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## **Historical Sciences**

# **RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE USA**

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### **Abstract**

The article discusses the situation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the United States. Particular attention is paid to the processes taking place in the last third of the 19th century within the Church itself, in particular to the issues of expanding the ethnic composition of the clergy, the gradual spread of Orthodoxy throughout North America and the increase in the number of Orthodox communities. It is shown that it is precisely these factors that determined the obvious need for revising missionary tasks, working methods, and the forms of organizing charitable and social activities.

In addition, the dependence of the dioceses on the Holy Synod of Russia became increasingly unnatural, not meeting the needs of the development of Orthodoxy in North America. The appearance in 1870 of the first Orthodox jurisdiction in the United States objectively indicated an alternative to transforming the Aleutian diocese of the Russian Church into an independent American Orthodox Church.

**Keywords:** religion, society, church, missionary work, priest.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Studying the process of the formation of Orthodoxy in the United States and getting acquainted with the current state of the Orthodox Church in America allows us to better understand the religious situation in this country, where there are several more church associations of various Orthodox jurisdictions, who do not depend on Orthodoxy in order to more fully represent the place of the Orthodox Church in the multiconfessional structure of the United States. Thus, it will be possible to clarify more clearly the role of Orthodoxy in establishing and strengthening spiritual contacts between Orthodox believers Russian and American co-religionists, the number of which is measured in millions.

However, the study of the place and role of Orthodoxy in the United States is relevant from a purely religious point of view. Without such a study, it is impossible to make an accurate and comprehensive picture of the youngest of the local autocephalous Orthodox churches and, consequently, Orthodoxy as a whole, the sphere of influence of which many mistakenly consider only the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe.

As for Russia, it is slowly but persistently assimilating the North American continent, especially the United States of America. Meanwhile, in a number of textbooks and teaching aids on religious studies, the Orthodox Church in America is not described at best, but is mentioned.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study of the diverse confessional structure of the United States, and in particular Orthodoxy as one of its components, is another self-sufficient methodological factor. The formation of ideas about the religious and spiritual life of various faiths, which largely determine the inner world of a person, is important for creating a more complete picture of the socio-psychological image of the American nation and its culture as a whole.

It is also very significant that the topic under discussion is in line with the processes taking place in modern Russian historical science. It is, above all, the study of social systems from the standpoint of a civilizational approach, which involves the recognition, along with economic and socio-political circumstances, of the equal role of spiritual factors. The complexity and multifactor nature of the civilizational method allows us to take a fresh look at the "old" phenomena, to discover and evaluate their facets, which until now have not been the subject of discussion by researchers. Studying the history of Orthodoxy in the United States allows us to enrich our ideas about the socio-cultural, spiritual side of American life as a kind of civilization system.

## III. DISCUSSION

In Russian historical science, the theme of the Russian Church Abroad remained banned for decades, occasionally studied under the influence of ideological stereotypes. Some information about the Russian clergy in America, the first Russian immigrants in the region, the life and work of emigrant revolutionaries in the USA and the Russian press was presented by A.M. Chernenko N.L. Tudoryanym, G.P. Partridge, M.I. Iosko, L.K. Shkarenkovym, S. A. Boginym, A. S. Sokolovym and others.

In the 1940-1990s. monographs and articles about Russians in America and, in particular, in California, owned by American or Russian-American authors, continue to be published. A large number of publications are devoted to the topic of Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian Church in America. Issues related to Russian public organizations receive coverage. The years following the "perestroika" are characterized by a rapid increase in the number of studies in domestic historical science. Research K.O. Bokzhova O.V. Vorobyeva E.V. Petrova A.B. Ruchkina, A.A. Fedorova A.A. Khisamutdinova directly or indirectly affect various aspects of the formation and functioning of the Russian-American diaspora.

