

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MINISTRY OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (END OF THE 19TH-BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURIES)

Tatiana E. Lifanova¹

Svetlana A. Shilina²

Ekaterina Yu. Sycheva³

Elena V. Nozdracheva⁴

Olga V. Golenkova⁵

Abstract: The current Russian society is characterized by close attention of the state to the environmental situation, the system of social assistance to the needy, social service and volunteering, as well as preserving the natural environment and maintaining ecological balance. The present study aims to analyze the process of socio-ecological ministry of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in the late 19th – early 20th centuries. The results were obtained using in-depth historical, sociological, and quantitative data analysis (one-dimensional statistical

analysis) of the source base: the works of prominent historians of Russia and materials from state archives. The relevance lies in the fact that the materials of the study illustrate the areas of the ministry of the ROC, poorly described in literature. Knowledge of the history of the development of a particular social industry, including the role of the ROC in the development of social charity, is an integral part of any social knowledge.

¹ Federal State-Funded Educational Institution of Higher Education «Bryansk State Academician I.G. Petrovski University»

² Federal State-Funded Educational Institution of Higher Education «Bryansk State Academician I.G. Petrovski University»

³ Federal State-Funded Educational Institution of Higher Education «Bryansk State Academician I.G. Petrovski University»

⁴ Federal State-Funded Educational Institution of Higher Education «Bryansk State Academician I.G. Petrovski University»

⁵ Federal State-Funded Educational Institution of Higher Education «Bryansk State Academician I.G. Petrovski University»

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1. Introduction.

The study of the history of the social system in Russia is updated by the fact that with the development of society, formation of states, cultures, norms and traditions, questions arise related to the attitude towards children, the elderly, and the disabled [9]. The desire to see strong and healthy citizens fit for work in their state remains crucial in many countries of the world over the centuries. Different stages of the history of Russian civilization transformed the attitude towards the needy due to the changing socio-economic conditions [3; 8; 22]. The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) plays an important role in increasing attention to those in need and providing them with the necessary assistance.

The present research aims to analyze various aspects of the social ministry of the ROC. The objectives were to enlarge on the following areas of this ministry: preserving the natural environment and maintaining ecological balance; providing the population with medical care; pastoral duties in the

theater of operations during the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 and the First World War; raising money to organize charity for widows and orphans of the military clergy; creating and maintaining hospitals for wounded soldiers; assisting in cases of natural disasters, weather anomalies, and epidemics.

A significant number of pre-revolutionary researchers [14; 21] on the problems of charity in Russia focused on the attitude of the government to helping the socially vulnerable and to identifying the distinctive features of the state charity system. A.A. Isaev [20], E.D. Maximov [29], A.D. Stog [40], G.I. Frolov [44] et al also dealt with issues of public charity. S.K. Gogel also wrote about the necessity to combine the efforts of the state and society in organizing assistance to those in need [15].

The works by T.E. Lifanova [27; 28], S.A. Shilina [46], O.V. Golenkova [16; 17], E.Yu. Sycheva [41], A.F. Nekrylova, V.V. Golovin [35] and A.K. Mamedov [30; 31] are characterized by a comprehensive approach to the relevant issues and by understanding the complexity, inconsistency and multifactorial nature

of the historical process and of the role of the ROC in it.

2. Research Methods.

The authors used the historical, sociological, and quantitative data analysis (one-dimensional statistical analysis) methods. The authors performed a deep analysis of the sources, including the works of prominent historians of Russia and the materials of state archives.

The methodological base of the socio-historical research consists of interdisciplinary works on the theory of systems, synergetics, civilizational, geopolitics, etc.

3. Results.

If we consider the Russian Federation as one of the main 'bonds' of modern civilization, it is impossible to abandon the analysis of the country's historical past, and the tireless search in the 'affairs of the past' for answers to today's and future realities. Knowing the history of the development of a particular social industry, including the role of the ROC in the development of social

charity, is an integral part of any historical knowledge.

The church was perhaps the first in this country to pay attention to the respect for the natural environment, as well as to that side of moral education which we now call the ecological.

