



# The Russian Orthodox Church and Moscow-the Third Rome Concept

► Araştırma makalesi / Research article

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### Abstract

In 988, under the leadership of Kinyaz Viladimer, Russians accepted Christianity through the Patriarchate of Constantinople and entered a new phase in their history. With Christianity, the Russians were introduced to writing and, most importantly, to religious texts. At the same time, this religious conversion also led to the acceptance of the belief of chosenness, which had spread to Christianity from Judaism. Nestor, a Russian priest who lived in the 12th century, wrote in his work that although Russians were the last community to accept Christianity, they would undertake important missions in the future. He also attributed a mission to the Russian society by referring to the biblical passage that the feet will be the head and the head will be the feet. However, in the mentioned centuries, the Eastern Roman Empire was still the center of Orthodoxy. For this reason, the Russian Orthodox Church would remain for many years as a Metropolitanate under the Patriarchate of Constantinople. However, the increasing Ottoman pressure on Constantinople from the 1400s onwards created several historical opportunities for the Russians. In particular, the Byzantine agreement with the Pope of Rome in Florence in 1439 mobilized the Russian Church. Using this agreement as a pretext, Moscow severed its relations with Constantinople. In 1453, the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, the center of the Orthodox world, opened a new page in Russian Theo-politics. Russian priests believed that Nestor's prophecy had been fulfilled and Moscow developed the concept of the Third Rome. Appearing in the 16th century, the Moscow-Third Rome concept soon became the ideological basis for the formation of the Moscow kingdom. In this article, the concept of Moscow Third Rome, which is one of the important turning points in Russian history, is analyzed through an analytical method. The background of the concept, the conditions that led to its emergence, its historical development and its reflections on the present day are emphasized.

**Keywords:** History of Religions, Moscow Third Rome, Russian Orthodox Church

## Rus Ortodoks Kilisesi ve Moskova-Üçüncü Roma Konsepti

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### Öz

Ruslar 988-90 yıllarında Kinyaz Viladimer öncülüğünde Hıristiyanlığı Konstantinopolis Patrikliği ile kabul ederek kendi tarihlerinde yeni bir evreye geçmiş oldular. Hıristiyanlıkla birlikte Ruslar, yaz ve en önemlisi de dini metinlerle tanışacaklardır. Aynı zamanda bu din değişimi, Hıristiyanlığa Yahudilikten sıraya gelen seçilmiş inancının da geçmesine yol açmıştır. Daha 12. yüzyılda yaşamış Rus rahip Nestor, kaleme aldığı eserinde Rusların Hıristiyanlığı en son kabul eden topluluk olmasına rağmen gelecekte önemli misyonlar üstleneceğini yazmıştır. O İncil'de yer alan ayaklar baş başlar ise ayak olacaktır pasajına atf yaparak, Rus toplumunun da günü geldiğinde baş olacağı kehanetinde bulunmuştur. Ancak söz konusu dönemlerde Doğu Roma İmparatorluğu güçlü bir şekilde Ortodoksluğun merkezi olma konumunu sürdürmekteydi. Bu sebeple Rus Ortodoks Kilisesi de uzun yıllar boyunca Konstantinopolis Patrikliğine bağlı bir Metropolitik olarak kalacaktır. Lakin 1400'li yıllardan itibaren giderek artan Osmanlı'nın Konstantinopolis üzerindeki baskısı, Ruslar açısından birtakım tarihi fırsatlar doğurmuştur. Özellikle 1439'da Bizans'ın Floransa'da Roma Papası ile yaptığı anlaşma, Rus Kilisesini harekete geçirecektir. Bu anlaşmayı öne süren Moskova, Konstantinopolis ile ilişkisini kesecektir. 1453 yılında Ortodoks dünyasının merkezi konumunda olan Konstantinopolis'in Osmanlılarca fethedilmesi, Rus teo-politiğinde yeni bir sayfa açmış oldu. Dolayısıyla son Ortodoks patrikliğinin de Müslümanların kontrolüne geçmesi adeta Rus Rahipler arasında Nestor'un kehanetinin gerçekleşmesi olarak algılandı. Konjonktürü iyi değerlendiren Pskovlu Rahip Filotheus, Moskova Üçüncü Roma konseptini geliştirdi. 16. yüzyılda gündeme gelen Moskova-Üçüncü Roma konsepti, kısa zaman içerisinde Moskova Krallığının oluşumunun ideolojik temeli haline geldi. Bu makale Rus Ortodoks Kilisesi ve dahi Rus devlet politikası açısından önemli gelişmelere yol açan Moskova Üçüncü Roma konseptini analitik bir yöntemle ele alarak analiz etmektedir. Bu kapsamda konseptin arka planı, ortaya çıkış şartları, gelişimi ve günümüze yönelik yansımaları üzerinde durulmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dinler Tarihi, Moskova Üçüncü Roma, Rus Ortodoks Kilisesi

