

genre. However, in giving the students such an enormous amount of information, *The Orthodox Church under the New Patriarch* would not so much help them to understand the complex situation as confuse them due to its lack of a unified structure and central idea, its mixture of genres, etc.

It seems that the only type of reader for whom this book would be absolutely useful – and the only likely type of reader – would be a journalist who has a general understanding of the life of the ROC and the ability to seek out information independently, who at the same time might be in need of a certain orientation that this book can offer. Despite some uncertainties raised by the inconsistent quality among

individual articles, the artificial way of putting them together, and other structural flaws, I would like to reiterate that this does not detract from the depth, the scholarly or journalistic value, or the relevance of particular articles included in the collection. Many of the questions raised require in-depth analysis, and the collection has shed light on them: these include peculiarities of the program and policies of the new patriarch, trends in the Church's social services, debates surrounding the participation of the ROC in education, and the dynamics of the ROC's image in mass media and mass consciousness.

Konstantin Mikhailov (Translation by Natalya Domina)

Alexander Agadjanian and Kathy Rousselet (Eds.) (2011). *Parish and Community in Today's Orthodox Christianity: The Grassroots of Russian Religiosity. (Prikhod i obshchina v sovremennom pravoslavii: kornevaia sistema rossiiskoi religioznosti)*. Moscow: Ves' Mir (in Russian). – 368 pages.

This collection of articles, written by the participants in a Russian-French joint project entitled *Twenty Years of Transformation: Religious and Social Practices in Russian Orthodox Parishes*, represents a rather successful

attempt at a balanced and rational analysis of one of the main components of modern Russia's religious life, i.e., Russian Orthodoxy, and in particular its local forms of existence within the framework of its primary forms – communities, above all parish-based communities. The authors' task was to perform a “multifaceted analysis of the

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various forms of modern Orthodox sociality,” and in accordance with the editors’ conception, all the articles are to some extent tied in to several unifying themes: “the relationship between parishes and communities (which may or may not coincide with the parishes), with an attempted typology of these connections; the makeup of the parishioners and clergy, and their interrelationships; types of religious authority (including those of a parish priest, a personal confessor, or a holy elder); the roles of priests and laity within parishes and communities; key religious practices (both during the liturgy and outside of it); the relationship between collective and individual practices within the church subculture; formative processes for the parish (community) identity; and interactions between communities and external society” (13).

The collection’s first chapter is focused on the “Historical Perspective,” as the author (Alexander Agadjanian) introduces the reader to questions addressed by studying and *interpreting* the parish itself and parish life over the last hundred years. He identifies the core issues that tie together the beginning of the twentieth century with the beginning of the twenty-first. According to him, they are: church institutions’ autonomy from or dependence on the state; the role of the laity in the church; the parish

clergy’s level of independence with respect to church leadership; and the reimagining of the parish in terms of the intensity of solidarity within each parish, and in terms of the structural tension between the concepts of “parish” and “community,” arising from the “saturation” of a solely administrative and territorial concept with social and mystical meaning, through joint participation in religious practices and community life.

All the other chapters constitute case studies of various sorts. The section titled “The Logic and Dynamics of Restoring Parish Life” contains examples of parish life in parishes that were restored in various regions of Russia in the 1990s. Ksenia Sergazina, who did her research in northeastern Moscow Oblast, suggests a typology of modern Orthodox parishes, focusing primarily on that which “forms the parish center,” cements it in place: that may be a “holy relic” (such as a miracle-working icon), a charismatic leader, or a community bound together due to a longer period of existence (for example, a surviving rather than restored parish). Olga Sibireva makes interesting observations in her chapter about the peculiarities of parish life in Shatsk, “the most Orthodox city in Ryazan Oblast”: despite the fact that most of the parishioners are neophytes who had no experience with religious

life during Soviet times, their religiousness is largely based on ideas formulated during that same period — “the focus on asceticism, the need for spiritual nourishment from elders, and the desire for isolation from the outside world” (78).

The same section also contains a rather tendentious article by Roman Lunkin, “The Parishes and Monasteries of the Russian Orthodox Church: Russian Society’s Hidden Strength.” At the beginning of the article the author poses the question, “Can the Church change society and its consciousness, and make it more socially oriented and democratic?” and in the end he answers it with an unequivocal “yes.” He goes further: “society and the Church mutually influence each other — the ROC democratizes more and more as it becomes more involved in social life” (139). However, in my opinion, the author’s conclusion is too optimistic. On the one hand, religious institutions, despite their inherent conservatism, are, in fact, capable of change, and these changes can, among other things, be triggered by processes occurring in society. Nonetheless, as a general rule, it seems to be a significant exaggeration to talk about “democratic” tendencies in traditional religions, and even more so to examine them as the main force behind the formation of civil society.

