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From the Editors

Dear Reader,

IN this issue of *State, Religion and Church*, we bring you four timely articles that explore various aspects of religious life in the post-Soviet space. First off, Daria Dubovka's article "Forgotten Time, or Techniques of Self-Transformation in Contemporary Russian Orthodox Convents" makes an intervention into significant scholarly debates about the meaning of agency within a context of religious obedience and submission. Drawing on the work of Saba Mahmood with regard to non-Western religious subjectivity, and particularly the wearing of the veil among Muslim women, Dubovka explores the applicability of Mahmood's approach to Russian Orthodox Christian women in a monastic setting. In accord with current tendencies in feminist anthropology, she also interrogates her own positionality relative to her subject of study.

Secondly, in "The Genealogy of the Idea of Monarchy in the Post-Soviet Political Discourse of the Russian Orthodox Church," Mikhail Suslov makes an informed historical case that contemporary monarchist rhetoric in Russian intellectual life should be taken seriously. Drawing upon a wide variety of sources, Suslov's article provides a nuanced examination of the Biblical exegesis found in such key texts as "The Bases of the Social Conception of the Russian Orthodox Church," linking the reasoning in these texts to Russian intellectual and political history, and in particular to the history of Slavophilism, which attempted to combine modernizing notions of popular sovereignty with support for autocracy. While Russian monarchists are unlikely to achieve much in the way of institution building or political success in the current climate, Suslov contends that their rhetoric has important implications for current social and political trends.

Next, we bring you Maria Kaspina's article "Folk Judaism: Variations of Religious Practices among the Jews of Ukraine and Moldova," which is based on largescale empirical research undertaken in Ukraine and Moldova in association with the Sefer Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization (for more on the scholarly activities of the Sefer Center see this issue's special review article by Ludmila Zhukova). Drawing on a large number of interviews, Kaspina explores the

transformations of Judaism under the conditions of Soviet life and the particular complexities and tensions that remain for post-Soviet Jewish communities as they rebuild religious life and integrate with the global Jewish community.

Finally, we bring you Maria Hristova's article "Imagining My Country: Pilgrimage as Postcolonial Reassessment of National Identity in Contemporary Russian Domestic Travel Writing." While the above-mentioned articles are translations of research first published in our Russian-language parent journal, *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom*, Hristova's article represents previously unpublished research. In it, she explores the ways in which spiritual themes such as pilgrimage permeate contemporary Russian literature, using Irina Bogatyreva's 2008 novella *Off the Beaten Track* as a case study. In the process, Hristova makes an intervention into the application of postcolonial theory to the study of Russia, a fruitful trend in Russian Studies that seems likely to remain important to the field for the foreseeable future.

As usual, this issue also provides a review article and two book reviews that give readers without knowledge of Russian a window into important developments in the field of religious studies in the post-Soviet space. In addition to the review article exploring the Sefer Center's recent publications on Jewish history and culture, this issue's reviews explore relations between Christians and Muslims in the medieval Middle East and the timely topic of the "invention of religion" and secularization in the post-Soviet space.

Feedback and manuscript submissions may be sent to religion@ranepa.ru (for submissions, please follow the style guide).

Happy reading!
The Editors



DARIA DUBOVKA

Forgotten Time, or Techniques of Self-Transformation in Contemporary Russian Orthodox Convents

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From a secular perspective, certain religious techniques of self-transformation, such as the complete subordination of an individual to a spiritual leader, appear to violate fundamental human rights and are hence unacceptable. Conversely, religious traditions offer a different view of the subject and their welfare and the means by which this welfare can be achieved. Nowadays, however, the secular environment in which they operate affects religious groups. As a result, some techniques of self-transformation reflect a mixture of secular and religious worldviews. This article examines techniques of self-transformation in contemporary Russian Orthodox convents. It explores how the notion of spiritual growth is influenced by a paradox in the Russian Orthodox concept of sainthood involving a proportional relationship between the profound perception of one's sinfulness and the increase of one's virtues. The secular understanding of time that prevails in contemporary monasteries highlights this contradiction and calls into question the possibility for spiritual growth. By focusing on the diachronic dimension of self-transformation techniques, this article challenges current understandings of secular and non-secular agency.

Keywords: anthropology of religion, contemporary Russian Orthodox monasteries, techniques of the self, secular and non-secular agency, subjectivity.

AT the close of the nineteenth century, the emerging field of anthropology was not immune to the influence of broader scientific trends; this is evident in the acceptance of an evolutionary paradigm for the field, according to which scientific knowledge must inevitably replace religious faith. However, over the course of the following century, the rising influence of political Islam, the upsurge of neo-Protestant movements, and interest in esoteric practices challenged expectations of the imminent arrival of a secular era. Moreover, anthropologists have come to regard not only religion, but secularism itself as an object of analysis, that is, as a specific ideological system with its own particular dispositions of power, notions of subjectivity, space, and time, and of legitimate methods of argumentation (Asad 2003). We have also reconsidered Western norms concerning the relationship between the state and religious institutions. Nowadays, the exclusion of religion from the public sphere is no longer regarded as inevitable, but rather as only one possible trajectory in the history of states. Secularization, too, is now regarded as a multi-faceted process, which unfolds differently in different nations (Casanova 1994).

For anthropologists of religion, the practices that people utilize to achieve spiritual growth have become a highly contentious topic of analysis. Some of these practices contradict the norms of Western secular subjectivity. Take, for example, the requirement of many religious teachings that a person subordinate his or her own will to the will of another or to the prescriptions of religious tradition. How does one describe the insult and humiliation of a believer who regards their suffering as a purification of the soul? This view of the techniques of self-transformation obviously does not accord with Western understandings of agency, which are based upon the capacity for action motivated by the subject's inner feelings and desires: being inaccessible and invisible to others, these desires must arise from somewhere in the depths of the subject and thus be indisputably their own, unconditioned by tradition or norms, and still less by outright compulsion (Coleman 2005: 128-129). In conjunction with the concept of agency, the idea of "working on the self," which has existed since well before modern times, inevitably came to involve the inner autonomy of the subject and their independence from the authoritarian prescriptions of religious norms. In the European secular tradition, agency was invariably interpreted as the subject's propensity to oppose and even their duty to overthrow oppressive authority (Asad 2003: 71).

In this article, I describe the ways that anthropologists have utilized the theoretical possibilities of the concepts of agency and subjectivity

to analyze religious practices that disturb exponents of Western secular consciousness. Then, drawing on material collected in contemporary Russian Orthodox convents, I examine what happens to seemingly elegant scholarly models of spiritual transformation if they are forced to contend with the temporal dimension. In this article, time plays a dual role. On the one hand, it is already incorporated into my informants' accounts of spiritual growth, and my task is to examine it in the general context of these "emic" accounts. On the other hand, time is an analytical category, which I propose to consider as an inseparable part of the concept of agency and which is often forgotten in anthropological research.

Theoretical Approaches to the Concept of Agency

Arguably, some of the most brilliant anthropological studies devoted to the relationships between the state, religious institutions, and the subject have been based on materials from Islamic nations, Egypt in particular (Asad 2003: 205–56; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005; Mittermaier 2011). This region draws scholars because in its peoples' social imagination and political programs, a complex game is being played out between the privileged "Western paradigm" of conditions for being in the world, on the one hand, and aspirations to create a contemporary government fundamentally incorporating a significantly greater role for religion in the public sphere, on the other. The expansion of the public presence of religion inevitably creates anxiety in Western society, where it is associated with the potential to suppress individual rights and freedoms. However, is not one manifestation of individual freedom a person's voluntary submission to religious tradition?

I want to note in particular an article by Saba Mahmood, in which she contests the description of agency outlined above and proposes a new conception of non-Western religious subjectivity (Mahmood 2001). In her work, Mahmood discusses why many women in Muslim countries have supported the Islamic revival (which includes such things as the wearing of the veil and other clothing restrictions, among other practices that appear oppressive from the European perspective). Prior studies of this question have focused on external factors, such as the pressure of patriarchal society, economic advantages, the low cost and practicality of traditional clothing, upholding social norms, wearing the veil as an expression of national identity, and so forth. Mahmood paid attention to what the informants themselves were say-

ing when they explained their return to traditional dress. And by and large they spoke of working on the self, of devotional practices, and of the opportunity to develop habits of virtue by using their external appearance to influence their inner state.

Coming up against the fact that certain groups in non-European cultures view following tradition as a resource for self-transformation, Mahmood proposes regarding agency “not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically conditioned relations of subordination enable and create” (Mahmood 2001: 203). Thereby, power is conceptualized as a cluster of relations that enable some actions and desires while preventing others, rather than as an exclusively repressive and coercive force. The agency presupposed by Islamic tradition has little in common with the defense of one’s interests in opposition to custom, divine will or unfortunate circumstances. Thus, Mahmood disrupts the fundamental connection between agency and readiness to oppose authority that has been longstanding in Western academic thought. The religious system that Mahmood describes encourages certain external actions and disciplinary practices (wearing the veil, for example), which, in turn, are supposed to elicit “correct” feelings and cultivate inner piety. Mahmood calls this process of spiritual work on the self “self-cultivation.” She emphasizes the intentionality of such activities, which demonstrates the fallacy of dismissing her informants as passive victims of fundamentalism.

When she presented results of her investigation at conferences and seminars, Mahmood’s findings elicited a variety of reactions. Mahmood writes that she had to defend herself against the accusation that she implicitly condones if not “embraces” the oppressed position of women in Islamic societies. However, in her opinion, before one dismisses a particular activity as insulting to human dignity, one must keep in mind one’s own European presuppositions and explore the desires and motivations of the people for whom these practices are important (Mahmood 2001: 223–25).

It is no surprise that Mahmood’s article provoked heated discussion in American academic circles. From one perspective, her answer to the question of why so many women in Islamic nations had taken to wearing the veil seemed the most “emic” and thus the most sensitive to the culture she studied, inasmuch as Mahmood describes what her informants themselves say rather than invoking external economic and social causality. According to their responses, they adopted the veil as a result of their own free choice and in particular from their de-

sire for religious self-perfection. But from a different perspective, this kind of explanation undermines rather than reinforces Western notions of agency and the subject, which are among the cornerstones of modern democratic ideology. Accepting Saba Mahmood's conception of agency requires accepting that someone can voluntarily desire to subordinate themselves to religious tradition and/or a charismatic leader, and that, in turn, opens the door to legitimizing authoritarian rule.

Besides the above-mentioned ideological anxieties provoked by Mahmood's article, her work also challenges all anthropologists who encounter similar problems in their fieldwork. What are anthropologists to do when, for example, they observe that carrying out some religious practice humiliates informants and that the informants themselves — and not only the outsider — may agree with that interpretation?! But at the same time they insist that the humiliation is *useful* for their souls, that it offers a path to self-perfection? Should researchers describe the practice critically, and by so doing indicate in one way or another that their informants have developed false consciousness? Or should researchers accept the words of informants and by so doing demonstrate respect for alternative modes of being human, but thereby legitimate the social injustice they observe in the community they study?

Undoubtedly, there is no single answer to this type of question, which fundamentally concerns the evaluation of a culture that is alien to the researcher. Focusing on the gap that Saba Mahmood observes between Western understandings of agency and those offered by other religious systems, I demonstrate that these two different understandings of agency are no longer isolated from one another and that, quite possibly, secular ideas have exerted considerable influence on the contemporary "religious subject." While Mahmood's article discusses Islam, I will consider Orthodox Christianity. The differences in how those two religions approach the subject are less significant to me than their shared divergence from secular ideology.

Self-Transformation in a Russian Orthodox Nunnery

Despite the fact that to an outsider, a cloister seems to be a rather private social space, contemporary Russian Orthodox monasteries and convents offer the researcher the chance to participate directly in their practices. Restored after the Soviet period, almost all of today's cloisters need assistance with labor, and therefore eagerly accept temporary laborers. Among the laborers are people who for a variety of rea-

sons want to spend days or months of their lives in a cloister, often without the intention of remaining there for good. In some cloisters, especially small ones, temporary laborers quickly become a part of the monastic sisterhood or brotherhood, which means that these groups meet not only during church services but that they work together on tasks of obedience (*poslushaniia*, that is, daily labor obligations) and share meals. As a result, participating in monastic life as a temporary laborer allows the researcher to observe everyday life in a cloister closely.¹ The everyday life of the residents of one such convent, located in a small town in central Russia, constitutes the ethnographic foundation for this article.

In the fall of 2012, I spent two weeks in this small convent, whose population consists of eleven people: five nuns (*monakhiny*), four novices (*inokiny*) and two lay sisters (*poslushnitsy*). I already had extensive experience of life in various cloisters, so I was familiar with the basic rules and logic of everyday life in a convent. My first week was spent in a cloister deprived of leadership: both the abbess, the head of the nunnery, and the orderly, her assistant, were in the hospital. The most sensible lay sister had been appointed as elder. Either because of her character or because of her limited time in the position and lack of authority either to punish or to instruct spiritually, her leadership was rather democratic, and she tried to heed the wishes of the other nuns. However strange it seemed to me, some were not pleased with this gentle style of leadership, perhaps because it left no room for disciplinary practices, a powerful resource for self-transformation. The abbess's habitual style of leadership differed quite strikingly from that of her replacement. I first encountered it in fact before the abbess returned. Below, I offer two excerpts from my field diary, slightly altered to reduce the emotional tenor and improve the consistency of the text. These excerpts are not written in an objective scholarly style. However, their undertone of surprise and a certain irony convey clearly the feelings of a person who professes secular values and finds herself in a religious milieu. As I have already emphasized above, in the case of fieldwork, the conceptualization of agency ceases to be an exclusively

1. In accordance with research ethics, I do not conceal my scholarly purposes when observing cloister life, which elicits a variety of responses: from the desire to chat with me and explain some aspects of monastic life, to openly doubting the need for my work and affirmations of the usefulness of secular knowledge. The nuns predominantly described in this article asked that their convent not be identified, saying that otherwise publication would attract too many pilgrims (apparently failing to distinguish between journalistic and scholarly publication).

theoretical question, insofar as the conduct of the researcher and their interactions with informants depends on it.

