even in the late 19th and early 20th cents many rural believers saw in the rigours of Old Belief a way of preparing for death. Similarly, while often presented as obscurantists, many well-known and respected late-imperial financiers, industrialists, and philanthropists, such as Mikhail Tret’iakov, were from Old Believer families.

The paradox of anti-Latin sentiments and reliance on Ruthenian and Greek scholars continued. Tapping the educational and cultural renaissance among Ruthenian and Ukrainian Orthodox Christians that followed the Union of Brest-Litovsk in 1596, Russia’s leaders welcomed those trained in Jesuit-modelled Mohyla’s (see Mogila) Kievan *collegium*. In 1685, two Gk hieromonks established Russia’s first institution of higher education, the Slavo-Graeco-Latin Academy. Graduates included not only future priests and bps but also state diplomats, physicians, professors in Russia’s first state universities, architects, the founder of Russia’s first theatre, and the world-renowned scientist Mikhail Lomonosov. Iconography in Russia at this time similarly reflected Westernizing trends, as can be seen in the work of Simon Ushakov (1626–86), chief icon painter in the Armoury Palace, where iconographers worked alongside foreign artists from Europe. This led to a change in what constituted ‘good iconography’, with Ushakov’s style replacing Andrei Rublev’s as the standard from the late 17th to the 20th cent.

Finally, Patr. Nikon played a complex role in the processes which eventually led to the 1686 transfer of the metropolitanate of Kyiv from the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople to that of the patriarchate of Moscow. In 1648, Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky led a group of Ruthenian Orthodox Zaporozhian Cossacks in an uprising against the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth. Khmelnytsky petitioned Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich to accept the Cossacks and their territory under his protectorate in exchange for military support against their Polish ‘oppressors’. Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich was initially cautious. Khmelnytsky turned separately to Patr. Nikon, who in 1653 met with a Cossack delegation and agreed to lobby the tsar for them. Despite Tsar Alexei’s reservations, Patr. Nikon convinced him of the importance of supporting the Cossacks’ cause as a religious one. Nikon thus blessed a reluctant tsar to enter into war with Poland, playing a significant role in uniting Kyiv with Muscovy.

5. THE PETRINE CHURCH REFORMS.

Among the most well-known emperors in the history of modern Russia, Peter the Great has been remembered as a ‘saviour’ and ‘antichrist’; as a ‘non-traditional monarch’ and a ‘typical Russian’; and as an ‘enlightened universalist’ and a ‘pseudo-reformer’ (Burlaka, 715ff.). As part of his all-consuming efforts to transform Russia into a modern European state, Peter I instituted a series of unprecedented church reforms that were to shape the life of Russia’s Orthodox Church virtually at every level for the next 200 years.

To avoid a competing ‘second sovereign’ in the patriarch, Peter left the patriarchal office in abeyance following the death of Patr. Adrian (1627–1700), appointing Stefan Iavorskii (1658–1722) as *locum tenens*, while abrogating much of Iavorskii’s influence by establishing a state office named the ‘spiritual collegium’—or the Holy Synod—as the Church’s highest ruling body. Peter issued his new laws governing church life in the *Spiritual Regulation* (1721), which remained legally in place until 1917. Given the unprecedented nature of these reforms, Peter the Great sought—and received—the canonical approval of the E. patriarchs.

Peter’s reforms deprived the Orthodox Church of institutional independence or any sense of collective self-definition among its members. Instead, the Church’s highest ruling body, the Holy Synod—now a state senate—became subject to the

political world of state Orthodoxy, the goals of which were often at odds with believers' own sacred sensibilities or daily experience.

Furthermore, Peter's church reforms, with their plans for an educated clergy, had long-lasting impact on Orthodox theological education. Efforts to establish institutions of higher learning had begun in earnest in Moscow during the reign of Peter's father, Alexei, and involved Greeks as well as graduates from the Kyiv Mohyla Academy. However, only the Kyiv Academy was able to provide sufficient numbers of qualified instructors, making Russia's Orthodox Christians largely indebted to their Ruthenian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian counterparts for their educational development. Bps were responsible for opening schools to prepare both sons of clergy and others for the priesthood. Furthermore, very few of these seminaries offered instruction in philosophy or theology.