## Introduction

There are some turning points in the history of societies. These turning points play an important role in shaping the future of those societies. One of these turning points in the history of Russian society is its acceptance of Christianity in the 10th century. The second is the "Moscow Third Rome" concept, which enabled the transformation of Moscow, which was a feudal state, into a Tsardom starting from the 16th century. The Russians' acceptance of Christianity saved them from being a pagan society and paved the way for them to attain writing and civilization. This also caused the Russians to connect to Byzantium through the Church. However, the conquest of Byzantium, the last bastion of Orthodoxy, by the Turks in 1453 created a vacuum of authority in the Orthodox world. Taking advantage of this gap, Russian priests developed the "Moscow Third Rome" concept. With this concept, the Russian Orthodox Church was proposing a new vision to the political authority. This was the second turning point in Russian History, and the Russians were showing the way from a fiefdom to an empire. According to the "Third Rome" concept, the first two Rome were erased from the stage of history, and Moscow (that is, the Russians) was entrusted with the mission of patron of Orthodoxy within the framework of God's plan. Now Moscow is the Third Rome and there will be never a fourth. This concept also will assert the election of the Russian people and attributes a historical mission to Moscow. In this context, the present study examines the emergence of the Moscow Rome concept, its development process, and its reflections on today.

### 1. Third Roman Concept of Moscow

The discourse of the "Third Rome" is a theological and political concept that expresses Moscow as the successor of the Roman Empire. Its foundations were formulated in the 15th and 16th centuries in the Moscow overlordship. This concept shows that Moscow declared itself the heir of Byzantium and the leader of Orthodox civilization. By the 16th century, the Church had begun to advocate a Theo-political ideology that emphasized the divinity of Moscow. The whole story began in 988 when the Russians accepted Orthodoxy under Byzantine influence. Already in the 12th century, the Russian priest Nestor formulated in his work the idea that in the future the Russians would be the heirs of the Byzantine Empire. In his work, Nestor praised Kinyaz Vladimir who officially converted to Christianity. Nestor called him "the new Constantine of Great Rome".<sup>1</sup> At this time, however, the Russians were ruled by more than one overlordship. The Theo-political conditions had to mature for the Russians to emerge with the claim of the Third Rome.

In 1204 Constantinople, considered the center of Orthodox Christianity, was occupied by the Crusaders. At the same time, the old hierarchy of power, led by the Byzantine monarch, who was replaced by the Latin emperor, was destroyed. Soon the Russians were also invaded by the Mongols. In such an environment, the Russians had to make a choice. Either they would submit to the supremacy of the West or the East. Without hesitation, they refused to get closer to the West. The Russian clergy concluded that the Catholic West was the one to be avoided. The logic went like this: if the East was sinful in God's eyes, then God would not have created heaven there. The West, on the other hand, was in chaos and

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<sup>1</sup> Se Povesti vremennykh let (Lavrentyevskaya letopis), Sost, avtory primechaniy i ukazateley. A.G. Kuzmin, V. V. Fomin, vstupitel'naya statya i perevod A.G. Kuzmina, (Arzamas: 1993). 109.

