

The participation of Russian Orthodox Church in public and social life of the Russian Federation

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Until 1917, Russia was considered as a country with an Orthodox tradition. Orthodoxy was the dominant confession, but not the only one. With time, the role of the church in the political life of the country had been constantly changing, but the church had always been taking a direct part in it. After 1917 atheism began playing the dominant role in the country - in fact, it became the new Soviet religion. Nowadays, when Russia has begun to return to its origins, against this background, the Orthodox Church yielded to temptation of power. This is a very strong thirst, which is extremely difficult to resist, because the main political figures of the country are trying to popularize Orthodoxy, and the leading television channels show their visits to church services. In essence, visiting a temple by any person is his own business, this should not be a cause for PR for politicians or the Church. If Russia is a secular state, the conditions should be the same for all.

«The Russian Orthodox Church does not fundamentally interfere with political agenda, but actively cooperates with the state in social and educational issues». (Jucan, 2017: 2) Such a statement in an interview with Romanian magazine «Q Magazine» was made by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill. «Our Church stands on the basis of principled non-interference directly in politics. As a general rule, the clergy are prohibited from participating in political campaigns, being nominated as candidates for public office during elections, and participating in election campaigning. This is the core for our independence and freedom and at the same time is a boon for the state and society » (Jucan, 2017: 3),

– edition cites the Patriarch Kirill in the run-up to his visit to Romania.

The Patriarch reminded that the Church in Russia is separated from the state by law, as in Ukraine, in Belarus, in the states of Central Asia and other regions of the pastoral responsibility of the ROC. It is impossible for the Orthodox hierarchy and clergymen to participate in the activities of political organizations, in pre-election processes such as public support for political organizations or individual candidates participating in elections, agitation etc.

There are many cases of church-wide support for various political doctrines, views, organizations and personalities in the history of the ROC. In some cases, such support was associated with the need to uphold the vital interests of the Church in the conditions of anti-religious persecution, destructive and

restrictive actions of heterodox authorities. In other instances, such support was a consequence of the pressure of the state or political structures and usually led to divisions and contradictions within the Church, to the departure of some people infirming in their faith.

In the twentieth century clergymen and hierarchs of the ROC were members of some representative bodies of power, in particular, the State Duma of the Russian Empire, the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union and of the Russian Federation, a number of local councils and legislative assemblies. In some cases, the participation of clergymen in the activities of the authorities brought benefits to the Church and society, but often such participation generated disorganization and division. This was particularly the case when the membership of clergymen was allowed only in certain parliamentary fractions. At the same time, history shows: the decision on the participation or non-participation of clergymen in political activities was and should be made, proceeding from the needs of each particular epoch, taking into account the internal state of the church organism and its position in the state. However, from the canonical point of view, the question of whether a clergyman serving a public office should work on a professional basis is decided unambiguously negatively.

On October 8, 1919, prelate Tikhon addressed to the clergy of the Russian Church with a message urging the clergy not to interfere in the political struggle, in particular, to point out that the ministers of the Church «at their desire to be out of any political interest, must remember the canonical rules of the Holy Church, by which it preclude their servants from interfering in the political life of the country, let alone make liturgical rites and sacred acts an instrument of political demonstrations ».(Department of External Church Relations)

On the eve of the elections of people's deputies of the USSR, on December 27, 1988, the Holy Synod decreed «to bless the representatives of our Church, in case of their nomination and election by people's deputies, this activity, while expressing our confidence that it will serve the good of believers and our entire society» (Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2000). In addition to electing people's deputies of the USSR, a number of bishops and clerics took deputy seats in the republican, provincial and local councils. The new conditions of political life prompted the Bishops' Council of the ROC in October 1989 to pay much attention to the discussion of two issues: «firstly, how far can the Church go in the path of taking responsibility for political decisions without questioning its pastoral authority, and secondly, is it permissible for the Church to refuse to participate in lawmaking and on the possibility of having a moral impact on the political process, when the fate of a country depends on the decision making process» (The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2000). As a result, the Council of Bishops recognized the definition of the Holy Synod of December 27, 1988, relevant only to the past elections. For the future, the order was adopted,

according to which the question of the expediency of participation of representatives of the clergy in

the election campaign should be decided in advance in each specific case by the hierarchy. Some representatives of the clergy, not having received the proper blessing, nevertheless took part in the elections. On March 20, 1990, the Holy Synod declared that «the Russian Orthodox Church removes moral and religious responsibility for the participation of these persons in elected bodies of power» (The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2000).

