

DECLARATION OF PUBLIC MOVEMENT "FOR THE REVIVAL OF ORTHODOXY"

Moscow, January 31, 2000.

Orthodoxy in Russia today is in a state of deepening spiritual crisis, whose roots go back to our centuries-old history.

The poor spiritual state of the Church was perhaps the first to be noted by remarkable Russian writers. Let us recall at least the words of F.M. Dostoevsky: "The Russian Church in Paralysis with Peter the Great." Let us recall I.S. Aksakova: "Neither the Russian nor the Slavic world will rise, nor will it gain integrity and freedom, as long as the Church remains in such a deadly state." Let us recall the bitter conclusion to which came the most attentive and conscientious researcher of the Russian church life N.S. Leskov: "Russia is baptized, but not enlightened."

Ways out of this crisis and the possibility of renewal of the Church were the subject of intense reflections of outstanding Russian thinkers: V.S. Solovyov, proto-revolution of S. Bulgakov, S.L. Frank, G.P. Fedotov. Unfortunately, all this rich heritage of Christian thought, which could form the basis of the true revival of Orthodoxy in Russia, lies, in fact, in vain. The current leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate has either cold indifference or unconcealed hostility towards it - it comes to public auto-da-fe, in the fire of which the books of the world-recognized Russian Orthodox theologians and philosophers perish.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the problems of the revival of the Church began to be actively discussed by the Orthodox clergy. With the demand for an early convocation of the Local Council, which was to begin the long-awaited church reforms, the highest hierarchs of the Church appeared.

In 1905, the "Union for Church Renewal" was formed in St. Petersburg, uniting priests and laymen who were genuinely concerned with the fate of Orthodoxy in Russia. It is time to finally tell the truth about those who for many decades have been called "Renovationists," giving a pejorative meaning to the New Testament concept of "renewal."

It is time to recognize that many of their ideas were theologically justified and urgently needed.

At the heart of this spiritual movement was the belief in the need for a genuine separation of the Church from the State, its release from state care, the decentralization of church administration, the introduction of the Cathedral administration through democratically elected Church Councils, the Diocesan Congresses and Parish Councils of the clergy and laity, the mandatory election of bishops and priests, The openness of Church organizations of all levels, as well as the active participation of the Church in the life of society, social service, education and the moral education of the people.

In the field of Liturgical Reform, it was proposed to introduce a living Russian language instead of the obscure Slavic, serving with the open Royal Doors and reading aloud the "secret" prayers.

In accordance with the fourth rule of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which reads: "The monks do not interfere in church or everyday affairs, and do not accept participation in them, leaving their monasteries," the revival movement of the first generation suggested abandoning the monastic Monopoly on power in the Church.

"The monasticism of the bishops," wrote A.D. Aksakov, - represents in the Church a phenomenon ... anti-canonical. "Monastic ministry requires silence, contemplation and distance from the bustle of the world. The early Church put a monastic feat above the priestly and hierarchical, and therefore did not allow the violation of monastic vows in the name of hierarchy.

After the February Revolution of 1917 the Local Council of the All-Russian Orthodox Church was finally convened and started its work. But during the three sessions it managed to carry out only a part of the urgent reforms. In September 1918, under the pressure of the Bolsheviks, the Council ceased its activities.

Nevertheless, the Council managed to make several important decisions implementing the program of church reforms, and in particular:

New statutes, new cathedral structures of the entire Church from the Patriarch (who was recognized only as the *first among equal* of the bishops) to self-governing parishes with provisions at all church levels of a broad initiative of ordinary clergy and laity and the elective beginning of the episcopate and the clergy.

It has been established that the Local Councils are regularly held at least every three years, and that diocesan and parish meetings are even more frequent, the sovereign ownership of all movable and immovable property for the parishes (temple building and all church property) is fixed.

At the same time, the renewal movement began to gain momentum. However, its further fate was tragic. On the one hand, it began to implement the necessary church reforms, of which Alexander Vvedensky, one of the leaders of revivalism, said: "It is necessary for liturgical creativity, the approach to the life of the liturgical language, the emancipation of man in communion with the Divine ... sweeping the alluvial and formal, deepening internal understanding of religion. It is necessary for the priesthood to leave the archaeological museum on the path of free and religious life and understand the true essence of religion. The salvation of the Church is by its "living" in the world, and not standing still in a religious dream. A "Living Church" will make you believe it! ".

Sadly, the leadership of the Renovationists could not escape extreme servility and was skillfully used by the Communist Party and the GPU to undermine the Church from within, split and fight against the patriarchal Church and personally against Patriarch

Tikhon. As a result, the revival movement was discredited in the eyes of believers, and church reforms were doomed to failure.

Along with profound and zealous supporters of reforms, such as Bishop Antonin (Granovsky) and priest Alexander Boyarsky, were direct members of the GPU, like the priest Vladimir Krasnitsky, who participated in the Movement. Vicious attacks were made against Patriarch Tikhon. The Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, Veniamin, and his associates, were tried and executed in cases regarding the seizure of church values, and cooperation with the God-struggling power of personalities, like Krasnitsky, were ruined by any desire for renewal and spiritual revival of Orthodoxy in Russia.