The treasury of ecological morality is filled with commandments of world religions, with local traditions, taboos, legends, sayings and proverbs of different nationalities. These will be strengthened by modern scientific concepts [7].

The government of the Russian Empire did not have an environmental doctrine before the church reform. One of the tasks of modernization is transforming the agrarian sector of the Russian economy into the industrial one, as well as transforming the rural environment into an urbanized one without taking into account rural development laws and the importance of its reproduction. The Russian government did not deal with environmental problems during the reforms or after their completion either [25].

The provincial section of the bureaucracy was studying the loss of natural resources and, in connection with

this, the rural environment in Russia. This is evidenced by unofficial provincial messages and official annual reports sent in the 1870s to the Zemsky department of the Ministry of the Interior, which regulated land use issues. The government was unable to assess the land before the buy-back operation, while the tax burden was already in place. The resources of producers were taxed according to the maximum category, primarily the peasants' land use, which undermined their economic condition, and, ultimately, the state's economy [25].

Local replenishment of resources within the settlements boundaries was dealt with by the peasants themselves. It was an initiative, folk experience, fixed in the norms of customary law. In the 1860-1870s, the restoration of the rural environment was not a directed national process, due to the estate of land use [25].

The Orthodox Church was able to formulate the tasks that were important for preserving the life of society, and the parish priests were able to accept them, because the Church was ready for this from ancient times. At the heart of the tasks of preserving the environment is a Christian vision of the

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destiny of man in worldly and eternal life, following the path of self-restriction. The church took an approach to pondering the place of the 'microenvironment' in the universe [25].

The ecological concept of the Orthodox Church in the 1860-1870s was built on an extensive social base. Orienting the parishioners to arranging a small environment, the clergy of the parishes addressed not only the prosperous strata of the population but also all the church (non)goers who sought good. Anyone could understand the concept of small business and act upon this understanding; if modernization in Russia increased the pragmatic mood of the prosperous and rejected the least prosperous, parish priests united all those in need of spiritual support. From ancient times, the ROC was also formed as a public institution, educating the moral and ethical ideal of self-denial [25].

The pastor of the village parish patiently explained to the peasants how important it is to be pious, attentive in communicating with the forces of nature, with 'God's gifts' and with all the resources given in earthly life [25].

The attitude to the forest was of particular importance in the parishes. For

church construction and arrangement of church space, including the housing stock of the parish, the forest was allocated from the state fund at a reduced price. Yet the forest was also an object of study; priests of the church parish made a significant contribution to the research of its condition. In the second half of the 19th century, forest underwent intensive exploitation. The volume of forest fund losses in Russia was described and studied in scientific societies with the participation of priests from local parishes. The parish clergy devoted considerable attention to the study of landscapes and ravines, and systems for strengthening them were promoted [13].

Parish clergy participated in the work of the veterinary service of Russia. From the organization at the parishes of traditional veterinary farms in the late 1870s, the clergy switched to the protection of the sanitary regime in the rural environment in connection with the law of 1879 adopted by the Zemstvo. This law provided for two directions for maintaining the environmental friendliness of the rural environment: protection of rural dirt roads during the run of herd cattle along them and cleaning the area from dead animals [36].

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The Zemstvo of Russia also involved the parish clergy in veterinary-quarantine services in the provinces; their duty was to educate the population and parishioners [25].

The need for the protection of natural resources increased due to the expansion of the business sector in 1880-1890. The sad page in rural nature management of this period is the massive forest arsons that destroyed large areas. Most of the arsons were associated with the struggle between peasants and merchants; village priests opposed peasant arson as a form of political or social protest [25].

Parish clergy participated in forming sanitary conditions in the settlements (maintaining graveyards) in the parish. In conditions of low population density and considerable remoteness of settlements from the parish church, so-called 'glaciers' (premises for rural morgues) were allocated to rural communities at the initiative of the clergy. Such premises were distributed in the villages of feudal-dependent peasants, later they appeared in the villages of state peasants (since the beginning of the 1860s). Through the efforts of the clergy, such premises were also organized in the poorest former

landowner villages. Peasants left deceased relatives in them until their funeral in the church [37].