It was the end of September — time to dig potatoes. A busload of pilgrims arrived at the nunnery to help. They had to be fed. The abbess telephoned from the hospital and gave her instructions — fry fish patties — and dictated the recipe. When it came time to prepare the meal, the nuns began feverishly to discuss the cooking techniques indicated by the recipe. The nuns who participated in the discussion were all middle aged or elderly, and they had various degrees of culinary experience, but the recipe immediately confused them all, because it called for too little milk and too much bread for the amount of ground fish. I was sure that they would set aside the recipe and begin cooking on the basis of their own experience and common sense, but evidently I did not understand the power of the recipe. The nuns read it again and again. One of them, Efrosina (I have changed all names), exclaimed from time to time: “The blessing² — this is right, this must be done, of course, it’s been blessed that way,” but would then immediately add that she would use less bread. Another moment passed, and Efrosina became distressed: “But who am ‘I,’ ‘I’ is — yuck, you shouldn’t even say the word ‘I.’” After that, her good sense once again gained ascendancy and she added: “Yes, of course, there’s the recipe, but you have to do a little thinking for yourself, too.” However, there was something subtly dangerous about thinking for oneself. As a result, everyone decided to proceed exactly as the recipe indicated, thanks to which an additional technical operation had to be added to the process of preparation: the fish had to be put through the grinder a second time, which took three hours of working time, but this bothered no one. When they finally managed, with great difficulty, to prepare the ground fish, the nuns discovered a concluding point in the recipe: salt and pepper according to taste. That point elicited another feverish discussion. Whose taste should be considered the model? Naturally, the abbess should be the deciding taster, but in her absence, who would take it upon herself to offer an expert opinion on the patties’ degree of saltiness? Late in the evening the abbess telephoned to find out how things were going. These adult, even elderly women described in great detail and with high spirits what was taking place in the kitchen, who was doing what, whether the griddle was clean and what color the

2. In monastic life, blessing is very closely connected to obedience — essentially, a blessing is either the permission or an order to do something, and ordinarily the abbess’s blessing is needed for every undertaking (Rousselet 2011: 298–316; Dubovka 2015, 63–81; Zabaev 2007: 5–26).

patties turned while they were frying. It's possible that I lack culinary refinement. However, never before have I encountered such a literalist approach to a recipe. For me, food preparation is a matter of fortune and circumstance, whereas in this nunnery other forces, which I still do not understand, were concealed in the kitchen.

For this viewer, an outsider, the absurdity was that a routine, profane practice, cooking, had become a part of the practice of religious self-transformation. After the abbess returned it became even more graphically clear to me that cooking could facilitate moral growth.

At dinner, one of the lay sisters, I'll call her Tamara, was supposed to prepare stewed cabbage. Mother, as the nuns call the abbess, tried the cabbage, and was very dissatisfied with its taste (and it must be said that the dish was not a success). Tamara began to explicate in detail the steps she had taken while cooking, trying to understand where she had gone wrong. Finally, the root of the evil was discovered — it was a pepper that the lay sister had dared to add on her own account. I thought that this odd investigation of food would end at that point. But no, Mother spent at least another half hour blaming the lay sister's vanity for the failure of the cabbage. Last time Tamara was praised, she said, so this time she wanted to outdo herself and came up with the idea of improving the recipe by adding pepper. Tamara timidly observed that of course a person hopes to do better. This further enraged the abbess: "So a person hopes to do better! But what's needed is not to do better, but to do according to the blessing! And you, you want to have your own will in everything!" Tamara almost burst into tears. Afterwards, the abbess spent some time discussing with the orderly whether Tamara could be trusted with preparing food for the pilgrims who were arriving. The orderly asked the lay sister: "Can you handle it?" Tamara: "I'll try." The abbess: "What, again 'I'll try!' As God wills — and there you go again, with your will." Tamara was now in tears: "Mother, I always say to myself — as God wills."

After that conversation the lay sister, walking with me back to our quarters, no doubt understood from the look on my face that an explanation was needed. Tamara said that Mother was actually very kind. I expressed reservations. Tamara went on. The abbess set it all out very well for her, she said. She herself failed to understand why we don't notice our hidden sinful passions, but the abbess noticed the sin and pointed it out. And Tamara found the public rebuke very useful, because that is exactly the way God humbles the proud — they have to be criticized in front of others. It is only while you are a novice that they coddle you;

as soon as you grow spiritually stronger, they start treating you much more strictly. But that only means that you've strayed from the proper path and God is correcting you.

Two points can be taken from Tamara's words. Firstly, hidden sin dwells within a person — hidden above all from the very person who carries it, while the public exposure of that sin cultivates the virtue of humility, which fosters the person's salvation. I will examine this understanding in detail.

Hidden sinful passion. According to Russian Orthodox anthropology, humans are sinful by nature from the moment of their birth as a result of the Fall of Adam and Eve. The sacrament of baptism cleanses believers of original sin, but much more work is required for them to overcome their own impure inclinations. Except for a few religious virtuosos, most people are so sinful that they fail to realize their sinfulness or are only able to realize it in a general kind of way, without seeing any of the concrete manifestations of their deplorable state.

The unmaskers of passion. Abbots, clerics, elders and all those who are called to pastoral leadership fulfill this role. An abbess must search for sin in the charges under her guidance. If she does not, it means she is not concerned with their spiritual life, and the nuns themselves will be dissatisfied with her.

The manifestation of passion. Work on the self begins with understanding one's current state. Sinful passions reveal themselves through a person's actions, but this is not the only method that Christian tradition has developed for discovering them. For example, tradition attributes to elders, both male and female, the ability to comprehend a person's spiritual state from the very first glance. From early Christian sources, Michel Foucault has examined monastic techniques of self-transformation, such as revealing to one's confessor one's most petty impulses and desires (Foucault 2008: 118–122). In this flow of confession (or self-descriptions), it is the duty of the confessor to distinguish the good thoughts from the bad. In today's monasteries, pastoral leaders base their interpretations on more objective, palpable things such as poorly prepared food, incorrect placement of icons on the lectern, or mistakes made while reading a prayer during a religious service. In this manner, any failure to observe the rules, written, unwritten, or merely implied by the leadership is treated as a manifestation of the sin of pride. The convenience of this form of spiritual leadership is that any sin a nun commits can almost always be visualized

and made concrete — for example, as a pepper added to a dish, as in the above example.

Obedience. In the context of quotidian labor operations, obedience becomes an instrument for facilitating the search for sin. Obedience becomes a rule that makes any deviation from it evident, and all the more so because in many cases the rule itself makes that deviation inevitable. For example, in the incident of the prepared dish described above: from a culinary perspective, it was necessary to depart from the given recipe, but according to the “spiritual economy” it was necessary to follow it precisely. It is no wonder that the nun Efrosina was so tormented by the choice between relying on her own common sense and submitting to the culinarily dubious wishes of the abbess. As soon as Efrosina began speaking of how reasonable it was to alter the recipe, she interrupted herself, blaming her own “ego.” Thus, the practical solution was linked to pride. The irony is that any choice a person makes can be interpreted as a fault. Everything depends on the interpretation that the Mother prefers. Here, for example, is another excerpt from my field journal:

In her absence, the abbess ordered the purchase of sawdust to line their storeroom floor. When she got back, the abbess denounced the lay sister Tamara, who had served as elder, for being unable to find dry sawdust. Tamara responded that the sawdust brought the day before was practically dry. The abbess then replied as follows: “In that case, why didn’t you realize you needed to order another car full? We need a lot of sawdust. You’ve got to think ahead a bit.”

Clearly, even conscientiously following the rules cannot preserve a nun from reproach. In the everyday life of her flock, an abbess can always find things to criticize in which a nun herself will have failed to consider the spiritual significance. Then, the nun responds with surprise and frequently, non-acceptance, inasmuch as what she has been told does not correspond to her picture of what has happened or to her inner sense of the matter. The most difficult part of my study was observing nuns’ confusion and initial refusal to accept the abbess’s interpretation, sometimes accompanied by tears. But if one sets aside a secular understanding of agency, then it becomes clear that in the monastic system of values, humiliation signifies spiritual growth.

Humility. It is a good sign when a spiritual charge finds it unpleasant to be chastised. It means that she is being worked on spiritually. In this emotional plan, fear and humiliation constitute an integral

part of monastic agency. And, by this logic, I should have rejoiced for Sister Tamara when the abbess unmasked her, insofar as this brought her closer to salvation.

At this point, it might be possible to summarize things, concluding that models of the “Western subject” and “Western norms of agency” are irrelevant to non-secular traditions. For example, the contemporary monastic subject manifests agency in consciously accepting the interpretations of their religious state from their spiritual mentor, who presumably has trustworthy knowledge of the desires and impulses of the person being instructed, even as the person themselves cannot perceive the real reasons for their actions. In the Egyptian field, Saba Mahmood comes to a similar conclusion about an alternative conception of agency. However, it seems to me that this conclusion is somewhat premature, and here is why.

In the contemporary world, all communities are to some extent familiar with secular norms and values. According to Charles Taylor, competing ways of representing the self and the world are the distinguishing feature of a secular age: “naïve” faith that particular dogmas and practices are the best/true/the most appropriate, coexists with an awareness of other approaches to the universe, be they atheistic or constructed on other religious postulates (Taylor 2007: 12–14). Because of this, the “naïve” view is interwoven with a “relativistic” one, unavoidably raising doubts. Of course, the relationship between the “naïve” and “relativistic” views will vary from culture to culture. And it is possible that while the European discourse concerning the subject and their rights is an integral part of the media in the Islamic society that Mahmood describes, it does not dominate, especially among certain groups. Nevertheless, the complete and absolute domination of the “naïve” view is hardly possible today, even in such societies.

The same is true in this case. All my informants share a post-Soviet past, in which the understanding of the subject and agency differ from the Western understanding, but not nearly so fundamentally as in traditional societies.³ Therefore, in contemporary nunneries, the “relativistic” and “naïve” outlooks will be even more entangled and confused. Indeed, the “naïve” views of the contemporary inhabitants of a given nunnery are the religious views that they often learned as adults, when

3. What I term traditional societies/cultures are those that classical anthropology examined — small, local groups, primarily pre-literate and having had little contact with Europeans.

they turned to the faith.⁴ And that means that those views are hardly likely to become as unshakeable at any point as the ideas of people who were raised in a religious culture and lack alternative accounts of themselves, others and the world.

The Temporal Dimension of Agency

Orthodox Christians hold a variety of perspectives on the nature of the subject. According to the research of Jarrett Zigon, conducted in Moscow during the first decade of the 21st century and devoted to conceptions of morality and ethics, the believers among his informants expressed the need to treat other people respectfully, since every person is a spark of God/the image of God (Zigon 2009: 1–26). However, this attitude toward one’s neighbor is not widespread in contemporary monasteries. The tradition emphasizing the sinful nature of every person has emerged as an alternative, but that way of perceiving the self is unfamiliar and problematic for the nuns, I maintain (Knorre 2011: 317–40). The nun Efrosina expressed surprise when she learned about the Russian Orthodox tradition proposing that even (or first and foremost) a saint will perceive themselves to be a sinner until the end of their days: “How hard, I thought, can I really be so bad — and it turns out that every saint has endured such spiritual struggle until the end of their life.”

This inner contradiction between a person’s customary self-image and the one cultivated in a monastic cloister can become the core of an entire spiritual life for a long time. According to Niklaus Largier, an emotional drama of this sort played a significant role in the life of medieval Catholic monasticism (Largier 2008: 73–91). Naturally, it was based on different aesthetics and practices. However the emotional dynamic followed a comparable scenario. In the nunnery I am describing, the development of spiritual life can be presented as follows: a person who is sinful but does not know this is shown (in this case, by the abbesses’ words) their genuine, sinful nature. At first, the “sinner” rejects this unappealing image and refuses to recognize herself in it; after that comes catharsis, and the person regards herself and her motivations in a different light. Paradoxically, the discovery of one’s sinful

4. The overwhelming majority of the nuns in the nunneries I studied turned to the faith in the early 1990s. Usually, only the abbess had experience of religious life — had entered a nunnery — in Soviet times. As a matter of fact, thereafter the church leadership often appointed an abbess to a newly opened cloister on this basis, that is, her having had experience of monastic life.

nature turns out to be the guarantee of salvation, inasmuch as from that moment, the person sees the truth about themselves and can begin ascending the path to virtue. In Largier's portrayal, the spiritual life of a Catholic monk in the Middle Ages was built mainly on the work of the imagination. During prayers, the monk began with the most detailed possible conception of hell, torments and temptations (complete with smells and sensations). And when he succeeded in bringing these horrible scenes to life, out of terror at his own future portion he pictured God's mercy, and the hope of divine transformation of his sinful soul brought about the desired catharsis.

These two styles of spiritual life are related in that they are both cyclical. Time and again, the same mechanisms provide the hope of salvation or an authentic vision of oneself as the culmination of similar religious experience. However, in the Russian religious tradition, many texts portray a different trajectory of spiritual life. These texts describe a gradual growth in virtue and thus, the path to God as an ascending line and not a "sinusoid" of emotional ups and downs.

"The Ladder of Divine Ascent" by John Climacus offers one of the most well-known images of ascension (Sinaiskii 1998). Composed in the seventh century, this tract envisions spiritual ascension as thirty rungs of virtue. Beginning at the bottom rung of renunciation of earthly vanity, the person who craves the Kingdom of Heaven ascends to penitence, to struggle with the passions, to ascetic feats, and at last reaches the summit, which unites the three main virtues: faith, hope and love. Nowadays, you do not have to read the book to be familiar with the image of the ladder, because the portrayal of the ladder leading to heaven, with monks ascending it, is very popular in Byzantine and Russian iconography.

There are other theologians whose works discussing the progressive cultivation of virtue are closer to contemporary thinking. The writings of two 19th-century saints, Feofan Zatvornik and Ignatii Brianchaninov, have been widely published in the past decade. In Russian Orthodox academic circles, their writings are regarded as the foundation for understanding spiritual life, because it was precisely they who made the early Christian patristic tradition available in a language that their contemporaries could understand and that is therefore closer to us, too. *The Path to Salvation* by Feofan Zatvornik contains the temporal aspect of spiritual life even in its chapter titles: "the sinner's awakening from sinful sleep," "ascending to the decision to abandon sin," "how Christian life is carried out, matures and becomes stronger in us," "the elements of ascension to liv-

ing communion with God” (Zatvornik 2001). This is only an abbreviated list of chapter titles. Many of the subsections, in turn, have a step-like structure. Thus, for example, human nature is depicted as consisting of three parts — the Spirit, the Soul and the Body, which exist in hierarchical order. In the lowest part — the body — the sins of sexual immorality, sloth and gluttony develop; envy, despondency, bitterness, wrath, vanity and lust find a refuge in the soul; the spirit can suffer from the hardening of feelings, self-absorption, audaciousness, self-satisfaction, indifference to the spiritual, and self-justification (Zatvornik 2003: 19, 65–190). Consequently, the struggle with these sins also proceeds in stages and in hierarchical order from lowest to highest.

The book *Ascetic Exercises* by Saint Ignatii Brianchaninov is a collection of articles, written at various times and collected and edited by the author at the end of his life. As a result, its structure is less coherent than *The Path to Salvation* (Brianchaninov 2011). Nevertheless, it has the very same sections on penitence, the eight primary evil passions and means of struggling with them, and the basic virtues that will take their place. The book pays a great deal of attention to prayer in general and the Jesus Prayer in particular.⁵ The latter is presented as the pinnacle of monastic practice: the fulfillment of that prayer, when it achieves perfection, becomes the basis for communion with God.