confusion because it had drifted away from Christian truth. The supporters of the submission to the Khans of the Golden Army were Metropolitan Kirill II (d. 1280), Prince Yaroslav and his son Alexander Nevsky (d. 1263). From 1245 onwards, Russian chronicles began to give the khan the title "Cesar", a title used by Byzantine kings.<sup>2</sup> The main reason why the Russian clergy remained loyal to the Golden Horde was that the Mongol-Tatars, unlike the Catholics, did not touch Orthodoxy. Towards the end of the 15th century, the Golden Army state was losing power, while Moscow, on the contrary, was gaining strength. In such an atmosphere, Archbishop Vassian (d. 1481) wrote a work in which he argued that the Tsar should bow not to the Tatar Khan but to God. He compared the Russian people to the Jewish people and wrote: "Just as the Lord saved the people of Israel from the Pharaoh, he will save us, the new Israel, from the pagan son of Ishmael."<sup>3</sup>

In 1439, the Byzantine treaty with the Pope of Rome in Florence strengthened the hand of the Russian Orthodox Church. One article of this agreement stipulated the acceptance of Papal supremacy over Orthodoxy.<sup>4</sup> The Russians rejected this agreement. There was more than one reason for this courageous behaviour of the Russians. Firstly, by the middle of the 15th century, Russia was free from the Mongol Tatar oppression. Secondly, the process of centralization of Russian territories was largely completed. Add to this the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, and the Russians were the only independent representatives of the Orthodox Christian world.<sup>5</sup> The Russian bishops saw this situation as a unique opportunity and confidently formulated the thesis that "Moscow is the Third Rome" regarding the historical role of the Moscow state. This thesis was initially proposed by Philotheus of Pskov (d. 1542), a monk of the Eleazar Monastery, who firmly believed that Russia was the final country to preserve the original and unspoiled form of the true Orthodox faith. Philotheus wrote to Vasili III Ivanovich (d. 1533), "that all Christian kingdoms have ceased to exist and are united in one kingdom... and that is the Russian kingdom. For two Rome have fallen, the third is standing, and the fourth will not be!"<sup>6</sup> There is a slight inconsistency in this ideology. Namely, even after the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate in 1590, it did not deny the ecclesiastical primacy of the Constantinople Patriarchate. However, the excitement of this new idea led the Russian clergy of the time to ignore the contradiction. For them, there was now a holy Russia with its own Tsars and Patriarchs.<sup>7</sup> According to Philotheus' idea of the Third Rome, there is a state in the world that is eternal in its spiritual existence - Rome. Its worldwide boundaries may change, and it may take different names. However, Rome is the most powerful state in the world. The First Rome is the ancient Roman Empire, which over time became overflowing with sin and was destroyed by the barbarians by the fate of God. The second Rome is its successor, the Byzantine Empire.<sup>8</sup> The mistake of Constantinople was to sign the League of Florence with the Catholics in 1439. Consequently, they faced invasion by the Turks as a divine

<sup>2</sup> Nikolay Asonov, "Vtoroy Izrail ili Trety Rim", *Gosudarstvennaya Sluzhba* 6 (2008), 181-182.

<sup>3</sup> *Polnoye Sobraniye Russkikh Letopisey*, t. VIII, (Sankt-Peterburg: 1859), 211.

<sup>4</sup> Cyril Toumanoff, "Moscow the Third Rome: Genesis and Significance of a Politico-Religious Idea", *The Catholic Historical Review* 40/4 (1955), 435.

<sup>5</sup> Asonov, "Vtoroy Izrail' ili Trety Rim", 183.

<sup>6</sup> Oleg Viktorovich Parilov, "Poslaniye startsa Filofeya i mesto Rossii sredi drugikh gosudarstv", *Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo universiteta im. N. I. Lobachevskogo* 1 (2003), 17.

<sup>7</sup> Toumanoff, "Moscow the Third Rome, 444.

