

**Yu. V. Balakshina**

## Programmes for Reforming the Church: The Evolution of Ideas and Forms, from Ecclesial Renewal to “Renovationism” (1905–1922)

**Balakshina Yulia Valentinovna, Dr. Sci. (Philology), Associate Professor, Academic Secretary, St. Philaret’s Institute, Professor, Herzen State Pedagogical University, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, jbalaksh9@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4187-1633>**

**ABSTRACT:** This article presents a comparative analysis of the foundational documents of pre-revolutionary movements for church reform in Russia (the “group of 32 priests” from St. Petersburg, or the “Union for the Renewal of the Church”), and those of the post-revolutionary Renovationist movement, i. e., the church reforms envisaged by the group of clergy and laypeople known as the “Living Church”. The goal of this research is to answer the following question: “how did the ideas of the pre-revolutionary movement for reform morph into the situation that obtained in the 1920s?” An overview of the historical-ecclesial situation in which documents were created is presented and their signing is reconstructed, after which a hypothesis regarding the level of external political influence vis-a-vis the programmes of 1905–1906 and 1922 is put forward. By analysing both the form and the linguistic content of said documents, the author comes to the conclusion that the programmes of 1905–1906 preserve an ecclesial orientation, both in that they use ecclesial language and display the dialogical character of proceedings/essays, while documents out of the Living Church movement (1922) are reminiscent of a political party’s agenda and notable for the categorical nature of certain wordings, actively making use of “revolutionary language”. The author notes that certain ecclesial catch phrases, such as “the Kingdom of God”, and “sobornost” are simply missing from the 1922 programme. Whereas pre-revolutionary activists strove, to a great degree, to consolidate the opinions

of all the movement's participants and achieve unity of understanding in terms of the goals and tasks of church reform, the many programmes of the 1920s evidence division in terms of opinions and positions, even showing that authors' attention to constructive programmes of reform has largely been replaced with a programme of criticism vis-a-vis the synodal church or church of Patriarch Tikhon. The appearance of programme documents in both cases is due to the situation of severe crisis. In the first case, this crisis is within the life of society and in the second within the life of the Church. These tipping points brought with them opportunities for new forces within the Church to appear, establish positions, and collect under their banners other likeminded people. In both cases it was necessary to garner the support of authorities so as to bring programmes before a broad audience of readers, though in 1905–1906 this primarily meant ecclesial authorities, whilst in 1922 the authorities in question were primarily those of the state. The author comes to the conclusion that despite the dependence of a number of ideas evident in later programmes (1920s) upon ideas from 1905–1906, there are nevertheless very significant differences between the two cases, relating both to the relative positions of the programmes' authors and to the theological foundations undergirding these positions. Programmes in the 1920s display radicalization of pre-revolutionary ideas, their displacement from ecclesial context, and a move toward the language of leftist programmatic politics. Post-revolutionary authors show that their relationship to the ecclesial organism has morphed at its very foundation; they no longer have love and concern for careful structuring within a spirit of sobornost, but rather show themselves to be dealing with the object of a church-societal experiment in the spirit of constructing the new world and the new man.

KEYWORDS: History of the Russian Orthodox Church, church renewal, Renovationism, "group of 32 priests", Union for Renewal of the Church, the Living Church, programme documents

FOR CITATION: Balakshina Yu. V. (2022). "Church reform programmes: evolution of ideas and forms from Renewal to Renovationism (1905–1922)". *The Quarterly Journal of St. Philaret's Institute*, 2022, iss. 44, pp. 43–73. DOI: 10.25803/26587599\_2022\_44\_13.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: With thanks to Fr. Ilya Solovyev for his role in providing consultation and clarification with regard to the history of the Living Church programmes discussed in this paper.

## Introduction and Definition of the Issue

The so-called Renovationist Schism was a direct result of the campaign to strip churches of all objects of any value, and yet another project of the Soviet authorities aimed at the destruction of the church from within. To a certain extent, the question of the dependence of the Renovationist movement upon the pre-revolutionary movement for the renewal of the Russian Orthodox Church already appears to have been solved. After the publication of a series of documents ([*Petrov; Protocols; Mazyrin, Smoliakova*]), a scholarly consensus has been reached, which shows that the two manifestations of reform had different natures. One was a movement from below, and if not from the people of the church, then at least from the clergy. The other was, at base, a programme of the new authorities aimed at church schism, discreditation, and at weakening the influence of the church upon the life of the Soviet state and society. But it is also unquestionable that the political initiators of the schism were leaning upon popular support amongst the people of the church and ideas that had stood the test of time, and that they were capitalizing on problems which had not yet found their organic solution within the Church. As Gregory Freeze fairly assesses,

The February revolution put an end to state oversight, freeing “living forces” within the Church and giving priests and laypeople the opportunity to carry out long overdue and much needed reforms [*Freeze, 287*],

but the coup in October 1917 brought a halt to the work of the local council, which had been called to bring these changes into ecclesial life. As a result, some very important discussions were never completed, and it became impossible to implement many decisions that had already been ratified by the council, in light of extreme changes in the nature of the relationship between the church and the state.

Thus, it seems important to chart how it is that the pre-revolutionary movement for church renewal morphed into the situation of the 1920s, the degree to which the heritage of the earlier renewal movement was maintained, and in what way the idea of renewal was subordinated to newer tasks. Leaders amongst the Renovationists did, on the one hand, actively strive to include the “group of 32 priests” from St. Petersburg in their genealogy, though on the other hand they also refer to the “innocuous” nature of the pre-revolutionary movement, likely over against the demands and ideas which they themselves were

putting forward. A.I. Vvedensky writes of the programme of the 32 priests in the following way:

It was only a dream in favour of a more canonical church structure, a protest against the bureaucratic nature of the synod, a call to the moral conscience of the faithful, and so on and so forth. All very noble, but also very harmless [*Vvedensky 1923, 24*].

Fr. Evgeny Belkov, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> issue of the Renovationist journal “Living Church” (23 May, 1922), published an article entitled “Forerunners of the Living Church”, in which he listed those ideas which, to his mind, the members of the group of 32 priests had put forward: the necessity to call a church council, restoration of the patriarchate in Russia, and protest against links with the Russian government [*Belkov, 10*]<sup>1</sup>. All of the ideas listed were put into effect by the Local Church Council of 1917–1918. But did the Renovationists of the 1920s really see their origins in the group of 32 priests and subsequent renewal movements, or was this simply a superficial, propagandistic attempt to lean on the authority of well-known people and associations who had previously garnered broad popular support?

Various documents called “manifests” by both authors and readers, due to their broad circulation, will be our primary centre of attention in this paper. As necessary, we will fill in the picture using both linguistic and hermeneutical comparative historical analysis.

## Overview of Church Renewal Programs

The materials for analysis in this paper are: 2 essays from the “group of 32 priests” in St. Petersburg, the programme of activities of the Union for the Renewal of the Church, published in 1905–1906, and the programme of church reforms envisaged by the group of clergy and laypeople known as the “Living Church”, taken from the group’s founding meeting, on 16–29 May, 1922.

In preparation, we will also provide a short overview of several other church transformation programmes and projects of the time — some from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and some from after the Revolution of 1917.

1. The author of the article also supposes that the group’s activity “were lessened due to the fact that a number of synodal bureaucrats ‘sidled up’ and started participating in meetings” [*Belkov, 10*], and that by

1917 these activities had all but ceased to exist: “we see only the odd ‘puddle’ remaining after the waters of the church renewal movement had already fallen” [*Belkov, 11*].

In addition to the official programme of the Union for the Renewal of the Church, the “Project for Church Reforms” was published in 1906 under the name of Fr. Pyotr Kremlevsky. Pyotr Magistriyanovich Kremlevsky (1870–1943), was the head priest at the Church of St. Methodius of Patara at the St. Methodius shelter for children on Suvorovsky Prospekt in St. Petersburg, and a member of the “group of 32 priests”. According to Fr. Konstantin Aggeev, Fr. Pyotr was the “secretary and treasurer... of the group” [Aggeev, 312]. His project was published in “Tserkovnyj vestnik” [Kremlevsky], the agency of the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy, in which both essays of the “group of 32 priests” were also published. But neither the group of 32 nor the Union for Renewal of the Church, which had already been founded by that time, lent their names to this particular document, probably because the document failed to receive unanimous support at the Union meeting on 19 December, 1905, at which it was discussed. As the document’s author tells us in the notes to the project, it was approved by the majority of the Union’s members, and “in spirit and in many specifics... entirely corresponds with the ideas of the Union for Renewal of the Church” [Kremlevsky, 81]. It follows, that some of the positions taken in this document’s programme failed to receive the Union’s general approval.