The above-mentioned works of Ignatii Brianchaninov and Feofan Zatvornik are usually familiar in one way or another to the inhabitants of cloisters and to many of the people who come to labor there. Members of the clergy have even expressed their displeasure with the popularity of these books or of similarly structured contemporary compilations of writings by the holy fathers. Several of the temporary laborers in the convent I studied told me that their priests recommended to parishioners that they not read the writings of these saints, saying that such books contain recommendations for monks, that is, for people already experienced in spiritual life. When *beginners* try immediately to carry out that which is most difficult — the Jesus Prayer — they will fail and become disillusioned or fall into the sin of pride.

5. The Jesus Prayer is the short phrase: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner.” It is particularly closely associated with Hesychasm, a mystical Christian current that links the possibility of the deification of the person with the constant reiteration of that prayer.

Thus, the clear hierarchy of sins, the prescribed order of replacing them with virtues and the evident goal of the spiritual path — the unceasing Jesus Prayer — together provide the various steps of the spiritual path. And some of those who seek monastic life arrive at the cloister familiar with some version of the practice of gradual self-transformation. To them, the cloister appears to be what can be called in scholarly language a “disciplinary institution.” Indeed, for those faithful who wish to proceed as far as possible in their spiritual development, entering a cloister must seem the most logical life choice — a chance to “professionalize” their interest. However, after spending some time in a cloister, nuns whose aim is working on the self come up against this: the understanding of human nature to be found in contemporary monasteries is incompatible with techniques of self-transformation based on a metaphor of progress. How can we speak of self-transformation if there are no criteria for understanding one’s own spiritual growth and the person working on the self cannot become conscious of their own success? Indeed, only after a person dies does it become possible to identify their saintliness or sinfulness with relative certainty, and, in the final analysis, God alone can judge a person’s soul.

To explore this question in more detail, I return to the concept of the disciplinary institution and the techniques of self-transformation with which it is closely linked. As presented by Michel Foucault, disciplinary institutions can be characterized according to the following parameters. Students/patients/soldiers and the like can be classified according to a scale of norms and deviations. However, no such scale exists in a monastery. A person always knows ahead of time that they are sinful, because the norm is saintliness. But according to the canons of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), a person can be declared a saint, canonized, only after their death. Therefore, the sole interest of the nunnery is to identify the nuns’ deviations from the norm — that is, to reveal their sinfulness. Furthermore, there exists in Orthodox tradition the belief that if a person follows the correct path, then the closer they approach God, the more clearly they will see even the most minor sin in themselves. Hagiographies that portray saints who weep on their deathbed and confess themselves to be great sinners typically confirm that idea (and also serve as a kind of guide for behavior). In this sense, a cloister logically assumes the role of a particular kind of surveillance system, aimed at revealing everything that is false in its inhabitants if the inhabitants do not do that for themselves. And should a monk

or nun be inclined to investigate their own behavior and thoughts, then the harder they work on themselves, the more they will see their own sinfulness. This is also development — but it is only inner growth. Ideally, the cloister (or the person themselves) must regard a nun's every action and step as sinful. In addition to everything else, this can be seen in the complete lack of praise and gratitude in contemporary convents.

In the traditional disciplinary institutions that Foucault identifies, the trainee must be taught new skills. It is hard to say the same about contemporary cloisters: nothing preserves a person from being regarded as a sinner, and, what is more, the person should regard themselves as such. The only new skill that nuns actually do acquire in a cloister is the ability to interpret their everyday behavior as sinful. The method is quite simple: ordinarily, only a single evil passion — pride/vanity — manifests itself in obedience, that is, routine household operations. A person performs something incorrectly — this demonstrates their pride. To the extent that spiritual life has become a matter for interpretation, the struggle with evil passions always comes too late, because the nun becomes aware of sin (or it is pointed out to her) only after it has been committed. However, patristic literature presents the struggle with the passions as attentiveness to thoughts and the ability to discern the consequences before engaging in action. In contemporary cloisters, by contrast, (self-)punishment for actions already performed has replaced that struggle. At first the person's sinful nature was hidden; then the abbess pointed it out; then followed repentance, prayer, penance. But the nuns are doomed to repeat this pattern endlessly — endlessly, because sin cannot be eradicated and is connected to the repeated acts of labor.

None of this corresponds well to the work of a disciplinary institution or, in theory, to didactic logic. In a cloister, there is no scale by which to measure the acquisition of a new skill, to examine it, to carry out exercises to solidify it and the like. That is, what is taking place is not work on the soul, which presupposes change and the possibility of ascertaining it, but rather the “recursion” of the discovery of sin in parallel contexts.

I think that by no means all inhabitants of cloisters experience this contradiction between their vision of spiritual growth and what really happens in practice. Some, for example, find significance in their very presence in a sacred space. But those who entered the nunnery with the idea of work on the soul as a complex of systematic exercises in which progress might be observed sooner or later reach a dead end.

According to patristic doctrine, those who aspire to be monks or nuns must first examine their own soul to discover the sins/passions from which they must be delivered. However, the contemporary nunneries of the ROC with which I am familiar practically focus on only a single sin — vanity/pride, while evidence of “work on the self” becomes the presence of sins (that is, catching sight of them), and not their eradication, however paradoxical that may seem.

When they first become acquainted with this system, the women who come to the convent to work on themselves deal with it by interpreting their everyday life as the manifestation of evil passions and by working out their emotional reaction to these discoveries. However, once they have learned to structure their everyday experience according to the new categories, the system ceases to develop. However much this may contradict the works by the saints cited above, in Orthodox tradition it is practically impossible to declare with confidence: I have overcome such and such a sin or developed such and such a virtue. In patristic literature this is called self-delusion (*prelest*) — the highest form of pride and self-deception. It is worth remembering the above-mentioned words of the nun Efrosina, who became distressed when she realized that the spiritual struggle was to last a lifetime, as was the perception of oneself as a sinner.

The lack of progress in the techniques of self-transformation prevalent in contemporary convents periodically prompts inhabitants to abandon the cloister. This happened time and again, for example, in the Resurrection Goritsy Convent in Vologda Oblast, which I visited over the course of several years. During my first visit, I saw only the cyclical schema of spiritual life: inhabitants made mistakes in the course of their labors of obedience and, as a result, became aware of their own sinful nature. This behavior perplexed me, but as a researcher I was forced to recognize that the nuns or novices expressed their *agency* — in complete conformity with Saba Mahmood’s concept of agency — precisely in subordinating their own will to that of the abbess. However, people left Goritsy one after another, having decided at a particular moment that their development in that particular convent had ceased and was unlikely to resume in the future. Moreover, from my Russian Orthodox acquaintances who visit various monasteries, I increasingly heard stories about schisms within cloisters, about the great “turnover” among inhabitants and about the return of some sisters to the secular world. Those of the latter with whom I managed to speak personally believed that they had ex-

hausted the possibilities for spiritual growth in their convent. In a new cloister or in their urban apartment they hoped they would be able to devote more attention to intense prayer, which would purify their soul and help to make possible their unmediated communication with God. This interest in mysticism, the “hesychastic” tendency in Russian Orthodoxy, merits its own study. Here I only want to emphasize that many who join convents in anticipation of spiritual growth find the constant repetition of one and the same practice to be manifestly inadequate.

Conclusion

The reason I changed my initial views on the nature of monastic agency (that is, subordination to the abbesses’ will) is because changes occurred in the field itself: convents became divided; their inhabitants returned to the world. This diachronic aspect of the research forced me to recognize that the academic definition of agency presupposes an unchanging subject, who either opposes authority/tradition (the reigning Western paradigm) or (according to Mahmood) subordinates themselves to it.

But does this unchanging subject exist? Recalling the words of Charles Taylor concerning the blending of the “naïve” and “relativistic” perspectives in the “secular age,” it is possible to presume with confidence that in post-Soviet space, at least, the majority of informants will be familiar with more than one way of regarding the world and their place in it. For example, those believers who, entering a cloister, try to master Christian norms of authority relations and conceptions of the subject and their desires and motivations, norms that are unfamiliar to them because of their Soviet past, might nevertheless retain a secular understanding of linear time. Although the secular understanding of time derived from Christian eschatology and has much in common with the image of linear ascension described by John Climacus, it was in modern times that it became virtually universal. All institutions of socialization — the school, the university, the army — are founded on the idea that development advances progressively. Consequently, the contemporary person who wishes to become proficient in something will naturally evaluate their activity by comparing the time and energy they devote to it with the degree of their success in reaching their goal.

Such faith in the progressive development of one’s abilities has had a disastrous impact on contemporary monasteries and convents. In

the first place, it ignores the paradox in Eastern Orthodoxy: that virtue increases even as awareness of one's own sinfulness deepens. Secondly, the recursive model of spiritual life prevalent in the convents I studied does not correspond to the goal of progressive development. Here, I will risk making the assumption that most people who pass through secular institutions of socialization have a concept of spiritual development that incorporates a *secular* notion of time. The pressure of secular time, by the way, manifests itself even more forcefully in cloisters than in the lives of laypeople, because for a portion of the people who enter monasteries, becoming shriven was a rational choice about how best to progress towards the Kingdom of Heaven during the short span of earthly life, whereas the lives of laypeople, even in the conditions of a period of "religious revival," involve more than spiritual practice.

In conjunction with the significance of the "temporal factor," the situation surrounding the current rebirth of Islam in Egypt makes me wonder whether the heroines of Saba Mahmood's article have continued their religious practice over the long term. As Mahmood noted, her informants were counting on the culminating effect of their disciplinary practices rather than on their mechanical repetition (Mahmood 2001: 216). In the case of contemporary Egypt, that means, for example, that wearing the veil for a long time must at some point lead to inner virtue. How far were Mahmood's informants from the desire not only to follow tradition but also to evaluate the success of their path, to measure their own growth?

Nowadays, the academic concept of agency is, in essence, built upon the ascribing of a variety of types of actions to one or the other of two opposing positions: activity or passivity. Saba Mahmood changed the usual vector of description by asserting that submission can be characterized as "activity." It seems to me that one and the same behavior (for example, obedience), viewed according to the scale of secular time, may be initially regarded by informants as an active and conscious choice, as work on the self. To the researcher, this will be viewed as a manifestation of agency. Subsequently, however, when the very same activity becomes routine, it will become unnecessary to informants and they will try to avoid it — and the researcher will also change the sign in their description of agency. Pre-supposing constant change, the obsolescence of previous practices, and the introduction of new ones, linear time influences the religious practices of many of the faithful. Academic studies of the faithful should bear that in mind.

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MIKHAIL SUSLOV

The Genealogy of the Idea of Monarchy in the Post-Soviet Political Discourse of the Russian Orthodox Church

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This article focuses on the concept of monarchy with an emphasis on the traditional Russian “autocratic” model. Mikhail Suslov inquires into the ways this concept is being used in today’s Russian Orthodox Church and in the circles of religiously motivated intellectuals. Informed by the “contextualist” tradition in conceptual history, this article traces the concept of monarchy back to pre-revolutionary and émigré thinkers and argues that two understandings of the term have been evolving throughout Russia’s modern history: the tradition of “divine kingship” (tsarebozhie), now largely marginalized, and the Slavophile interpretation that shifted substantially toward the idea of popular sovereignty and is now dominant in official and mainstream Orthodox political thought. The Slavophile concept of monarchy is internally contradictory and unstable, making its usage problematic, but, at the same time, it opens the possibility for new and original theorizing.

Keywords: Russian Orthodox Church, monarchy, monarchism, divine kingship, popular sovereignty, Slavophile, “Bases of the Social Conception.”

BEFORE the fall of the monarchy in February 1917, the figure of the autocratic tsar was for many centuries the center of the Russian political world. Political theorists justified the monarchy and proposed measures to strengthen it, while the common people handed down from generation to generation the habits of the “language of monarchy” and “monarchist sentiments.” Paradoxically, even early 20th-century anti-monarchist discourse was bound up with an ingrained monarchism — indeed the very criticism of the monarchy

often arose from the contrast between the actual tsar and the idealized image of a monarch.¹ Conversely, at times intellectuals' conceptualization of the autocratic monarchy prompted them to acknowledge the necessity of radical reform and to refuse loyalty to the actual tsar in the name of realizing ideal autocracy (see Luk'ianov 2006: 54–59). The fact is that monarchism, and political traditionalism in general, resists rational interpretation and theoretical analysis. A monarchist has already lost his case as soon as he attempts to defend his political convictions by argument. In the monarchist's ideal world, such a situation could not even arise thanks to the “natural” and “self-evident” character of the monarchist system.

Precisely for this reason, in Russia, with its thousand-year experience of monarchy, monarchism as an ideology was paradoxically underdeveloped. This played a fatal role for the Romanov dynasty: the pre-revolutionary regime proved incapable of securing mass support amid the competitive politics of the early 20th century. Some monarchists openly refused to deliberate on the topic of governance, asserting that autocracy in Russia concerned the realm of faith, mysticism and emotions and did not lend itself to analysis. Note the following statements by early 20th-century commentators: in Vasily Rozanov's words, “Tsarist rule is a miracle” (Rozanov 1912). According to Nikolai Cherniaev, “Russian autocracy (...) [can] not but seem a supernatural matter, which is satisfactorily explained only through the participation of Providence in the fates of peoples” (Cherniaev 1998: 18). Sergei Bulgakov wrote that before his “conversion” to monarchism he “did not love the Tsar,” for “the question of monarchy is, in essence, a question of love or non-love” (quoted in Kolonitskii 2010: 10).

Rationally arguing the impossibility of rational argumentation concerning the monarchy, these monarchists fell into the liar's paradox. Consequently, in pre-revolutionary Russia many intellectuals were convinced supporters of the monarchy, but few were monarchists. For example, the notorious Konstantin Pobedonostsev, whose rehabilitation in post-Soviet Russia has played a major role in the formation of contemporary conservatism, was undoubtedly a staunch monarchist, but his theoretical ruminations on monarchy were unoriginal and inconsequential for intellectual history. Other monarchist intellectuals

1. For the latest research devoted to the nuances of (anti-) monarchist consciousness, one can point to Kolonitskii 2010: 552–65. In an earlier period, monarchist mythology lay at the root of mass protest movements—and not only in Russia. See the rich literature on this, for example Field 1976 and Hobsbawm 1971.

who tried to develop original monarchist theories came under suspicion of the authorities and sometimes also found themselves under arrest. To the authorities, even dissidents on the right were first and foremost dissidents.