Showing leniency, the Synod refrained from applying the relying sanctions to the violators of discipline, «stating that such behavior lays on their conscience». On October 8, 1993, because of the establishment of a professional parliament in Russia, it was decided at an enlarged meeting of the Holy Synod to instruct clergymen to refrain from participating in the Russian parliamentary elections as candidates for deputies. The corresponding Synodal definition established that the clergy that violated it were subject to an eruption from dignity. The Bishops' Council of the ROC of 1994 approved this definition of the Holy Synod as «timely and wise», and extended its action «to the participation in the future of the clergy of the ROC in the election of any representative bodies of the CIS and Baltic countries, both at the national and local levels» (The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2000).

The Council of Bishops that happened in 1997 developed the principles of relationship between the Church and political organizations and reinforced one of decisions of the previous Council, by not blessing the priests to be political organizations' members. The Council «On the relationship with the government and the secular society» says: «To welcome a dialogue and contacts between the Church and political organizations only provided these contacts don't any have political supporting background or motive. To consider the cooperation with these organizations valid or permissible in case it brings goodness to the Church and nation, except interpreting this cooperation as political support. To consider invalid a participation of bishops and priests in any pre-election agitation and their membership in political associations, regulations of which assume their candidates to have elective government posts of any level» (The definition of the Bishops' Council of 1997 «On the relationship with the state and secular society», 2008).

Needless to say, that non-participation of the religious majority in the parties' activities and in pre-elections does not mean its total denial to express its opinion about issues concerning the society, denial to represent its position in front of authorities of any countries on any level. The position is represented by cathedrals, the hierarchy and its members. Anyway, the right to express its viewpoints cannot be given to governmental establishments, political and secular organizations.

Despite the denial to participate in government activity, the actions of ROC for a very long time are interpreted ambiguously and cause negative attitudes among the majority of people in Russian Federation. And some groups show extremely negative attitude to its actions.

The staff members of private research organization «Levada-center» published the results of their latest survey (2016), according to which about 66% of the people in Russia think that ROC mustn't interfere in the affairs of the country and somehow influence the final decisions on the governmental level. Moreover, about 57% of participants pointed, that the government mustn't follow any religious or antireligious beliefs. Taking the statistics into account, it is obvious that ROC sometimes expands the spectrum of its functions and goes beyond its powers, not even being afraid to be caught by law

In 2007 Russian scientists sent a letter to the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, where they expressed their concern about «rising clericalization of the Russian community» and «interference of the Russian Orthodox Church into all sides of public life». Ten scientists, with the Nobel laureates (Zhores Alferov) and Andrey Vorobyov, academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences and corresponding member of the RAS Michael Sadovsky among them, signed an appeal. In the appeal the academics criticized the resolutions of the XI World Russian People's Council. Indignation of the academicians was caused by the ROC's call to the government to make a new subject «Fundamentals of Orthodox culture» compulsory in all schools.

The Alexy II's circular, addressed to «all eparchial bishops», states, that «we won't solve moral education issues concerning future generations without drawing attention to the public education system». The final part of the document says: «if there would be issues in teaching of «Basics of the Orthodox faith», rename the course into «Fundamentals of Orthodox culture», and this won't cause any objections among teachers and principals in secular educational facilities, raised on the atheistic basis». According to this text, while wearing the mask of «Fundamentals of Orthodox culture» they try to insert (and again avoiding the Constitution) the «Law of God».

«The Council thinks that studying «Fundamentals of Orthodox culture» is essential in our state, where the absolute majority of population is orthodox. Is it really good to treat other confessions so contemptuously? – say the academicians. – isn't it similar to orthodox chauvinism?» (1999) In addition to that, scientists also are perplexed about ROC's suggestion to make «theology» a scientific specialty: «On what basis a theology – a set of religious dogmas – should be referred to scientific disciplines? – say the authors of the message. – Science must operate its facts, logics, evidence, but far not by the faith» (2007). Academicians think, that «making the church a government agency – is an obvious contravention of the Constitution of the country», which proclaims the separation of church and public education system.