Since the spiritual culture of Russia over the past ten centuries for most of the population was formed in the traditions of Christianity, the role of priests in the development of a careful attitude to nature can hardly be overestimated. After all, everything that we now relate to environmental problems, crises, disasters, and ways to prevent them is in the Bible. Priests, preaching and clarifying biblical truths, thereby contributed to the development of environmental thinking among parishioners. Let us consider the discourse of the main provisions of the Bible, aimed at preserving nature, preserving the micro and macro environments and having not lost their relevance so far.

The Ten Commandments of Moses (Exodus 20:12) to this day form the basis of the legal system in Russia, as in other Christian-oriented countries. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) defines the highest criteria of moral conduct in human relations. True, many ecologists precisely blame Christianity for the formed reckless enslavement of nature; it was Christianity that

contributed to the formation of man as the conqueror of nature, recklessly exploiting its resources.

Let us analyze the traditions of Christianity from the perspective of environmentally oriented behavior.

The Bible says that the Earth was created for man: God “created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18). At the same time, he provided the Earth with everything necessary for people: not just that they survive, but that they can fully enjoy life (Genesis 1-2).

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15). “The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food” (Genesis 2:9), and “Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky” (Genesis 2: 19).

According to the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, plants are meant as food for animals, birds and reptiles, as well as for humans, and after the great flood all these creatures were given the order to multiply. The Book of Job says that God sends rain to plants and uninhabited deserts (Job 38: 25-27);

however, Psalm 104 even more expressively describes God's care for nature and for everything that exists, where man is no more noticeable than birds and wild animals (Psalm 104: 10-30).

The first chapter of Genesis favors an exclusively vegetarian diet; only after the fall and the Great Flood was man allowed to eat meat.

Man was placed in the world to look after it for the Lord and preserve it as a source of joy, and not just for food (Genesis 2: 15).

There is an interpretation of the belief in the rule of man, according to which mankind is called upon to take control of the natural world entrusted to it by God, to Whom man is responsible for maintaining the world. However, there is no despotism in the biblical dominance of man over nature. The book of Genesis gives man the right to maintain nature, yet it sanctions only such right that is consistent with the Hebrew concept of the monarchy. Since the ancient Jews had no contacts with other absolutist monarchies, their own kings were never recognized as despots. Moreover, they were considered responsible before God for the prosperity of the country, and if they were unable to

provide for it, then God could send a prophet and appoint a new king.

The prosperity of any country is impossible without careful, sustainable environmental management. The Bible, as a book about God's economy, cannot fail to provide man with the rules of safe life on Earth, and, therefore, of economic management. Most advice God gave to believers were related to what we now call 'environmental management'. The Old Testament provides laws with many prescriptions – for instance, when to plant and sow, that is, beginnings of competent land use are given: “For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what is left. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove” (Exodus 23: 10-11).

Genesis, the Book of Psalms, Job, and the Gospel speak in favor of a good understanding of the values and beauty of nature. Both the Old and New Testaments provide understanding of the intrinsic value of all the living things, and this means a careful attitude to everything, which is explicitly expressed in the Old Testament. Man's dominance

over nature also means his responsibility to God, Who Himself praised everything created by Him as very good (Genesis 1).

Biblical words about the rule of man give a certain reason to consider everything that exists as resources for the good of man. On the other hand, the belief that man can use nature correctly does not justify the irresponsible treatment of it.

The books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy established significant restrictions on human interaction with nature, including, for example, attitudes toward fruit trees, oxen, female birds, and fallow land.

It is erroneous to believe that if so many things are entrusted to people (moral beings), this means the absence of moral prohibitions in practice. The Bible says that the Lord cares about the welfare of all the living things, not just man (Psalm 104). People, in accordance with this, are obliged to take care of nature, not to destroy its integrity in a ruthless submission to their own needs. Although the Bible does not establish these obligations in the form of clearly defined principles, it nevertheless eliminates despotic and anthropocentric approaches to nature.