The Orthodox Church, with its experience of cooperating with the monarchy throughout the history of Russian statehood, was always a reliable ally of the rulers. But by the end of the imperial period the relations between church and monarchy had become problematic. Criticism of “caesaropapism” — that is, the assimilation of the church as a branch of the state bureaucracy — resounded increasingly in church circles (see, for example, Hedda 2008: 153–75). At the same time, the inherited intellectual tradition of the sacralization of the monarchy contrasted all the more irresolvably with the processes of modernization. After the Manifesto of October 17, 1905 — the third point of which read, “[This manifesto] establishes as an inviolable rule that no law can come into force without the approval of the State Duma,” thereby formally, at least, abolishing the autocratic power of the tsar — sacred kingship generally sounded like a joke or, at best, a legend from the distant past. Finally, the particular attempts to theorize autocratic power rationally that I will examine below created ideological tension between reality and the imagined ideal, effectively undermining the actually existing dynasty. Occupying the honorable first position in Uvarov’s political formulation “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality,” the Orthodox Church did not rush to the aid of the tottering dynasty in 1917. As is well known, soon after Nicholas II’s abdication Church leaders hastened to express their joy at the liberation of the Church from state oversight and initiated the relevant revisions of doctrine and liturgy. These Church reformers included such churchmen as Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov, the author of “The Monarchist Catechism” of 1911 (see “The Resolution of the Moscow Council of Deans [*blagochinnykh*] [March 7, 1917]” in Babkin 2006: 193–95). And note also the resolution of the Church Council not to sing “Many Years” to the emperor and members of his family (Babkin 2006: 379), which signified that the Church silently supported the abolition of the monarchy in Russia. In fact, the position of the Orthodox clerical hierarchs regarding the monarchy was one of the most important factors in the desacralization of autocratic rule and the development of the revolutionary process in the spring and autumn of 1917.

In contemporary Russia, people often idealize the actual interaction between the Church and the monarchy in the pre-revolutionary period, while a folkloric (*lubochnyi*) image of tsarist rule enjoys pop-

ularity among sizeable groups of the population. A recent poll conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) in March 2013 showed that 24 percent of Russians have nothing against the idea of the restoration of the monarchy; an analogous survey in 2006 numbered potential monarchists at 19 percent. In the same period the number of opponents of monarchy has also increased insignificantly: from 66 percent in 2006 to 67 percent in 2013. Thus, we can speak of the stabilization of the number of monarchist sympathizers at a level of approximately one-fifth of the population (“Monarkhii v Rossii” 2013).

At present, the weakness of political monarchism can be explained with recourse to several factors. First, there is the significant rupture with pre-revolutionary political thought and tradition. The systematic “purge” of monarchist elements from the country in the 1920s led to the entire core of the Russian monarchist tradition continuing its existence in emigration. Divided into several branches and dynastic lines, the present representatives of the House of Romanov abroad are unknown in contemporary Russia and arouse little interest among the Russian population. The monarchist tradition in the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is not so much being restored as being created from scratch. Despite mass republication of pre-revolutionary monarchist theorists by nationalist and radical right-wing publishers, the current level of political discussion about autocracy remains quite low. The assimilation of monarchist ideology on the popular level goes no further than idiosyncratically understood and quite superficial ideas. Therefore, public discussion of the theory of monarchy rarely goes beyond the bounds of considering the historical achievements and aesthetic appeal of the pre-revolutionary empire. That is, monarchy is a marker of a specific worldview rather than the product of rationalistic theorizing and political planning. In the same way, at the institutional level as well monarchism has not thus far been represented by political parties and movements of all-Russian scope. For instance, only in 2012 did the Ministry of Justice register the first Monarchist Party of the Russian Federation, headed by the Urals-based magnate Anton Bakov (“V Moskve uchrezdena” 2012).

Second, the monarchists’ factionalism does not facilitate successful institutionalization. Already at the end of the Soviet period two main camps of monarchists came together: the “legitimists,” who affirm that the Romanov dynasty continues to enjoy the right to the Russian throne, and the “assemblyists” (*soborniki*), who demand a

decision on a candidate for monarch by universal vote, that is, an “assembly” (*sobor*). The legitimists are also not a monolithic movement, for varying dynastic reckonings and the legal systems of different countries permit the designation of several possible claimants. The Russian Monarchist Party, for example, supports the candidacy of Prince Karl Emich of Leiningen, who recently adopted Orthodoxy and took the name Nikolai Kirillovich. In the view of the “assemblyists,” an Assembly of the Land (*Pomestnyi zemskii sobor*) should be called, and, like the Assembly of 1613, it should elect (“call,” as adherents of this view prefer to say) a tsar, not restricting itself to one specific dynasty. Archbishop Gavriil (Chemodakov) of Montreal and Canada, for example, supports this position. (On contemporary monarchists, see, for example, “Russkie monarchisty” 1996; Krylov 2013.)

Does all this mean that we should discount monarchism as a serious ideological force in contemporary Russia? Most likely, monarchism does in fact possess great potential for growth and emergence from the “gray zone” of political marginality in Russia against the background of disillusionment with liberal democracy and the current regime’s “tightening of the screws.” This article seeks to demonstrate that monarchism plays an important role in the political philosophy of Orthodox Christianity and also cannot be ignored in political debates outside the Church. One of the central theses of “The Bases of the Social Conception of the Russian Orthodox Church,” ratified at the Bishops’ Council of 2000 (points III.1–III.7), is devoted to this topic. In order to understand what significance present-day Orthodox intellectuals ascribe to monarchism, in this article I trace the ideological genealogy of monarchism in Russian political theory with the aid of a close reading of “The Bases of the Social Conception” (hereafter, “Bases”) and the reconstruction of the intellectual context to which it relates.

A concept of ideology as the “decontestation” of political debate serves as this investigation’s theoretical basis. This means the ability of ideology to fix the meaning of concepts that, outside an ideological system, are “essentially contested.” For example, we do not understand what a person means by “freedom” until we have discovered in what ideological context the term is used, in other words, until we have determined whether this person supports the ideology of liberalism or socialism, for example. The concept of “monarchy” also means different things in different contexts: in the perception of liberal democracy “monarchy” has one meaning; in Russian traditional-

ism, another.² The concept of monarchy, however (as with any other essentially contested idea), possesses a complex internal structure and dynamic. Therefore, the investigation of the concept of monarchy involves two analytical strategies: contextualization (that is, the identification of the intellectual context that determines the meaning of monarchy at a definite moment in time³) and a morphological analysis of the concept.

The article's main thesis is that the ROC accepts principally the Slavophile interpretation of autocracy in its late imperial version. On the one hand, this is actually one of the most thoroughly developed monarchist doctrines known in Russia. On the other hand, it arose during the period of the monarchy's decline and as its intellectual "pillar." In that era, monarchist theory was "modernized" by the inclusion of elements of nationalism and the concept of popular sovereignty. But with that the understanding of monarchy became contradictory, for the question of the ultimate source of authority — the divine will or the people's will — remained suspended in air. The "archaeology" of monarchist thought in the ROC reveals that monarchism's cultural resources, in the form in which they are being developed in contemporary Russia, are not able to form a sufficiently firm foundation for ideological constructions, inasmuch as the present-day theory of monarchism cannot escape from Slavophile paradoxes.

Is Monarchy Preferable in the Opinion of the ROC Leadership?

Reliable sociological data does not yet exist on the extent of monarchist ideas among the clergy and laity of the ROC, but some scattered facts permit the assertion that these ideas find a much greater response within the Church than in the country on average (see Turunen 2007)⁴. Just what is the position of official Orthodoxy on this matter? A resolution of the Bishops' Council speaks of "the non-preferability to the Church of any state system, any of the existing political

2. The research methodology summarized above owes much to Freedman 1998.
3. The contextual approach was developed by the so-called Cambridge School of intellectual history. Of the members of this school, Quentin Skinner exerted the greatest influence on the present work. See Skinner 1969; Skinner 2002.
4. See also a small collection of interviews conducted with clergy for the portal www.regions.ru. Of six Orthodox priests, six supported monarchy, while at the same time not one of the Muslim and Jewish religious leaders supported monarchy ["Sviashchennosluzhiteli o monarkhicheskoi idee" (2012)].

philosophies and any specific social forces and their leaders, including those now in power” (“O vzaimootnosheniakh Tserkvi s gosudarstvom” 1994).⁵ “Bases” (III.7, paragraph 3) quotes this assertion, especially emphasizing that the ROC does not interfere with the people’s free choice regarding the forms and methods of government, “or at least does not oppose their choice” (III.7, paragraph 1). Quite reasonably in the same section (III.7, paragraph 3), “Bases” notes that the “non-preferability” principle is linked to the Church’s main concern lying “not [in] the external organization of the state, but [in] the condition of its members’ hearts” (see Kirill [Gundiaev] 2008). Stressing that there is no “equal sign” between monarchism and Orthodoxy, commentator Alexander Arkhangel’sky, in the pages of the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, expresses his view on the permissibility and conventionality of all forms of government “except for absolute totalitarianism and regimes hostile to humanity” (“XX vek v istorii Rossii” 2010: 73). One can compare, too, the words of Arkady Maler: “The symphony of Church and state is possible in the most varied forms and with the most varied state systems, excluding the two extremes (...) which are tyranny and anarchy” (Maler 2012).

It would seem that with this it would be possible to put the matter to rest and close the topic of “monarchism in Orthodoxy.” For the authors of “Bases,” however, these reflections merely frame the section’s central thesis (III.7), which establishes a hierarchy of the forms of state power: the era of the biblical judges (judgeship), monarchy and democracy. At first, under the judges, “the right to rule was effected not through coercion, but by force of authority; moreover, this authority was accompanied by divine sanction.” Subsequently, “under monarchy, power remains God-given, but for its exercise it employs coercion rather than spiritual authority.” Finally, contemporary democracies “do not seek divine approval of their governance” (III.7, paragraph 2).

In the next paragraph of “Bases” bold type sets apart the main idea: “One can by no means exclude the possibility of a spiritual renewal of society such that a religiously higher form of state structure

5. Patriarch Alexy II consistently supported the concept of “non-preferability.” In addressing whether monarchy was a superior political system, he answered: “As far as the Church is concerned, there cannot be any everlasting, non-transitory national state arrangements” (Aleksii II [Ridiger] 1991: 4). In contrast, Metropolitan Kirill during that time had developed a largely positive view of monarchy, linking the upheavals of the 20th century in Russia with the weakening of Orthodoxy and monarchism (Kirill [Gundiaev] 1993: 11).

becomes natural” (III.7, paragraph 3). In this way, “Bases” acknowledges that different forms of state power have a different relation to religion and morality: some are “religiously higher,” others less so. Naturally, the Church prefers the former to the latter, for the “religiously higher” forms offer greater opportunities for care for the “condition of hearts.” But if the form of government depends on morality, then the Church cannot be indifferent to the form of government. In this sense monarchy is good not simply from the standpoint of its political functionality, but also because of its particular beneficence toward the religious needs of the population. This brings into doubt the thesis of “non-preferability” of this or that state system; its paradoxical inclusion in the very section that refutes it deliberately softens the rather strong impression left by the Church’s decisive stand on the political question.

The ideas of the authors of “Bases” enjoy wide currency among ROC clerics. For example, as Archpriest Alexander Shargunov notes, “an Orthodox monarchy (...) secures the majority of people the most favorable conditions for salvation” (Aleksandr [Shargunov] 2008). In the context of recent political debates Archpriest Gennady Belovolov discussed a soul-saving Orthodox monarchy in the following way: “If an Orthodox Tsar were in power, is it possible to imagine that he would remain indifferent to the murder of his own loyal subjects in the womb?! I think that on the first day of his accession to the throne an Orthodox Sovereign would ban this outrage. (...) Or what Tsar would permit the giving over of his young subjects into a family overseas with a complete change of their faith and citizenship.” Subsequently, in commentary on his own text, he clarified his position: “In a democracy they will make you fill your heart with Snickers, whereas in an Orthodox Tsardom you will have greater opportunity ‘to occupy your heart with God’” (Gennadii [Belovolov] 2010).

The priest Dmitry Sverdlov (banned from service for five years from January 14, 2013) noted the internal contradiction of the position of “Bases” regarding monarchy: “‘The Bases of the Social Conception’ (...) leaves an ambiguous impression when it touches on monarchy. For example, it says there that ‘the Church accepts the relevant choice of the people,’ when the topic concerns the ‘forms and methods of government.’ Yet, of all the possible forms of social structure, the document designates only monarchy, along with theocracy (...), as ‘God-given.’ (...) Such double-mindedness leaves a person of the Church wide latitude for dreaming precisely of monarchy” (Sverdlov 2012). But then again, opponents of monarchy, too, can refer to the same sections in

“Bases” to support their position. For example, the journal *Foma*, approved by the Publishing Council of the ROC, holds a skeptical view of monarchy. In 2008 the journal organized a special forum, “Should an Orthodox Person Be a Monarchist?” to which one of the originators of “Bases,” Professor Andrei Zubov, for example, contributed. Zubov asserted that “when a society begins to increase in its Christian self-consciousness, then with time monarchy becomes unnecessary. (...) Because people themselves can find their own paths as they walk before God” (“Dolzhen li pravoslavnyi chelovek byt’ monarkhistom?” 2008). In other words, his position, based on an interpretation of the same “Bases,” directly contradicts Archpriest Alexander Shargunov’s position mentioned above.

Here one must note that the monarchist argumentation in “Bases” has nothing in common with constitutional law. The “juridical” terminology in “Bases” is indefinite and obscure: the work labels roughly the same entity as “social organization,” “form and method of government,” “form of rule,” “ruling form,” “form of state structure” (III.7). From the perspective of constitutional law, juxtaposing monarchy and democracy (III.7, paragraph 2) is as senseless as comparing apples and oranges, since they characterize different aspects of the state: a form of government (monarchy or republic) and a political system (*rezhim*) (democracy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism). A concept such as “judgeship” would perplex any legal expert. According to Konstantin Kostiuk, the conception of “judgeship” is a “valuable finding” in “Bases,” since its utter unattainability and irrelevance “permits distancing oneself equally from all [actually existing] political forms” and thereby makes the thesis of “non-preferability” more persuasive (Kostiuk 2013: 364).

The point is this: Concerning monarchy, “Bases” is referring to a different intellectual tradition, one in which monarchy signifies exclusively the traditional Russian autocracy, whose foundations the document seeks in the biblical history of Israel’s first kings. With this move the historically and geographically local phenomenon of the autocratic monarchy is elevated to the level of a universal model of “social organization.” Nevertheless, the proposed hierarchy — judgeship, monarchy, democracy — still makes its classifications on varying principles, for it leaves significant gaps: for example, the European monarchies of the absolutist period, which “did not seek divine approval of their rule,” were monarchies only on a symbolic level (that is, they were not monarchies from the perspective of “Bases”), yet nor were they democracies in any sense of that word.

