

**ISCKMC 2022****International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****MISSIONARY WORK IN DON HOST OBLAST IN SECOND HALF  
OF 19TH CENTURY**

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**Abstract**

Based on the study including sources that have not yet been introduced into scientific circulation, it was found that in the Don region, the missionary work initiated by the imperial authorities began in the 1870s. After analyzing the regional communities not professing Christianity, or being in confrontation with the Russian Church, it was decided to implement two directions of the mission: one among the Don Kalmyk Lamaists and another among the Old Believers. During the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries, a number of missionary activities were developed: the establishment of an orphanage, where they lived and received education; foundation of Orthodox churches among the Kalmyk settlements; a dialogue aimed at Christianity adoption; training missionaries in theological educational institutions; establishment of the common faith parishes; the development of special brotherhoods, whose purpose was to distribute special literature among the Old Believer population; missionary congresses. At the beginning of the 20th century, when carrying out activities by specially established diocesan missionaries, it was recognized that the mission did not gain success among the Kalmyk population, and among the Old Believers it gave stable, but low-key performance. The study aimed to analyze the possibility of using the developed methods of conducting missionary activities at present has shown that only certain methods can be used due to the fact that today the mission is carried out mainly in national prison administration.

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## **1. Introduction**

The change in the legislation of the Russian Federation in relation to religious organizations in 1997 and the regulation of a wide range of opportunities possible to be implemented by religious organizations by the federal law “On freedom of conscience and on religious associations” adopted by the State Duma on September 19, 1997, raised the question of such an activity as a mission and its types, including those stipulated by the peculiarities of the region in which they are carried out. In this regard, the appeal to the historical heritage is becoming relevant. Its study contributes to determining the features and the need.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The problem of this study is the missionary activity of modern religious associations and the possibility of using their historical experience developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **3. Research Questions**

Addressing this issue enables to define the subject of this study, specifically, missionary work in the practice of religious organizations in the Russian Federation.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent of the mission in the Rostov region being multi-ethnic and multi-confessional amidst social and cultural transformations of modernity.

## **5. Research Methods**

The methodological basis of this study is the principles of historicism, consistency, objectivity and scientific nature. The principle of historicism enabled to determine the origins of the idea for establishing a mission in the Don region, the features of its formation and development. Thanks to the principle of consistency, the areas of the missionary activities were determined. The principles of objectivity and scientific character contributed to formulating and substantiating the possibility and necessity of applying the experience of missionary activity in modern times.

## **6. Findings**

History of Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is marked by the expansion of the territorial boundaries of the state. This process is associated with the accession of small peoples not professing Christianity. The imperial idea implied that the unifying principle of all the nationalities included in the state is religion. Thus, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a missionary movement aimed at peoples’ Christianization was found at the initiative of Emperor (Kamedina, 2011). In addition to Christianization, the emphasis was put on the compulsory joining to the Russian Orthodox Church. Specifically, in 1865, the Orthodox

Missionary Society was established in St. Petersburg, and on January 25, 1870, it was established in Moscow (Tsy-pin, 2006), where it acquired the status of the major one. This body was the initiator of the diocesan committees' foundation. Its major task was to organize the mission within the dioceses.

The development of broad missionary movement was controlled by the emperor and included two directions: an internal mission aimed to overcome the Old Believer "schism" and an external one – to Christianize the pagans. Missionary activity was entrusted to the Russian Orthodox Church. Through the diocesan bishops, committees were founded in each church-administrative unit (eparchy) and they aimed to organize missionary work.

From the time of the formation, the Don region named the Land of the Don Cossacks until 1786, the Land of the Don Host – from 1786 to 1870, the Region of the Don Host – from 1870, was a multi-ethnic and poly-confessional region. With a predominantly Christian population, a small number of Muslims, Buddhists (supporters of Lamaism) and Jews lived here. Among Christians, supporters of the old rites (Old Believers) were very numerous. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the representatives of the following minority religious group were recorded in the region: Pneumatomachians, Molokans, Judaizers (Old Israel, New Israel), Baptists, etc. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the temporary residents of the Don Region included foreign merchants who conducted international trade, and colonists (mostly Germans). This category of the population was characterized by the confession of Catholicism and Lutheranism.

Since the Don Army was an irregular army of the Russian Empire, and its task was to participate in wars and protect the borders of the state, it was involved in the imperial initiative to develop the mission. It was, firstly, a controlling body, whose task was to keep statistics, including religious movements, secondly, a body controlling the allocation of various types of allowances (for example, land) to all who adopted Christianity (for example, Kalmyks).

