

# Outspoken Moscow Theologian Defrocked by Orthodox Church

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Andrei Kuraev has long been a polarizing figure in Russian Christianity. **Sergei Ermokhin / TASS**

The Russian Orthodox Church has [defrocked](#) one of the country's most prominent theologians after he was found to have slandered a fellow priest who died from Covid-19.

Protodeacon Andrei Kuraev, a well-known radio and television personality whose views on homosexuality, blasphemy and Russia's Orthodox hierarchy have made him one of the country's best-known religious figures, had described Alexander Ageykin, the head of a Moscow cathedral who died of the coronavirus in April, as a "dumb careerist" on his LiveJournal blog.

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The Moscow Episcopal Court on Tuesday found that Kuraev had not "changed his ways" since receiving a warning in 2015 and concluded that his public statements accusing the Church

hierarchy of “organizing a schism” were blasphemous.

The decision to defrock Kuraev — who [described](#) the move to The Insider news website as his “canonical murder” and “a New Year’s present for Patriarch Kirill” — must be approved by the Patriarch, the highest authority in the Russian Orthodox Church.

Kuraev has long been a polarizing figure in Russian Christianity.

In 2013 the outspoken theologian alleged the existence of a “gay lobby” at the heart of the Orthodox Church, after which he was dismissed from his teaching position at the Moscow Theological Academy.

His public pronouncements — which have included criticism of Islam, legal restrictions on blasphemy and Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea — have made him one of the Orthodox’s Church’s internet-friendly figures, with over 70,000 Facebook followers.

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