This project contains a preamble, six points which are listed as “abnormal manifestations in the contemporary Russian Church”, sixteen programme proposals, and a special section entitled “Questions for the Project”. In the notes, the author calls pastors and laypeople to a broad discussion of the document at common parish meetings and personally amongst themselves, and supposes that the collected materials may become preparatory materials for an “emergency nationwide council” [Kremlevsky, 83]. The project develops ideas of sobornal management (community-led management. — *Translator’s note*), appointment by election for all church positions, and further territorial division of the church into “a multitude of small dioceses”; it places a particular accent on the idea of the organization of parishes and monasteries as communities/brotherhoods, proposes the “simplification of church services, bringing them more into line with people’s understanding”, and suggests a new translation of books containing liturgical texts [Kremlevsky, 82].

In addition, in Moscow in 1906, a separate booklet containing an essay by V. P. Svetsitsky, entitled ““The Christian Brotherhood for Struggle’ and its Programme”, was published. This essay had been read at a meeting of the Vladimir Soloviev Society for Religion and Philosophy on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 1905. The introduction refers to the Christian

Brotherhood for Struggle as the “first attempt to create a Christian political organization in Russia” [*Sventsitsky*, 3], which party should in future “hold the place of honour amongst a whole group of popular, grassroots political parties” [*Sventsitsky*, 4]. In the brochure, in addition to a description of the brotherhood’s activities and the text from several of their brochures, the booklet contained the “Proposed Short Programme of the Christian Brotherhood for Struggle”. The authors’ overall political orientation is evidenced by the presence of sections entitled “Political Programme” and “Economic Programme”. The project “Overview” focuses on church renewal, and a section entitled “Ecclesial Programme” is included in the second “special” section of the Project. The “Overview” lays out the doctrine of the Church, which is referred to as the “ideal for all human relations (in particular political, social and economic)” [*Sventsitsky*, 22]. This section gives most attention to the principles of Christian community life, among which figure “the perfect ideal of non-power relations”, the destruction of “all dark consequences of governmental life”, appointment by election, fellowship, “free religious creativity”, and “fully shared property” [*Sventsitsky*, 23–24]. The “Ecclesial Programme” in the special section of the Project has a more practical character, focusing on how appointment by election for all ecclesial positions might be achieved. A number of specific reforms are also mentioned, including the rejection of a stratified system of religious education, the repeal of religious censorship, the rejection of state support for the Church, financial maintenance of clergy by the parish community, repealing the practice of taking an oath for those entering military service, the separation of church and schooling, and the transfer of all monastery property to the Church in general [*Sventsitsky*, 26–27].

The small number of members of the Christian Brotherhood for Struggle, the half-legal character of its existence<sup>2</sup>, and the way in which its programmes were unveiled, all bear witness to the fact that this document didn’t enjoy wide acceptance within the Church at large, despite the fact that it became a vital witness to the development of thought regarding relationships between church and society in Russia at the time.

The overall number of Renovatoinist programmes is much greater, given that the authorities gave their authors opportunities to publish these both as stand-alone leaflets/brochures, and in various periodi-

2. More about the Christian Brotherhood for Struggle see: [*Nashedshie grad*].

icals. In his memoirs, which he entitled “Tumultuous Years”, Anatoly Krasnov-Levitin mentions a work by Fr. Aleksandr Boyarsky, entitled “The Church and Democracy: A Companion for the Christian Democrat” [*Krasnov-Levitin*], in which “a programme of Christian Democracy is expressed so clearly and simply, that even in our days it could be passed into law (with a few small changes), as the basis for a Christian democratic movement for the whole world” [*Krasnov-Levitin*, 130]. The programme describes the structure of society from a perspective desirable from the point of view of Christian values. It dismisses: the idea of rule by a single person, aggressive wars, the death penalty, and the division of society into classes. It touts: equality for women, calls labour the basis of life, and champions cooperation as the backbone of economic life. The programme barely mentions ecclesial questions.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> issue of the journal “Zhivaja tserkovj”, which was published on 23 May, 1922, just after the renovationist Temporary Ecclesiastical Administration’s seizure of power, A. I. Vvedensky published his programmatic essay entitled “What Should the Imminent Council Do?”. Within the structure of this essay, one can see a parallel with the future programme of church reforms which would soon be put forward by the group of Orthodox clergy and laypeople calling themselves Zhivaja tserkovj (the Living Church). Both have five sections which are titled, correspondingly, in the following way: “Rethinking Christianity’s Basic Principle” — “Dogmatic Reform”, “Rethinking Certain Ethical Positions” — “Ethical Reform”, “Reforming Church Services” — “Liturgical Reform”, “Bringing Church Administration into Order” — “Canonical Reform”, “The Legal Position of the Church in the USSR” — “Parish Reform” [*Vvedensky 1922; Programme 1922*]. The similarity between the two texts is easily explained by the fact that they were both written during the same, late-spring days of May, 1922, and with the direct participation of Vvedensky. The text of the article differs in terms of its expressive, emotional style and is overflowing with persuasive rhetoric, such as: “Christianity has turned into a backwater, when really it is an ever-flowing river, churning out into the ocean of Divine being” [*Vvedensky 1922*, 4]; “Our church services often become evening Buddhist prayer machines” [*Vvedensky 1922*, 5]. Also telling, is the fact that Vvedensky’s attempts to describe the relationship between the new church and the new state (“It must be unconditionally loyal to state authorities to the end, whilst not losing sight of its other-worldly character” [*Vvedensky 1922*, 6]) never found their way into the Living Church reform programme, either in virtue of the Renovationists’ caution, or in virtue of the authorities’ strategy,

by which it was assumed that decisions of this nature should be ratified at the church council which was planned for spring of 1923.

In the third issue of “Zhivaja tserkovj”, a document entitled “Foundational Principles of the ‘Living Church’ Group of Orthodox Clergy and Lay People”, ratified at the group’s meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup>—29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1922, was published. This document, however, did not contain any specific proposals other than the general declaration that church dogma, liturgy, ethics, canons and parishes all require reconsideration. The document did, however, contain a statement of the group’s own principles of existence and means of achieving their goals [*The main provisions, 11–12*].

It’s worthwhile to take a particularly close look at the question of authorship and provenance of a detailed programme document published in the weekly newspaper of a group of freethinking clergy from the Diocese of Penza, which also went by the name “Zhivaja tserkovj”, in the issues from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of May [*Church renovation*]. This document was signed simply — “Group of Freethinking Clergy”, with Bishop Ioanniky (Smirnov), and also appeared in the “Zhivaja tserkovj” journal of the central Temporary Ecclesiastical Administration, under the title “Programme of the Progressive Group of Clergy and Laypeople from the Vologda Region for Church Reform” [*Programme of the Vologda*]. The programme is preceded by a historical preamble, in which the authors bewail the fact that “the leap forward in religious consciousness” brought about by the revolutionary events of 1917, the recent changes in the structure of state governance, and the separation of the church from the state, have not yet found their expression in terms of new forms of ecclesial life. This document also states that the Local Church Council of 1917 did not solve these problems and “could not have, given the list of attendees” adequately handed these issues of church reform. It asserts that at the current time, the Patriarch has fallen under “strong outspoken conservative elements among the previous Synodal activists” [*Church renovation, 3*] and that the task of reforming church life is therefore in danger. Next the authors proceed to unveil their broad criticism of the current state of the “church body” (they use the word “organism”), which has been torn apart by centuries of synodal governance, at the end producing their programme recommendations, that consist of 15 points. In determining its primary areas of attention, the document again corresponds with the document published under the name of the central “Zhivaja tserkovj” group, though it also places a large emphasis on religious education and formation of a Christian worldview through



the catechesis of adults, new missionary activities, new methods of moral upbringing/education, etc. We note that the Penza programme speaks of the possibility of “a full translation of liturgical texts into Russian language”, though the programme of the central “Zhivaja tserkovj” group mentions nothing of this issue. In terms of the issue of regional dioceses, the Penza document turns out to be less extreme, only suggesting that bishops be elected by the council of the believers, “from among scholarly Christians who have the necessary moral traits and enjoy the general trust of the people” [*Church renovation*, 2], whereas the official programme contains a point about “opening the episcopal office to priests who are married and living with their spouses...” [*Programme 1922*, 18].

Amongst church publications from 1922, there are several other regional programmes for church reform<sup>3</sup>, as well as various different types of calls to action and founding documents for new ecclesial associations, all of which contain position papers / programme recommendations<sup>4</sup>. We may note that pre-revolutionary activists, for the most part, strove to consolidate the opinions of their movements’ various participants and to achieve unity in terms of their understanding of the goals and tasks of church reform. The many programmes of the 1920’s, on the other hand, display fragmentation in terms of opinions and positions, even showing that authors’ attention to constructive programmes of reform had by then largely been replaced by a programme of criticism of the synodal church or church of Patriarch Tikhon.