The diocesan bishop of the Don and Novocherkassk diocese was responsible for organization of missionary activity in the Don region and other provinces of the Russian Empire, and the clergy of the diocese and laity who wished to work in this field controlled its implementation. The beginning of missionary activity on the Don was associated with the name of Archbishop Platon (Gorodetsky), an outstanding hierarch of the Russian Church, who stated the absence of missionary work in the diocese after joining the Don chair in 1867. Only in 1871, thanks to his initiative, preparations for the establishment of the committee of the Missionary Society began.

The Don Diocesan Committee of the "Orthodox Missionary Association for Assistance to Orthodox Missions in Conversion of Non-Christians Living within the Russian Empire to the Orthodox Christianity and the Consolidation of Converts Both in the Truths of the Holy Faith and in Christian Life" was opened in 1871. Before its establishment, the diocesan bishop initiated the study of the statistics of the non-Christian population living on the Don. Preliminary results recorded in the archival documentation of the Don Spiritual Consistory stored in the State Archive of the Rostov Region, showed that in 1870 in Don Host Oblast there were up to 24,000 Lamaism adepts (Don Kalmyks) and a small number of Tatars (162 people) who professed Islam (GARO. F. 226. Op. 2. D. 6319. L. 3). An analysis of the work of the parish clergy on the subject of missionary work carried out by the diocesan committee showed that the priests of the Orthodox parishes adjacent to the Kalmyks' nomad camps did not convert a

single person to Christianity over the past 5 years. Moreover, among them were no people capable of missionary work. Thus, the need to open the Don Committee of the Orthodox Missionary Society was justified. On November 21, 1871, the committee was opened in Novocherkassk by order of Archbishop Platon (GARO. F. 226. Op. 2. D. 6319. L. 17).

The activities of the Committee in the first years of its existence aimed at preparing the Don Kalmyks for a mission. On the initiative of Archbishop Platon, the faith and life of the Kalmyks was studied. At the same time, a project for missionary activity developed and funds were raised. In order to get acquainted with the doctrine, rituals and language of the Kalmyks, in 1872 the Committee sent a teacher of the Don Theological Seminary to Kalmyk settlements. It was A.L. Krylov, who in the 1870s created works devoted to the customs and religious beliefs of the Kalmyks and published them in the journal “Donskie eparxialnye vedomosti”. The works under consideration are still relevant and make up an important source illustrating the history of the Don Kalmyks.

The most important initiative of the mission of the Don Diocesan Committee concerning the Kalmyks, which received the approval of the diocesan bishop, was the establishment of an orphanage for Kalmyk children aimed to educate them and further involve in missionary activity.

The orphanage was opened on November 21, 1880 in the settlement “Ilyinka 2” of the Don region of Don Host Oblast. It is noteworthy that students or graduates of the Voronezh Theological Seminary, which later got the name “the Don Theological Seminary”, were appointed as heads of the orphanage and teachers. Amidst the orphanage funding, which provided not only free education, but also accommodation, food, and even the work of an interpreter who solved communication problems with Kalmyk children not speaking Russian, this educational institution did not enjoy either trust or popularity among the Kalmyk population. Initially, the shelter received 5 boys of 8–11 years old. For the entire period of the orphanage’s existence, there were only 9 boys in it, of which only 5 accepted the idea of accepting Christianity and carrying out missionary service. As a result of its short existence, the Committee had to recognize the failure of the orphanage for the mission, and on August 24, 1889, the orphanage was closed. The pupils who remained in the orphanage were supported by the Committee and continued their education at the Don Theological Seminary and the Pletnevsk parochial school at its expense. The Committee assisted the pupil, who could not enter the Don Theological Seminary, in getting the position of a scribe in the Salsk police department.

Despite the active measures taken to start missionary work among the Don Kalmyks, the mission was not successful. The service of the priests trained at the Don Theological Seminary and assigned to the areas where the Kalmyks lived were not fruitful. The report of the missionary committee for 1911 states that two priests did not engage in missionary work at all “because of parish concerns”, and the third – due to “a moral vice that he had not overcome”. The latter was transferred to another parish (Pavlovsky, 1911).

Despite the fact that the main goal of organizing the Orthodox Missionary Society was to promote the spread of Christianity among the pagans of the Russian Empire, Archbishop Platon (Gorodetsky) drew attention to the Old Believer “schism”, which represented an extensive field for Orthodox missionary activity in the Don and Novocherkassk diocese (Dzyuban & Matyukhina, 2015).