In 1724–5, Peter began preparations for an academy of sciences and arts in St Petersburg, based on the European university. Theological education was placed under the aegis of the Holy Synod, with long-lasting consequences, including the promotion of a hereditary clerical social estate, as well as the coexistence of two cultural worlds within Russia's educated society. During the 1860s, clergymen's sons were no longer bound by estate to their clerical heritage, and Russia's theological academies developed into intellectual centres in their own right. This period saw the publication of a Russian translation of the Bible, an extensive programme of patristic translations into Russian, the launching of numerous theological and devotional journals, and the production of scholarly works in the fields of church history, liturgical studies, and patristics that remain unmatched in Russia to this day.

A highly diverse group of Orthodox clergy, hierarchs, and lay academic graduates of the theological academies constituted Russia's 'church intelligentsia', which often socialized with members of Russia's secular educated society: Russia's so-called 'religious thinkers' and philosophers. Although the names of Russia's secular educated religious thinkers are well known in the W., the works and thought of their theological academy-trained counterparts remain less so. Engagement between Russia's religious thinkers and the 'church intelligentsia' began in earnest in 1901 with the establishment of the religious-philosophical meetings in St Petersburg, belying any suggestion of a meeting between two opposed cultural worlds. Indeed, it could be argued that the notion of **sobornost'*—an idea of Slavophile origin and a driving idea behind the call for major church reforms at the beginning of the 20th cent.—was born from this engagement between Russia's religious thinkers and its 'church intelligentsia'.

In addition, Peter's Spiritual Regulation targeted monastics—both male and female—as social parasites. Continuing policies begun by his predecessors, Peter secured even greater control over monastic wealth. He also subjected monastic communities to more centralized state control via the Holy Synod: anchorages and small hermitages were closed, suspected of providing refuge for dissent (not least Old Believers); small monasteries were combined to form larger ones; legislation was introduced to hinder new monastic foundations. Peter's efforts were followed by large-scale secularization of monastic lands under Catherine the Great (1729–76). Nevertheless, the end of the 18th cent. saw the beginnings of monastic renewal, symbolized by the publication of the *Dobrotolyubie* (1793), an anthology of ascetical and mystical texts, translated by Velichkovsky, a kind of Slavonic cousin to the Gk *Philokalia*. As well as promoting the Jesus Prayer, this movement saw a revival of spiritual eldership (*starchestvo*), in monasteries such as Sarov (see SERAPHIM OF SAROV, ST) and Optina Pustyn': all popularized through a work known in English as *The Way of a Pilgrim*. The spiritual elder or starets became a fixture of late imperial Orthodox spirituality. Concurrently, despite the Petrine-instituted synodal bureaucracy, the number of monastic communities began to grow rapidly in the 19th cent. If in 1764 only 225 monasteries remained active, by 1914 this figure had grown to 1025.

Little known, but of particular interest, was a move towards the restoration of the female diaconate in the latter part of the 19th cent., supported not only by clergy but also by several noblewomen in Russia, such as the abbess of the well-known Lesna convent, Ekaterina (born Countess Evgeniia Efimovskaia, 1850–1925) and the Grand Duchess Elizaveta Feodorovna Romanova (born Elizabeth Alexandra Luise Alice of Hesse-Darmstadt, 1864–1918, sister of the Empress Alexandra), who founded the Martha and Mary Community of Mercy in Moscow. By the time of the 1917–18 All-Russia Church Council,

various grassroots efforts towards restoring the female diaconate had pushed the question into the public sphere, with prominent Russian church historians maintaining that ancient Rus' had inherited the order of the female diaconate from Byzantium. These efforts were frustrated by the untimely ending of the Council in 1918.

Finally, perhaps most significantly in light of future events, Peter's church reforms targeted features of Orthodoxy that were most salient for believers' sense of belonging to the 'Church'. These included the construction and maintenance of parish churches, the construction of chapels, the veneration of icons, prayer, and liturgy—all of which the *Spiritual Regulation* and subsequent state laws sought to regulate. Furthermore, Petrine-informed state legislation seemed to exclude laymen and laywomen from the 'Church' by confining that term to clergy and monastics or to a building.