After the defeat of Tikhonov's patriarchal church in the 1930s, the Bolsheviks took up their former wards, the Renovationists. Their fate was finally resolved after 1946, when about 500 remaining renewal parishes were removed from registration by state bodies and forcibly transferred to the Moscow Patriarchate.

An attempt at Orthodox renewal and the revival of the early twentieth century efforts was foiled by the Bolsheviks, who made a temporary bid to support the revival movement in the struggle against the Tikhonov Church. They managed to achieve a threefold effect: 1) to split the Church, 2) to weaken its spiritual and political influence on the people and 3) to discredit in the eyes of the believing people everything connected with the problems of the renewal of the Church.

Sharply changing the policy towards religion in 1943, Stalin relied on the most archaic, congested (corresponding to his political line) pro-Kremlin synodal model of the Church. Its leader soon became the opponent of the church reform, Alexis I (Simansky).

The archives, in particular the correspondences of the first chairman of the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, General of the KGB, G. Karpov and Patriarch Alexy I, give a clear idea of how the foundations of the martyrs and confessors were destroyed and devastated by the persecutors of the Church, thus, Stalin, Beria and Karpov in 1943 built a religious organization of a completely new type - the Moscow Patriarchate, being fully controlled by the State punitive organs.

For all of its existence, the Moscow Patriarchate has unconditionally supported the foreign and domestic policies of the CPSU and the Soviet state. There was not a single instance that the Church raised its voice against the atrocities of Soviet totalitarianism or the defense of persecuted believers.

Moreover, it has always acted with official support for regime crimes, such as military expansion in Hungary, in Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan and other shameful acts. The stigma of the "red church" remained on the body of the Moscow Patriarchate.

All this could have been explained and forgiven if the Moscow Patriarchate was sincere in its readiness to reconsider and rethink its past in times of unexpectedly opened freedom that came with the collapse of the communist regime in 1991. But, she did not

even try to begin her revival with repentance, which would be natural from a Christian point of view. After the State refused the anti-religious policy, over the years the Moscow Patriarchate has not found the strength to condemn the shameful collaborationism with the God-seeking regime and the betrayal of its Believers.

Even more importantly, even in conditions of relative freedom, the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, turned out to be incapable of serving the spiritual enlightenment of the Russian people by falling into pagan ritual - "shamanism," turning the Church into a ritual-welfare service and the clergy into a priestly caste.

The current Charter on the administration of the ROC, its Civil Charter, the standard statutes of the parishes of the ROC strictly regulate the hierarchical dictatorship, establish the absolute power of the Synod over the episcopate, and the ruling episcopate over the powerless clergy and church activists. The methods of leadership of the Church adopted by the Moscow Patriarchate are fundamentally contrary to the principles of Canon Law, and, in particular, to the decisions of the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of 1917-18. It established a structure that corresponds not to the "Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church" but, in essence, an organization built on the basis of unconditional subordination of the younger to the older, a barracks structure.

The first paragraph of the standard Charter for parishes of the ROC declares: "The parish is a religious association, which is the primary structural unit of the Russian Orthodox Church." Is it not from the Charter of the State's *Internal Security Service* that these principles of paramilitary apparatus - penetrated with iron discipline - were taken?

Even a parish meeting can not be convened, in accordance with this charter, without the permission of the ruling bishop.

Strengthening the totalitarian nature of the Moscow Patriarchate is facilitated by the transfer to the centralized ownership of the highest leadership of the Church of all movable and immovable church property (buildings, sacred objects, land), which led to the concentration of property and power in the hands of the Patriarch and the Synod. It is this anti-canonical church nomenclature, "privatization," the removal of ownership from their communities, which created the materialistic foundation for the all-powerful control of the Patriarchate leadership...and, sadly, over all aspects of Church life.

Inside the Moscow Patriarchate, no dialogue is possible on the urgent church and social problems. Rightfully thinking people, who express a point of view that does not coincide with the "general line" of the Synod, are immediately expelled from the Church. The modern Moscow Patriarchate doesn't even have a hint of a Social Doctrine, the development of which they themselves proclaimed several years ago. But having and implementing a proper Social Doctrine is one of the defining directions of *true service* of the Church to the people!

The prophetic ministry of Christ was also not perceived by the Church. The image of prophetic ministry includes not so much the gift of foresight, but, first of all, the courage in exposing lies, in the struggle for truth. It was for this that Christ was crucified.

The Moscow Patriarchate lives outside the basic problems of the Church itself, and of the country and society. There are no economic or social problems; there are no problems of alcoholism, drug addiction, abortion, national problems, environmental problems and many others. There are no economic problems with the people. What common interests can the Synodal oligarchs have with elderly pensioners whose pensions are below the standard of living? Where else in the world can you find a religious body that so disparagingly treats its followers?