In order to support academicians' letter, the representatives of the Muslim society stated their concern about the current process of clericalization. The head of the Public Chamber Commission on the matters of regional development and provincial government, Vyacheslav Glazychev, supported them, too. During the debate of the annual «Status of civil society in RF» report, he took the initiative to discuss «the intense meddling of Church into government affairs». «I respect the Church, but in our country, it is separated from the government. This intense meddling of Church into all government affairs, instead of doing its own parish job, - is undue», - stated V. Glazychev, encouraging to resist the «creeping clericalism» (2007).

The indignation of the Head of the Commission is particularly caused by «assertive injection of the Word of God in schools». «If there were Sunday schools, it would be normal, but we are talking about public schools. The insertion of this subject in schools is a clear invasion in the state, and the community keeps staying silent, but those who try to resist suffer from ostracism», - he noticed. According to V. Glazychev, nowadays in Russian community «the mix of devilry, nonsense - obscurantist divinations, ghosts, UFOs – and an undue influence of Church is common and ordinary». «I think it's time to stand for the principles of normal, tolerant, but secular state» – claimed the Head of the Public chamber Commission.

In response to the letter of ten academicians, ROC announced, that «Russian Orthodox Church accepted and esteemed science in the past, as today it accepts and esteems it» (Kozitskij, 2007). But in February 2015 the Head of ROC, the Patriarch Kirill offered The Ministry of education to expand the school course «Basics of religious cultures and secular ethics», which is introduced since 2012, and to teach students from the 2nd to the 9th grade. In the current school program «Basics of religious cultures and secular ethics» is studied in the 4th grade of the secondary school. Students and parents have a right to choose a certain module: «Basics of orthodox culture», «Basics of Islamic culture», «Basics of Jewish culture», «and Basics of Buddhist culture», «Basics of worldwide religious cultures» or «Basics of secular ethics». Since 2015 «Basics of moral culture of nations of Russia», has been added to the school program, which has been planned to become the next level of «Basics of religious cultures and secular ethics».

Attempts to interfere into the sphere of education – is a contravention of the principal of secular education. But, as we can see, ROC since the early 2000s shows an apparent neglect of Russian legislation.

Thus, the resolution #349-pg on the assignment of the rank of» honorary citizen of Leningrad region» to the «Holy Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, Alexy II» for «enhancement of civil peace and revival of moral traditions on the territory of the Leningrad region»(2001).

However, the statement above, in our opinion, contradicts current legislation and reality for the following reasons:

1. According to paragraph 1 of article 6 of the Constitution «Citizenship Of The Russian Federation..., is uniform...» and up to paragraph 1 of article 1 Russia – is a federal (nor confederal) state. Thus, there cannot be any «citizen» of Leningrad region and «honorary citizen» of Leningrad region.
2. The Civil War on the territory of Leningrad region was over even until 1920, and no civil disturbances happened since then, therefore, Alexy II couldn't «enhance civil peace» in the absence of civil tension, and this deed, attributed to Alexy II, does not conform to a reality.
3. «Revival of moral traditions» by the «Holy Patriarch» is nothing else like revival of church (religious) traditions. According to article 14 of Constitution, «Russia – is a secular state» and «religious associations are separated from the state», that is why religious activity cannot be qualified as a credit to the state, which Leningrad region is the subject of.
4. By the mentioned resolution, the governor of Leningrad region, V.P. Serdyukov, seized his position for the forming of laudatory attitude towards religion, which violates paragraph 4 of article 4 of Federal law «On the freedom of conscience and religious associations».
5. Any document that has personal reference must identify a physical person by surname, name and patronymic in accordance to the document of the established sample, certifying an identity, but not by pseudonym, nickname, number etc. The identification of a physical person in mentioned resolution as «Alexy II» makes the resolution legally insignificant and void and not enforceable.

A big commotion in the society is caused by the events connected to the accepting of the Federal law № 327-F3, dating back to November 30, 2010 «On the handover of property of religious use, previously being state or municipal, to religious organizations». On the October 19, 2017 the meeting of the state Duma Committee on the civil society development and issues concerning public and religious assignments happened again. There was a speech of Deputy Head of Federal agency on management of state property, Igor Babushkin, on the realization of the Federal law «On the handover of property of religious use, previously being state or municipal, to religious organizations». The representative of the Ministry points out that the process of the handover moved to a completely new level. By the data of The Federal property management Agency, 482 objects were absolutely legally handed over to religious organizations during the last 4 years (Federal Agency of the State Property Management). Also, in the development of legislation on monuments of history and culture, along with the Ministry of culture and the Ministry of economic development of Russian Federation, requirements regarding documental structure were optimized, requirements on provision of security service were excluded,

which made possible to shorten the procedure of application consideration and to avoid unjustified refusals.