6 1917 and the soviet experiment

The year 1917 marks an unprecedented watershed in the history of the Orthodox Church in Russia. In the span of nine months, the face of Russian Orthodoxy changed forever.

First, the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the subsequent fall of the Romanov dynasty brought an end to a political order long assumed to belong to 'the sacred order of things', bequeathed by the Byzantines; throne and altar became untethered. Nevertheless, the response on the streets of Russia's cities was one of widespread euphoria, with many Orthodox Christians openly welcoming the prospects of a new, representative, democratic order. The Holy Synod declined requests to support the monarchy publicly. Instead, it ordered clergy to commemorate the provisional government rather than the tsar in church services.

Despite Church leaders' assumptions regarding their institutional independence in the new order, the provisional government retained the Petrine type of oversight of the Orthodox Church, appointing V. N. Lvov (1872–1930) as Ober-Prokurator. The State Duma appointed a committee on church affairs, which organized Orthodox diocesan congresses. These local congresses of clergy and laity played a significant and yet still underappreciated role in these nascent stages of church reform. The free discussion of such a wide range of issues was historic in Orthodoxy in Russia; equally remarkable was the virtually unanimous support for the end of the tsarist regime. Concurrently, between March and October, the Church experienced sporadic conflicts with the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, who, as Marxist radicals, were generally hostile toward the Church.

Secondly, on 15 Aug. 1917, some 564 Orthodox Christians, more than half laymen, convened in a long-anticipated church council (*or Sobor*), the first to meet in over 250 years. They faced the monumental task of restructuring the Church's institutional framework and governance under extraordinary circumstances, including regular reports of violence and the execution of clergy. The council's principal decision was to restore the patriarchate of Moscow and All Rus' and the election as patriarch of the metrop. of Moscow, Tikhon (Beliavin). There was wide-ranging discussion at the Council of a host of topics. Perhaps even more significant were the theological insights its proceedings left for posterity. In this sense, the council was less a one-off event than the culmination of some fifty years of thought and discussion about the place of the church in the modern world.

Thirdly, two months into its proceedings the council's business was cut short by the Bolshevik coup on 25 Oct. 1917; by Sept. 1918, the council was forced to adjourn in the face of an unfolding civil war. With its scientific-materialist worldview, the new Bolshevik-Communist regime was inspired by a utopian vision committed to the creation of a new society and a 'New Person' who, by definition, was to be 'religionless' or 'godless' (*bezbozhnik*). This project involved anti-religious policies and strategies that were meant to 'shatter the religious worldview' in all its traditional forms—Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, as well as the local indigenous faiths. Since the majority of Russia's population was Orthodox, the Bolsheviks focused their attention above all on the Orthodox Church.

Soviet anti-religious policies targeted both Orthodox institutions and people's sacred sensibilities. First, legislative measures aimed at weakening the Church institutionally and 'liberating the toiling masses from religious prejudices' (Corley 1996: 13): the confiscation or nationalizing of church and monastic lands and properties, the denial of legal status to religious communities, and a ban on public services and religious education.

Secondly, the early Soviet regime also attempted publicly to compromise the Orthodox Church and discredit people's beliefs, for instance by exhuming holy relics of revered saints, convinced that the sight of 'mere bones' instead of an 'incorruptible body' would undermine believers' faith.

Thirdly, Soviet officials pursued a divide-and-conquer policy by fomenting divisions among Orthodox Christians from within, both domestically and abroad. A 1930 confidential memorandum of the Soviet secret police boasted of its successes on this front domestically by pointing to the Orthodox Church group known as the 'Renovationists' or 'Living Church'. Appealing to widespread, liberal trends in Orthodoxy prior to 1917, the 'Living Church' supported such reforms as the liturgical use of the vernacular Russian instead of Church Slavonic, the use of the Gregorian instead of the 'old-style' Julian calendar, and married bps. Although the 'Living Church' gained control over the majority of opened churches, such open collaboration with the Bolshevik regime led to its eventual demise. In the long term, this episode compromised for many Orthodox believers in Russia the integrity of any progressive Christian ideals and thought. The Soviet secret police claimed credit for analogous divisions among Russia's Orthodox émigrés abroad.