The Bible says a lot about people's attitudes toward animals. "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Genesis 1:26). Thus, people were instructed to look after all the land and all the animals.

Jesus Christ shows sympathy to caring for animals. He says that a good shepherd, as opposed to a mercenary, puts his life for the sheep (John 10:11). This verse was intended to influence people's attitude towards their own flocks, as well as their understanding of the pastoral care of Jesus Christ for the followers.

There are laws that govern the use of pets: oxen and mules. Everything is very regulated and teaches the most caring attitude towards them. In addition, the Bible says: "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help them with it" (Exodus 23: 4-5).

Regarding the relationship to nature, the New Testament differs from

the Old Testament in the final removal of the distinction between clean and unclean animals (Acts 10-11) and the abolition of animal sacrifice.

The Bible also gives instructions on how to handle plants. More than three thousand years ago, God commanded the Israelites to preserve fruit trees during a siege of an enemy city, giving a simple reason for this: the trees provide food. “When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees people, that you should besiege them?” (Deuteronomy 20: 19).

It is clear that any plants are more valuable when they are alive, yet in today's world, momentary benefits often make you forget about long-term benefits. Only environmental knowledge can make a difference.

Since Christians knew the Old Testament, they had the opportunity to see that in the eyes of God various beings other than man have their own intrinsic value. The provisions of the New Testament also reflect the relationship of man with nature. Thus, when Jesus Christ spoke of ‘field flowers’ (Matthew 6: 28-30), He emphasized how much

more value people have. And yet, the words spoken about the flowers suggest that God admires even the appearance of plants and that they have intrinsic value. Therefore, being in agreement with the Bible, man should not consider nature as just a source for realizing own aspirations but should take care of everything which is around (in recent years, this has been interpreted as preserving biodiversity).

Environmentalists who are trying to save as many species as possible speak of their ethics as the ‘principle of Noah’, because Noah was ordered to bring “two of all living creatures, male and female” into the ark (Genesis 6:19). The prolonged existence of species in nature, apparently, implies their undeniable right to it.

Jesus Christ spent 40 days in the desert surrounded by wild animals; several times He asked His disciples to cross to the other side of Lake Galilee to gain solitude and avoid the crowd (see Mark 4:35, 6:45, 8:13). These places in the Bible indicate that He regarded nature for not only resources but saw in it a refuge and a source of renewal. As in His reflections on field flowers, here He appreciates the beauty of nature. Now we call it the recreational function of nature.

The Bible explicitly and implicitly contains many of the necessary components for deliberately balanced environmental ethics.

The root of all environmental problems lies in man himself. People should govern themselves first, not nature. The phrase “Man, know yourself”, carved on the Delphic Temple in Ancient Greece, nowadays acquired an unexpected hue. Environmental education and training should be the priority direction of all environmental activities. The main source of environmental education is those structures or areas of life which initially aim at forming ethical standards through a system of moral prohibitions or restrictions. In society, this is primarily family and religion.

It is unlikely that someone over the past two thousand years said better words than Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, but we see that humanity is developing in some completely different direction.

The Bible teaches that man's duties in relation to nature are based on faith in the Creator of the world and everything that fills it, the Creator who loves His creation and provides for it. Man made in the image of God is His

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fellow-worker in the world (1 Corinthians 3:9). Following his Prototype, a person is obliged to love nature and take care of its order, purity and well-being. This means that the dominance of man over nature allows and even assumes knowledge of nature, and also puts forward some control over it. Yet this does not mean at all that man has been given the right to abuse the ‘gifts of nature’ and even less so to destroy it. The Bible says that once the world was different, and every creation of God was beautiful (1 Timothy 4:4). Yet man, being free to choose the path of life or the path of death, the path to God or from God, used his freedom for evil. Since then, “the creation was subjected to frustration... the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Romans 8: 20-22). We disobeyed our Creator, deciding that we ourselves know and are able to do everything. What happened to the world around us is a clear example of what our self-confidence leads to.

