

PARADIGMS OF RELIGIOSITY OF THE POPULATION AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE IN THE MODERN HISTORY OF BELARUS AND THE POST-SOVIET SPACE IN THE XX – EARLY XXI CENTURIES

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The main results of the 2016–2018 research of the problem of state-confessional policy in the history of Belarus in 20–21 centuries, the peculiarities of religiousness of the population and the realization of freedom of conscience in the post-Soviet space are formulated.

During the study of the problem “Paradigms of Religiousness of the Population and Freedom of Conscience in the Modern History of Belarus and the Post-Soviet Space in the 20th early 21st centuries”, the paradigms of state-confessional politics on the Belarusian lands on the 20th centuries and the post-Soviet space of the beginning of the 21st centuries were analysed, the peculiarities of the religiousness of the population have been studied, and models of the realization of the freedom of conscience in the post-Soviet space of the late 20th – early 21st centuries have been revealed.

The fundamental changes in the paradigm of state-confessional policies and the realization of freedom of conscience, fixed in the Belarusian lands in the 20th - early 21st centuries, and determined by internal political doctrines of the strategy of state development, identified a number of stages of this process, the evolution from the identification model and attempts to modernize it to the separation model and the formation of elements of a cooperative model of state-confessional relations.

In the period of the Russian Empire in the early 20th century in the Belarusian lands the previous practice of the identification model of state-confessional relations was preserved, the segregation of religious organizations took place, and religion was not a private affair of citizens. With the aggravation of internal political contradictions, attempts were made to liberalize the confessional policy, and problem of the freedom of conscience was reflected in the political programs of political parties and social movements in Russia. The characteristics, contradictions and difficulties of the confessional situation in the empire were clearly revealed during the First World War, which became a serious test for the ability of the Russian Orthodox Church to carry out the ideological support for the autocracy.

During the period of the Provisional Government, an attempt was made to revise the identification model of state-confessional relations, and to modernize the legislation in the field of religion in the spirit of bourgeois democracy.

In the period of the Soviet state, the practice of a rigid separation model of state-confessional relations was established, which became the antithesis of the model of the period of the Russian Empire in the early 20th century. There were variations of its implementation (the pre-war period and the period of the Great Patriotic War, the second half of the 1940s – mid-1950s, late 1950s – the first half of the 1960s, the 1970s – the 1980s), but only in the late 1980s under the influence of the new party doctrine “Perestroika”, state-confessional relations enter into a marked stage of liberalization.

In the period of the Republic of Belarus, the modernization of the legal system of the separation model takes place. In the legislative provision of state-confessional relations, the main sub-periods can be distinguished: a) a liberal and legally consistent separation model (1991–2002) and b) the inclusion of elements of a more dominated cooperative model (since 2003).

The specificity of the religiosity of the population of modern Belarus is formed in the conditions of poly-confessional modern society. “Religious-church renaissance”, formed in the late 1980s – early 1990s, predetermined a high level of mostly formal religious self-identification of citizens. The trend of 2012–2017 is the reduction of the number of respondents who claim to believe in God. The inhabitants of the western regions of Belarus have a higher appreciation of the role of religion in their life compared to the eastern ones, assigning the absolute majority of those who declared their faith in God claim to be Orthodox. There remains the lack of a strict correlation between higher rates of confessional identity and lower rates of respondents’ overall religious identity, as well as a pronounced ideological eclecticism of modern “believers”. The low cult discipline was fixed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. Materials of international studies of the 2000s usually rank Belarus among the least religious countries in the world.

The consequences of the “religious-church renaissance” to a greater or lesser extent experienced all regions of the post-Soviet space. According to international polls, in general, the post-Soviet countries show a lower degree of religiosity than the world average. Of the 15 countries, 12 belong to the first half of the countries of the

world, arranged in the order of increasing religiosity. The most “religious” post-Soviet countries are Tajikistan, Armenia and Georgia. The least religious post-Soviet country is Estonia, the top five also includes Azerbaijan, Belarus, Latvia and Lithuania. The “religiosity” indicator may be influenced by the state ideology, the ideology of the “traditional religion” as part of national identity, culture, etc. At the same time, only six post-Soviet countries (including Belarus) are characterized by a high or medium level of confessional diversity.

In the post-Soviet space, the models of freedom of conscience that exist in the modern world are limited. The identification model did not become legislative practice, the separation model was proclaimed in most countries of this group, the cooperation model is observed in terms of its possible elements in Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia and Belarus. From a formal legal point of view, the concept of the freedom of conscience is most consistently represented in the legislation of Azerbaijan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. Constitutions and specialized laws on the freedom of conscience of the post-Soviet countries, except Armenia and Belarus, either directly declare the country’s secularism or lack of state religion, or (and) reinforce the separation (independence) of the church from the state.