Fourthly, the widespread ruin or repurposing of churches and the desecration of sacred objects, esp. icons, became a hallmark of the Soviet regime's anti-religious policies. Given the intimate link of churches, chapels, and icons with personal and collective memory and intangible cultural heritage, the long-term generational impact of such destruction was immeasurable.

Fifthly, prior to the Second World War, the state often also resorted to extreme violence and terror. Believers—especially clergy and local lay parish leaders—were repressed or 'liquidated'. In 1923, the 15th-cent. Solovki Monastery was turned into a 'camp of special purpose', a precursor of Stalin's Gulag (Chief Administration of Corrective Labour Camps and Settlements), well known for the many clergy and religious intellectuals detained there, who often died. Two waves of Soviet terror hit the Orthodox Church particularly hard: the Red Terror (1918–21), under Lenin's leadership during Russia's Civil War, and Stalin's Great Terror (esp. 1937–8).

Sixthly, the single-party state promoted not only the public denigration of clergy and their families but in 1918 also legally disenfranchised them. As social outcasts, monastics and clergy (and their immediate family) from all religious traditions lost access to education, ration cards, medical care, etc., until 1936. Believers and their sacred sensibilities were also subject to ridicule through media and the arts, including posters and the press, film and literature.

Finally, in order to promote a new social order and set the New Person free from religion's 'shackles', the Soviet state invested in wide-ranging educational programmes to promote 'scientific atheism'. In 1922, instead of execution, Lenin condemned to exile abroad in so-called 'philosophy steamers' close to 150 intellectuals and their families, including world-renowned scientists, who refused to embrace Soviet Marxism. Among these exiles were some of Russia's best-known religious thinkers: Berdyaev, Bulgakov, and others.

Thus by 1939, the cultural expression of centuries' worth of lived Orthodox religious experience and thought had been virtually eradicated. Of some 54,000 Orthodox churches and more than 1,000 male and female monasteries in Russia in 1917 only 100–300 churches and 64 monasteries remained. As a centralized institution, the Orthodox Church in Russia had been effectively liquidated—only four bps remained who were not imprisoned.

Soviet policy towards religion—and the Orthodox Church in particular—shifted dramatically with the onset of the Second World War. In 1939–40, as a result of the Nazi–Soviet Pact, the Soviet Union gained territories in Belarus, Ukraine, the Baltics, and parts of Bessarabia, which, outside the boundaries of the USSR, had all been spared twenty years of

persecution. As a result, the USSR gained more than 3,500 churches and approximately 6 million Orthodox believers: a factor which already led to Soviet rethinking their policy toward Orthodoxy. Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 caused a more radical turn in Stalin's policies toward the Orthodox Church. Pre-empting Stalin, the metrop. of Moscow, Sergii (Stragorodskii), in a public encyclical, called on believers to defend the homeland. Stalin soon saw the strategic value of securing the Church's support for the war effort to foster public morale and counter the image of Hitler's forces as 'liberators of Christians'. As a result, Stalin 'encouraged' the head of the League of Militant Atheists, Emelian Iaroslavskii, to curtail their activities. Arrests of clergy sharply declined. In Apr. 1942, churches in certain urban regions were permitted to hold outdoor processions during the midnight Paschal service. By Jan. 1943, the Orthodox Church tacitly gained legal status as an institution when permitted to open a bank account for parishioners' donations toward the war effort. Stalin's change toward the Church was confirmed in Sept. 1943 when he agreed to a church council to choose a patriarch, the opening of several seminaries and theological academies, and the publication of a church journal. On 19 Sept. 1943, Sergii was consecrated as patr. of Moscow and All Rus'. Concurrently, as part of this new strategy, Stalin established the Council for Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church to look after Church affairs. Headed by the KGB colonel, Georgii Karpov, the Council's task was to maintain the public aura of Church independence, while controlling the Patriarch and other church officials. A parallel Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults was established for other religious confessions.

By the end of the war, the Russian Orthodox Church numbered some 10,500 parishes: 2,800 in Soviet Russia, the rest in Ukraine and Belarus with newly annexed territories. Following the war, Stalin ordered Church officials to travel abroad to various ecumenical gatherings to further Soviet political interests, setting up in 1946 the Church's Department of External Church Relations. The first delegation of Orthodox clergy travelled abroad in 1945. In Jan. of that year, representatives of eight autocephalous church attended the church council that elected Alexii I (Simanskii) as patriarch after the death of Patr. Sergii. Soviet state officials tapped Soviet museums for confiscated church treasures to present as gifts to the visitors (Kail). The change in attitude towards the Orthodox Church had little effect on Soviet ideology concerning religion. During Stalin's last years, 1948–53, churches once again were closed, and arrests resumed, though on a reduced scale.