### **The History of the Creation of Various Programme Documents**

The pre-revolutionary movement initially popularized its ideas in two essays published by the “group of 32 priests” from St. Petersburg in 1905 in the journal *Tserkovnyj vestnik* (Church Herald), entitled, “On the need for Change in Russian Church Governance” [*On the need*] and “On the Makeup of the Synod” [*On the Makeup*], as well as in the programme of activity of the Union for the Renewal of the Church, which was published in 1906, in the Kazan-based journal *Tserkovno-obshchestvennaya Zhiznj* (Church-Society Life) [*Church Renewal Alliance*]. The constitution of the Brotherhood of Advocates of Church Renewal, published in *Tserkovnyj vestnik* in September, 1906, in essence repeated the main points of the Union’s programme of activity.

3. See, for instance: [*Resolutions*].

4. See, for instance: [*Rules*].

In his 1996 article “Essay of the 32’ as a Source of Russian Orthodox Church History”, S.L. Firsov considers the history of the publication of the first essay of the “group of 32” against the backdrop of government discussion of the need for church reform, given revolutionary developments in the country [Firsov]. In Firsov’s opinion, the fact that the essay was published in *Tserkovnyj vestnik* on 10 March, five days prior to its presentation to Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovsky), provides evidence that the group of priests were likely led by more powerful forces, making it appropriate to speak of the Metropolitan as having been “blatantly deceived”. The publication of this essay propelled the question of church reform from behind the closed doors of a ministerial Committee and into public discussion, for it was vital that within society the idea of church reform be presented as a grassroots initiative. From our point of view, the essay’s publication without the official agreement of the Metropolitan isn’t worthy of such harsh criticism<sup>5</sup>, though we do find it to be of principle importance that the essay was published during a time of acute ecclesial-political crisis. Work on the essay likely began in February of 1905, after the Petersburg priests had visited Metropolitan Antony (Vadkovsky) with their proposal to begin ecclesial reforms [Aggeev, 294–297], and continued for almost a month. Upon publication, the name of the essay was refined to make it less radical: instead of “On Urgent Canonical Freedom for the Orthodox Church in Russia”, it was published under the previously mentioned title, “On the need for Change in Russian Church Governance”.

We find information about work on the second essay (“On the Makeup of the Synod”) in the April letters of Fr. Konstantin Aggeev. In the letter of 1 May, 1905, Fr. Konstantin reports that the essay has been given to the Metropolitan, and that the group has already agreed to publish it come what may, even if the church hierarchy does not agree, but that there is hope “that the Metropolitan will agree, because the essay is strictly scholarly and tactful” [Aggeev, 318]. The essay was published in the 21<sup>st</sup> issue of *Tserkovnyj vestnik*, on 26 May, 1905, without any note of its authorship. Aggeev makes a summary comment in a letter, “the Metropolitan has agreed, but what a discussion we had beforehand!” [Aggeev, 324]. Both essays were actively reproduced in secular newspapers, after which they were published in the anthology entitled “K Tserkovnomu Soboru” (“Towards a Church Council”).

5. For more detail, please see: [Balakshina, 73–75].

Finally, the programme of the Union for the Renewal of the Church was published in the journal *Church-Society Life* [*Church Renewal Alliance*], the journal of the Kazan Ecclesial Academy, most probably with the goal of implying the nationwide character of the Union, and only thereafter in Petersburg journal *Tserkovnyj vestnik* (1906. № 6. 9 Feb.).

Thus, we see that pre-revolutionary advocates of church renewal published their programmes: at least endeavouring to initially receive the blessing of the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg for their activities, choosing publishers with the broadest access to those who were best educated within church circles, and making use of opportunities to prepare their essays in a quality fashion, with citations from the Word of God, the canons of the Church, and historical source material.

The post-revolutionary renovationist reform programme was passed, according to its title page, at the founding meeting of the “*Zhivaja tserkovj*” (Living Church) group, which took place in Moscow on the 16<sup>th</sup>—29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1922. This programme was only thereafter published in the renovationist journal “*Zhivaja tserkovj*”, on 1 October, 1922. This programme was publicized, with insignificant variation, in various ecclesial journals with renovationist tendencies — both in the capitol and in regional journals<sup>6</sup>. The double dating may indicate that the programme was developed in two stages. The preliminary project was set out in the heat of discussions with Patriarch Tikhon, to whom the Renovationists made visits on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of May, 1922, which were necessary to the priests themselves for working out their subsequent plan of action. The completed project, which had also likely been approved by the state authorities, was proposed at the founding meeting of the Living Church group on 29 May, at Troitskiy Podvorje — the Moscow offices of the Lavra in Sergeev Posad. Finally, in A. E. Krasnov-Levitin’s opinion, the October publication of the programme, which had possibly once again been fine-tuned in the meantime, was related to the heightening of tensions between various renovationist groups:

All of these acute incidents once again almost led to schism, and only after new and lengthy discussions was agreement finally reached... Among all else, it really was time to consider a local council and along with it a positive programme of reforms. In issue n. 10 of the journal *Zhivaja Tserkovj* (Living Church), the

6. See: [*Programme 1923; The programme of church reforms*].

programme ratified back on 16/29 May and drawn up with the participation of A. I. Vvedensky, was published [*Krasnov-Levitin*, 221–222].

We might assume that various agencies of Soviet authority rushed the publication of these materials, controlling and directing the ecclesial process. The second half of May 1922, was an intervening period between the work of two commissions for the presentation of church issues to the party's Politburo. The final protocol (№ 17) of the Central Commission for the Seizure of Church Assets, working with L. D. Trotsky, was dated 15 May. It was only in autumn 1922, however, that the Commission for Implementing the Separation of Church and State, under the Central Committee of the Russian Bolshevik Communist Party (TsKRKP(b)), or Antireligious Commission, was formed [*Protocols*, 6–7]. A special commission for anti-religious propaganda under the state propaganda machine (Agitprop) was formed on 6 September, 1922. The remit of this commission was the “oversight of any religious publications and of information in other periodicals concerning religion” [*Protocols*, 8]. Events in the spring of 1922 were more or less personally directed by L. D. Trotsky, who supported the idea of temporarily supporting clergy from among the Smenovekhovtsy (white, intelligentsia) with the goals of quickly pulling the church through the unavoidable stage of “bourgeois reformation” and “sinking the counter-revolutionary portion of the church” with their help [*Trotsky*, 161]. By the autumn, however, Communist Party work with the Church was already more systematized, as a result of which they could arrange for the universal publication of a programme for church renovation.

The history of the publication of these various essays and programme documents brings us to the conclusion that their appearance — both in 1905–1906 and in 1922 — is related to an acute situation of crisis, in the first case within the life of society, and in the second case within the life of the Russian Orthodox Church. These tipping points brought with them opportunities for new forces within the Church to appear, establish positions, and collect under their banners other likeminded people. The need for urgent expression, however, brought with it a tendency toward rushed and poorly thought through wordings and a proclivity for catchphrases which is not the ideal for programmes which declare ideas intended for real-life embodiment. In both cases it was necessary to garner the support of authorities so as to bring programmes before a broad audience of readers, though in 1905–1906 this primarily meant ecclesial authorities, whilst in 1922 the authorities in question were primarily those of the state. Work on

the central ideas and meaning of the programmes was a function of a small group of people, though in both cases the reception of these ideas by a much broader group of the movements' participants was needed. We would draw attention to the fact that in the earlier case, over the interval of time separating the publication of the first essays from the publication of the popular programmes, the number of advocates for church reform increased and the movement became nationwide. In 1922, the interval between publications (May to October 1922) is more a time of further schism and contradiction within break-away Renovatoinist movement “gone public”.