All statements about nature are given in the context of a code of ethics formulated by the Ten well-known Commandments. These moral commandments of the Old Testament

determine the righteousness of man. And the Bible teaches: “Thus you will walk in the ways of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous” (Proverbs 2:20).

The commandments of the Old Testament, exalted and supplemented by the essence of the New Testament, can certainly fulfill the role of environmental imperatives today, bearing in mind that none of the well-known ethical postulates of our culture carries a greater informational capacity and moral stature. Thus, the basic rule of people sharing the resources of the Earth should be the Old Testament commandment “Love your neighbor as yourself” or the Christian commandment “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12). Unfortunately, not all people have knowledge of exactly how one should act in accordance with this rule. The lack of accessible and timely information on the possible consequences of new technologies does not allow convincingly condemning the immorality of many areas of scientific and technical research, although we all observe an increase in ecogenic diseases and an increase in the number of people with disabilities in certain regions with an unfavorable environmental situation.

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The Old Testament

commandment “You shall not kill” bears a great environmental burden. Today, this commandment is a ban on research and the introduction of technologies that potentially contain the possibility of killing something alive. Such research and technology are possible in a wide variety of fields, and each profession has its understanding of this commandment. “Do not kill” as an ethical norm is convincing not only in the system of religious belief – as the norm of environmentally safe behavior, it is also substantiated by natural-scientific knowledge about the biosphere homeostasis. A chemist who does not even believe in God understands the inadmissibility of using (and, consequently, manufacturing) chemical weapons, toxic chemicals, harmful food additives, etc.

According to the principle of biochemical unity (formulated by V.I. Vernadsky at the beginning of the 20th century), that which is deadly for one living creature cannot be harmless to another. The living world is connected by trophic chains, and sooner or later the poison reaches a species to which it was not intended, and then it will reach man through food.

The laws of the Old Testament monitor the proper balance of social wealth produced through nature. Once every 50 years all debts were forgiven, and the lands were returned to their original owners (Leviticus 25: 8-17).

According to Jesus Christ, “Man shall not live on bread alone” (Matthew 4:4). After God created everything, “God saw all that He had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). It is then obvious people were to own the Earth for their own benefit, yet do so with a sense of responsibility. People should be the guardians of the Earth, not its destroyers. The death of the Earth – what we are witnessing now – is happening against the will of God. Therefore, those who contribute to this act against the purpose of life on Earth. The Bible declares that God “will destroy those who destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18).

The great idea of the Apocalypse (*Greek* ‘revelation’) is not to sow a sense of doom but to mobilize people to understand the situation and to perform the actions prompted by the Almighty.

We begin to understand the meaningful value of Revelation only when we read the Bible ecologically.

The biblical parable of original sin is now read as a legend about the change of the animistic worldview of our ancestors who lived in unity with nature to a natural resource submissive. Moreover, the Revelation of John is now read as an intuitive prediction of the future.

Man will not be able to survive and improve among the decomposition and destruction of the environment with a catastrophic reduction in biodiversity.

Man must internally realize how to deal with the natural world without destroying it. This understanding is given by religion; in beliefs, environmental morality is formed by a complex set of ideas about man’s place in the World, about being connected to its multidimensionality and the laws of evolution. This underlies the understanding of man’s responsibility for interfering in the natural course of events and determines the attitude to life preservation knowledge. The belief system justifies environmental morality and reflects the general cosmic principles that determine the inadmissibility of neglect of the Earth, as part of the Cosmos.

The Orthodox parish clergy instilled not only confessional but also secular culture and fostered a caring

attitude to nature, making a special contribution to the development of local history. Empirical studies of local lore in Russia became widespread in the second half of the 19th century thanks mainly to church communities. These are systematic descriptions of the church parish serving as a unique source on the history of the Church and on the evolution of the environment in Russia. The information collected reflects the movement of the population, the restructuring of the territories of parishes and volosts, and the reasons for the transfer of borders. Parish priests contributed to studies of individual industries and crafts and on their impact on the environment. At the same time, priests were regular participants in a wide variety of secular surveys of the population and living environment of Russians. They were the most active assistants to provincial statistical committees since the 1870s; the information they collected was recognized by contemporaries as the most comprehensive and objective [25].