To summarize the meeting, Chairman of the Committee, Sergey Gavrilov, noticed that practice showed the effectiveness and efficiency of the Federal law «On the handover of property of religious use, previously being state or municipal, to religious organizations», which in full measure protects the rights of religious organizations as well as state organizations, occupying the property, and at this stage there are no significant changes needed. Nevertheless, prior events say the opposite.

In the beginning of August 2000, it's became known that the cultural Center in the name of Dzerzhinsky of the city of Penza, being previously the property of Open joint-stock company «RZD», was handed over to ROC. 400 children studied in that building. From 1884 to 1917 there was a Bogoyavlenskaya church at the site of the cultural Center, and this fact served as ground for handing the building over to the Church. In 1923 the Bolsheviks made the church a railway property, administration of which established a club for its employee and their children.

Similar story happened to the museum of cosmonautics of the city of Orenburg with an attendance of more than 3000 people a year. A special honor of this museum – is personal belongings and gear of soviet cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, who graduated from local flight school. But long before Yuri Gagarin was born, and cosmonautics was founded, here was an Orthodox Seminary – and more than one hundred years later exactly this reason gives local representatives of ROC the right to claim the area. After the collapse of the USSR a part of the building was given back to local diocese – now it wants to take the whole building. The Museum staff is sure that museum exposition is impossible to be moved, and it would be destroyed, because it «was made to last». Now city authorities are looking for a new space for a Museum – the issue of handing the building to the diocese, to say, is already solved, but, unless a suitable building for the Museum is found, there will be no icons and candles in the place of Yuri Gagarin's spacesuit.

In Novocherkassk, in the Rostov region, the battle between local diocese and Cossacks is occurred. Today, there is an administration of the Cossack stanitsa «Srednyaya» on the Kirpichnaya St., 72 ROC claims that the building had belonged to Mikhailovsky church earlier, though the church owned it just for 5 years, and after, there was an elementary school there. Now, atamans of Cossack troops regularly gather there. On the June 17, 2017, they sent a letter to the Patriarch of all Russia and to the President of Russia with a request to moderate local diocese's appetites. For many years now, diocese is planning to open a school there. Cossacks say that they are ready to give an area with 120 seats in the administration building. But church representatives weren't satisfied by the deal – they insist on

change of ownership. As the Cossacks say, this year the city administration supported eparchy and unilaterally terminated the rental agreement due to handing the building over to ROC.

In January 2015 the authorities of Kaliningrad suggested to erect a 10-metres high monument to Knyaz Vladimir near the Pobeda square. For the embodiment of the idea the authorities decided to hand over the area next to the square for free use to the ROC. As city officials said later, the cost of the area – was 5 015 358 rubles. The suggestion was supported by 20 deputies of the city's council, two of them abstained. The monument is supposed to be erected this year, though the sculptor, Vladimir Surovtsev, on the January, 19 (before the vote) told «Komsomolskaya Pravda» that authorities are suggesting that he finds money for the monument himself. By sculptor's estimations, he needs 16-20 million rubles to erect the monument. In 2016 the city administration allowed the Kaliningrad ROC eparchy to build an orthodox Spiritual and Enlightenment Center with total area of 5,6 thousand square meters.

At the end of July 2017, the Saint Petersburg administration property relations Committee handed over 4,7 thousand square meters of land in the Komarovo village to the ROC for free use. The cost of the land is estimated at 30 million rubles. According to the Land code, the ROC has the right to get the territory only if there is a real estate belonging to ROC. Actually, there is «Church» realty – Saint Petersburg and Ladoga Metropolitan Varsonophiy's summer cottage is situated there. In accordance to 2005 data, there is a house of 212 square meters and a house for the maid of 144 square meters. What has become known recently, the ROC is planning to take a parking lot in Komarovo – now a chapel construction is coming to an end there, though there isn't any permissive documentation for the construction. «Novaya gazeta» of Saint Petersburg says that the church officials expect to legalize the construction in hindsight and are certain that the governor «will make a politic decision».