<sup>8</sup> Asonov, "Vtoroy Izrail ili Trety Rim ", 184.

punishment. After that, Moscow emerged as the only major line of defence for Orthodoxy. Moscow became not only the capital of a powerful state but also the Third Rome as the defender of spirituality and morality. In his message, Philotheus formulated ideas about the global significance of the formation of the Moscow State and its messianic role concerning Orthodoxy and other peoples. The main goal is the transformation of Moscow into the Third Rome, which will last for a thousand years. On the contrary, according to him, if Moscow falls, the end of the world will be inevitable.<sup>9</sup>

This thesis of Philotheus is a rather unique eschatological theory in spatial and temporal terms. In time, this theory would form the basis of not only the religious but also the political ideology of Russia. So much so that the thesis that Moscow is the Third Rome gave rise to the claim that it was the heir to the lands of the former Byzantine Empire. This idea was strengthened during the reign of Tsar Ivan III (d. 1505), who married Sophia Paleologus, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor Constantine.<sup>10</sup> However, there was a problem. That is the Russian Orthodox Church was still dependent on the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This problem would be solved because of the shortsighted church policy of the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (d. 1595). Namely, during the reign of Sultan Murad III, Pammakaristos Monastery was converted into Fethiye Mosque because of the fatwa issued by Çivizâde Mehmet Efendi. Patriarch Jeremias II of Fener (d. 1595) was asked to acquire a new patriarchal centre. Patriarch Jeremias II sought financial support and thought that this support would come from the Russian Tsardom. He asked the Sultan's permission to pay a visit to Moscow and travelled there. Jeremias II met with Boris Fyodorovich Godunov, heir to the throne, and asked for financial support. Godunov, in turn, requested Jeremias II to promote the Metropolitan of Moscow to the Patriarchate. Returning to Istanbul, Patriarch Jeremias II of Fener, with the approval of the other churches, elevated the Moscow Metropolitanate to the status of Patriarchate in 1590.<sup>11</sup>

Gaining formal independence from Byzantium was a significant milestone for the Russian Church on its path to becoming the Third Rome. The Russian Church could now be elevated nationally and politically. The ideology of one Orthodox Tsar-Sesar and one true faith Orthodoxy in the whole world contributed greatly to the formation and growth of Russian national self-awareness. Only the will of the Tsar and an abstract theory were not enough to implement the new concept of the Russian national church in life and society. The help of the patriarchs was necessary, so the Russian church that became national also became the state itself.<sup>12</sup>

The new state ideology, with its idea of Moscow as the Third Rome, was designed to reflect the unprecedented growth of the patriotic consciousness of the masses. So much so that the liberation from the Tatar yoke, the reunification of all Russian lands and the fall of Constantinople gave rise to the belief that the Russian people were God's chosen people.

<sup>9</sup> Kirillov Ivan Akimovich, *Tretiy Rim Oчерk istoricheskogo razvitiya idei russkogo messianizma*, (Moskva; 1914), 28.

<sup>10</sup> Valeriy Alekseyevich Rokunov, "The Doctrine 'Moscow the Third Rome'", *And Challenges of the Modern Geopolitical Situation* 6/87 (2022), 1939.

<sup>11</sup> Dualı Ş. Muhammed, "Fener ve Moskova Patrikliği Arasında; Birleşik Ukrayna Ortodoks Kilisesi Meselesi", *10th International Conference of Strategic Research on Scientific Studies*, ed. Ömer K. Tüfekci (17-18 June, Rome: 2019), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Nadezhda Zhukova, "Kontseptsiya Moskva-Tretiy Rim", *geopolitics.rus* (Erişim 22 Ocak 2024).

Russian chroniclers wrote with great appetite that all other Orthodox kingdoms fell to the Turks, but the "Russian lands" continued to exist independently by the grace of God.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the formation of the Russian autocracy was reflected in the extraordinary state ideology that emerged from the late 15th century onwards. The vision of an unimaginably vast Orthodox kingdom and Moscow-Third Rome, which was, in fact, a political myth, swept Russia.