Ironically, Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev—usually associated with a cultural thaw—spearheaded a new anti-religious campaign, part of his broader plan to reach the goals of Communism in 'this generation'. By 1962, over half of the existing churches had once again been destroyed or repurposed; only two monasteries and three seminaries remained open on Soviet Russia's territory. Khrushchev also reverted to the publication of popular anti-religious propaganda, including posters.

More significantly, while abandoning Stalin's tactics of mass arrests and terror, Khrushchev (and his successors) turned to psychiatric diagnoses and forced hospitalizations as a form of repression, especially for religious and political dissidents. Paradoxically, while pursuing militant anti-religious policies on the home front, Khrushchev concurrently reinstated Stalin's post-war strategy of using the institutional Church to promote state interests abroad. Under directives of the Communist Party's Central Committee, the Orthodox Church joined the Conference of European Churches (1959) and the World Council of Churches (1961). In 1962, it established an office in Geneva for a full-time representative of Russia's Orthodox Church, and also sent observers to the Second Vatican Council. Despite Church leaders' frequent public denials of religious persecution in the Soviet Union, from 1964 to 1986 the number of Orthodox churches declined by half, and the process for opening a parish became bureaucratically more complicated.

Indeed, by 1986, in the midst of Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika, the Russian Orthodox Church had only 6,794 working churches, 3 seminaries, 2 theological academies, and 22 monasteries for the entire territory of the USSR. Given this 70-year experience of an unflagging anti-religious regime, how did the Orthodox Church and Orthodoxy as a lived faith survive? First, especially during the decades prior to World War II, believers on local levels cultivated an 'institutionless' Church, sustained by informal networks of believers, often centred around a spiritual elder or priest, some of whom belonged to the so-called 'catacomb church'. In 1927, these underground networks grew in reaction against Metrop. Sergii's declaration of loyalty to the Soviet State, a strategy for institutional survival which elicited controversy among believers, and scepticism from the Soviet secret police (Savin). Despite increased control of internal church affairs, some

clergy, including hierarchs, found creative ways to circumvent state officials. Such clergy—often deemed ‘fanatical’ and ‘reactionaries’ by the Soviets—belied conventional stereotypes of clerical collaboration under the Soviet regime (Kenworthy and Agadjanian, 143–4; Marchenko).

In the 1960s, Orthodoxy found new life among urban intellectuals and youth who became interested in the ‘forbidden books’ of the Bible, patristic authors, and pre-revolutionary Russian religious thinkers, and in the writings or broadcasts of Orthodox who found themselves ‘exiled’ abroad. They found support from various young ‘dissident’ priests, such as Fr Gleb Yakunin and Fr Dmitrii Dudko, both of whom experienced arrest, and Fr Alexander Men’, hailed by Averintsev as ‘the man sent from God to be missionary to the wild tribe of the Soviet intelligentsia’, who was brutally murdered in 1990. Indeed, between 1917 and 1922, and again as a result of the Second World War, hundreds of thousands of Orthodox believers found themselves abroad, scattered through W. Europe, China, Africa, Australia, and the Americas. Their diverse ethnic and religious roots, and often differing cultural and political convictions, resulted in the formation of various Orthodox communities, three of which in particular traced their roots to Russia’s Orthodox Church—namely, the Provisional Administration of Russian Parishes in Western Europe (centred in Paris), the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia), which traced its beginnings to a council held in Sremski Karlovci (Yugoslavia) in 1921, and the Orthodox Church in America—as well as those parishes that remained faithful to Moscow. Members of these communities retained links with their Orthodox confrères in Russia throughout the Soviet period and contributed in various ways to Orthodoxy’s survival. The nature of that survival, along with the extent of ‘success’ of Soviet religious policy, remains debated—especially in light of the general consensus that, for the generations who came of age in the 1960s, Soviet atheism had already become the ‘normative way of being’ (Luehrmann 2011: 80).