Be that as it may, “Bases” determined that from the religious perspective “monarchy” is preferable to “democracy,” something that rightist intellectuals have not failed to notice. (See, for example, Semenکو 2001 [2000]: 160.) One must understand the assertion of monarchy’s preferability in the context of two other very important theses of “Bases.” The first holds that the state and the Church have different “natures”: “The Church was founded directly by God Himself (...) while the divine establishment of state rule reveals itself indirectly in the historical process” (III.3, paragraph 1). This interpretation imbues the Church’s understanding of political phenomena, including its interpretation of monarchy, with great significance. Second, one of the most controversial moments in “Bases,” immediately evoking friction with the authorities, is the recognition by the Church of the right “to refuse to submit to the state” if the latter compels believers to engage in sinful acts or to renounce their faith (III.5, paragraph 4). (Scholars have cited instances of the Kremlin’s expression of dissatisfaction with the monarchist theses of “Bases.” See, for example, Richters 2013: 24.) Taken together, these theses form the normative basis for oppositional activity by the ROC. With all the murkiness as to what constitutes sinful action and which actions will entice believers to renounce their faith, Church radicals can view virtually any state action as grounds for civil disobedience. Because of the existing dependence of the ROC on state structures, the expression of monarchist sympathies by the highest bishops of the Church cannot remain without consequences. Hence, both “Bases” and subsequent official political statements made by Church leaders soften the effect in the manner of “however, but then again (...).” Indeed, some of the literature notes that “Bases” was written in this style, which allows it to achieve a specific tactical compromise but to lose, from a strategic perspective, an opportunity for the development of theological ideas in Orthodoxy (Kostiuk 2013: 361; in his analysis Kostiuk refers to the work of Alexander Morozov [Morozov 2000]).

The Two Bodies of the King: The Tradition of “Divine Kingship” Theology

One can speak roughly of two traditional perceptions of “monarchy” in the ideology of Russian Orthodoxy. One of them closely links the Church and the autocracy, taking its cues from historical experience and the writings of the Church fathers. In contrast, the second sets forth the tradition of the Church’s existence independent of the autoc-

racy or even in spite of it.⁶ The political history of Byzantium and Russia offers an abundance of evidence for both viewpoints, in that periods of the monarchist state's support of the Church alternated with times of persecution (for example, the iconoclastic controversy in Byzantium) or complete subordination of the Church to the structures of power (the so-called "Synodal period" in imperial Russia).

A similar ambivalence is present in the biblical history of the first kings of Israel, lying at the root of the interpretation of monarchy in "Bases" and generally central to the Orthodox understanding of monarchy. Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) wrote in 1848: "The Creator (...) Himself raised up judges and leaders for this people, He Himself *reigned over* this kingdom (...) finally, He Himself instituted kings over them, and also continued the miraculous signs of His supreme rule over the kings." And further on he continues: "Perhaps, they say, all this was during the times of *theocracy*, that is, of divine rule, and now the times are different." In other words, for him there is no fundamental difference between the period of the prophets and the subsequent period of the kings; both one and the other fall into the same category of "theocracy," since later, too, during the government of the kings, divine rule over the people continued through God-given rulers. Needless to say, to him the transition to monarchy was not a "fall" or some sort of devolution. With an elaborate allusion to the Russian Empire, the metropolitan writes that in our time, too, nothing has really changed: "Has God actually ever abdicated His divine rule over the world and mankind, and particularly over those kingdoms and peoples in whom His spiritual kingdom has been predominantly realized and disseminated or that are especially aligned with His kingdom?" (Filaret [Drozdov] 1888 [1848]: 5). In his exposition, the history of King Saul's dethronement is entirely absent, and the discussion of the new period begins with King David (Filaret [Drozdov] 1888 [1848]: 10–11). He thereby avoids even the mention of a situation in which a monarchical ruler can lose divine sanction and, consequently, the throne. His history of the first kings of Israel centers on the moment of David's anointing to the kingship; moreover, Filaret emphasizes that this happened long before his actual accession to the throne. The explanation of this, in the theolo-

6. It is entirely possible to speak of two traditions in the relation of the Christian Church toward the state, one of which took shape as follows: "[T]he politically determined crucifixion of Christ, the persecution of the apostles and the first martyrs from the first days of Christianity's existence, established in Christianity the experience of alienation from and mistrust toward the state" (Kostiuk 2013: 17).

gian's view, is that by divine dispensation David had to be elevated above the common people in order to become king, so as to highlight especially the transcendental approbation of his power independent of his personal feats (they became evident after his anointing) and the choice of the people.

Such an interpretation is standard for many traditional monarchies, including the Russian one, the theory of which, in comparison with the English monarchy of the Elizabethan period for example, was much more weakly developed from both the theological and juridical perspectives. The conception of authority propounded by Metropolitan Filaret shows not so much the uniqueness of the Russian "theology of rule" as its immaturity, for it differed little from that of the European Middle Ages. These theories shared the concept of "the two bodies of the king," according to which the person of the monarch consisted not only of his "earthly," physical nature, but also, through his anointing to the kingship, of a certain transcendental essence (Kantorowicz 1997: 47–87; see also Staats 1976). The latter made the earthly king into the "reflection" of Christ, a sacred, inviolable being, "God's anointed," to whom "we must submit not as to a person governing the people, but as to God himself" (Kovalevski 2011: 9).⁷

In medieval Russia, too, the idea of the divine basis of earthly rule and the character of the tsar's supremacy as the "living image" of its sacred prototype became established (Andreeva 2007: 193). This is the same idea as the medieval concept of "the two bodies of the king," as in the following: "The Christian ruler became the *christomimetes* — literally the 'actor' or 'impersonator' of Christ — who on the terrestrial stage presented the living image of the two-natured God" (Kantorowicz 1997 [1957]: 47). According to Iosif Volotsky's interpretation, "The tsar in his nature is like unto all mankind, while in his rule he is like the most high God" (quoted in Andreeva 2007: 201). The foundational work of Michael Cherniavsky shows the evolution of the concept of the sacred ruler in medieval Rus. In his work Cherniavsky analyzes the way that from the dual image of the prince — "a saint on a throne" (that is, a passive passion-sufferer, an imitator of Christ, such as the saints Boris and Gleb,⁸ for example) and a "saintly prince" (that is, a

7. Giorgio Agamben expands upon Kantorowicz's analysis through the concept *homo sacer*. In his view, the representation of the person of the king stems from his historically established status as inviolable, existing beyond the bounds of any jurisdiction, and hence primarily political (see Agamben 2011).

8. Konstantin Kostiuk notes that princely saints were canonized "not with a view to their own merit as rulers but as passion-bearers" (Kostiuk 2013: 61). If I understand Kos-

military leader and a martyr for the cause of Christ, such as Alexander Nevsky) — arose the conception of the God-given authority of the Orthodox tsar, who was not only “holy” himself, but who also represented the guarantee for the salvation of his people and state (Cherniavsky 1962: 22–23, 76). The theology of “divine kingship” suggested that kingly power in itself enjoyed divine origin and needed no special imprimatur from the Church (Andreeva 2007: 201).

As in medieval Western Europe, the concept of the tsar’s sacred rule gave expression to the secular ruler’s desire for autonomy from the Church. (Concerning this, see Figgis 1914, for example.) This explains in part the persistence of the tradition of the sacralization of authority in the 18th and 19th centuries, when cultural processes already in development tended toward secularization and the decree of 1680 banning the deification of the tsar continued in effect as well (Zhivov and Uspenskii 1987: 75; Baehr 1991: 27–29). In 1766, a new edition of the prayer service for the Sunday of Orthodoxy [the first Sunday in Lent — Editors], in use up to 1917, included the following among the anathematized by proclamation of the clergy in the name of the Church: “Against those who think that Orthodox rulers come to the throne not by special Divine favor toward them and who think that with the anointing to the kingship the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not poured out on them for the conduct of this lofty office; and therefore who dare to revolt and to commit treason against them: anathema” (“O chine pravoslaviia”). There is another comparatively late example: the regicide of March 1, 1881, which Orthodox and rightist, monarchist circles described in medieval terms as a martyr’s death that atoned for the sins of the people and the state itself. For example, to Fr. John of Kronstadt, Alexander II “became a figure somewhat analogous to Christ, who died for the sins of the people and for the sake of salvation” (Kitsenko [Kizenko] 2006: 290). And note also the phrase: “the sacred blood of the Tsar-martyr” (Khoinatskii 1881: 2).

The anointing of the tsar in the Orthodox rite in Russia, as is well-known, involved the union of two traditions: the anointing of the tsar to the kingship, characteristic of Byzantine and Western European

tiuk’s thought correctly, then it is hardly possible to agree with it, for the princes were glorified as passion-bearers precisely because they were princes. A simple calculation performed by Michael Cherniavsky demonstrates that of 14 Kievan princes (from Vladimir Sviatoslavovich to Andrei Bogoliubsky) 10 were consecrated as saints; of 12 Muscovite rulers from the end of the fourteenth to the end of the sixteenth centuries seven were canonized, and the canonization of the eighth — Ivan the Terrible (Ivan Groznyi) is under discussion in society. Thus, in medieval Russia practically “all princes were seen as saints” (Cherniavsky 1962: 32).

monarchical practice, and the sacrament of chrismation, performed in Russian Orthodoxy after baptism. The rite of anointing the tsar is analogous to the sacrament of chrismation — it symbolizes the second birth, thereby exalting the tsar over common mortals and declaring to him his special consecrated status. The communing of the tsar also over time began to resemble the Eucharist for priests, as if confirming the idea that the kingship and the priesthood “are the two greatest gifts,” two positions of equally sacred significance (Zhivov and Uspenskiĭ 1987: 24; Kostiuk 2013: 87–88).

Konstantin Kostiuk asserts that in contrast to the West the theology of authority developed in a contrary direction in medieval Russia — toward the endowment of governance with sacred attributes and the erosion of the distinction between the “two cities.” As a result, a spiritual mission and eschatological function were ascribed to tsarist rule, and the role of the people as a political agent was ignored (Kostiuk 2013: 108–9, 115). But in the 19th and early 20th centuries ideological searchings moved toward the revision of the traditional sacralization of authority. It is undeniable, however, that the traditional theology of “divine kingship” continued into the 20th century as well, although it also ceased to be central to political theology. Accordingly, Sergei Bulgakov wrote, “The tsar bears his rule like the cross of Christ, and (...) submission to Him can also be through the cross of Christ and in His name” (quoted in Kolonitskiĭ 2010: 10). In the same spirit, Kirill Zaitsev maintained that “only in terms of the Church’s insight is it possible to understand who the tsar is. Only in God’s Word is it possible to find the answer to the question of what the Russian Orthodox kingdom is” (Zaitsev 2010: 259).

That which was mainstream in medieval Russia and a traditionalist alternative to modernizing ideological projects at the end of the imperial period has, in present-day Russia, been pushed to the margins of political debate. Post-Soviet, radical-right Orthodox thinkers also support “divine kingship.” For example, V. L. Kovalevsky writes that “the Russian Tsar was chosen to serve by God Himself. He was a messenger and servant of the Heavenly Father: a living weapon of the all-directing right hand of God, the executor of divine judgments.” Vladimir Neviarovich asserts that “it is possible (and imperative) to regard Orthodox monarchy as an integral branch of Orthodox doctrine, sufficiently theologically developed and formulated by the fathers and learned men of the Church,” the foundation of which was laid in the history of King Saul (Neviarovich 2004: 32). In his interpretation of this history, Neviarovich draws upon A. P. Lopukhin, a professor at the

St. Petersburg Theological Academy, who argued that “during the time of the judges the whole life of the people — their religious-moral life as well as their political, social and family life — fell into disorder. (...) In the absence of a firm ruler to ensure the observance of the laws, morality (...) declined all the more” (Neviarovich 2004: 38; Lopukhin 1915: 64). According to this interpretation, not only was the establishment of the monarchy not a “fall,” but it signaled a transition to a higher level of moral perfection in the life of the society (see Neviarovich 2004: 39). In contemporary monarchist literature, references to Archbishop Serafim (Sobolev), the author of the political treatise *Russian Ideology*, are also popular. In his treatise, Archbishop Serafim analyzes in detail the circumstances of Saul’s anointing, refuting the view that kingly rule “was established as an indulgence.” The archbishop writes that “through its desire to have monarchical rule” the people of Israel in no way “fell; they did not commit a sin. The word ‘*prizrekh*’ (1 Samuel 9:16) refers not to indulgence toward sin (...) but toward the [people’s] sufferings and toward the establishment of kingly rule as a means for their salvation” (Serafim [Sobolev] 2002: 67–68). Serafim writes: “Christian monarchical rule received its genesis directly from God, the Heavenly King” (Serafim [Sobolev], Filaret [Drozdov], Ioann [Maksimovich] 2000: 87).

In the context of “divine kingship” theology one can consider also the radical-right currents among Orthodox intellectuals that develop the eschatological and messianic ideas of the Russian tsar as “one who holds at bay” (*uderzhivaiushchii*), that is, as a force of universal significance, saving the entire world from tumbling into hell (Aleksandr [Shargunov] 1999). It would be incorrect to suggest that attempts to revive the medieval theology of “divine kingship” are marginal in contemporary Orthodoxy; a whole series of influential religious media, including the radio network Radonezh and the news agency The Russian People’s Service (*Russkaia narodnaia liniia*) support the monarchist line.

Monarcho-Skepticism in the Russian Orthodox Church

As we have seen, the position of “Bases” seriously differs from the theology of “divine kingship.” First, “Bases” holds that “history’s one true theocracy existed in ancient Israel before the period of the kings” (III.1, paragraph 3). Second, “Bases” clearly favors the view that “the Lord (...) regretted their [the people’s] abandonment of divine rule” (III.1, paragraph 3), that is, he expressed regret specifically in connection

with the change of government from that of “judgeship” to monarchy. Patriarch Kirill declares with the same certitude that under judgeship morality gradually declined, faith weakened and sinfulness increased among the people of Israel. Therefore the introduction of kingly power was “a deep spiritual tragedy” for ancient Israel, which rejected unmediated divine rule and placed over itself an earthly sovereign (Kirill [Gundiaev] 2013: 247–48).⁹

One also finds representation of the establishment of monarchy as a kind of decline, as the lowering of the moral level, in Orthodox thought at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. For instance, Archbishop Andronik (Nikolsky) noted in 1907: “One must completely free oneself from that artificial, forced argument such as is typically made from the Holy Scriptures to confirm the exclusive correctness and perfection of only the strictly monarchist form of government. I implore every reader not to be alarmed (...) should I, a convinced tsarist, say definitely that there is no such evidence in the Holy Scriptures” (Andronik [Nicol’skii] 2004: 353). In his view, the prophet Samuel anointed Saul to the kingship only so that “the Jews would not forget God completely,” and therefore monarchical rule was only “a protection and security against greater evils,” and was not sacred (Andronik [Nicol’skii] 2004: 354–55).