The Moscow Third Rome Concept was introduced to strengthen the official ideology and policy of the autocracy and to give it a national character isolated from the West. This was facilitated to some extent by Ivan III's marriage to Sophia Paleolog. Although Sophia was the princess of the Byzantine Empire, which no longer existed, her Byzantine coat of arms with the double-headed eagle and her religious and political calling seemed to have been transferred to the Moscow principality.<sup>14</sup> Moscow became the successor of Byzantium, both politically and religiously. All these developments resulted in the public acceptance of Philotheus' prophecy that the Russian people were chosen by God. Moreover, the Moscow Third Rome theory was soon embraced by government circles and found its way into official state documents.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Role of the Russian Orthodox Church

Father Philotheus' theory of the Third Rome led the Moscow Tsars to the idea of a single universal ruler for all Orthodox Christians. This theocratic ideology resulted in the Moscow kings seeking closer ties with the Greeks and other Orthodox Christians. Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich (d. 1676) firmly believed that he was the undisputed leader of all Orthodoxy. He considered himself equally responsible for the fate of both the state and the church. Emulating the older Byzantine monarchs, Tsar Alexei confidently aspired to be the true leader of Orthodoxy.<sup>16</sup> This was also expressed by the Greek clergy. For example, Patriarch Paisios of Jerusalem (d. 1660), who visited Moscow in 1649, directly expressed the following laudatory thoughts in his conversation with the Tsar; "May the Holy Trinity strengthen you and increase your years in the depths of old age". Paisios continued his speech, demanding that the Tsar save Orthodox Christians from the hands of savages, just as Moses saved the Israelites from captivity. In the memories of the Tsar, "Since the time of our grandfathers and fathers, patriarchs, bishops, monks, and merchants have not ceased to come to us, groaning from the insults and oppression of their enslavers. For this reason, I fear that Almighty God will punish me for them, and I am ready to shed my soldiers and even my blood for this cause, if God so will" he wrote.<sup>17</sup> In the context of these ideas, the 'Greekisation' of the Russian church has acquired a special meaning. The Kievan priests were positive about a possible inter-church union, believing that a rapprochement with the Greeks, particularly in rituals, would facilitate the political unification of the Orthodox peoples under the Tsar of Moscow. As part of this plan, Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich confidently decided to introduce both scriptural and ritual law through Greek-trained

<sup>13</sup> Marshall T. Poe, "Izobreteniy Kontseptsii "Moskva-Tretiy Rim", *Ab Imperio* 2 (2000), 64.

<sup>14</sup> Kirillov, *Tretiy Rim*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Zhukova "Kontseptsiya Moskva-Tretiy Rim".

<sup>16</sup> Anton Vladimirovich Kartashov, *Ocherki po İstorii Russkoy Tserkvi*, V 2-x t. Tom II. (Moskva Berlin: 2020), 103.

<sup>17</sup> Kartashev, *Ocherki po istorii Russkoy Tserkvi*, 104.

priests. The arrival of Patriarch Paisius of Jerusalem in Moscow in 1649 presented an excellent opportunity to highlight the issue. Patriarch Paisius was warmly welcomed in Moscow and received generous gratuities. He issued a decree boldly describing the Tsar of Moscow as the new Moses. Some clergymen, most notably Nikon who would later become patriarch, confidently began translating the language of religious books and rituals into Greek. Stefan Vonifatiev (d. 1656), the Archbishop of the Moscow Cathedral of the Annunciation, presented a petition to the Tsar in response, accusing the Patriarch and the Bishops of neglecting the Church's splendour. Despite Moscow Patriarch Joseph's (d. 1652) demand for punishment of Stefan and his followers, the Tsar remained steadfast in his support for the Church's reform process. This process, however, faced two obstacles. The group of priests within the Russian Orthodox Church was a challenge, as previously mentioned. Additionally, Greek priests refused to allow Russians and Slavs to make the two-fingered sign of the cross, claiming superiority in their faith.<sup>18</sup> Naturally, the Russians were not happy with such an unconditional denigration of their piety. The Russian and Greek clergy met several times to try to resolve the problem. However, there was more discussion of superiority than reconciliation. Historian Karteshev gives some examples of the negotiations that took place during this period. For example, the Greek priest asks, "Where did you get the faith if not from us, from the Greeks?" The Russian priest Arseny replied: "We received faith from God, not from you, and baptism from the Apostle Andrew from the very beginning". "And from whom did you Greeks receive baptism?" Archimandrite Philemon: "We received it from Christ, from the apostles and James the brother of the Lord." Monk Arseny: "You are not telling the truth. You Greeks live in Greece, in Macedonia and the whole country of Constantinople near Thessalonica, while Christ and James the brother of the Lord preached in Jerusalem. And in Jerusalem, there are no Greeks."<sup>19</sup> As can be seen, Tsarist Russia's dream of becoming the Third Rome is about to be interrupted by the superiority dispute between the Russian and Greek clergy.