### **Working Language and Form: Specific Traits Shown by the Various Programmes**

We need to say something about the language and form of the various documents we have chosen to analyse in this study. The first steps in the movement for church reform were heralded by writings in which the theological, canonical preamble was no less important in terms of specifics and contents than the following specific points recommended as action points for reform. The “essay” genre — an expanded article with detailed arguments written by state or societal activists in order to present their views on one or another issue, along with proposed paths for its solution — was already widespread in 19<sup>th</sup> c. Russia. Often essays were “written to order”, for the benefit of representatives of civil authorities, but they might also be written at the personal initiative of representatives of popular societies/associations, desiring to influence the structure of life within the Russian Empire<sup>7</sup>. It was this genre that was chosen by the representatives of the “group of 32”, probably by analogy with the much discussed but yet to be published essays of S. Y. Witte, “On the Contemporary Situation of the Orthodox Church” (“O sovremenom polozhenii pravoslavnoj tserkvi”), and Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovsky) on “Questions regarding Desirable Transformations within the Orthodox Church in our Situation” (“Voprosi o zhelatel'nykh preobrazovanijakh v postanovke u nas pravoslavnoj tserkvi”), which had been presented to the Ministerial Committee. Perhaps the choice of a genre that was more familiar to state activists, rather than clergy, had also to do with the fact that N. P. Aksakov, who had

7. E.g.: N. M. Karamzin's Essay on old and new Russia with regard to politics and civil life; Pushkin's Essay on education of the people, written by him by order of

Tsar Nicholas I; K. S. Akasakov's essay “On the internal condition of Russia”, which was presented to Head of State Emperor Aleksandr II.

a long history of government service and was a societal activist who well acknowledged his responsibility for the life of the nation, people and church, played a leading role in the preparation of the document. In any case, the genre presupposed a recommendatory tone, rather than one involving ultimatums. Essays were not only about the popularization of various programmes, but also for presenting convincing arguments in a rhetorical style, aimed at persuading and prevailing in public or non-public battles with competing programmes of action.

In Konstantin Aggeev's letters, we have evidence that it was precisely the question of the character and logical continuity of the arguments being made, that was most discussed during the process of writing the essays:

...In the evening we sat editing our essay on the makeup of the Synod. Cheltsov drew up the body, but after preliminary debates at our meeting, we've reviewed it very careful, changed and amended it. I'm quite satisfied that our party prevailed: the centre of gravity of the work is the Word of God and Church History. The canons are not mentioned even once [Aggeev, 310].

The essays are written in the style of scholarly theology, with elements of publicism; difficult syntactical constructions are used, with elements hinting at Church-Slavonic (e. g., "A vedj chleny otkhodjashchego ot Tserkvi obshchestva sutj utrachivaemye slovesniye ovtsy slovesnogo stada Khristova" [*On necessity*, 201]), and citations from Scripture.

The programme of the Union for Renewal of the Church doesn't have a theological preamble and has twelve well-defined points, although the way in which it is written nevertheless maintains a more recommendatory character, defining a vector for the development of thought, rather than prescribing specific actions:

The Union maintains that the font of church unity finds its embodiment in ecclesial sobornost. Such sobornost should be manifest in all agencies of the church, from the smallest to the greatest... in all areas of church activity, and in church management and the church court [*Church Renewal Alliance*, 185].

The programme authors maintain a proclivity for the language of the church, even though they sometimes use expressions which are not typical of traditional Orthodox Christian discourse (e. g., "universal Christianity", "multi-dimensional creativity of the whole church"). They strive to maintain logical argument in the development of their

theses, beginning with explanatory points clarifying their understanding of the nature of the Church, and following with practical consequences that are the outworking of their understanding.

The structure of the “Zhivaja tserkovj” (Living Church) programme resembles the programme of a political party and is distinguished by its categorical nature and pragmatic and specific wordings. It has five sections on reform: dogmatic, ethical, liturgical, canonical and parish related. Each section has from one to nine points, expressed using categorical verbal nouns, e. g., “Eliminating rites which are hold-overs from a pagan worldview” [*Programme 1922*, 18]. In the first section on dogmatic reforms, actions are most often identified by the word “development” (“Developing a doctrine of man as the crown jewel and completion of the intricate acts of creative forces”) [*Programme 1922*, 17]), which on the one hand provides a reference to the religious-philosophical meetings and debates about dogmatic development, and on the other hand speaks of the authors’ caution and understanding that direct dogmatic changes might, more likely than not, scare off potential supporters. In other sections of the programme, planned actions are identified with words such as: refutation, struggle, reconsideration, elimination, and liquidation, which place greater accent on opposition to that which is determined to be stale and outmoded, rather than determining vectors for positive development.

B. I. Kolonitsky, who has produced multiple works analysing the political language of 1917, notes the importance of the formation of a very particular, Bolshevik language, which “was initially a special dialect of revolutionary language” [*Kolonitsky*, 51], and mastery of the ability to “speak in Bolshevik”. Revolutionary vocabulary, in the opinion of scholars of political rhetoric, developed in Russia in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is characteristic of this revolutionary vocabulary to designate monarchical authorities as “tyrants”, “despots” and “satraps”, on the one hand, and “images like ‘chains’, ‘dungeons’, ‘prison bars’, and ‘shackles’ were introduced, and would long remain in the arsenal of revolutionary propaganda” [*Khazagerov*, 185]. Revolutionary language, with which the 1922 document is richly endowed, shows up in terms and phrases such as “episcopal despotism”, “power of the kulak constituency”, “rights of workers and the exploited”, “the gullible masses”, and “those deprived by life... orphans”. There are points which are composed entirely of Bolshevik rhetoric: “Struggle against those in power, against religious prejudice and superstitions arising from people’s incompetence and monastic exploitation of the religious sentiment of the gullible masses” [*Programme 1922*, 18]), though

there are also other points in the programme that are entirely neutral in terms of language (“Broad integration of laypeople in church services, up to and including matters of ecclesial education”. [*Programme 1922*, 18]). It’s possible that programme development was guided by Soviet curators, or that the authors themselves combined the urge toward political loyalty with remnants of ecclesial language and consciousness.

It is characteristic of the Living Church programme, that expressions such as “The Kingdom of God”, which were key for pre-revolutionary advocates of church renewal, are nowhere to be seen. We might debate the degree to which in pre-revolutionary ecclesial discourse this expression indicates an otherworldly reality vs an ideal, this-worldly societal mechanism (in the Union’s programme this is spoken of only with great care); after the Revolution, this evangelistic expression entirely disappears, most likely for ideological reasons: even in this form, the new regime didn’t allow allusions to the overthrown and eliminated form of state governance.

It’s more curious that in the renovationist programme there isn’t a single reference to sobornost, which was a central concept in the texts on church renewal in 1905–1906<sup>8</sup>. Those reforms which, at the turn of the century, were presented as a direct and necessary consequence of the restoration of ecclesial sobornost (election of clerics, bringing laypeople to responsibility for the church, various forms of collective governance both in parishes and dioceses) are, in the Living Church programme, simply mandated as reforms in line with the general revolutionary spirit. No attempt is made to establish any foundation for these reforms.

### Programme Content

We will structure our comparative analysis of the programmes for church renewal in 1905–1906 and 1922 around the five sections of the Living Church programme. The first section shows us that the Renovationsists of the 1920s took a decisive step in the direction of reforming church dogma. Their programme begins with a section entitled “Dogmatic Reform”. The Penza version specifies that “all dogmas of the Eastern Orthodox Church are recognized as being indelible”, and that only “their interpretation in school textbooks on dogmatics” should be subject to review [*Programme 1923*, 1]. In fact, corrections were made

8. See, for instance: [Egorov].



to core fields of church teaching such as Christology, Patrology, Ecclesiology and Soteriology. In particular, the programme perceives: the need to “restore the evangelical, early-church teaching on the faith, with deliberate development of the dogma on the human nature of Christ the Saviour” [*Programme 1922, 17*]<sup>9</sup>, the corresponding need to develop the Christian dogma of God as “the source of truth, love and mercy over against the ancient Hebrew understanding of God as a terrible avenger who punishes sinners”<sup>10</sup>, the need for “the doctrine of the final judgement, heaven and hell” to be fleshed out as moral understandings [*Programme 1922, 17*]<sup>11</sup>, etc. In the first case, the Renovators are reacting to an elemental monophysitism that is inherent amongst Orthodox people. In the second case, some excesses in the preaching of the Synodal period are in view. In the third case, they are reacting to richly loaded iconography featuring the Final Judgement, such as the “Descent of the Virgin into Hell”. The compensatory principle, which is related to an inability to distinguish between passing traditions and the Living Tradition of the Church, is elevated to the place of an Absolute, and reforms to dogma are announced and promulgated.

In the pre-revolutionary programmes for church renewal, questions of dogma are not posed directly, although many of the supports of church reform went through the testing experience of close interaction with members of the intelligentsia who were searching for God and longing for dogmatic development. For a number of the members of the “group of 32” the topic of dogmatic reform was a taboo. Thus, for instance, when at meetings of the Fellowship of Young Christian Students Fr. Pavel Lakhostsky presented a paper on the theological views of A. S. Khomyakov, he upheld creativity within the church, stood up for “key changes to the structure of church life” which, however, “should in no way touch church dogma” [*Christian Community, 682*].

The pre-revolutionary authors are coming from a particular understanding of the Church which isn’t fixed in church dogma, which they have received from the works of A. S. Khomyakov and N. P. Aksakov.

9. Compare: “2. In the dogma of the Person of Christ the Saviour, together with a description of his Divine Nature it is necessary to disclose and describe His humanity in equal measure, so as to avoid a tendency toward Monophysitism, underscore Christ’s historical existence, and call for each believer in Christ to morally live out the life of his teacher” [*Programme 1923, 1*].