This interpretation of monarchy was close to Nikolai Berdiaev’s position, articulated in the pages of the journal *The Way (Put’)*, in which a polemic arose concerning the interpretation of the story of Saul. Berdiaev objected to the notion of a biblical basis for monarchism and to the idea of a God-given king that A. Petrov and Grigory Trubetskoy supported (Petrov 1926: 134–39; Trubetskoi 1926: 172–75). According to Berdiaev, the Old Testament describes a conflict between theocratic and monarchist ideas, and therefore the power of the king was the result of moral decline and the people’s opposition to living under a direct theocracy (Berdiaev 1926). The philosopher concluded that “monarchy (...) belongs entirely to this world, to the kingdom of Caesar, and its characteristics do not carry over to the Kingdom of God,” and therefore there was no defining connection between Orthodoxy

9. Patriarch Kirill’s position is shared by Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin: “Even monarchy is perceived in this document [“The Bases of the Social Conception”] with regret, as a departure from divine rule” (Chaplin 2013). See also Archpriest Georgy Mitrofanov: “Monarchy, as with state systems [or “government”] in general, is the result of the Fall of the first people.” (“Dolzhen li pravoslavnyi chelovek byt’ monarkhistom?” 2008). Arkady Maler takes a similar view: “Therefore when the people demanded that the last judge, Samuel, give them a king (...) then the Lord was angry with his people (...) and the very establishment of the monarchy was a punishment for Israel” (Maler 2012).

and monarchy (Berdiaev 1925: 31–32).¹⁰ The “Eurasianist” Nikolai Alekseev agreed with Berdiaev, affirming that monarchism was a pagan political concept, while true Christianity should avoid the heresy of “divine kingship” (Alekseev 1927).

This second way of thinking in the Orthodox theology of monarchy regards the idea of the tsar’s godlikeness as heretical and blasphemous idolatry. In recent decades, the “liberal” camp of Church intellectuals continued the tradition of Berdiaev. For instance, Hegumen Veniamin (Valery Novik) agreed that the monarchist idea had pagan roots and declared that autocracy frees people from the burden of freedom and responsibility, just as the Grand Inquisitor proposes in Dostoevsky’s novel *The Brothers Karamazov* (Veniamin [Valerii Novik] 1999: 274–75).

The same Bishops’ Council that adopted “Bases” in the year 2000 also raised the question of the divine nature of tsarist rule in connection with the canonization of Nicholas II and members of his family. The matter evoked lively debates in society and the decision taken by the Council was something of a compromise between the positions of the rightists and those of the opponents of canonization. The former insisted on the recognition of the canonization of the tsar’s family and their servants as martyrs, as the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (ROCOR) had done in 1981. As a result, the Council honored Nicholas II, the empress and their children as passion-sufferers.¹¹ The difference between “passion-sufferers” and “martyrs” lies in this: a martyr can be merely a person who has suffered for his faith, while a passion-sufferer accepted a martyr’s death in imitation of Christ. Furthermore, the Council specially emphasized that Nicholas II was canonized not as a tsar and not for his political activities nor ideologi-

10. Compare this with Sergei Bulgakov’s assertion: “Although a certain theurgy is also inherent in the nature of tsarist rule, this did not displace nor substitute itself, however, for the natural, ‘animal’ principle of power. Tsarist rule still did not become theocratic through its theurgic aspect. (...) Inspiration by good, as well as by evil, remained equally possible for tsarist governance” (Bulgakov 1994 [1917]: 340). See also: “There is no dogmatic connection between Orthodoxy and a specific political system” (Bulgakov 2006).

11. In a report to the Bishops’ Council the chair of the Synodal Commission on the Canonization of Saints, Metropolitan Yuvenaly (Poiarkov) analyzed in detail the arguments for and against the canonization of the imperial family and concluded that Emperor Nicholas II, Empress Alexandra, Tsarevich Alexey, and Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia underwent suffering and torment before their deaths. “It is in their understanding of this feat (...) that the Commission (...) finds it possible to honor in the Council these new martyrs and Russian believers with a place among the passion-sufferers” (Iuvenalii [Poiarkov], Doklad).

cal convictions, but as a private person. Finally, the Council specified that the canonization of Nicholas II did not signify the sanctification of monarchy in general (*Russkaia Tserkov' na rubezhe vekov* 2001: 14–18; Slater 2005; Bodin 2009). With all the historical equivocality of its decision the Council sought to supersede the medieval Orthodox tradition of the sacralization of rulers and simultaneously to obtain support from proponents of canonization on the right (and especially from ROCOR).

In 2009 the film *Tsar*, concerning the conflict between Tsar Ivan IV and Metropolitan Philip, came to the big screen, directed by Pavel Lungin. Oleg Yankovsky, who played the role of the metropolitan, received the blessing of Patriarch Alexy II, and the filming began with prayers to St. Philip. Theologian Alexander Dvorkin and Hieromonk Kosma (Afanasev) served as consultants for the film. The film elicited positive responses from representatives of the ROC and therefore can be regarded as expressing more or less the official position of the Moscow Patriarchate on the interrelation of the Church and tsardom in general. Two episodes in the film emphasize an extremely negative attitude toward Ivan the Terrible. In the first of these, the tsar is enticed to demonstrate his supposedly divine powers by calling down lightning, and lightning actually flashes forth, but the metropolitan declares that this power had not a divine but a diabolical source.¹² The second episode, by contrast, depicts the metropolitan already in prison, when his fetters fall away miraculously and he discovers he has the gift of foreknowledge and of healing others through the laying on of hands. (For further details, see Halperin 2013.) Rating the film very highly, Protodeacon Andrei Kuraev found it significant that the film, which became something of an illustration of the mutual relations between tsar, Church, and people, came out several months after the enthronement of Patriarch Kirill: “Is it by chance or not, that the release of this film happened in the first year of the new patriarchate? Will it not fall to Patriarch Kirill to inherit not only St. Philip’s throne but also his cross? Isn’t this film a kind of spiritual bequest from St. Philip to Patriarch Kirill?” (Kuraev 2009a).

The film *Tsar* relates to the Orthodox theology of monarchy in many ways, including as an illustration of the idea expressed in “Bases” that the tsar can lose divine sanction. The story of Saul relayed

12. Compare this with Sergei Averintsev’s evaluation of traditional autocracy in the context of the binary logic characteristic of Russian culture: “Autocratic rule is something residing either above the human world or below it, but in any case it seems not to be a part of this world” (Averintsev 1988: 220).

in “Bases” shows that his authority passed to David without any regard for the dynastic principle. Moreover, in contrast to Metropolitan Filaret’s interpretation, “Bases” pointedly emphasizes that David was the son of a simple man (III.1, paragraph 4) who nonetheless merited divine favor and was anointed to the kingship. In opposition to the views of radical-right intellectuals who want to canonize Ivan IV as “a Faithful Saint Tsar,”¹³ the film *Tsar* depicts Ivan the Terrible as a bloody tyrant. The film thereby reflects the position of the Church’s highest bishops, in whose view “pseudo-zealots for Orthodoxy and autocracy (...) canonize tyrants and adventurers without authorization. No one knows whether these people do this deliberately or unconsciously. If deliberately, then they are provocateurs and enemies of the Church, who are trying to compromise the Church” (Aleksii II [Ridiger] 2001).¹⁴

The film portrays Ivan the Terrible’s moral bankruptcy and political failure and thereby lays the groundwork for criticism of the dynastic principle on the grounds that a person unfit for the role may come to the throne. Referring to current political events in Russia in 2009, Archpriest Dimitry Smirnov, then deputy chair and director of the administrative staff of the Patriarchal Commission on Family Matters and the Protection of Motherhood and Childhood, asserted that strong presidential rule with the transfer of power to a designated “successor” was better than monarchy, which offers no guarantee against accidents of birth (*Russkii chas* 2009). Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeev) has spoken similarly: in his view monarchy is not the best form of government, for in history there have been various monarchs, some worthy and some not, and various presidents, but monarchy intrinsically does not preclude the transfer of power to an unworthy successor (Hilarion [Alfeev] 2013).

13. A recent initiative by supporters of the canonization of Ivan the Terrible was their demand to remove the painting by Ilia Repin, “Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan, November 16, 1581,” from the halls of the Tretyakov Gallery on the basis that it is “vile, slanderous and false both in its subject matter and as a pictorial representation” and “offend[s] the patriotic feelings of the Russian people” (“Eta kartina oskorbliaet patrioticheskie chuvstva russkikh liudei” 2013). The communication to Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky was signed by Vasily Boiko-Veliky, Igor Froianov and the (former) priest Alexy Averianov.
14. Compare this with Patriarch Kirill’s statement — “Tsar Ioann the Terrible (...) committed lawless deeds (...) a sea of blood was spilt in Rus” (Kirill [Gundiaev] 2010b: 96) — and that of Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeev) — “Ivan the Terrible (...) turned into a bloody tyrant who brought the country to socio-economic crisis” (Hilarion [Alfeev] 2010: 148). See also “K voprosu o kanonizatsii tsaria Ivana Groznogo i G. E. Rasputina,” 2008.

Patriarch Kirill, despite his idealization of pre-Petrine Rus, also refrains from unequivocal support for autocracy. He has followed the canonical Slavophile theory about the harmony between tsar, patriarch and people in Muscovite Rus. The system of “checks” on tsarist rule included the authority of the Church, Church councils, Assemblies of the Land, and the practice of petitioning, in other words, the unmediated communication of the people with the tsar. For this reason the ancient Russian autocracy, according to Patriarch Kirill, did not resemble Western absolutism but came quite close to the ideal of “symphony” (Kirill [Gundiaev] 2010a: 250–51; 2010d: 83; 2010b: 95–96). At the same time, the Church’s subordinate position during the Synodal period, when it became part of the state apparatus, has not been forgotten.¹⁵ Acknowledging the merits of autocracy in the past, Patriarch Kirill revises the formulation of “symphony” so that the concept of “monarchy” in it becomes the concept of “the state” in general. In particular, he has repeatedly affirmed that it is precisely today in post-Soviet Russia, and not in the pre-revolutionary period, that church-state relations have approached most closely to the ideal of “symphony,” that is, the ideal of mutual non-interference in matters of the respective exclusive “jurisdictions” of the state and the Church and of mutual support in the remaining spheres (Kirill [Gundiaev] 2010a: 231). The topic of autocracy is often present in the discourses of Church leaders “apophatically,” through its absence; for instance, speaking of the “calamities” that befell Russia after 1917, Patriarch Kirill mentioned “the grievous sin of apostasy committed by the entire people, (...) trampling on what is holy, (...) blasphemy and the mocking of the Church, of sacred relics, of faith” (Kirill [Gundiaev] 2010b: 57), but he did not refer to the fall of the monarchy and the execution of the imperial family.

“The People Must Be Ready for Monarchy”: Autocracy or Popular Rule?

One can conclude from reading the story of Saul in “Bases” that the document injects elements of popular rule into the theory of Orthodox monarchy. “Bases” depicts the rise of the state as “God granting the people the opportunity to arrange their own social life based upon

15. See, for example: “The Church did not have an independent stance on social and political questions and could not, because it was part of the state apparatus” (Kirill [Gundiaev] 2010c: 29). See also Aleksii II (Ridiger) 2005: 214, 439. And Metropolitan Hilarion reminds us that the very restoration of the patriarchate became possible only after the fall of the monarchy (Ilarion [Alfeev] 2011: 166).

the free expression of their will” (III.1, paragraph 4). Lungin’s film also shows that the ultimate downfall for Ivan the Terrible was not divine punishment but the nonviolent opposition of his own people. The scene of the deposition of Metropolitan Philip shows the role of the Church in condemning the tsar’s actions in the eyes of the people; the very last scene portrays the solitary tsar, waiting in vain for “his people” on a tsarist holiday.

The presence of this “democratic” element in Orthodox political theory is not at all self-evident, for it represents a departure from the canonical reading of tsarist rule as divinely established, with its source of legitimacy not in the will of the people but in the anointing of the tsar to the throne. The exposition of Saul’s history in “Bases” once again leaves room for ambiguous interpretation: the establishment of monarchy was an act of divine indulgence (*milost’*) toward the “free expression of the will” of the people, but in this reading what exactly is the source of this authority — divine indulgence or the will of the people — remains for the commentators to determine. All the same, the political language itself in “Bases” (“free expression of the will” and such like) shows how deeply the theory of popular sovereignty has penetrated into the Orthodox political tradition. Let us turn once more to the above-cited paragraph of “Bases” (III.7, paragraph 3): “One can by no means exclude the possibility of a spiritual renewal of society such that a religiously higher form of state structure becomes natural,” but now let us focus on the concept of the “renewal of society.” Then Metropolitan Kirill clarified this idea in a speech on March 27, 2007, in which he provided his own interpretation of the fall of the monarchy in 1917: “The moral state of the people no longer corresponded to the monarchist principle of state structure.” In his view, monarchy “requires almost 100-percent religiosity among the people and society; the universal belief that the tsar is the anointed sovereign is essential.” Raising the question of the possibility of monarchy amid the contemporary religious-moral state of Russian society, the future Patriarch Kirill remarked that if today monarchy were “by some miracle to be restored and if, God forbid, the tsar were to make some sort of mistake, they would throw tomatoes and rotten eggs at him just as they would at any feckless mayor” (Kirill [Gundiaev] 2007).

Commenting on Patriarch Kirill’s speech, Andrei Kuraev connects the “monarchist principle” with the principle of Christian asceticism, of “self-diminishment,” of “kenosis,” arguing that under a monarchy the subjects must be prepared for unquestioning obedience, for “monarchy is the renunciation of one’s own will and the entrusting of

it to Divine Providence (...). People have to relax their clenched hands from the rude gestures to which they became accustomed during the years of co-rule and democracy into open palms, ready to receive everything that will issue from the throne as Divine Providence” (Kuraev 2009b: 390). But today, too, in Russia there is a “particle” of monarchy — the Moscow Patriarchate. “If our monarchists cannot take an oath to refrain from criticism of the Patriarch, how will they be able to keep themselves from criticizing a monarch?” (Kuraev 2009b: 391–92). In sum, a good monarchist must be an Orthodox believer. Leaving aside the question of whether the converse is true or not,¹⁶ one can note that Andrei Kuraev also links monarchy with the formation of political agency in the (church-going) people. Many Church representatives hold the same view, that the people must be prepared for monarchy, and the degree of their integration into the life of the Church indicates this readiness. For example, Archpriest Maxim Kozlov, Archpriest Vladislav Sveshnikov, Archpriest Alexander Iliashenko, Archpriest Andrei Spiridonov, Archimandrite Platon Igumnov and others support this position. In these authors’ works one can read such statements as these: “Monarchy can emerge when broad layers of society are found ready to acknowledge themselves as subjects of a sovereign”; “The chief prerequisite for the establishment of monarchy is moral and spiritual maturity and society’s readiness to embrace it”; “One can raise the question of monarchy only if the people themselves truly feel that this is not forced upon them and is not the imposition of something alien”; “If it [society] wants to declare itself democratic, traditional monarchy is impossible”; “We simply have not grown up to this level [the establishment of a monarchy]; we still have not matured,” and so forth (“Monarkhiia” 2012). There can be different readings of this matter: either the people are still not ready for monarchy or, as Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin writes, the ideal of monarchy never “was lost”¹⁷ among the people — but, in essence, the matter at issue here is one and the same, namely the inclusion of elements of the

16. The answer among the radical right to this question is unequivocally affirmative. See this quotation from Metropolitan Vladimir Bogoiavlensky: “A priest who is not a monarchist is not worthy of standing before the Holy Altar” (Neviarovich 2004: 21). See also the statement by Viacheslav Klykov: “A truly Orthodox person is first and foremost a monarchist” (Klykov 1996).
17. At a meeting with deputies from the Duma faction “United Russia” (Edinaia Rossiia) in May 2010, Vsevolod Chaplin declared that “the people must mature for monarchy”; and on November 3 that same year at an exhibit and forum entitled “Orthodox Rus” he called for the rectification of the “failure of legitimacy” of the existing system, a failure that came about because of the 1917 revolution (Malashenko and Filatov 2012: 63).

theory of popular sovereignty at the very heart of Orthodox discourse on monarchy.