7 1988 and the collapse of the soviet union.

In 1988, the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union publicly celebrated the millennium of the ‘Baptism of Rus’ in 988. Three years later saw the dissolution of the Soviet Union—the end of the ‘Soviet experiment’—with the lowering of the Soviet flag in the Kremlin in December 1991. For believers, the millennial celebrations had already signalled that ‘end’, which they described in terms of a ‘second baptism’ and ‘a new, resurrected Rus’. Nevertheless, the idea of a public millennial celebration did not originate with Church hierarchs. Instead, operating in the era of ‘openness’ (*glasnost*), the new head of the Council for Religious Affairs, Konstantin Kharchev, saw the celebration as an opportunity to promote a new Soviet religious policy. Official statistics estimated that, after decades of ideological offensive, the number of Soviet citizens whose worldview remained informed by religious sensibilities (if not confessional attachment) were in a minority (10–20 per cent). Kharchev, along with prominent reform-minded state officials such as Alexander Yakovlev (1923–4; the architect of perestroika), argued that, while a persistent minority, believers were nevertheless ‘loyal, hard-working citizens’ whose continued marginalization would be counterproductive to long-term Communist Party and state goals. Consequently, although technically an Orthodox commemoration, the millennial celebration was born of a calculated state initiative signalling an official change in repressive state religious policies, without implying an official end to the Party’s governing ‘scientific materialist’ ideology (Maslova 2015:50). Presuming the celebration of this anniversary would be modest and subdued, the Orthodox Church was caught off guard by the proposal for a grand event. Nevertheless, they seized the moment, holding a local church council during the commemorations in which they reclaimed control over parish life ceded to local Party organs in 1961. The council also canonized several new saints, including Theophan the Recluse, Rublev, Velichkovsky, Ambrose of Optino, and Ksenia of St Petersburg. Publicly, the celebrations sparked a widespread euphoria, generating enthusiasm and hope among Orthodox believers of a return to the way things were ‘before’—however defined or imagined—both in Soviet Russia and abroad. They also elicited curiosity and interest in Orthodoxy among Soviet citizens more broadly. Since 1988, the history of Russia’s Orthodox Church—as an institution and body of faithful—has evolved at a dizzying pace, making analysis difficult with results quickly outdated. Vexed by issues of history, memory, and identity, this period has seen trends analogous to the effects of ‘large-group’ trauma(s). Minimalist evaluations of the long-term repercussions of the violence and destructiveness of the Soviet past, combined with Eurocentric value-laden

assumptions regarding 'religion', 'the secular', and secularization, have posed significant challenges to both academic and policy-related evaluations of trends in post-Soviet Orthodoxy.

In 1990, the long-ailing patr. of Moscow and All Rus', Pimen (Izvekov, b. 1910), died. For the first time in the history of the Soviet Union, state and Party left the Orthodox Church free to elect its own patriarch, without its oversight and 'recommendation' of a candidate. An episcopal church council elected the metrop. of Leningrad, Alexii II (Ridiger, 1929–2008), by a small majority. The election was held by secret ballot.

The following year, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and an inexorably rapid transition to a capitalist economy precipitated for many people a cultural, spiritual, and moral vacuum. That same year, the Council of Religious Affairs (CRA) was disbanded. While this ostensibly rendered the Orthodox Church in Russia institutionally independent for the first time in 270 years (since the Petrine Reforms), it did not create a 'tabula rasa' or mark an 'abrupt halt to the shadow of Communism'. To assume so overlooks the weight of the Soviet past and the power of that past in shaping individual, communal, and institutional Orthodox sacred sensibilities in the present. Accordingly, in the late 1980s, when the state began offering to return repurposed or languishing confiscated church buildings and monasteries to the Church, many leading hierarchs were initially self-admittedly unsure how to respond, often displaying seemingly inexplicable caution to such proposals. In response to one such offer—to return the ancient architectural site of the Solovetsky monastery, which the Soviet regime had transformed into a notorious prison camp—an enfeebled and ailing Patr. Pimen declined, reportedly replying, 'There are too many of our bones there' (Melnikov 2015).