10. Compare: “3. To the develop the Christian doctrine of God as a merciful, loving and justly punishing

Father, to counterbalance the Old Testament understanding of God as a terrible avenger” [*Programme 1923, 1*].

11. In the Penza version of the programme we find this addition: “to counterbalance a purely sensible-physical understanding of them” [*Programme 1923, 1*].

In the first essay of the “group of 32” a definition of the Church is given, and in order to manifest the essence of this understanding the proposed reforms are necessary:

Within herself [the church] is divinely designated as the “holy of holies” of the Living Spirit which lives within her and completes its service in the “holy of holies” of human souls, leading the spiritual children of the organism as a whole — each individually to personal fulfilment which is salvation in Christ, and all generally to common fulfilment which is the creation of the Kingdom of God in people joined together as the unified, verbal flock of Christ [*On necessity*, 200].

For comparative purposes, let us look at the definition of the Church proposed in the sixth point of the first section of the Living Church programme: “The Church of Christ is a divine-human union for the manifestation of God’s truth on earth” [*Programme 1922*, 17]. The difference doesn’t only lie in the laconic style of the revolutionary era, but also in the categorical transfer of the sense of the Church’s existence to a plain which is “this-worldly”. The accent on the moral aspect of ecclesial teaching — and even church dogma — vividly distinguishes the 1922 document from its early counterparts: the need to further disclose the human nature of Christ is clearly to “underscore Christ’s historical existence, and call for each believer in Christ to morally live out the life of his teacher” [*Programme 1923*, 1]; eternity is announced as “the organic development and completion of the *moral* structure of the human person” [*Programme 1922*, 17]; heaven and hell are interpreted as moral concepts. This accent on the moral and ethical sphere, to the detriment of the mystical, had been shown to be “productive” and “in demand” in the case of Tolstoyism (non-resistance), and might be seen both as related to the era’s overall mood which favoured practical, materialist change, and also to the new authorities’ battle with the “opium of the people”, for which purpose they were gradually re-orienting consciousness away from a largely uncontrollable focus on the divine, towards a focus on this-worldly, day-to-day values and interests. Attempts to link the dogmatic understanding of the creation of the world by God with evolutionary theories and the cult of the natural sciences — part of the backbone of the concept for the revolutionary transformation of society — are also characteristic of the Living Church programme. Paragraph 3, in particular, announces: “the development of a doctrine of the world’s origin from the creative will of God with the participation of the productive forces of nature” [*Programme 1922*, 17]. As A. G. Kravetsky notes, “the compatibility

of scientific knowledge and religious experience... was a foundational theme for Renovatoinist apologetics” [Kravetsky, 522].

The endeavour to clean “big-T” church Tradition of built-up layers relating to her history and union with the state can, without question, also be found in the documents of the Union for Renewal of the Church. For instance, in their programme’s second point, we read that “while believing in the Church as an eternal institution, the Union seeks to free the concept of the Church itself from ideas related to statehood that have become enmeshed in it”. The first essay of the “group of 32” original boasted the title “On Urgent Canonical Freedom for the Orthodox Church in Russia” and proposed orienting the structure of church life on “tradition from the Apostolic era” [On necessity, 202]. The Renovatoinists’ attempts to return to a “evangelical, early-Christian teaching on the faith”, freeing it of “contemporary Christian ideology”, look as if they are a direct development of these ideas. In place of a restoration of evangelistic ideals, however, we see rather the adaptation of evangelical truths to the historical and political demands of the present moment.

The pre-revolutionary movement had serious theological thought as its basis, awoken in part by the religious philosophical meetings of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his article entitled “The Essence of Church Renewal”, for instance, Fr. Mikhail Cheltsov distinguishes “the Church in her Transcendental Essence” (Mystical Church) and “worldly holiness”, from “the Church seen from the perspective of her human element expressing her to the world” (historical church), presupposing that the “truths of the faith”, and “the good news about life itself... will always be the same as they have been, never waxing nor waning in terms of their content, and never erring”, despite the fact that in terms of people’s mastery of these truths of faith “they are susceptible to occlusion and distortion, demanding constant and careful oversight, examination, disclosure, renewal, cleansing from heretical and other contaminants and clarification in the true light of the doctrine of Christ” [Cheltsov, 79].

The fact that “within man’s direct yet at the same time mediated perception and expression of divine Revelation distortions and mistakes are always possible” [Kochetkov, Kopirovsky, 45], is discussed by theologians on more than one occasion. The salient issue is more one of how the Church can put these things right, and to whom the right of initiating such cleansing and renewal of church tradition belongs. Within church history, the assumption of such a right by anyone in particular from amongst the representatives of the church or by secular authorities, or by any group within the church, has,

without fail, led to schism. While in the pre-revolutionary era the issue of distinction between the temporal and the eternal within the life of the church was fairly posed, in the revolutionary era we see that church activists have accrued unto themselves the right to correct church dogma in accordance with their own understandings, thereby violating the principle of fellowship in love that is fundamental to the being of the Church, and making schism unavoidable.

To this we should add that elevation of dogmatic reform, in particular, to the place of honour within the programme, was in line with the new Bolshevik authorities' order for a "new Reformation". Trotsky wrote in a letter on 30 March, 1922, that "to jump lithely across the bourgeois reformation of the church just isn't going to be possible. We need, therefore, to turn it into a miscarriage" [*Trotsky, 163*], — thus he hurried to bring together the "Smenovkhovskiy clergy" as a manifestation signalling the bourgeois phase of societal development that he believed was necessary to traverse, so as to roll out proletarian revolution. The similarity between both the pre-revolutionary renewal programmes and post-revolutionary Renovationism on the one hand, and modernist movements within Roman Catholicism and Protestantism on the other, has been noted on more than one occasion by historians and scholars of religion<sup>12</sup> [*Golovushin 2020*]. From an internal Orthodox Church point of view, however, the question of initiating reforms was posed very differently in each of the two cases. In the first case (1905–1906), we see movement within the church tradition and a process of community discussion (*sobornost*). In the latter case (1922), we see revolutionary categorical-ness and reliance upon the command and political resources of secular power.

The second section of the Living Church programme features questions of *ethical reform*. This section contains points laying out positions on labour relations, the family, and private property. Similar issues are elaborated upon today in the document entitled "The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church", a document which regulates not internal church issues, but the life of the church within society. Of course, the turn of the church toward societal issues was, in and of itself, a direct consequence of the discussions at the turn of the century about the fact that the church can't simply be a sermon about the ideal afterlife and the fact that "the time has come to disclose the

12. Compare: "The modernists want: a) to soften the doctrinal immovability of Catholicism; b) allow for the cautious evolution of Christian dogma; c) to deprive the Pope of his role as, infallible, teacher of

the church; d) to free the individual conscience from bondage, and e) to introduce radical changes to the external structure of the catholic church along democratic principles" [*Prokoshev, 9*].

revelation within Christianity about *truth on this earth*” [Ternavtsev, 19]. The documents from 1905–1906, however, say far more about the church than about social issues, insofar as the church can “return to itself all the productive force of its influence in all areas of human life and the full force of its voice” only if it can heal its internal ailments, and in particular “she should take back her freedom (from governmental authorities — *Yu. B.*) belonging to her from time immemorial and determined by order of the holy canons” [On necessity, 202].

Of course as the revolutionary situation developed, the pre-revolutionary movement for church renewal needed to determine its position with regard to societal and political questions, and we see the appearance of brochures such as “The State Duma and Pastors of the Church” [The State Duma], and the appeal “On the Terrible Events of our Days”, with its call to halt the use of force “unleashing the terrible wave of fully-destructive evil” [To brother-pastors, 1363] (with regard to anti-student and anti-Jewish pogroms of 1905). The programme documents of the movement, however, were very careful in speaking about their societal goals (of course also in consideration of censorship). The 11<sup>th</sup> point of the programme of the Union for Renewal of the Church, for instance, states that “the Union recognizes that the promise to renew the whole world belongs to the Church, and that free scholarship, art and culture are not only forceful instruments for achieving this renewal, but abiding elements of the Kingdom of God” [Church Renewal Alliance, 186].

It is obvious that the basic field of interest of the Union’s authors in terms of the life of society is the intellectual and spiritual activity of the intelligentsia. It was these “members of society” in particular, “who have seceded from the Church” [On necessity, 201], have a strong and effective creative energy and are becoming opponents and interlocutors, and are an object of concern and mission for members of the “group of 32”. The “group of 32” were linked with members of the intelligentsia such as D. S. Merezhkovsky, S. N. Bulgakov, N. A. Berdyaev, S. L. Frank, and P. B. Struve not only by discussions at religious-philosophical workshops and society meetings, not only by the factor of writing for common journals in which their works were published, but also by the bonds of personal friendship<sup>13</sup>. In 1922 these intelligentsia basically disappear from the field of vision of the Living Church

13. See, for instance, Fr. Konstantin Aggeev’s letter to P. P. Kudrjavtsev on 6 October, 1906: “Yesterday I spent 3 hours at Trubetskoy’s, where I also saw Struve.