Contemporary “divine kingship,” too, contains the same “democratic” element of the concept of “the renewal of society” but with the stress on nationalism. The representation of Nicholas II as a “redeemer” indirectly constructs a political subject, for the term “redemption” implies some sort of subject, a certain “we,” who “are redeemed.” The construction of “we” becomes still more prominently evident in that version of “divine kingship” that requires universal repentance for the sin of regicide, since the question “Who are the ‘we’ who must repent?” becomes unavoidable. The idea of repentance by the whole people thereby becomes an instrument for the nationalization of political discourse. Note Vladimir Neviarovich’s statement: “Over each of us hangs the mortal sin of regicide. (...) First and foremost in this repentance is the recognition of oneself as one small part of the Russian people” (Neviarovich 2004: 262). Although the topic of collective repentance’s political significance has been insufficiently researched in the literature (see for example, Celermajer 2009), it is possible to assert with sufficient conviction that the rituals and rhetoric of national repentance possess great potential for the formation of national identity. Within Russian culture, Alexander Solzhenitsyn has made the most influential statement of the link between the nation and collective repentance in his 1973 article, “Repentance and Self-Limitation as Aspects of National Life” (Solzhenitsyn 1995 [1973]). As one might expect, “repentance and self-limitation” are precisely the concepts most applied to contemporary discourse about the restoration of monarchy: repentance for the sin of regicide and “monarchical kenosis,” mentioned above by Andrei Kuraev.

The Slavophile Ideology of Autocracy

One cannot say that the “democratic” element came into monarchist ideology only recently. On the contrary, the highest attainments of the Orthodox theology of secular authority were connected to the search for a political agent in the 19th and early 20th centuries, first and foremost in the Slavophile tradition, in which the autocracy was significant insofar as it was an indication of the high spiritual condition of the peo-

Compare with the words of Archpriest Gennady Belovolov: “Our people are by their nature monarchist” (“Svetskaia konstitutsionnaia monarkhiia” 2011).

ple (D. Kh. [Khomiakov] 1903 [1899]: 40).¹⁸ To the classic Slavophile thinkers, the notion of autocracy did not exclude, but rather assumed, an element of popular rule in line with the sacramental formula, “the people opine, the tsar decides.” A note by Archbishop of Perm Andronik [Nikolsky] in 1907 provides evidence of the penetration of Slavophile rhetoric into the Church milieu: “The autocracy, created in history by the people themselves and resting on the complete union of the Tsar with the people, the enduring expression of which was the Assemblies of the Land called by the Tsar as was the custom to take counsel with the realm, to hear the people’s will — namely this was our unwritten constitution, according to which there is no Tsar without a people, nor a people without a Tsar: from the land comes counsel and will, while from the Tsar comes decision and rule” (Andronik [Nikolskii] 2004: 359). Slavophile thought contrasted such a union of tsar and people with the bureaucratic rule of absolute monarchies, as well as with the despotic government of a single individual and with parliamentary democracy.

The theological ideas of classical Slavophilism exerted an exceptionally powerful influence on the intellectual climate of the late imperial and émigré social-philosophical and theological debates and continue to resound in contemporary discussions. The concept of the Assembly of the Land, the idea that the people’s will installed the Romanov dynasty on the throne through the Assembly of the Land of 1613, was central to Slavophile ideology (for example, see Koshel’ev 1862; Sharapov 1907). Later Slavophilism sought to develop more specific and juridically functional forms of “a people’s monarchy,” in which the people would possess not only “opinion” but also, to a certain degree, “decision.” At issue was the concept of the integration of autocracy and local popular self-government; the publicist Sergei Sharapov (1855–1911) elaborated the most complete theory of such a state structure.

The concept of rule-of-law autocracy (*pravovoe samoderzhavie*) — the idea that in contrast to despotism, Russian autocracy implied strict observance of the law — was one of the principal bases of the neo-Slavophiles’ theory. In the neo-Slavophiles’ view, although the will of an unlimited monarch was the source of legislative authority, this in no way meant that his subjects had to endure arbitrariness and lawlessness (Vasil’ev 1883; Vasil’ev 1890: 70). First, as the jurist-theoretician

18. Compare this with Konstantin Aksakov’s statement: “We have had tsars who were impostors but no anointing oil for the impostor” (quoted in *Slavianofil’stvo i zapadnichestvo* 1991: 82).

cians of tsarist Russia demonstrated, the laws approved by the monarch were binding on the tsar himself (of course, until such time as he desired to abrogate or change them). And second, the law-making process itself was also law-governed and followed a definite, sufficiently complex procedure rather than happening spontaneously upon the whim of the monarch (Korkunov 1892–93: 217–19).

A second and very important premise of neo-Slavophile analysis lay in the recognition of the people's legal capability, that is, the people's ability and opportunity to participate actively in political life and the adoption of decisions of state-level importance. Sharapov attempted to reconcile this premise with the concept of the tsar's unlimited rule, and developed the idea of two sources of authority — autocracy and self-rule. In his view, the authority of the autocrat had a divine origin and therefore was indivisible and non-transferable. In other words, it was laughable and blasphemous to think that the tsar could delegate part of his divine authority to a minister, and then the minister to a department head, and so on all the way down to the local constable. On this reading, only the tsar had complete authority, but how could this be when speaking of such a colossal and populous state as Russia? The tsar cannot interfere in every trifling case happening in the provinces, but neither can he delegate his authority to resolve the case “to the grassroots.” This means that there must be a second source of authority, too — the people, who can, through a system of elections, delegate the resolution of their local matters at the levels of the township (*volost'*), county (*uezd*) and upward all the way to the central ministries (Sharapov 1905; Sharapov 1902). In practice this means that the tsar's prerogative relates to the most important state affairs, such as war and peace, the army and navy, railroads and finances, as well as oversight, while primarily local matters (education, policing, road building and so on) come under the purview of the people's representatives.

In 1905 an extensive essay by Lev Tikhomirov appeared entitled *Monarchist Statehood*,¹⁹ in which Tikhomirov grounded the possibility and desirability of autocracy at the most elementary, psychological level. He demonstrated that monarchy is psychologically very near to a person, since it embodies the authority of moral principle — univer-

19. Written in very weighty language, the book did not become a bestseller in monarchist circles. Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov took upon himself the role of popularizer of Tikhomirov's ideas; in 1911 he published his own work, *The Monarchist Catechism*, based upon *Monarchist Statehood* (Vostorgov 1995).

sal for all people — over formal legal and bureaucratic norms.²⁰ One can imagine such a perspective in the context of natural law theory. In the spirit of Thomism Tikhomirov brought natural law together with divine law: if people were perfect, then natural law would completely coincide with divine law, but after the Fall, the necessity for positive law arose; and positive law can differ greatly from divine law. In such a case, the essence of monarchy lies in establishing the union of divine and natural law and of overcoming the dominance of positive law. Tikhomirov rejected the concept of “symphony” at the institutional level and criticized the Byzantine tradition of the Church’s subordination to state interests; he affirmed that the tsar and the Church should be united at another, more fundamental level, at the level of the human personality. At that level the Church’s role consists of the instilling of religious morals, while the tsar’s role is the expression of the people’s moral ideals through political decision-making (Tikhomirov 1905).

The definitive crystallization of the “people’s monarchy” concept takes place in Tikhomirov’s works, for in contrast to the Slavophiles’ theory, he — without entirely rejecting the divine nature of tsarist authority — interprets that authority in a circumscribed way and fuses it ultimately with the people’s will (which in the last analysis is not surprising for a former member of the People’s Will [*Narodnaia Vol’ia*]). The idea that the tsar expresses the people’s moral ideal returns to the Church its key role as the guarantor of morality and religious salvation, a role taken from it by the sacred power of the tsar as understood in medieval theology. It was precisely for this reason that such an interpretation attracted support in post-Soviet political theology, with the groundwork laid by intellectuals from the religious and philosophical renaissance of the early 20th century in both the Russian Empire and in emigration. For example, Nikolai Berdiaev wrote that under autocracy “the tsar and the people are linked to each other by one and the same faith, by one and the same submission to the Church and to God’s truth. Autocracy presupposes a wide popular social base” (Berdiaev 1925: 33–34). The rite of coronation and anointing of the tsar was subjected to distinctive interpretation in this period. Sergei Bulgakov, for example, noted that through the rite

20. See, for example: “A monarchical supreme authority more effectively secures individual rights. (...) This conclusion derives from the fact that monarchy (...) is namely formed solely by the ethical principle” (Vereshchagin, Makeev and Ponezhin 2003: 56). Tikhomirov’s ideas were taken up by Ivan Ilin. Cf., “True monarchy is realized only through the inner activity of the soul and spirit. It introduces into politics a principle of intimacy, devotion, warmth and heart-felt emotion” (Ilin 1979: 506).

“a special, sacred-erotic bond is established with the people” (Bulgakov 1994 [1917]: 340). Note also the statement by Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov: “Here [in the anointing] the Tsar, crowned by God, enters into a holy sacramental union with his people” (Vostorgov 2011: 31). The metaphor of the state as a family, again coming to the surface of the political discourse in “Bases” (III.1, paragraph 2), has particular significance for monarchist consciousness, in which the image of the tsar mingles with the image of the “husband,” and coronation to the throne with the sacrament of crowning the bride and groom (Ioann [Snychev] 2012 [1994]: 494).

In this intellectual tradition, dominant in Church discussions at the turn of the 20th century, an understanding of the supernatural, divine nature of tsarist rule merges with the concept of popular sovereignty. Contemporaries commented upon the artificiality of such a combination. Vladimir Soloviev, and subsequently Pavel Florensky and Sergei Bulgakov, criticized the ideas of the Slavophiles, and of Alexey Khomiakov in particular, for their excessive devotion to “democratism” (Florenskii 1996 [1913]; on this see also Paromov 2011). In 1917 Sergei Bulgakov decried the “temptation of democracy” in Orthodox thought, alluding specifically to Slavophilism and populism with their tendency to deify the people and their faith in the “Father-Tsar (*tsar-batiushka*)”²¹ and to mix the sacred and the profane (Bulgakov 2009 [1917]: 30). Bulgakov noted that the Orthodox Church was a church of the common people, a people’s church, and therefore for it the allure of democracy was especially strong in comparison with other Christian churches.

Despite this critique, the further “mainstream” development of Orthodox political thought was linked primarily to the Slavophile and populist tradition. The works of Ivan Ilin have exerted particular influence on the contemporary understanding of monarchy, including in Church circles; Ilin proposed a sort of synthesis of the neo-Slavophile “popular autocracy” and Tikhomirov’s “natural law” with emphasis on the latter. Especially indicative of Tikhomirov’s influence was the idea that the level of popular legal consciousness determines the form of state rule. (See, for example, Zernov 2007: 12.) It is specifically Ilin’s formulation of the notion that “the restoration of the monarchy (...) is unthinkable without a simultaneous spiritual rebirth” of the Russian people that resurfaces in books by Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev) and other monarchists of our day (see Ioann [Snychev] 2011: 102). Ivan

21. The term *batiushka* is a traditional term for a father or a priest. — Translator.

Solonevich's *People's Monarchy* (1973) is another source of inspiration for contemporary monarchists; to a significant degree it continues the Slavophile tradition of the nationalization of the theory of monarchy. In this theory, the monarch is necessary so that "the personal fate of individuals is knitted together into a single whole with the fate of the nation" (Solonevich 1991: 89).

Conclusion

In this article I have examined two main sources of theorizing about monarchy: the medieval concept of "divine kingship" and the modernizing Slavophile project of introducing elements of the theory of popular sovereignty into the understanding of monarchy. Although both traditions coexist in contemporary Russia, their proportion and the nature of their interaction have shifted toward the marginalization of "divine kingship." Having adopted "Bases," the leadership of the ROC made a decisive choice in favor of the Slavophile interpretation. First, the divine nature of governance in general and of the tsar's in particular was rejected. Second, monarchy was recognized as a less lofty form of government than "judgeship." Third, and this is key, the question of monarchy was transferred onto the social-ethical plane; monarchy was recognized to be morally more beneficial for the people and its restoration was considered possible provided that there was a "spiritual inspiration of society." The "people" were thereby recognized as a political agent, as the main beneficiary of monarchy and as its foundation.

Consequently, even while dreaming of pre-Petrine Rus and the "symphony" that allegedly existed in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, contemporary Orthodox monarchist intellectuals reconstruct not the concept of theological "divine kingship" that existed at that time, but rather the ideas characteristic of the final stage of the Russian monarchist tradition, which developed at the turn of the 20th century. The neo-Slavophiles and conservative monarchists of the late imperial period expended their intellectual efforts toward the rational grounding and justification of the already tottering and "morally obsolescent" monarchy; these efforts therefore were necessarily contradictory. The attempt to reconcile the historically dying tradition of "divine kingship" with the idea of popular self-rule was not successful then during the pre-revolutionary years, and cannot be logically well-grounded in our day. That is, monarchism cannot stop short of the stage of the Slavophile conceptual mixture, and its proponents are compelled to

take either a step “backward,” toward “divine kingship,” which means toward political marginalization, or “forward,” toward a nationalist interpretation of monarchy.

The socio-political characteristics of traditional Russian Orthodox monarchy can be described by the concept of “empire,” that is, as a “composite society,”²² a community of subjects of the tsar that was amorphous, heterogeneous, and exhibiting very weak — if they existed at all — internal bonds. Despite distinct attempts at “Russification” at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, “the nation” did not act in the capacity of a political end and self-sufficient entity, but rather served as a basis for loyalty to the autocracy (as in Sergei Uvarov’s theory of “Official Nationality”). In the present circumstances, a community of subjects of a virtual tsar imagines itself with radically different traits — as a homogeneous, close-knit “people,” drawn tightly together by “bonds” of Russian “national” belonging and Orthodox faith. Monarchy appears not as the cause but as the consequence of the existence of such a people. It is important to emphasize that the territorial bounds of the “Orthodox people” extend beyond the borders of the actual Russian Federation and are conceptualized by the notions of the “Russian World” (*Russkii mir*) and “Holy Rus,” thereby announcing the potentially irredentist dimension of the imagined Russian monarchy.