Thus, we can confidently say that the clergy did a lot for environmental education and the upbringing of their flock and for creating

a favorable living environment, at least in their parish or the diocese.

The Church played a definite role in providing the population with medical care – above else, the first free hospitals for the poor were also established by the Church. In 1091, they were established by the Bishop of Pereyaslavl (later Metropolitan of Kiev) Ephraim [1]. There are memories of the successful medical activity of Cyril, who founded Lake Beloozero monastery in 1397, and of Zosima, the founder of the Solovetsk monastery, directly called ‘a healer’ in the *vitae* [6].

The advantage of medical care provided by monastery healers was, first of all, that it was free of charge and, therefore, publicly available, while secular doctors treated for money [19].

In 1722, the Holy Synod began the construction of the hospital on the model of Louis XIV ‘for a long and safe life’; it which was based on the project of Dr Bydlo. It was allowed to purchase tools and medicines in France.

The parishes provided medical assistance and free medicines to patients [42].

Of particular importance is the influence of the clergy of the Russian army and navy in the troops during the

First World War, as noted by numerous researchers [2; 4; 34]. The socio-psychological problems and the role of the clergy in making decisions concerning not only military priests but also related to the entire army serve as the main issues here.

Let us consider the main activities of military priests in terms of their social orientation.

“The regulation on the management of churches and clergy of the military and naval departments” was approved by order of August 12, 1890.

The priests had duties in various cases of a military situation: in and out of action, at a hospital, on a medical train [45]. Priests contributed to the streamlining of the holiday system (exemption from training) and fought drunkenness and suicides [45].

During the Russo-Japanese War, the Orthodox clergy of the army touched upon the crucial issues of identifying the fallen and delivering death notices. In January 1905, a field priest submitted a memorandum addressed to the army commander, which proved the need to provide all the army ranks with badges, for example, notes with the necessary information about the warrior and with the address of

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his relatives, sewn into the uniform and worn on the chest [45].

In 1914, a congress of military and naval clergy was held, where, among others, questions were discussed about libraries, training, charity and the religious and moral education of prisoners [5].

Despite the activity of the Holy Synod, the maximum burden to ensure the religious and moral needs of Orthodox soldiers fell on the shoulders of military priests whose ranks grew almost five-fold since mid-1914. They spiritually ‘served’ the troops and were responsible for the morals of units of the warring Russia [43].

In connection with the war outbreak, members of the Holy Synod made some decisions regarding their personal contribution to helping the warring motherland: by Decree No. 6712 of July 29, 1914, “all salaries received by the members or those present in the Holy Synod” were donated to the established infirmary [4]. The infirmary opened on September 1, 1914, and on the tenth day the first wounded arrived there. At that time, theological schools also decided to establish their own infirmary. On the proposal of the Rector of the Theological Academy of the capital, Bishop Anastasy

(Aleksandrov), on August 18, 1914, the Holy Synod established the Committee of Russian Theological and Educational Institutions for Assisting the Sick and Wounded Soldiers of the Current Russian Army Designed by Anastasy (Decision No. 7355), which opened the milestone infirmary in Minsk on September 17, 1914 [5]. Subsequently, the Committee deployed another mobile infirmary on the Caucasian front. Transferred to the Main Directorate of the Red Cross, both of these infirmaries were provided by spiritual schools with a monthly content of 10 thousand rubles [5].

The creation and maintenance of hospitals for wounded soldiers became a large and complex area of the Church's social and guardian activities during the war. Taking into account local conditions and material possibilities, each diocese took an active part in rendering assistance to sick and wounded soldiers and officers [44].