I “told Struve off, for failing to baptise his son, who is already a year old. My baptism of the child is now forthcoming” [Aggeev, 392].

programme authors, while “the worker” becomes their target audience, and they promise him equality “in terms of the use of the world’s blessings” and to “defend his rights” in such case as he supports the idea of “the justice of the social revolution and the union of workers worldwide” [*Programme 1922*, 18].

It’s in this section of the programme that words and ideas marking the authors’ support for the revolution and new authorities suddenly appear. The Living Church programme speaks of “the equality of all workers in terms of use of the world’s blessing” as a fundamental principle of statehood, of “the justice of the social revolution and unification of workers worldwide in defence of the rights of the worker and exploited person” [*Programme 1922*, 18]. According to Marxist doctrine, revolution allowing the transition from a capitalist to a communist world order, was understood as a necessary means toward the manifestation of authentic justice, and was interpreted not as a political battle for power, but as a moral and spiritual act, which explains the presence of these points specifically in the section on ethical reform:

In this sense Marxist revolution has not a legal, but a moral justification, and is considered as a sort of equivalent to pushing the “restart” button for the entire social system, returning everything to better bases, more founded upon a position of justice and the real needs of the human being [*Karchagin*, 122].

This section of the programme also displays a heightened anti-monastic mood. While the Union only opposes the “continuity between episcopal power and monasticism” [*Church Renewal Alliance*, 185], the 1922 programme casts doubt on the monastic tradition in general, and categorically relates it to class exploitation: the Programme suggests struggle against “monastic exploitation of the religious feeling of the gullible masses” and opposes the “monastic teaching on [their] personal salvation via rejection of the world and spurning of the natural needs of human nature, which leads to moral degradation and destruction of the human race” [*Programme 1922*, 17]. Criticism of the idea of personal salvation from the position of service to one’s neighbour, naturally, also had a place in the works of people who were close to the “group of 32”, and in particular Abbess Ekaterina (Efimovskaya). But such a radical rejection of asceticism cannot be found even in their personal correspondence, not to speak of their public declarations.

A. G. Kravetsky explains that the “sovietization” of ecclesial language and life “not only in terms of striving at any price to adapt to the ideology of those in power”, but also in terms of “an attempt to show

that in the face of anti-religious propaganda the Church is striving for the future and its influence will be felt within the structure of the new society” [Kravetsky, 527]. It’s possible that in this case we aren’t simply dealing with direct dictation from the party initiators of the schism, but also with an attempt by the authors of the programme to lean on various key positive concepts of the new revolutionary era, which can be seen in the more frequent references to the subject of labour, understood as a “joyful manifestation of the fulness of life and one’s personal input towards the prosperity of society” [Programme 1922, 18].

The third section of the Living Church programme is dedicated to *liturgical reforms*. We note at the outset that the 1905–1906 programmes said very little, very cautiously on this topic. The Union proposed and “enlivening” of church services, and Fr. Petr Kremlevsky’s project which was approved by a majority but not all of the members of the Union, included points about reconsideration of the monastic rule of prayer and a new translation of liturgical books. This lack of outward expression in terms of the liturgical sphere might be explained both by the priority of issues for that era of church management, by the conservatism of the liturgical field itself and, at last, by the good theological education of the supporters of church renewal, who well understood the stratified complexity of the formation of liturgical rites and the impossibility of “excluding theological expressions and ideas inimical to the all-merciful love of Christ” with one swift flourish of the pen [Programme 1922, 18] or of reconsidering church services with an eye to “eliminating those layers which were introduced into Orthodox liturgy during the outmoded period of symphonia between church and state” [Programme 1922, 18].

The positions of the Living Church programme such as “drawing the liturgy closer to the people’s understanding”, “broad inclusion of the laity into the liturgy, up to and including instruction in ecclesial matters”, and “fundamental reforms so as to make preaching an integral part of the liturgy”, obviously have their direct lineage in the ideas discussed at the turn of the century [Programme, 18]. But all these issues were discussed in the diocesan feedback to bishops and at the Local Church Council of 1917–1918, and had received articulate ecclesial approval [Balashov], [Kroshkina]. Inclusion of these points into the Renovatianist document more likely speaks to their desire to legitimize the document before the people of the Church<sup>14</sup>.

14. For a more detailed discussion of renovatianist liturgical reforms, see: [Solovyov 2002; Solovyov 2008].

The fourth section of the Living Church programme is on *Canonical Reports*. While pre-revolutionary texts actively made reference to an understanding of canon law, the Renovationist programme was composed of only a single point:

Removal of those canons which are outdated, were inserted by demand of civil authorities, which contain narrow and nationalist understandings of Christianity, or understandings which are unnecessary at the present time, given modern conditions for church life [*Programme 1922, 18*].

The understanding of what a “canon” is, was one of the key discussions in 1905–1906, focussing on a restoration of a “canonical structure for church life”, “canonical freedom”, and “canonical structure”. It is possible that this accent on canons in the essays of the “group of 32” was related to the fact that the intellectual centre of the group was N. P. Aksakov, who was a specialist in canon law. But the activists of the pre-revolutionary movement, more often than not, strove to undergird their ideas with references to the church canons, rather than to call for revision of these canons. N. P. Aksakov’s approach to the canons was complex and dialectical. He understood that canons can be understood as “the mechanistic production of old historical templates”, but also in an eternal sense “as the higher principle of church life” [*Journals, 641*], and its Living Tradition, which in each historical era creates its own external historical forms”<sup>15</sup>.

Finally, the fifth section of the programme is dedicated to *parish reforms*. It is tell-tale that the extensive monograph by A. L. Beglov, “The Orthodox Parish at the Close of the Russian Empire: Condition, Discussion and Reform” hardly pays any attention to proposals put forward by supporters of parish reform [*Beglov 2021, 343–377*]. This isn’t the researcher’s oversight, but rather a consequence of the fact that in their suggestions the Union focused on improving the quality of the gathering of the people of God rather than on criticizing its form. The Union’s programme speaks of

a real union between the members of the Church, beginning with only two or three people gathered together in the name of Christ, continuing through parishes both smaller and larger, and finishing with unity between all Christian churches [*Church Renewal Alliance, 185*].

15. For more detail, see: [*Naumova*].



For the Renovators of the 1920s, the basic form for the organization of church life was conceived of as the parish, having its foundation in geographical rather than spiritual limits, and given over entirely to the power of the local priest. The parish was understood “as a liturgical society in which the priest united together those who were near to his church” [*Programme 1922*, 18]. It’s impossible not to notice that in this section of the programme we have a reaction to the work of the Synodal Department on the welfare of the parish, the decisions of which, as Beglov states,

were sufficiently conservative and shared a proclivity for the minimalization of the consequences of the “parish revolution”, which incorporated such reforms as the property rights of parishioners vis-à-vis church property being limited and elections of clergy being subject to a double episcopal filter [*Beglov 2019*, 37].

On the one hand, the Renovators return to ideas of elected office and the independence of the parish in terms of property rights, yet on the other, they themselves introduce limitations on grass-roots “initiative”, giving a controlling function to the clerics in: a) election of spiritual leaders by the community together with representatives of the regional clergy, as in early Christian practice, b) the use of church funds together with members of its clergy [*Programme 1922*, 18].

This section also contains a point determining the attitude to bishops. Although the church activists of the early 1900s have often been implicated in accusations of white clergy revolting against black clergy, in their documents their expressions are very cautious and, in terms of accusations, relate primarily to the second essay of the “group of 32”, “On the Make-up of the Synod”. In the Union’s programme, the autocracy of bishops is limited by councils of priests (this point is maintained in the 7<sup>th</sup> point of the Renovatorist programme), by the election of bishops, and by constant councils at various levels, none of which are mentioned in the Living Church programme.

In recommending the embodiment of a series of ideas actively discussed at the turn of the century, such as reinstatement of the order of deaconesses, Renovatorist documents ignore the primary subject matter treated by activists from the Union for the Renewal of the Church, which was bringing sobornost back to the Church. Sobornost — understood at the beginning of 1905 more as the right of the Church to solve its internal problems in council — is already understood more widely in the Union’s programme, as a return to a fundamental quality of church life.