In the Vysha Township of the Ryazan region Svyato-Uspensk monastery not only encroaches municipal buildings or municipal land, but private property of residents. In 1917 the monastery was closed and all its property, including buildings and land, was given to the state. In 1930s a mental hospital was founded, and in 1970s the employees were given apartments in buildings within the territory of the hospital. In 1990s residents privatized their apartments, and later, the hospital relocated. The government decided then to hand over several buildings that had earlier belonged to the monastery to ROC. In 2011, as a result of clandestine land surveying all privatized buildings became a part of federal property – people were called «invaders» of monastery's land and their gardens and backyards

– illegal. They demolished even the outside WC – and the court suggested the family, that had owned WC, to «go to the forest, it's nearby». In fact, the residents were ready to move out from the monastery space – but they weren't given any other home, and possible monetary compensation is so small that you can't even purchase new housing. 23 families suffered from the pressure of the monastery - there

is even a woman among them, who was once a prisoner of a concentration camp.

In July there were protests in defense of territory of the Proletarsky Park from the claims of the ROC in Bryansk – diocese of Bryansk intends to build another church. As city's activists say, a new religious edifice is going to take up to 3,5 thousand square meters of the town's park, and the construction itself will require to cut 80 chestnut trees. A few trees had already been cut only in order to conduct geological research – after the research it will become clear whether it is possible to build a church there or not. The part of the park area was handed over to Bryansk eparchy for free, and now it has already designed a project of the Church «in honor of the Holy Royal Martyrs» (after the executed family of an Emperor Nikolay II Romanov). Local authorities assure their neutrality in the matters of conflict, although citizens are indignant because they were not even invited to public hearings on the fate of the park. Eventually, in spite of trees cut down, the architectural Board of Bryansk declared the park to be a perfect place for the church.

According to the Federal law of 30.11.2010 «On the handover of property of religious use, previously being state or municipal, to religious organizations», the ROC has the right to rent property and possessions, received from the state, and to carry on business. Generally, this is what the ROC does. As a rule, the Church sets quite simple and straightforward goals: to gain property, to rent it and to make a profit or to place its own facilities. As it would be said in Soviet times, narrow departmental interests dominate over the wider social objectives...

It is impossible not to mention interference of the ROC in socio-cultural life of the community. In 2005 the Syktyvkar and Vorkuta's eparchy opposed the Imperial Russian ballet «Rasputin» in Komi Republic. Priests are sure that the use of the Tsar-Martyr (Nikolay II) – is sacrilegious and is an insult to the memory of canonized monarch. Despite all these claims, the ballet took place. But, unfortunately, with the requests of the diocese, plays on the works of Nikolai Gogol «Pannochka» and «Gorgeous Solokha» were cancelled. In 2006 to the centenary of the day of birth of D. Shostakovich there was a new ballet performance «Tale about priest and his worker Balda», based on the Shostakovich's opera. The ballet faced strong criticism from the Syktyvkar and Vorkuta's eparchy, which tried to cancel the «blasphemous performance». At the end of the day, the eparchy contacted The Ministry of culture and national policy of the republic. After the regulation of the Minister, N. Bobrova, the play production stopped.

In 2007 the Abbot of one of Saint Petersburg's temples, referring to the opinion of the Moscow patriarchy, made demands to Russian ballerina, Anastasia Volochkova, to cancel her shows in Smolnii cathedral, threatening to excommunicate and suggested the idea that she notifies arrangers about her falling ill. Anastasia Volochkova stated:» someone is willing to disrupt my concerts in my beloved city, where I haven't performed for so long. I was just shocked by the suggestion to cheat to my audience, which came from a cleric».

The diocese of Pskov banned the show of rock-opera «Jesus Christ - superstar», which had to take place on May, 5 in 2009 in Pskov. Music critic, Artemy Troitskiy, commented this decision: «Our ROC has been trying for a long time already to attribute the functions that were carried out by the Department of ideology and propaganda of the CPSU Central Committee in the Soviet times» (2009).

On May 5, 2008 Archbishop of Ufa and Sterlitamak, Nikon (Vayukov), protested the «Worldwide run of friendship» – an Olympic-styled international transcontinental relay race. An ideologist and a head of the event for more than 20 years now – is Sri Chinmoy, an Indian «spiritual master» and philosopher, who immigrated to the USA in 1964. According to the organizers, the race promotes a healthy lifestyle, contributes to physical education, to the development of mass sport and to the development of cultural and friendly relations between people. Archbishop stated that in Russia the race is a «demonic craft» and that «in its definition the «Worldwide run of friendship» is a wicked promotion and a new neoinduist sect of Sri Chinmoy's recruitment. We request local authorities not to support a new destructive sect of Sri Chinmoy at all, except providing security to its participants, and not to organize any meetings, press-conferences and official greetings»(2008).