The first and most important step towards organizing a mission among the Old Believer population was training of clergy who could work as missionaries among the Old Believers. The Don Theological Seminary was in charge of this task fulfillment (Matyukhina, 2013b). Thanks to the initiative of Archbishop Platon, in the first years of its existence, the Don Theological Seminary introduced an intensified teaching of the doctrine of the “schism”. Thus, in October 1870, the archbishop noticed that only two lessons a week were devoted to the doctrine of “schism”. Teaching the historical part of the doctrine was entrusted to the teacher of Russian church history, and the accusatory part – to the teacher of dogmatic theology. Not satisfied with this form of teaching, the archbishop remarked to the Board of the Seminary that due to a large number of Old Believers in the diocese, the study of this discipline becomes more thorough and specific. Taking into account the opinion of the bishop, the Board of the Seminary decided to introduce the “doctrine of schism” into the seminary program as an independent discipline for pupils of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, teaching this discipline achieved substantive results. In addition, the corresponding department of the seminary library was formed from early printed books used to study the features of the Old Believer worship and rituals.

An important method of mission among the Old Believers was the establishment of parishes of the same faith, to which priests of the official Church, performing divine services, sacraments and rites using early printed books (according to the old rite) were appointed. The establishment of parishes of the same faith as a measure to facilitate the transition of the Old Believers from the schism to Orthodoxy did not result in a perverse outcome. There was a shortage of missionary personnel in the vast territories of the diocese with such a large number of schismatics, and in 1894 there were only 19 parishes of the same faith for the entire diocese.

Since missionary activity continued to be relevant and in demand in the Don and Novochoerkassk diocese in the 1880s, preparations began for the opening of the Missionary School to train missionary personnel in parishes of the same faith and for missionary positions. The rector of the Don Theological Seminary presented the project of the Don Diocesan Missionary School. Those who completed the full three-year course of the school were distributed as co-religionists to clergy positions in congregations of the same faith, and Orthodox to the positions of missionaries.

A long-term result of Archbishop Platon’s efforts to fight the schism was the establishment of the post of diocesan missionaries in 1896 and the formation of missionary districts. At the end of the 1890s, as reported in the diocesan magazine “Donskie eparxialnye vedomosti”, the Don and Novochoerkassk diocese was divided into the following missionary districts: Aksai with the residence of the district missionary in the village Manychskaya; Tsymlyansky with the residence of the district missionary in the village Nagavskaya; Kamensky with the residence of the district missionary in the village Svinyarov, stanitsa Ust-Belokalitvenskaya; Nizhne-Chirsky with the residence of the district missionary in the village Verkhne-Chirskaya; Berezovsky with the residence of the district missionary in the village Popov, stanitsa Ostrovskaya; Chernyshevsky with the residence of the district missionary in the farm Diev, stanitsa Chernyshevskaya. This church-administrative division allowed the missionaries, whose number was very small, to cover a significant number of villages and farms populated mainly by the Old Believer population.

An important method of carrying out missionary activity was the holding of missionary congresses (Matyukhina, 2013a). Taking into account the increase in the number of various sects, the church leadership at the 3<sup>rd</sup> All-Russian Missionary Congress in Kazan in 1897 proposed a number of measures to strengthen the anti-sectarian mission in the dioceses. On the basis of these proposals and by the decree of the Holy Synod of May 26, 1900, decisions were adopted on the activities of the 3<sup>rd</sup> All-Russian Missionary Congress and transferred to the dioceses for execution (GARO. F. 226. Op. 3. D. 10482. L. 1). In paragraph 6 of the definitions section, it was proposed to establish diocesan missionary congresses. On September 9, 1902, Archbishop Athanasius (Parkhomovich) of the Don and Novocherkassk opened the Don Diocesan Missionary Congress for the first time in the building of the Don Theological Seminary. Orthodox and fellow faith priests, deans of the dioceses, six district missionaries, diocesan missionaries, as well as missionaries and clergy from neighboring dioceses were invited to join it. The congress was attended by a representative of the Holy Synod, who made a report on missionary activity in Russia. The congress was attended by a representative of the Holy Synod, who made a report on missionary activity in Russia. The congress discussed the need to increase the number of missionary courses, the missionary significance of church schools, the establishment of brotherhoods, the gatherings and needs of the mission, the introduction of a permanent column in the “Donskie eparxialnye vedomosti” under the title “Raskol i sektantstvo” (“Schismatic and Sectarianism”), etc. and the rules were entrusted to a commission consisting of diocesan missionaries, the rector of the Don Theological Seminary, district missionaries, and diocesan clergy dealing with mission issues. Decisions of subsequent Don diocesan missionary congresses in 1913–1915 continued the search for effective forms and methods of missionary activity among the Old Believers and sectarians. Diocesan congresses enabled to evaluate and correct missionary work carried out at various levels.

Missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which started bringing positive results, was ceased due to the political transformations of the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The cessation of missionary activity was primarily influenced by a change in legislation. Specifically, on January 23, 1918, the Bolshevik government adopted a decree “On the separation of the church from the state and the school from the church” (Sovnar USSR, 1942). This legislative act deprived religious organizations of the status of a legal entity and nationalized all types of property that belonged to them. Deprived of the material base, the Orthodox Russian Church was unable to finance the staff of missionaries and publishing activity, which was an important part of missionary service. The formation of Soviet legislation on religious organizations was completed by the “Decree on Religious Associations” adopted on April 8, 1929, which finally deprived them of all rights and limited the internal life of the communities of the Orthodox Russian Church and its activities exclusively to the temple buildings, which fundamentally precluded missionary service.

The change in the political system in 1991 initiated the policy of returning rights to religious organizations. This was preceded by the official celebration of the 1,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christening of Russia in 1988, constant requests to the Council on Religious Affairs of the USSR to return churches to believers, etc. As early as October 1, 1990, the USSR Law “On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations” was adopted. It was concise, but its adoption testified to the end of the era of the persecution of religion in the territory of the former USSR.

On September 19, 1997, the State Duma adopted the Federal Law “On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations”, and on September 24, 1997, the Federation Council approved it. This document became a landmark that fully testified to the social and cultural transformations of modernity (Chechel & Stepanyan, 2012). For this study, Chapter III.1 of the document “Missionary Activities” is of particular interest. First of all, this legislative act of the post-Soviet period defines this concept. In accordance with federal law, missionary activity is understood as “the activity of a religious association aimed at disseminating information about its doctrine among persons who are not participants (members, followers) in that religious association, with the purpose of involving these persons in the membership (members, followers) of a religious association” (Federal Law “On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations” of September 19, 1997) Despite the certain style of the document stipulated by the genre of the legislative act, the above definition corresponds to how the term “mission” is understood by the Russian Orthodox Church. In accordance with the definition of the Church, “mission” means the priestly apostolate, which is a necessary and basic form of service to the Church (Efimov, 2007). Apparently, the appeal to the terminology adopted by a certain religious organization was an indicator of the post-Soviet views transformation. Further, the document specified the content of missionary activity and the procedure for its implementation, which also did not contradict the ideas of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The adoption of the aforementioned federal law raised the question of the possibility of applying the missionary methods developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. An analysis of the historical experience in the implementation of this direction (Lunkin, 2015) ensured the possibility of using it in modern times. This is due, firstly, to the absence of a pronounced need in modern society for knowledge about certain religious organizations and their practices. Secondly, the WWW allows independent acquaintance with all issues being of interest to an individual (Luchenko, 2008). On the one hand, this will greatly facilitate the missionary component of any religious organization; on the other hand, the WWW excludes the possibility of personal interaction and increases the chance of misinterpreting the information provided publicly. As a result, at present the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church is concentrated mainly on the institutions of the penitentiary system.

## **7. Conclusion**

As the study showed, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Russian Empire, an extensive system of missionary activities was created. Its object was communities that did not accept the power of the Orthodox Russian Church and sectarian communities. However, the developed methods, despite their validity and testing in the historical process, are unacceptable for the present despite the possibility of conducting missionary activities approved at the state level.

Thus, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the imperial authorities initiated an extensive network of missionary institutions, whose activities were aimed at the Christianization of small peoples annexed to the empire during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to solve the problems of the internal mission aimed at joining the supporters of the old rites to the Russian Orthodox Church and at overcoming the rapidly developing sectarianism of both rationalistic and mystical directions. The approach to missionary activity was

elaborated in detail. Educational institutions belonging to the spiritual department were involved in the training of qualified missionaries.

Despite the possibility of conducting missionary activity determined by the federal law of 1997, it is obvious that the historically formed experience is unacceptable for the present, which is largely due to the transformation of the consciousness of a modern person.

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