## Conclusions

In establishing the continuity between of a series of ideas in the two ecclesial movements in 1905–1906 and 1922, we have also noted a series of significant differences. The first of these relates to the internal position of those who spoke out for renewal in the life of the church in each of the two cases: while members of the “group of 32” priests and the associations immediately following were oriented toward discussion within the church in a spirit of sobornost, post-revolutionary Renovators assign to themselves the unequivocal right to reform the church from the point of view of those positions which seemed to them to be uniquely correct and which were approved by their soviet curators.

At the turn of the century, church renewal was founded upon complex theological thought with a serious basis in Scripture and church tradition, and laid out in the language of the enlightened church and educated intelligentsia. In the 1920s, we see a sharp radicalization vis-à-vis the pre-revolutionary ideas, which are ripped out of their context within the Church and translated into the language of leftist political parties.

In all this, in essence the reforms proposed by the “Living Churchers” seem to be quite secondary and make use of ideas which have either already been popularized and approved by the Local Church Council of 1917–1918, or which return the church to the original form of parish life at a time when there is already “an epidemic of workshops and brotherhoods”, and an historical situation which demand church gatherings of a fundamentally new and different type.

Fr. Konstantin Aggeev, in his “postulated” article “To My Friends”, a section from which he included in his letter to P. P. Kudrjavitsev on 25 December, 1906, very clearly expresses the way in which the activists of the “group of 32” understood their business in terms of church renewal. This letter was written after two years of work and bears witness not to their initial enthusiasm, but to the stable perspective which has resulted from that work:

If we even for a moment had considered our task to be the renewal of the Church, rather than simply acting together with it, we would have left. Only prophets can be effective in such great affairs; one can't stand in shoes before the Burning Bush... [Aggeev, 404].

It's clear that Aggeev has in mind the spiritual renewal of life, without which neither the life of the Church nor the life of the individual

Christian is possible. There were, of course, also people with great ideas amongst the Renovators of the 1920s, some of whom Fr. Ilya Solovyov names: Fr. Nikolay Popov, Fr. Aleksandr Bojarsky, and hieromonk Theophan (Adamenko). But it was not these men who determined the face and character of the Renovator movement. The position of the primary renovator leaders turned out to be deeply non-ecclesial not only in that they submitted the life of the church to the demands of the new authorities, but in terms of their internal relationship with the Church, which they considered not as a sobornal organism to be treated with love and care, but as a sort of object of an ecclesio-social experiment, undertaken in the spirit of constructing a new world for new Soviet man.

## Sources

1. *Aggeev* = Aggeev Konstantin, priest (2014). “Letters to P. P. Kudryavtsev”, in Iu. V. Balakshina (2014). *Bratstvo revnitelei tserkovnogo obnoveniia (gruppy ‘32-h’ peterburgskikh sviashchennikov), 1903–1907. Dokumental’naia istoriia i kul’turnyi kontekst* [Brotherhood of zealots for church renewal (a group of ‘32’ St. Petersburg priests), 1903–1907. Documentary history and cultural context]. Moscow : SFI Publ., pp. 217–412 (in Russian).
2. *Belkov* = Belkov Evgeny, priest (1922). “Harbingers of the Living Church”. *Zhivaia tserkov’*, 1922, May 23, n. 2, pp. 10–11 (in Russian).
3. *Cheltsov* = Cheltsov Mikhail, archpriest (1997). “The Essence of Church Renewal”. *Pravoslavnaia obshchina*, 1997, n. 40, pp. 75–87 (in Russian).
4. *Christian Community* = *Christian Community of Students in the first half of 1905 // Pravoslavno-russkoe slovo*, 1905, n. 16–17, pp., 661–687 (in Russian).
5. *Church Renewal Alliance* = “Church Renewal Alliance Programme”. *Tserkovno-obshchestvennaia zhizn’*, 1906, January 20, n. 5, pp. 185–186 (in Russian).
6. *Church renovation* = “Church renovation programme”. *Zhivaia tserkov’. Organ svobodomyshchego dukhovenstva Penzenskoi eparkhii*, 1922, May 5, n. 1, p. 3; May 12, n. 2, p. 2 (in Russian).
7. *Egorov* = Egorov Ioann, priest (1908). “Sobornost’ in Christ’s Church”. *Voprosy religii*, 1908, iss. 2, pp. 82–107 (in Russian).
8. *Journals* = *Zhurnaly i protokoly zasedanii vysochaishe uchrezhdenного Predsobornogo prisutstviia (1906 g.)* [Journals and minutes of meetings of the highest established Pre-Council Presence (1906)], v. 1 : *Otkrytie zasedanii Prisutstviia. Zhurnaly zasedanii Pervogo, Vtorogo, Tret’ego i Chetvertogo otdelov* [Opening of meetings of the Presence. Journals of the meetings of the First, Second, Third and Fourth Divisions]. Moscow: O-vo ljubitelei

- tserkovnoi istorii : Novospasskii monastyr' Press, 2014. (Church History Materials ; Book 55). (in Russian).
9. Krasnov-Levitin = Krasnov-Levitin A. E. (1977). *Likhie gody, 1925–1941: Vospominaniia* [Dashing Years, 1925–1941: Memoirs]. Paris : YMCA-Press (in Russian).
  10. Kremlevsky = Kremlevsky Petr, priest (1906). “Church Reform Project”. *Tserkovnyi vestnik*, 1906, n. 3, pp. 81–83 (in Russian).
  11. *Nashedshie grad* = Chertkov S. V. (ed.) (2017). *Nashedshie grad. Istoriiia Khristianskogo bratstva bor'by v pis'makh i dokumentakh* [Found city. History of the Christian Brotherhood for Struggle in Letters and Documents]. Moscow : Kuchkovo pole : Spasskoe delo (in Russian).
  12. *On necessity* = “On necessity for changes in Russian church Governance: the opinion of a group of metropolitan priests”, in Yu. V. Balakhshina (2014). *Bratstvo revnitelei tserkovnogo obnoveniia (gruppa “32-kh” peterburgskikh sviashchennikov), 1903–1907. Dokumental'naia istoriia i kul'turnyi kontekst* [Brotherhood of zealots for church renewal (a group of ‘32’ St. Petersburg priests), 1903–1907. Documentary history and cultural context]. Moscow : SFI, pp. 199–205 (in Russian).
  13. *On the Makeup* = “On the Makeup of the Synod”. *Tserkovnyi vestnik*, 1905, n. 21, pp. 641–648 (in Russian).
  14. *Programme 1922* = “The programme of church reforms outlined by the ‘Living Church’ group of clergy and laity in the development of its main provisions adopted at the founding meeting of the group on May 16–29, 1922”. *Zhivaia tserkov'*, 1922, n. 10, October 1, pp. 17–18 (in Russian).
  15. *Programme 1923* = *Osnovnye polozeniia programmy gruppy pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva i mirian “Zhivaia Tserkov”* [The main provisions of the programme of the group of Orthodox clergy and laity “Living Church”]. Penza : Tipo-lit. GSNKh, [1923, February] (in Russian).
  16. *Programme of the Vologda* = “Programme of the Vologda Progressive Group of Clergy and Laity (Church Renewal)”. *Zhivaia tserkov'*, 1922, August 1–15, n. 6–7, pp. 15–17 (in Russian).
  17. *Protocols* = Lobanov V. V. (ed.). (2014). *Protokoly komissii po provedeniiu otdeleniia tserkvi ot gosudarstva pri TsK RKP(b) — VKP (b) (Antireligioznoi komissii). 1922–1929 gg.* [Protocols of the commission for carrying out the separation of church and state under the Central Committee of the RCP (b) — VKP (b) (Anti-religious commission). 1922–1929]. Moscow : PSTGU Publ. (in Russian).
  18. *Resolutions* = “Resolutions of the meetings of the First Vladimir Diocesan Conference of the members of the ‘Living Church’ group of white clergy and laity on December 10–12, 1922 in Vladimir”. *Tserkov' i zhizn'*, 1922, December 15–31, n. 4, pp. 5–7 (in Russian).