Of the foreign studies that have appeared at present, the works of M. Mazo, B. Farley, and the Rev. Hieromonk Damaskin (Christiansen) are of interest. In particular, the American researcher Margarita Maso is an outstanding specialist in the field of the Molokan spiritual tradition. Brigitte Farley highlighted the activities of the Russian Orthodox mission on the US Pacific coast at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries. and his interaction with representatives of other Orthodox peoples - Greeks, Serbs, etc. Hieromonk Damaskin compiled a detailed biography of the Orthodox missionary Sebastian Dabovic (Serb by nationality), who made a significant contribution to the spread of Orthodoxy in North America as a whole and on the Pacific coast of the United States and Canada in particular.

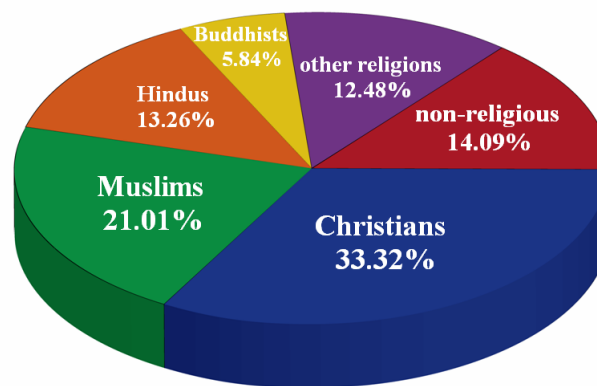
## IV. RESULTS

The history of Orthodoxy in America can be divided into two periods: "Russian" (until 1867) and "American" (from 1867 to the present). The most remote northern parts of the North American continent, for the most part, were discovered and studied by Russian travelers long before the formation of the United States of America. "Hundreds of Russian names in a vast space, from the westernmost of the Aleutian Islands almost to the Gulf of San Francisco, from the southernmost point of Alaska to the northernmost, indicate a significant feat of the Russian people." Companies of merchants sold fur-bearing animals, simultaneously made geographical discoveries and brought local peoples into Russian citizenship.

The founders of the first Russian settlements, establishing trade with the natives, taught them crafts, reading and writing, counting and, at the same time, introduced them to the basic concepts of the Orthodox faith, baptized them, taught elementary prayers. So in the process of discovery and colonization of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska, the gradual spread of Orthodoxy begins. The overwhelming majority of Russian sailors professed this religion, as evidenced by the names of ships and large wooden crosses in various areas of the land being developed, established as a sign that the honor of the first visit to these places belongs to the Russian people. On the ships sailing to the shores of North America, there were icons, lamps, liturgical books, sometimes a camp church, with an accompanying priest.

By 1905, 55 thousand parishioners were officially registered in the North American dioceses. Of these: 7,801 Galicians, 6,023 Bukovynians and Romanians, more than 11,000 Serbs and other Slavs, 5,016 Ugrians, 2,735 Russians, 460 Greeks, 2,170 Creoles, 2,026 Indians, 1,906 Aleuts, 3,168 Eskimos, Americans and 128 others. Their number increased due to the natural growth of Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Gentiles. There was a gradual formation of new parishes and the growth of Orthodox emigration. In the USA and Canada there were several times more Orthodox. Some of them were subordinate to the jurisdiction of other Orthodox churches operating on the Eurasian continent.