It is worth emphasizing that current Russian legislation forbids authorities to show their sympathy or loyalty or discriminate the rights of any religious movements in any manner.

The paragraph 1 of article 4 of Federal law «On the freedom of conscience and religious associations» states: «Officials of state authorities, other government bodies and local government bodies and servicemen are not entitled to use their official status in order to shape certain attitude towards the religion». Besides, in the paragraph you can find this: «Activity of government bodies and local government bodies is not followed by any public rites or ceremonies». Seems like, it also means that the officials don't have a right to attend any religious activities, even more so, to participate in them. There can't be any religious lectures or preaching in government institution, led by religious organizations. This applies to secular educational institutions as well. In our opinion, there must be no sign of protection of religion in any educational program, educational standard of public schools and universities. Religious publications in government media should be combined with scientifically-wealthy commentaries. Church constructions and the activity of the Church clergy in military units and prisons, perhaps, should be banned too.

For about twenty years in Russia, one can observe church services, for example, at the May 9 events held by local governments. So now officials are already openly speaking in churches, thus «forming» their «attitude» to the Church. It has long been required to assess the compliance of the article 14 of the Constitutional with the official statements of government officials, including Russian presidents, governors of the Leningrad region and St. Petersburg in relation to religious confessions. And their

participation in religious events (for example the official participation on June 17, 2000 of the President of the country, the two governors, the commander of the military district and the Minister of Railway Transport in the opening of the monument at the Finnish Railway Station of St. Petersburg - the Wayside cross in honor of the 2000th anniversary of Christianity).

As mentioned earlier, the illegal activities of the ROC are not only not suppressed by the state, but it also finds support, therefore, since the beginning of the new millennium, we have seen the following results of church intervention: the creation and functioning of state bodies for interaction with religious organizations, and renaming in St. Petersburg the State Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism in the Museum of the History of Religion. As well, the facts of the construction of churches and their functioning in the military units and prisons of our country, the facts of gratuitous return without the relevant laws on the restitution of the former property of religious associations that are state property, etc. are appeared. Thus, we can ascertain that often in violation of the Constitution in Russia, state policy is not based on secular character. Perhaps, it's because in any document, accidentally or intentionally, the essence of the term «secularity» is not revealed for some reason. Or because the overwhelming majority of citizens of our country, and even the state and municipal employees themselves do not know what are the specifics of secular behavior.

Although it is clear that incompatibility with religion is common to the concept of «secularism», a legal problem arises: the law calls for the fulfillment of what is not sufficiently defined. From the experience of history, we know that in such a situation there are always unscrupulous performers who, in the atmosphere of general ignorance, interpret such uncertainty in their favor with the benefit for themselves and with the damage to society.

It is generally believed that one of the most important conditions of democracy is ensuring freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, and therefore, the rights of citizens without any fears of being atheists or believing in God. At the same time, the state remains secular, i.e any religious organizations are completely separate from the state. The Constitution of the Russian Federation formally meets these requirements, but in practice they, unfortunately, are not observed. There had been increasing cases of acts of desecularization, which contradict with the Constitution: sermons are read on state television, various religious programs are being broadcast. Priests appeared in the army, buildings; military facilities (including - nuclear submarines, space rockets) are «consecrated», «Holy» water is sprinkled at various official events.

Although the fundamental principles of secularism have been known for a long time, they are not studied in school institutions for some reason. Nobody explains the very concept of secularism, which presupposes the freedom of conscience and rationality of consciousness with the equality of the right

to belong to any religion, and to reject it in favor of enlightened atheism, the possibility of scientific knowledge of the world. Therefore, on the basis of this understanding, the right of everyone to master the tools of critical attitude to any dogmatic or totalitarian systems, including religious and sectarian, looks quite legitimate. Primary, secondary and higher schools should be guarantors of freedom of opinion and mastery of such approaches. That is why the organization of «public, free and secular education,» all kinds of support, including material, scientific atheistic movements and organizations, and not religious clergy, is the constitutional duty of any secular state, and therefore its first persons - leaders, all officials and state employees.

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