As a supporting example, Lunkin cites the parish led by Father Dmitri Smirnov, who is famous for his “social and educational activities.” In addition, according to the author, he “openly reacts to modern trends in Orthodoxy and certain innovations of modern culture.” However, it is strange to characterize a parish’s activities solely from the perspective of its internal structure and social activism, as effective as it may be, without paying any attention to its ideology (in this particular case, strictly conservative); only after evaluating the latter can we draw conclusions and make assessments. In any case, in academic work it is best to refrain from making such direct judgments.

One of the book’s most interesting texts is Zhanna Kormina’s chapter, “Modes of Orthodox Sociality in Modern Russia: Parishioners, Pilgrims, Networkers.” This St. Petersburg-based researcher manages to find an explanation for the significant gap between the numbers of people who identify as Orthodox and those who are deeply religious and consistently involved in parish life. The author asserts that “the parish or community is just one of the ‘religious modes’ that exist in modern Orthodoxy” (191). The article examines three modes of Orthodox sociality, which assume differing degrees and methods of involvement in

religious life — “regular Orthodoxy,” “network Orthodoxy,” and “non-regular (recreational) Orthodoxy” — and, accordingly, the three types of Orthodox believers that come into contact and coexist around the tomb of a famous holy elder on the Pskov-area island of Zalita.

In his article “Reform and Rebirth in Two Orthodox Subcultures of Moscow: Two Ways of Making Orthodoxy Modern,” Alexander Agadjanian analyzes the Transfiguration (*Preobrazhenskoe*) Commonwealth of Small Orthodox Brotherhoods and the parish of Saints Cosmas and Damian church. These religious entities, both in Moscow, with their reputations for being “intellectual” and “liberal,” are noticeably different from other such entities, and in fact share some key characteristics: “Christocentrism,” a focus on a “direct communion with the text [of Scripture],” profound catechesis, the central role of the sermon, a vivid “collective identity,” etc. In general, the author notes, “both church subcultures appear to have roots in the same combination of religious and cultural traditions and in a similar set of spiritual needs, and were directed at similar urban environments” (263). However, in time the two groups diverged significantly: the Commonwealth was focused on radical and successive reforms, which led to conflict with church leadership, persecution, and, as a result (and

partly as a natural development of their initial ideas), the formation of a more tight-knit, closed, and homogeneous community. The Saints Cosmas and Damian parish, which also experienced hard times in the 1990s, “was forced to change its positions somewhat and seek a compromise; it is possible that the price they paid for this compromise was a slight shift toward a more traditional, albeit not conservative, parish style” (267). Despite the fact that both groups can be considered a part of the Church’s modernist wing, their differences are foundational: “the Commonwealth’s modernism consists of an innovative program within the framework of Tradition (...), carried out as a single, necessary agenda. The Sts. Cosmas and Damian parish also represents a ‘modernism,’ but in a different sense — as a synonym for diversity and flexibility, for openness with respect to modern urban culture” (275).

In the book’s final section, “A Grammar of Church and Parish Culture,” the authors discuss the values and core principles that form the basis of parish life. For example, in her chapter “On Relationship between Priests and Laity: Penance and Blessing,” French researcher Kathy Rousselet examines various interpretations of the concepts (and associated practices) of “penance” and “blessing,” as well as their role in the lives of parishioners and even the organization of parishes.

These two concepts are crucial when characterizing the system of church authority and the entirety of relationships within the Church. The author concludes that these practices can be classified as the kinds of social ties that Laurent Thévenot called the “grammar of the common through the personal”: “by giving blessing and assigning penance, the priest allows a person to become part of the community and network, be it the temple, the parish, or the Church as a whole — these are all ‘common places’ as discussed by Thévenot” (314). These values, which dominate in the Church, can be juxtaposed with the experience of a “liberal grammar,” which assumes the “reconciliation of mutual concessions.”

I will not specifically address the book’s remaining chapters. It is worth, however, briefly mentioning Boris Knorre’s interesting analysis of the psychological types present

within the Church subculture; Ivan Zabaev’s paradoxical conclusion regarding the “sacred individualism” that predominates in Russian Orthodoxy; and the unusual case of a Tiumen parish community self-organizing with no priest, as described in Roman Poplavsky’s text. As a whole, the book is one of the first attempts at studying modern Russian Orthodoxy at the “grassroots” level, the parish and community level, rather than at the level of official documents and statements by Church leadership, and this approach immerses us in the actual processes occurring within the Church. It is, then, a pity that this collection’s quite academic, but altogether too neutral title is unlikely to attract potential interested readers.

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Mikhail Smirnov (2011). *Sociology of Religion: A Dictionary. (Sotsiologiia religii: Slovar’)*. St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg State University Press (in Russian). – 411 pages.

In the preface to his *Sociology of Religion: A Dictionary*, author Mikhail Smirnov warns us that

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he “recognizes the shortcomings of individual efforts and the impossibility of exhaustively opening up the entire range of both general and particular questions which arise [in this area].” Nevertheless, he hopes,