World Religions by percentage

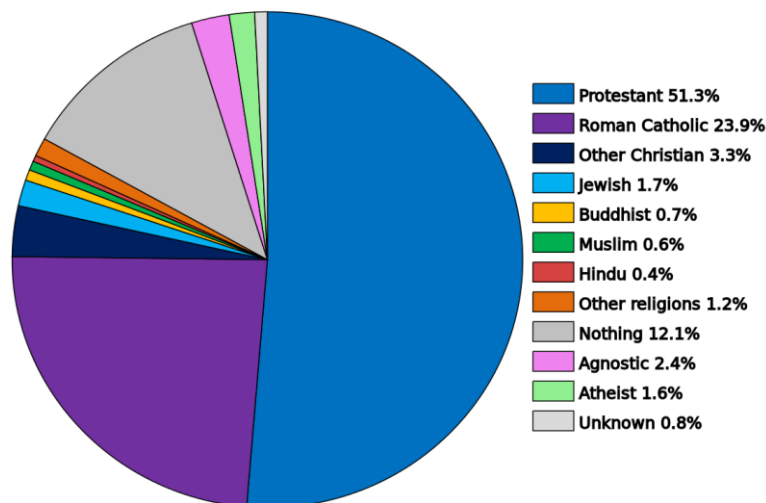


The vast majority of parishes located on the territory of the mainland states did not have a ten-year history of existence by the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore, it is not surprising that the path of church life was not streamlined, parish traditions did not work out. Rarely, the parish can be called quite comfortable. Many churches did not have appropriate church facilities; they were housed in small rooms or in public buildings (for example, in Anzonia the church was in a former theater). In some cases, ownership of the temples was disputed by the Uniates. Some churches were built on credit, and parishioners did not have enough money to not only repay the loan, but also to pay interest.

In some places where the Orthodox lived, there were no churches at all. It so happened that the parishioners, who promised to pay salaries to priests and clergymen and agreed to come, did not fulfill their promises in the future. Subsidies of the Synod, which allowed the clergy to be independent of believers in material terms, did not guarantee a solution to all problems. Some of the “curators” (trustees) were inclined to intervene in matters of church life, which led to disputes and conflict situations. The disorganization of church and parish life stemmed from the peculiarities of the diocese: it was a change of clergy and the ongoing emigration of the Orthodox.

Compared to Russia, there the pastor, who usually served in the same church for several decades, became close to the parishioners. In America, the situation was diametrically opposite, since the parish was a territorial unit with an ever-changing population. A wave of emigration threw several people to some locality who lived there for a year or two, sometimes several months, and left for another place. Parish life was only beginning to improve, but then it was destroyed by a new stream of emigrants. Perhaps the former parishioners did not forget the church, they made donations once or twice a year, sometimes they came to confession, but this connection was nominal. The Orthodox could live in a new place of residence without a church or presbyter, surrounded by Uniates, Gentiles, sometimes they were financially dependent on the latter.

The American Orthodox Church currently plays a prominent role in the United States. The Church includes 16 dioceses, more than 500 parishes, and about 600 clergy. The church has three seminaries and the St. Vladimir Theological Academy, which officially received the status of a higher educational institution in the United States.



Religion in the United States

There are male and female monasteries. Successfully developing publishing business. The Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America has created various charitable, educational and social organizations.

The main language of worship is English, although there are a number of parishes in which the Church Slavonic and Russian languages are preserved to one degree or another.

## V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, would like to note that a retrospective of the development of the Local Churches clearly demonstrates the role of the personality factor, the influence of the example and feat of individual missionaries.

So in the affirmation of Orthodoxy in America, the formation of the American Orthodox Church, several church leaders played an outstanding role: the monks of the first mission of the Russian Church German Alaskinsky, Innokenty (Veniaminov). Not the last place in this galaxy of names is St. Tikhon (Bellavin). His missionary work received a well-deserved praise from the Americans, who elected Tikhon as an honorary citizen of the United States.

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## РУССКАЯ ПРАВОСЛАВНАЯ ЦЕРКОВЬ В США

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### Аннотация

В статье рассматривается положение Русской Православной Церкви в США. Особое внимание уделяется процессам, происходящим в последней трети XIX века внутри самой Церкви, в частности вопросам расширения этнического состава духовенства, анализируется постепенное распространение православия по всей Северной Америке и рост количества православных общин. Показано, что именно эти факторы обусловили очевидную необходимость пересмотра миссионерских задач, методов работы, форм организации благотворительной и социальной деятельности.

Кроме того, зависимость епархий от Священного Синода России становилась все более неестественной, не отвечающей потребностям развития православия в Северной Америке. Появление в 1870 году первой православной юрисдикции в США объективно указывало на альтернативу превращения Алеутской епархии Русской Церкви в независимую Американскую Православную Церковь.

**Ключевые слова:** религия, общество, церковь, миссионерство, священник.

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