### 3. Efforts of Patriarch Nikon

Nikon served as Patriarch of Moscow for fourteen years, from 1652 to 1666. He was renowned for his strong personality and his close relationship with Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, who even bestowed upon him the title of 'Great Monarch'. In the preface of the Church Service Book, the Tsar and the Patriarch were referred to as 'God's chosen duo'. Whenever the Tsar was absent from Moscow, Nikon acted as his replacement.<sup>20</sup>

Patriarch Nikon knew that to realize his thesis of Moscow becoming the Third Rome, some reforms within the Church were necessary. He was especially determined to harmonize the worship of the Russian Church with the Greek version. For this, the religious books that had existed for a long time had to be reformed. At first, there was a clergy around him who supported his ideas. In time, however, Nikon's despotic attitude mobilized the archbishop Avvakum (1620-1682) and the hermit Fyodor (d.1682). These priests were against

<sup>18</sup> Andrei Bogdanov, "The Debate on Faith with the Greeks", by Arseny Sukhanov: complete author's text *Leteraturny Fakt* 2/12 (2019), 146.

<sup>19</sup> Kartashev, *Ocherki po istorii Russkoy Tserkvi*, 107.

<sup>20</sup> Kartashev, *Ocherki po istorii Russkoy Tserkvi*, 121.

innovations and wanted the old order to continue.<sup>21</sup> This led to the division of the Russian Orthodox Church into old believers and reformers.

So, what did Patriarch Nikon's reforms include? First of all, in the Russian Church, the act of crossing oneself has always been done with two fingers. With the reform, this practice was increased to three fingers, as in the Greek tradition. Another changing practice was the abolition of the practice of blessing wine during the mass ritual. In addition, the eight-pointed cross used by the Russians was changed to the four-pointed Greek cross. Another change was the way baptism was administered. The Russian Church used to baptize by full immersion in water. With the Reformation, the Greek practice of pouring water on the head during baptism was accepted. Finally, religious literature is brought into line with the Greek versions because there are many inconsistencies in the Slavic translations.<sup>22</sup>

All these reforms aimed to have common literature and ritual with the Orthodox world on the way to becoming the Third Rome and to accustom the Greek perception to this idea. Nikon's endeavours caused him to make more than one enemy in time. So much so that Nikon's enemies took it upon themselves to provoke the Tsar against him. In that time, the Tsar grew up, matured, gained wisdom, and the Boyars' suggestions paid off. Nikon was dismissed and the process of reform in the church was interrupted. In the end, Moscow, which had managed to expand its borders as far as the Great Wall of China, could not overcome local reflexes. Karteshev summarized this situation as "the horizon of the native Russian Church clergy could not conceive the dream that a cross could again be erected on the dome of Hagia Sophia". The anti-innovationist Archbishop Ivan Neronov (1670) wrote to Tsar Alexei: "We do not see a single virtue in them (the Greeks); they do not have the humility of Christ, but an evil pride."<sup>23</sup> As a result, the ambition of Moscow to become the Third Rome, which had been dreamt of in the 17th century with the great efforts of Patriarch Nikon, was again thwarted by the Russian clergy.

Thus, the concept of the Moscow Third Rome was shelved for three hundred years. Moreover, it was forgotten. In the second half of the 19th century, during the reign of Emperor Alexander II, the ideas of Philotheus, including his messages about the Third Rome, were revived. The concept of the Third Rome was again frequently mentioned in popular scientific works. Readers believed that the building of the great Russian state was based on this eschatological mission. Pan-Slavists used the idea of the "Third Rome" to justify their calls for the preservation of the "Slavic brotherhood" and even the conquest of Constantinople.<sup>24</sup> The famous Slavophile Nikolai Danilevsky (d. 1885) wrote that for this dream to be realized, Russia must immediately get rid of the "disease of Europeanisation".<sup>25</sup>

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent Soviet regime did not adopt the thesis as a political goal initially. However, according to some thinkers, such as Berdiaev, Russian messianism was the main driving force behind Bolshevism, which he believed was preserved in the depths of Russian spirituality. Berdiaev also argued that Lenin's Third

<sup>21</sup> Makariy Bulgakov, *Istoriya Russkoy Tserkvi*, t 12 (Moskva: Spaso Preobrazhenskogo Valaamskogo monastyrnya, 1994), 112.