From the first days of The World War, the Orthodox Church took an active part in organizing all possible assistance to the army and navy. On July 20, 1914, by definition No. 6502, the Holy Synod called on monasteries, churches and the flock to donate to the

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wounded and to help people called up for war. Monasteries and other institutions under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church were called upon to prepare all possible places for hospitals, as well as to find capable people to care for the wounded. In all churches, poor boxes were established in favor of the Red Cross [43].

The Orthodox Church, its monasteries and parishes left a good memory of themselves with initiative and creative social and charitable work in the difficult years of the First World War. On July 20, 1914, the decision of the Holy Synod No. 6503 was adopted "On the Organization in All Orthodox Parishes of Assistance to Families of Persons in the Troops". According to this document, a special board of trustees was to be formed in each parish, in which the entire church clergy and the elder took mandatory part. The Council kept records of such families, ascertained their property status and determined assistance. Particular assistance was provided if the head of the family was at war or died or if the family lost their younger members because of the war. The money was raised by collecting donations in the parishes and from church funds. Initially, it was clear that

this money would not be enough, but with the outbreak of war, the Holy Synod publicly placed serious hopes on the Orthodox parish, although it did not receive the rights of a legal entity and was not an independent church administrative unit until 1914 (as religious communities of Orthodox Christians, for example) [43].

In the autumn of 1914, Councils of parish trusteeships launched a campaign to assist families who had men mobilized for war. Parish trusteeship councils held box gatherings, spoke to the well-to-do citizens and accepted donations on subscription lists. Donations from business associations and institutions were encouraged. As a result, in the first year of the war, parish trusteeships created a charity fund of 6 million rubles, of which 50% was collected among parishioners. From this fund, 2.2 million families of military personnel received various financial benefits before the autumn of 1915. Along with financial support, parish trusteeship councils provided help by freely distributing grain, plowing fields, harvesting, gathering firewood, and providing loans for declining households. During the autumn of 1915, parish trusteeship opened hundreds of

nurseries to help families with young children, organized collective plowing and cleaning of the soldier wives' fields, created charity orphanages or assigned orphans to vocational schools [43].

The war was inevitably accompanied by a multiple increase in the number of people with disabilities and extremely exacerbated the problems of their living arrangements and patronage. In 1915, the Synod issued a special appeal to the Orthodox dioceses to take over part of the state care for the disabled soldiers and officers and to take part in helping the recovering soldiers. The synod asked the diocesan leadership to find opportunities to open houses for the disabled at monasteries, as well as shelters in which recovering soldiers and officers could finally improve their health. This conversion of the Synod found a lively response in dioceses, monasteries and church parishes – according to information received from the field, on June 1, 1915, they expressed their readiness to open such houses for 2000 people in the monasteries, and 1.500 people were accepted at the expense of church funds [43].

At the Synod's call, monasteries and church parishes actively participated in helping refugees by

creating refugee care committees in all dioceses and large cities [32].

With the formation and development of the Russian centralized state, labor assistance is gradually becoming a link in the social charity chain [44], and the clergy plays an essential role in its organization.

The liberal ‘thaw’ of the 1860-1870s and the rise of the charity movement connected with it intensified the activities of church trustees to create labour houses, in which labor assistance was considered as their main function. In 1882, the St. Andrew’s parish trusteeship headed by the rector of St. Andrew’s Cathedral, John Sergiev (Kronstadsky) opened such house in Kronstadt. In September 1886, at the expense of the Evangelical Society, another labour house was founded to become a prominent labor assistance institution in Russia. Its trustees and employees were not limited to providing temporary labor assistance – they carried out constant work on the moral re-education of professional beggars, instructing them on the path to an honest working life [32].

Soon, labour houses began to open everywhere. They were surrounded by a network of charitable institutions

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(schools, reading rooms, Sunday schools, public canteens, shelters, orphanages, cheap apartments, etc.). Gradually, the idea of labor assistance took shape as a system of measures to organize an independent working life, which included various measures for the poor and the unemployed.

The church carried out social regulation of labor activity; a certain form of it being church holidays and Sundays as a way to regulate labor costs and the balance of working and non-working hours [33].

