

Scientific article

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Activities of the Spiritual Consistory Committee for Analysis and Systematization of Diocesan Documents: 1831–59

Abstract

The article details the activities of the Archive Committee of the Moscow Spiritual Consistory, set up on the initiative of Metropolitan Philaret Drozdov of Moscow to put in order diocesan archives, which had suffered in the Napoleonic invasion. The documentary complex of the

consistory was the backbone of the institution. The disastrous state of the archive not only undermined the activities of the consistory, but also hindered its socially important search for information in the parish records. Thus, the first priority and essential task of the Committee was to sort through and describe burial record books, which were in disorder. The filed away documents of the consistory expeditions, or structural subdivisions of the consistory, also required serious systematization. The same was true of the historical part of the complex dating back to the previous century. Thus, the Committee faced a choice of an optimal classification scheme: territorial grouping of files by soroks and churches, which dated back to the 18th century, or grouping by “substance” — subjects corresponding to the activity areas of the consistory desks and expeditions. The latter was impelled by the Statute of the Consistory (1841), as well as by the permanently increasing volume of records. So far, the Moscow Consistory Archive has been studied primarily from a pragmatic point of view: as a rich source base for diverse research on the history of the Church. The issues of archival document arrangement have attracted no special attention in scientific literature, although the surviving materials of the Committee reflect an interesting debate of diocesan archivists on the possible solution to the existing problem. In this respect, the documents left by the Committee are a valuable illustration of the Church archiving in search for a better organization of systematic preservation of diocesan administrative documents. The conclusion is made that the Committee was directly involved in the development of the consistory's document complex, its continuous processing, description, and adaptation to the new records management conditions, as well as to the modern structure of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Consistory collections. Stable organization of work with documentary material would have been impossible without appropriate staffing. The Committee was an unusual, beyond-the-limits-of-corporate-culture union of Moscow priests. Representatives of the Moscow clergy formed a special type of archivist, combining work in the archives with everyday parish practice.

Keywords

Diocesan archivists, substance of files, archivist, Moscow Dicastery, Moscow Consistory, arrest certificates, metric books, systematization of documents, statutes of the consistories.

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