<sup>22</sup> Sergey Petrovich Obnorskiy, *Kbrestomatiya po istorii russkogo yazyka*, t I (Moskva: Klassicheskiy uchebnik Aspekt Press, 1999), 324.

<sup>23</sup> Kartashev, *Ocherki po istorii Russkoy Tserkvi*, 103.

<sup>24</sup> Poe, "Izobreteniyeye Kontseptsii "Moskva-Tretiy Rim", 76.

<sup>25</sup> Danilevskiy Nikolay Yakovlevich, *Rossiya i Yevropa* (Moskva: Kniga, 1991), 576.



International replaced the Third Roman thesis.<sup>26</sup> However, the Soviets, who adopted communism as the official ideology, ignored the Russian Orthodox Church and its mission until 1947. However, after World War II, Stalin, at the suggestion of the Moscow Patriarchate, attempted to make Moscow the centre of the Orthodox world, but this attempt failed due to the intervention of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.<sup>27</sup> Especially since 2000, with the rule of Vladimir Putin, the Theo-politics of being the leader of the Orthodox world, designed by the Moscow Patriarchate, has become functional again. The Moscow

Patriarchate, which now has an estimated 150 million followers worldwide, serves Russian political power by extending its spiritual influence beyond the borders of Russia. The Church's concept today is formulated under the title of "Unity of the Russian World". In this framework, the ties between the Putin regime and the Orthodox Church are so close that Patriarch Kirill calls the Putin era "God's miracle".<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

V. S. Solovyov says: "The fate of a nation depends not on what it thinks about itself, but on what God has planned for it in eternity."<sup>29</sup> One of the most important ideological components of the Russian national idea is the concept of "Moscow is the third Rome". In a way, this concept can also be called the "Red Apple" of the Russians. The concept of "Moscow is the third Rome" has two dimensions: spiritual/religious and geopolitical. The spiritual/religious aspect involves a genetic link between Byzantium and the Russians through Orthodoxy. The geopolitical aspect of this concept also originates from the spiritual sphere and is closely linked to it. Namely, because Byzantium fell into the hands of Muslims, Russia was the only independent Orthodox country in the world. This positioned Russia as the defender of Orthodoxy worldwide. In the 15th century, Orthodox Russian priests claimed that God had chosen Russia to fulfil His divine destiny. Although the concept of the Third Rome was relegated to the background after the failure of Patriarch Nikon, it remained the driving force of Russian Theo-politics.

The concept of the "Third Rome" has caused intense debates, especially in the Western world since its introduction. Whether in the late Tsarist period or during the Cold War years, the concept of the Third Rome has always been on the agenda. According to most Western commentators, this was a "Russian messianism". After the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially with the Putin government, the Third Rome concept has been used as a soft power element in international relations. Again, this concept makes the central role of the Orthodox Church in national identity meaningful and fills the ideological vacuum created by the Soviet collapse. Finally, the Third Rome concept constitutes an important basis for Russia's global confrontation against the West.

<sup>26</sup> Nikolay Aleksandrovich Berdyayev, *The Russian Revolution*, trans. Ann Arbor (The University of Michigan Press, 1961), 41.

<sup>27</sup> Dualı Ş. Muhammed, *Rus Ortodoks Kilise Tarihi* (İstanbul: Divan Yayınları, 2024), 161.

<sup>28</sup> Rakunov, "the Doctrine Moscow the Third Rome", 1941.

<sup>29</sup> Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyov, *Russkaya İdeya*, Sost. Y. A. Vasilyev (Moskva: Ayris-press, 2002), 228.



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