Nevertheless, the year 1988–9 saw more than 3,100 churches reopened in the USSR. By the time of the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, any lingering hesitation among the church hierarchs gave way to other impulses resulting in a boom of church restoration and construction, especially in highly populated urban areas. According to official Church statistics, between 1991 and 2019 the number of active churches grew by more than 25,000. Motivating factors, which vary, include: 1) the spiritual vacuum, ideological crisis, and a need 'to belong', leading to massive numbers of adult baptisms during the 'wild nineties', with large numbers of new members requiring more churches; 2) a lay desire to restore broken ties to ancestors through newly available local churches; 3) a residual episcopal tendency to view the reopening of a closed church as symbolic resistance to, and 'victory' over, the Soviet regime; 4) an initial assumption among many clergy that the Soviet project had ultimately failed, that the majority of former Soviet citizens had remained latent believers and would fill churches as they opened, thereby confirming the Church's long-muted but uninterrupted 'relevance' in society and culture.

The exponential growth in active churches during the 1990s and early 2000s, however, led to many problems. First, given that as late as 1988 the Orthodox Church in Russia had only three seminaries and two theological academies, there was an enormous lack of qualified pastors to serve in these new parishes. As a makeshift, Orthodox bishops ordained a generation of men with little or no theological and pastoral training or experience, a situation which saw two apparently unanticipated consequences: 1) the disenchantment, or renewed estrangement, of many lay Orthodox believers with the institutional Church; 2) the widespread cultivation of what some termed a 'pseudo'-Orthodox culture which emphasized patriarchal principles and lay 'obedience' to such a degree as to elicit public criticism from Patriarch Alexei II. The post-Soviet period has also seen the emergence of a few faith-based universities, not necessarily linked institutionally to the Church, the best known being St Tikhon's Humanitarian University in Moscow, established in 1991.

In the 1990s, the rapid rise in interest in Orthodoxy resulted in the Church's investment in the publication and wide distribution of Orthodox literature. Initially, this was a matter of reprinting pre-revolutionary Orthodox publications, since Orthodox cultural production—literary, iconographic, architectural—had virtually ceased during the Soviet period. Such reprinting of pre-revolutionary Orthodox works, however, perpetuated another deep-seated problem, caused by the cultural isolation of the USSR. Soviet society had remained largely isolated from the broader cultural and social movements taking place in the W., as well as resulting shifts in values. The Civil Rights, feminist, gay liberation and LGBTQ+ rights movements, together with the embrace of diversity and pluralism, had in many ways bypassed a society which in the 1960s was emerging from Stalin's terror, the Gulag regime, the virtual eradication of the rich material and spiritual culture of

Russia's diverse religious traditions, and the staggering loss of more than 16 million people during the Second World War. Only in the past two decades have translations of major Western philosophical and theological works become routine. In addition, the 1990s unfurled an 'archival revolution' in Russia which resulted in a wave of publications of previously inaccessible archival documents—including those that focused on Orthodoxy and the Church—and a national preoccupation with the Soviet past. For the first time the broader public was given access to the extent of the atrocities and brutality that accompanied Soviet anti-religious strategies. In an attempt to provide guidance to its members, the institutional Church regularly issued (and continues to issue) official statements on a wide range of topics, the most elaborate of which remains the 'Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church' (2000). None of these 'official' church documents are dogmatic in nature, however, and most provoke lively (if not heated) public debates, even among Orthodox Christians, both in Russia and in the broader Orthodox world. As a document that emerged in a post-Soviet context, the 'Bases of the Social Concept' has not been received as the Orthodox view on various pressing social issues. In 2020, the ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople issued a competing document entitled 'For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church', highlighting divisions of thought among Orthodox Christians.

In addition to its focus on intra-ecclesial matters, in the 1990s the institutional Church also embarked on a broader 'extra-ecclesial' missionizing effort. In a public relations campaign of sorts, the Church's leadership began cultivating a broad civic identity with Orthodoxy as a cultural—though not necessarily 'faith'-related—marker. In doing so, the institutional Church presumed to represent and speak for a majority of the population. This effort took a variety of forms, the most ambitious and lasting of which were those initiated by the current patr. of Russia, Kirill (Gundiaev). In 1993, when still metropolitan, Kirill founded the World Russian Peoples Council, which he presented as an explicitly civic forum to foster civic society by 'consolidating its socially responsible forces' and providing 'a meeting place for people of different political convictions united by concern for the future of Russia'.