The Code of 1649 legislatively justified non-working holidays. For instance, in 1669, by royal decree, Prince Grigory Obolensky was imprisoned for the fact that his servants worked on his farm on Sunday [33].

The Church provided great assistance to those in need in cases of natural disasters, weather anomalies, and epidemics. Thus, the period of the 13th-15th centuries was an ordeal for the less prosperous – a decrease in the average annual temperature led to unusually severe winters, prolonged spring and the early onset of cold weather, which led to famine and epidemics. Great famine also broke out immediately before the Mongol invasion in 1230-1233. The

population has declined sharply and in some cities almost completely died out. In the 14th century, more than one hundred extreme natural phenomena were recorded in the annals, which caused at least 30 hungry years. Famine and the accompanying epidemics were noted in 1309-1311, 1320-1322, 1348-1353, 1363-1368, 1375, 1387, 1389-1393. During these years numerous cases of cannibalism, robbery and consumption of inedible plants were noted [24].

In 1351, an epidemic of plague came to Russia; the second pestilence began in 1363. Terrible consequences of epidemics were noted in the 15th century. A particularly dangerous epidemic came to Russia after an unusually cold winter of 1417, during which numerous people died from the cold. Then came the pestilence, which lasted all summer and the next winter. As a result, many household and villages fully died out [24].

The epidemic of 1420-1422 had even more serious consequences for Russia, when drought occurred after the warm winter of 1419-1420, with frost and snowy September. The following year, the misfortunes repeated: in the fall of 1421, an epidemic began, followed by

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famine in the winter. By the year 1422, all chronicles, except for the Pskov ones, mentioned ‘great famine’ – people ate carrion, horses, dogs, cats; there were even cases of cannibalism [24].

Finally, the whole decade of 1436-1445 was a period of prolonged shortage, extraordinary high cost, chronic famine and epidemics [24].

Thus, natural disasters led to both mass deaths and social upheaval, expressed in violence and robbery. In total, from the second half of the 14th century to the second half of the 15th century, at least 23 cases of pestilence are mentioned in the annals [24].

The situation was aggravated by two factors: nomad raids and endless feudal strife, which completely erased the feeling of mercy [24].

During the time of national disasters, monasteries became centers of giving alms and rendering assistance to those in need [24]. During the famine of 1508 in the Volokolamsk land, the founder of the Joseph-Volokolamsk monastery Joseph Volotsky ordered to feed about seven hundred people and build a house for the sick at the monastery. When the monastery’s reserves were depleted, Joseph made loans and asked the local prince Yuri

Ivanovich to take care of people suffering from hunger [24].

Sometimes the Russian Church provided charitable assistance to other nations, usually Orthodox. In 1894, an earthquake occurred in Greece, and the Holy Synod donated 3 thousand rubles from its funds and announced raising donations in all churches [38]. In 1897, the Holy Synod again released 4 thousand rubles in favor of the Greeks who suffered in the war with Turkey [39].

Thus, speaking of the socio-ecological ministry of the ROC and its representatives, we can conclude that this work is of great importance in solving social problems over a long period of time.

4. Discussion.

At the end of the 20th century, the access to previously closed archives and library collections allowed to study and rethink the experience of social activity existing in Russia. The research of the historical roots of the state system of charity was carried out by V.I. Zhukov [18], P.V. Melnikov, E.I. Kholostova [32], K.V. Kuzmin [24], M.V. Firsov [43], K.A. Voronov et al. [11; 10; 12],

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T.E. Lifanova [26], V.V. Kuzevanova et al. [23], I.V. Maslova et al. [47].

The present research analyzes the ability of the Orthodox Church to formulate the tasks important for maintaining the life of society; the parish priests could accept these since the Church was ready for this from ancient times. At the heart of the tasks of preserving the environment is a Christian vision of the destiny of man in worldly and eternal life, following the path of self-restriction. The church took an approach to pondering the place of the 'microenvironment' in the universe [25].

5. Conclusion.

The significance of the research lies in the conclusion that the social and environmental ministry of the ROC and its representatives is of great importance due to its work in solving social problems over a long period.

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