19. *Rules* = “Rules of the ‘Living Church’ Group of White Orthodox Clergy and Laypeople”. *Zhivaia tserkov’*, 1922, n. 4–5, 1–15 July, pp. 18–19; n. 8–9, 1–15 September, pp. 20–21 (in Russian).
20. *Sventsitsky* = Svetsitsky V. P. (1906). *‘Khristsianskoe bratstvo bor’by’ i ego programma* [Christian Brotherhood of Struggle and its programme]. Moscow : Tip. A. P. Poplavskogo (in Russian).
21. *Ternavtsev* = Ternavtsev V. A. (2005). “Russian Church before a great task”. *Zapiski peterburgskikh Religiozno-filosofskikh sobranii (1901–1903 gg.)* [Notes of the St. Petersburg Religious and Philosophical Meetings (1901–1903)]. Moscow : Respublika, pp. 5–31 (in Russian).
22. *The main provisions* = “The main provisions of the group of Orthodox clergy and laity ‘Living Church’”. *Zhivaia Tserkov’*, 1922, n. 3, June 15, pp. 11–12 (in Russian).
23. *The programme of church reforms* = “The programme of church reforms outlined by the ‘Living Church’ group of clergy and laity, in the development of its main provisions adopted at the founding meeting of the group on May 16–29, 1922”. *Drug pravoslavnogo naroda. Relig.-nравstv. zhurnal : Ofits. organ Saratovskogo eparkhial’nogo upr*, 1922, n. 3, pp. 10–11 (in Russian).
24. *The State Duma* = *Gosudarstvennaia Duma i pastyr’ tserkvi* [The State Duma and Pastors of the Church]. St. Petersburg : Tip. P. F. Voshchinskoi, 1905 (in Russian).
25. *To brother-pastors* = “To brother-pastors of all confessions and to all who cherish the testaments of Christ, about the terrible events of our days: Appeal”. *Tserkovnyi vestnik*, 1905, n. 43, col. 1363–1365 (in Russian).
26. *Trotsky* = “Note by L. D. Trotsky to the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) on the policy towards the church. March 30, 1922”, in *Arkhivy Kremliia* [Kremlin archives]: In 2 v., v. 1 : *Politbiuro i tserkov’. 1922–1925 gg.* [Politburo and Church. 1922–1925]. Moscow ; Novosibirsk : Rossiiskaia politicheskaia entsiklopediia (ROSSPEN), Sibirskii khronograf, 1997, pp. 161–164 (in Russian).
27. *Vvedensky 1922* = Vvedensky A. I. (1922). “What should the coming council do?”. *Zhivaia tserkov’*, 1922, May 23, n. 2, pp. 4–6 (in Russian).
28. *Vvedensky 1923* = Vvedensky A. I. (1923). *Tserkov’ i gosudarstvo: ocherk vzaimootnoshenii tserkvi i gosudarstva v Rossii 1918–1922 g.* [Church and the state: an essay on the relationship between church and state in Russia, 1918–1922]. Moscow : Mospoligraf (in Russian).

## References

1. *Balakshina* = Balakshina Yu. V. (2014). *Bratstvo revnitelei tserkovnogo obnoveniia (gruppa “32-kh” peterburgskikh sviashchennikov), 1903–1907 :*

- Dokumental'naiia istoriia i kul'turnyi kontekst* [Brotherhood of zealots of church renewal (group of "32" St. Petersburg priests), 1903–1907 : Documentary history and cultural context]. Moscow : SFI Publ. (in Russian).
2. *Balashov* = Balashov Nikolai, archpriest (2001). *Na puti k liturgicheskomu vozrozhdeniiu* [On the Way to Liturgical Renewal]. Moscow : Dukhovnaia Biblioteka (in Russian).
  3. *Beglov 2019* = Beglov A. L. (2019). *Pravoslavnyi prikhod Rossiiskoi imperii na rubezhe XIX–XX vv.: sostoianie, diskussii, reformi* [The Orthodox Parish of the Russian Empire at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries: status, discussions, reforms]. Thesis abstract ... Cand. Sci. (History). Moscow (in Russian).
  4. *Beglov 2021* = Beglov A. L. (2021). *Pravoslavnyi prikhod na zakate Rossiiskoi imperii: sostoianie, diskussii, reform* [The Orthodox Parish at the Close of the Russian Empire: Condition, Discussion and Reform]. Moscow : Indrik (Tserkovnye reformy: Diskussii v Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi nachala 20 veka. Pomestnyi Sobor 1917–1918 gg. i predsobornyi period) (in Russian).
  5. *Firsov* = Firsov S. L. (1996). "Essay of the 32' as a Source of Russian Orthodox Church History". *Russkoe proshloe : Istoricheskii al'manakh*. St. Petersburg, 1996, n. 7, pp. 391–395 (in Russian).
  6. *Freeze* = Freeze G. (2019). "Gubitel'noe blagochestie": Rossiiskaia tserkov' i padenie imperii : sbornik statei ["Destructive Piety": The Russian Church and the Fall of the Empire: a collection of articles]. St. Petersburg : Europe University Publ. (in Russian).
  7. *Golovushkin* = Golovushkin D. A. (2020). *Fenomen obnovlenchestva v ruskom pravoslavii pervoi poloviny XX veka* [The Renovationism Phenomenon in Russian Orthodoxy in the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century]. Dis. ... Dr. Sci. (Philos.). St. Petersburg : Politekhniko-servis (in Russian).
  8. *Karchagin* = Karchagin E. V. (2018). "Justice and revolution in the social philosophy of K. Marx". *Logos et Praxis*, 2018, v. 17, n. 4, pp. 118–124. DOI: 10.15688/lp.jvolsu.2018.4.13 (in Russian).
  9. *Khazagerov* = Khazagerov G. G. (2002). *Politicheskaiia ritorika* [Political rhetoric]. Moscow : Nikkolo-Media (in Russian).
  10. *Kochetkov, Kopirovsky* = Kochetkov Georgy, priest, Kopirovsky A. M. (2018). "The Experience of Covering the Topic 'The Church's Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, Its Scriptures and Traditions' in Teaching Faith to Modern Catechumens". *"The Light of Christ enlightens all": SFI Academic Periodical*, 2018, iss. 26, pp. 38–65 (in Russian).
  11. *Kolonitsky* = Kolonitsky B. I. (2017). "The anti-monarchist revolution of 1917 and the beginning of the formation of the cult of the leader of the people". *Istoricheskie issledovaniia*, 2017, n. 6, pp. 35–53 (in Russian).
  12. *Kravetsky* = Kravetsky A. G. (2012). *Tserkovnaia missiia v epokhu peremen (mezhdru propoved'iu i dialogom)* [Church Mission in an Age of Change

- (Between Sermon and Dialogue)]. Moscow : Kul'turnyi tsentr “Dukhovnaia biblioteka” (in Russian).
13. *Kroshkina* = Kroshkina L. V. (2017). “The Resolution of the 1917–1918 Local Council ‘On Church Preaching’: Historical Context and Crucial Tasks”. *“The Light of Christ enlightens all”*: SFI Academic Periodical, 2017, iss. 23, pp. 91–100 (in Russian).
  14. *Mazyrin, Smoliakova* = Mazyrin A. V., archpriest, Smoliakova I. N. (2020). “‘The fewer wise spiritual men there are, the more profitable it will be for us’. Documents of the secret operational department of the GPU on the work on the split of the Russian Church in 1922”. *Vestnik Ekaterinburgskoi dukhovnoi seminarii*, 2020, n. 3 (31), pp. 369–378. DOI: 10.24411/2224-5391-2020-1031 (in Russian).
  15. *Naumova* = Naumova M. A. (2022). “The Origin and Purpose of Church Canons in N. P. Aksakov’ Writings”. *Vestnik Sviato-Filaretovskogo instituta*, 2022, iss. 42, pp. 130–151. DOI: 10.25803/26587599\_2022\_42\_130 (in Russian).
  16. *Petrov* = Petrov S. G. (2013). *Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' vremeni patriarkha Tikhona (istochnikovedcheskoe issledovanie)* [Russian Orthodox Church of the time of Patriarch Tikhon (source study)]. Novosibirsk : SO RAN (in Russian).
  17. *Prokoshev* = Prokoshev P. A. (1911). *Religiozni krizis na zapade Evropy : (Modernizm) Publichnaia lektsiia* [Religious Crisis in Western Europe: (Modernism) : public lecture]. Tomsk : Parovaia tip. Orlovoi (in Russian).
  18. *Solovyov 2002* = Solovyov I. V. (2002). “A Brief History of the So-Called ‘Renovation Schism’ in the Russian Orthodox Church in the Light of Newly Published Historical Documents”, in Idem. (ed.). *“Obnovlencheskii” raskol: (Materialy dlia tserkovno-istoricheskoi i kanonicheskoi kharakteristiki)* [Renovationist schism: (Materials for church-historical and canonical characteristics)]. Moscow : O-vo liubitelei tserkovnoi istorii : Izd-vo Krutits. Podvor'ia (in Russian).
  19. *Solovyov 2008* = Solovyov I. V. (2008) “‘Renovationist’ schism and liturgical reforms”. *Tserkovnyi vestnik*, 2008, n. 12 (385). Juny 27, available at: [http://www.e-vestnik.ru/church/obnovlencheskij\\_raskol\\_liturgia/](http://www.e-vestnik.ru/church/obnovlencheskij_raskol_liturgia/) (20.06.2022) (in Russian).

The article was submitted 15.07.2022; approved after reviewing 24.07.2022; accepted for publication 01.08.2022