Church leadership has not served the simple Orthodox people for a long time. It is separated from it by an insurmountable wall of protection and high stone fences. We hear from the pulpits cold words about mercy and compassion, because in the reality of life we see the tables of hierarchs overflowing with delicacies, lavish residences, private planes and the regularly replenishing fleet of super-expensive cars. And all this - against the backdrop of the extreme poverty of ordinary people, who, depriving themselves of an essential piece of bread, carry the last "drachma" to the temples so that the "princes of the Church" can be buried in luxury!

The pagan cult of the personality of Patriarch Alexy II has long been reborn as a grave sin of idolatry (by the zealously inflated media). All this, contrary to the decision of the Council of 1917-1918, who recognized the Patriarch as only the *first among equals*...the first among his equal bishops.

Can you imagine a Christ who would close the doors of the Temple for simple followers? Can you imagine the apostle Peter, guarded by muscular body guards from the State Special Protection - God forbid! – not allowing a prostitute or sinner with a heartfelt request for a piece of bread?

And, we're not even talking about the flagrant crimes committed by the Moscow Patriarchate before God and people associated with the moral corruption of its hierarchs, which everyone who reads newspapers already knows! About stealing Humanitarian Aid worth over \$ 2 billion, about tobacco and vodka that corrupt our citizens, the faithful and the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate! Nor, about oil production, which gives fabulous incomes to the Metropolitan monks who allegedly renounced the world and everything in the world!

Alienation from the people by the Patriarchate, the reluctance to speak openly with the Believers and fear of change are forcing the ROC leadership to take a direct violation of the requirements of the Constitution, providing for the Local Council every five years. It's been not five, but ten (now eighteen) years since the last Council in 1990, which was chosen by the present Patriarch Alexy II.

The leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate committed a grave sin against the "Holy of Holies" of Orthodoxy - its Reunion, canceling plans for the anniversary year of the *Millennium of Christianity* by the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, replacing it held on January 11 at the State Kremlin Palace with live entertainment, performing many grave impressions...such profanity for the greatest anniversary.

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In the current critical situation, which puts us on the verge of spiritual ruin for a whole Local Church, we consider it our duty to testify before God and to all the believing people:

1. The Moscow Patriarchate is rapidly losing its spiritual authority. In order to survive, it needs the support of the State. In an honest spiritual struggle, it can not stand competition even with the so-called "religious sects." However, society needs a real spiritual rebirth. The root of the crisis that struck our country is not only in political or economic instability, but in the state of our society, which is largely determined by the Moscow Patriarchate, with the help of civil authorities, seizing the "canonical spiritual space" of Russia.
2. The Orthodox Church should depart from the model of totalitarian dictatorship and resort to what has been established by Canon Law. The highest hierarchical power in the Church is the bishop, head of the diocese, as it was in the Apostolic period. Bishops, heads of dioceses, are entitled to unite in a single church structure, but only with consultative and coordination rights. Such a structure should not have administrative functions and the right to appoint or dismiss bishops. This right should be enjoyed only by diocesan assemblies (in the presence of elaborated corresponding procedures).
3. Bishops and priests should be elected (and retired to rest) only by the people themselves - diocesan (parish) meetings on the proposal of the diocesan council.
4. It is necessary to allow ordination to the bishop of a celibate or married priest without the necessary adoption of monasticism.
5. The church should have three branches of power: legislative, executive and judicial.
6. By now, most Orthodox churches have already moved to a new Gregorian style (the exception is only the most conservative churches: Russian, Serbian and Jerusalem). One of the directions of the necessary reform is the transition of the Orthodox Church in Russia to a new style. Such a transition should not be forced: those parishes that do not want to support the calendar reform should have the right to use the Julian calendar.
7. The brutal discipline of the heavy posts that exist in Orthodoxy today must be reviewed within reasonable limits.
8. It should be with the consent of Believers to simplify and reduce Orthodox worship, freeing it from excessive Byzantine splendor.

9. It is necessary to abolish the complex multi-stage system of church awards and pompous titles, which generates vanity, careerism and corruption.
10. The services must be performed in any language at the will of the Believers, and first of all in Russian.
11. Each worship service should be rigorously accompanied by a sermon.
12. It is necessary to exclude from the practice of church life any fees for services and services.
13. It is necessary to open an altar for greater participation of Believers in worship, and, at the request of Believers, to re-establish the throne in the middle of the temple.
14. It is necessary to revive the publicity of financial reports of church organizations of all levels.
15. It is necessary to restore the regular convocation of diocesan and local councils.

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We hope for the revival of the Church, despite its current plight.

We believe that the time is not far from when, from the bureaucratic department, it will turn into a truly free Christ Church, dedicated to God and serving the people.

But such a revival can not happen without the active participation of the episcopate, the clergy and the whole believing people.

We appeal to all Orthodox Christians to take part in the movement for the revival of Orthodoxy.

If the church reforms today do not take place, tomorrow Orthodoxy is finally doomed to self-isolation, is doomed to be a relic in the religious zone.