The forum was designed as a space for free discussion and debate concerning 'ways of recreating the face of our homeland'. For Kirill, it also provided a public platform from which to voice the ideas that eventually crystallized in his own highly controversial understanding of the notion of the 'Russian World' (*Russky Mir*). Since the mid-2000s, this organization has become increasingly more illiberal and state-oriented in its agenda. Finally, Metrop. Kirill established Russia's Interreligious Council in 1998, the year following the promulgation of Russia's contentious federal law 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations'. Precipitated by an increasing number of foreign (especially Protestant) missionaries, whose view of Russia as an 'open missionary field' many believers (as well as non-believers) found offensive and intrusive, the law favoured those confessions now defined as an 'integral part of [Russia's] historical heritage'—namely, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Orthodox Christianity. At the same time, the aforementioned law—which attracted widespread criticism from both inside and outside the Church—also singled out Orthodoxy for its 'special role in the history of Russia'. The Interreligious Council in turn sought to promote mutual understanding among the 'heritage' faith communities, as well as fostering a shared set of 'traditional spiritual or moral values'. Since its beginnings, the Interreligious Council has issued public pronouncements that often echo those of the Moscow patriarchate. The political reach of the Council's influence (at least initially) is reflected in its instrumental role in the state's establishment of Russia's 'Day of National Unity', a national holiday celebrated on Nov. 4. In 2005, amidst widespread controversy, this holiday—which not coincidentally corresponded to a feast on the Orthodox calendar—replaced the annual commemoration of the Bolshevik Revolution on Nov. 7. While widely embraced in the 1990s, the Orthodox Church's public relations efforts have since met with increasing civil resistance to what in 2007 ten members of Russia's Academy of Sciences characterized as the Church's 'active incursion into all spheres of social life'. Moreover, as the Orthodox presence on the Internet has grown, it has become increasingly evident that critiques of Church leadership do not divide neatly along 'observant' Orthodox, 'nominal' Orthodox, or secularist lines. Significantly, diverse theological, social, and political views among Orthodoxy's most devout believers make it difficult to predict the social behaviour of believers. Accordingly, contrary to conventional wisdom in the West, observant Orthodox believers in Russia can be just as easily found on either side of the opposition protests that have periodically filled the streets of Moscow, especially since 2011. Consequently, 'the Orthodox Church's' view, seen as that of the entire body of faithful, on almost any given issue remains notoriously elusive,

and is better thought of in terms of a broad spectrum. Perhaps most emblematic of the web of challenges this situation has posed is the Orthodox Church's efforts to 'immortalize the memory' of the atrocities of the Soviet past through canonization of so-called 'new martyrs and confessors': Orthodox believers who innocently suffered or were killed for their faith under the Soviet regime. Already during the church council held amid the 1988 millennium celebration,

Metrop. Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh singularly raised the topic: 'we are the only ones who are [currently] silent about the point that only the heroic faithfulness and steadfastness of thousands of unknown people saved the Church from complete ruin...' Since then, the Orthodox Church has officially canonized more than 1,700 people as 'new martyrs and confessors' by name—more than five times the number of saints canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church in its entire history. Many more, not officially confirmed, are also revered at the local level. Over more than twenty years, independent researchers at St Tikhon's University have amassed a database of more than 35,000 names of people considered 'martyrs and confessors'. Since 2006, when a state decree curtailed broad access—even by the institutional Church—to forensic files in the KGB archives on the basis of privacy laws, the number of canonizations has significantly declined. Given the Church's imagined and self-designated role of representing 'the majority' of Russia's population, and given its perceived 'right to discern the spiritual path of a people', any newly confirmed martyrs and confessors were from the outset a public matter. Inevitably, these new martyrs and confessors became entangled in the post-Soviet memory wars. At first, the Church found itself out of step with much of post-Soviet society, tracing the roots of Soviet regime atrocities not to Stalin's, but to Lenin's, rule, during which the targeted arrests of believers began and the first corrective labour camps were established. Furthermore, many of Russia's citizens accused the Church of monopolizing the memorialization of victims of the Gulag past, and hence the historical account of that past.

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