Monarchy in its “non-autocratic,” constitutional sense can also fit in quite well even in contemporary political debates tinged with nationalism as yet another instrument for the grafting together of the “nation” and as an important element in the ROC’s new political language. In this manner, debates over monarchy serve as a unique intellectual proving ground for the Church in which the applicability of different traditions of political theology is tested and the working out of a new approach is proceeding — an approach that would emphasize the ideological self-sufficiency of the Church, that would be theologically sound and at the same time practically applicable as a program of political action.

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22. The journal *Ab Imperio* promotes the conceptualization of empire in terms of the notion of “composite society,” and my use of the term here is influenced by its editors.

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MARIA KASPINA

Folk Judaism: Variations of Religious Practices among the Jews of Ukraine and Moldova (Research Findings, 2004–11)

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This article draws on analysis of interviews with Jews of Ukraine and Moldova who lived the first part of their lives following traditional Jewish ways, while the latter part occurred during the period of strong anti-religious pressure in the Soviet Union. As a result, several variations of what we can call “folk Judaism” emerged. One form consists of a coerced non-observance of the laws of Judaism and entails the elaboration of various ways to observe Jewish traditions in the absence of the ability to follow the letter of the law. The second option involves conscious rejection of ancestral religious traditions, partial observance as “camouflage,” and minimal interaction with modern Orthodox Judaism. The third option is creating one’s own individual rules for observing selected religious commandments. Several key mechanisms of the formation of new Jewish “folk” religious practices can be identified. They are the transformation of the existing halakhic regulations with the help of a) ritual deception; b) changes in the status of the ritual object; and c) application of the laws of ritual purity to an object known to be unclean.

Keywords: religion, folk religion, folk Judaism and Jewish customs, modern fieldwork.

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THE present article is based upon field interviews recorded during research trips between 2004 and 2011 to Podolia (the towns of Tulchyn, Balta and Mohyliv-Podilsky), Bukovina (Chernivtsi), and Bessarabia (Chişinău [Kishinev], Soroca, Bălţi [Beltsy], Briceni [Brichany], Khotyn and Novoselytsia). The researchers chose Podolia, Bessarabia and the towns of Chernivtsi as their research site because up to the present time part of the long-term resident Jewish population, bearers of an authentic ethnocultural and linguistic tradition, remains in these regions. During the Second World War the Jews of these areas found themselves under Romanian occupation (the so-called Transnistria Governorate, 1941–44) or were deported there. Although the Romanian occupation authorities annihilated the Jews in some towns and drove the population of the remaining towns into ghettos and concentration camps, a significant part of the Jewish population survived the occupation. Consequently, after the war, southwestern Vinnitsia Oblast and northwestern Odessa Oblast in Ukraine, Chernivtsi Oblast and also Moldavia proved to be among the few regions in which ethnographically distinct Jewish communities remained. Moreover, until 1940 the Jews of Bessarabia lived in territory that was part of Romania. By conversing with informants from this area who were born in the 1920s–30s, we can document unique memories of pre-Soviet Jewish traditional culture, in which the system of traditional Jewish education had not yet been destroyed, religious precepts and customs were observed, and synagogues and cheders functioned. Before the war started our interlocutors were from ten to fifteen years old, and they were able to experience the East European Jewish tradition that their contemporaries living on the territory of the Soviet Union were only able to hear about from their older relatives. Interviews with Jews who spent part of their lives amid traditional Jewish culture and part under active state hostility to any manifestations of religious traditions represent a unique source for the study of popular religion in everyday Jewish life.

A wide array of researchers has examined the contours of popular religion in general (see, for example, Durkheim 1964; Crummey 1993; Levin 1993; Primiano 1995; Panchenko 1999). The complexities of defining official, normative, standard religion and its popular distortions or transformations lie at the root of theoretical works devoted to this multifaceted phenomenon. In accord with many scholars, I consider the basic definition of popular religion to be the sum of religious practices accepted by a particular community and existing in dynamic interaction with official religious institutions.

Joshua Trachtenberg and Dov Noy were the first to advance the concept of “popular religion” seriously with respect to the study of Jewish traditional culture (Trachtenberg 1961; Noy 1986). They emphasized primarily the local variants of religious practices of Jews in different ethnic groups, isolating the specific characteristics of rituals and customs among the Jews of Morocco, medieval Germany, contemporary Israel and others. Moreover, the clash of Judaism’s religious regulations with folkloric forms of observance or even the non-observance of these norms also became the subject of much research devoted to Jewish customs (An-skii 1908; Kaspina 2010; Weissler 1987; Sperber 1999; Sperber 2008). It is well known that one of the fundamental principles of Jewish religious law is the presence of strict regulation of all spheres of human life, including the tiniest details of household activities and daily routine. Nevertheless, even at the time of the establishment and formation of Jewish religious law — *halakha* — the rabbis insisted that a person must not violate his ancestors’ customs, nor the received customs in a given place (Jerusalem Talmud, Pesachim 4:1; Babylonian Talmud, Soferim 14:18). This means that even for the founders of Jewish religious instruction it was evident that in real life the law often comes into conflict with popular custom and the traditions accepted in those localities where Jews are living at a given moment. In principle, Jewish law makes a distinction between civil and ritual law. While in the realm of civil law custom can nullify the law, in the realm of ritual law, as a rule, this does not happen: in this sphere custom cannot permit what is prohibited by law.

In the present article I examine several variants of “folk Judaism” that emerge from interviews and field observations in our chosen region. One of these is the coerced non-observance of Judaism’s rules and folk ways of handling its prohibitions. The second variant is the conscious rejection of ancestral religious traditions, the observance of them “for camouflage,” and minimal interaction with contemporary Orthodox Judaism. The third variant is the development of one’s own individual norms for the selective observance of certain religious regulations.

Coerced Non-Observance of Religious Traditions due to Persecution

The first type of justification for violating specific prescriptions of Judaism is linked to the difficult historical and political situation in which Jews found themselves after the Second World War.

Open observance of Judaism's commandments was subjected to intense pressure from the authorities, and in order somehow to uphold tradition without attracting excessive state attention to themselves, Jews were compelled to violate some particulars of religious laws.

Thus, for example, according to the law on the doorpost of every door opening into a Jewish home there must hang a *mezuzah* — a specific text from the Pentateuch, written on parchment and enclosed in a special little box. A professional scribe produces the *mezuzah* in ink on parchment, and it is quite expensive. In the difficult conditions of the Soviet period when it was impossible to find a genuine *mezuzah*, some Jews put just paper sheets with a printed text from a *siddur* (prayer book) into little boxes on the doorposts, which contradicted halakhic norms:

You see, this son didn't have a *meziza* [*sic*]; there was one Azek among us, very learned, very ... he was that sort of person. So he said, "I will give you two little pieces of paper from the *sider* [*sic*]; you put them there. It will be considered a *meziza* [*sic*]" (API, Interview with Pesa Shaevna Kolodenker in Tul'chyn, 2005).

The "learned" man, obviously a religious authority, found a compromise solution that went against Orthodox Judaism but kept the tradition, albeit in distorted form.

It was similar with the need to gather a *minyan* — ten adult Jews — in order to conduct collective prayer. In the Soviet period sometimes children, women and even non-Jews were counted among the ten. In one of our interviews we documented a unique example from the war years:

A *minyan* is ten people. But when my papa was ... we were in a camp, it wasn't possible to gather nine people — they would shoot then and there — one-two. As I recall, when it was necessary, when a *minyan* was necessary, then papa always went out and counted nine trees, and he was the tenth (ATsBI, Interview with Klara Moiseevna Kats in Chervivtsi, 2008).

In connection with the prohibition against burying people according to the Jewish rite, yet another compromise version of tradition appeared: a man would be buried in a suit, as was accepted by all the surrounding peoples, but under the suit they put on the special burial clothes —

takhrihim, in which one must bury the dead according to Jewish ritual. “They just washed the deceased. They dressed him, who wanted to — in a suit, but all the same, underneath were *takhrihim*” (ATsBI, Interview with Anna Iosifovna Shvartsbroit in Chernivtsi, 2005). One of the informants told us that if they dressed the deceased in just a suit, he would not find rest in that world; he would be “bitten and tormented” (Titova 2006: 38).

In cases when observance of mourning for seven days after the funeral was impossible and one had to go to work, people modified the custom: instead of sitting shoeless at home, they put earth from the grave in their socks:

[And did you sit in mourning?] Shivah. Seven days. Seven days they sit on the floor. I did, too. I sat and my wife did, although my wife is a Ukrainian, we too sat together. We sat for mama seven days. So there it was. (...) They need earth ... they'll take earth in their socks. [Earth in their socks? From where?] From the grave. This also somehow explains it, that it's as if you are going about so that each day you don't go there, it's as if you go alongside this ... alongside the deceased. Well, that's what I noticed, that's what I gathered (API, Interview with Mikhail Aronovich Koifman in Mohyliv-Podil's'kyi 2008).

The practice of putting earth into socks or boots (not necessarily from the grave) by those who could not spend the entire seven days of mourning at home — primarily because they had to go to work — was widespread. Many interviewees mention it. Evidently, its origin derives from one of the expressions of sorrow: the mourner spends the entire seven days of mourning shoeless. By placing earth in boots or socks, it is as if the mourner continues to remain barefoot, even at work.

In this particular case, however, the little bit of earth from the grave that the mourner carries symbolizes from his perspective his continuous presence beside the burial place. Generally speaking, Jewish tradition not only does not prescribe visiting the grave of the deceased on each day of mourning, but even insistently recommends not doing this. Nevertheless, this practice of ritual substitution acquired precisely that rationale in the consciousness of our informant.

In sum, one can note that in cases of involuntary distortion of existing rules the main mechanisms of developing “popular” religious practice amount to a change in an object's status (trees instead of people, a

printed page instead of a handwritten piece of parchment) and ritual deception (*takhririm* hidden under a suit and such like).

Conscious Rejection of Tradition: Social Pressure and Observance as “Camouflage”

The opposite situation concerning the modification of religious traditions occurred in assimilated Jewish families, which observed the precepts of Judaism only for show:

[Did you keep the traditions at home?] — Strictly ... no, I'll say it to you in Yiddish, *far die Menschen* (for the people), so that, so we wouldn't be judged, and so ... and I in my own, so to speak, home. (...) Understand ... inasmuch as my father wasn't religious, so that, for example, on Yom Kipur [*sic*], the Day of Atonement, he fasted, but he smoked ... And this ... is not permitted ... Well, for example, when his father died, then he went to synagogue and said for him ... this ... commemorative prayer.

(...) My parents, they changed ... the dinnerware; for every day there was a set of dishes with forget-me-nots, but for Passover, then they took the set with the little green stripes ... And then when my grandfather was still alive ... so that, well ... so as not to offend [him] ... well, it's not permitted to mix meat and milk products, so they told my grandfather that these were meat knives and these were dairy ones, but this was ... a kind of camouflage (ATsBI, Interview with Sofia Filippovna Vollerner in Chernivtsi, 2005).

This interview shows which elements of Jewish tradition were maintained, even when a large part had been lost: the Day of Atonement and the observance of customs commemorating the deceased. We repeatedly documented that people kept kosher dishes for elderly relatives, despite the fact that they were not keeping kosher in the home. This being said, remarkably even in Soviet times, religious communities endured in one form or another underground and, sometimes, especially in small towns, functioned quite openly. So in Chernivtsi, for example, the “whole town” knew that a Jewish boy had been born:

[And did you not circumcise your children?] No, and besides, that was such a paradoxical situation. I do not know how they found out. Basically, when my oldest son was born, I had not even managed yet to come home with my son, when a man had already arrived from the synagogue to circumcise him. And as it happened, Papa opened the door. Well, now, Papa

was an old communist. Since 1918. He says: What do you mean — he says — what circumcision? And the upshot was, he didn't allow it. And indeed, to tell you the truth, we didn't even think about it (ATsBI, Interview with Eleonora Borisovna Tsnaimer in Chernivtsi, 2010).

Jews' relationship to religion underwent very serious changes, and alongside the observance of several basic elements of Judaism, such as fasting on Yom Kippur, marking the anniversary of a relative's death (*yahrzeit*) and trying to obtain matzo for Passover (for more details see Lvov 2008: 71–73), the sharply negative concept of “fanaticism” became the defining characteristic of piety. (For more details on the usage of the term “fanaticism,” see Zelenina 2012: 63.)

The typical shift in Soviet Jews' religious consciousness appears in this small fragment from an interview:

We had one grandfather, from the *kohens* (descendants of the priests of the Temple at Jerusalem); he was buried in a shroud (*savan*), but the other grandfather said: “Dress me like a human being, in a suit” (ATsBI, interview with Khana Fischelevna Glutnik in Chişinău [Kishinev], 2010).

People were ashamed of elderly Orthodox Jews, yet justified them to some extent:

All the same, I was raised in a long-standing Jewish family with traditions like that. My grandfather was one of these very pious types; I remember they even came to us and they even prayed. He was very religious. My grandmother was illiterate, no, she was somehow more indifferent. He said there that she should pray, and she did it, but she wasn't *fanatically* religious like him, my grandmother, whereas my grandpa, yes, he went to synagogue, every week, on Saturday, well, he went, yes, yes (ATsBI, Interview with Musa Abramovna Kluzman [Sigal] in Chernivtsi, 2007).

Papa went to synagogue, to the one that was open; he didn't always go but only when he thought it was necessary. There was no *fanaticism*. He went for *yahrzeit*, for *Yizkor* [prayer in memory of the deceased — Translator], twice a year he read prayers when his parents died so that it would be well with them in the Garden of Eden (ATsBI, Interview with Ita Zigrfridovna Shteinberg [Vainzaft] in Chernivtsi, 2008).

I know that we were born in a religious family, I know everything about Jewish law, so far as that is concerned, but that I was a *fanatic* — no. I'm not a fanatic. I don't go to synagogue and I never went to syna-

gogue, only Yon Kiper [*sic*]. When it was the Day of Atonement, we gathered to hear the shofar, when they still blew on the shofar. But, so, no, I wasn't especially (...) my family was religious — all of us. But not such *fanatics* that we wore beards, that we were like that, that we went around in black coats (ATsBI, Interview with Dvora Khaimovna Gol'dgaimer in Chernivtsi, 2009).

Even outright violation of centuries-old traditions by parents is perceived as something of an act of valor:

Papa had [tries to recall its name] a *tales, toles* — a white cloak with black and the little boxes. This was called a *tales mit tviln* [*sic*; usually, *tallis* and *tefillin* (prayer shawl and phylacteries — Translator.)]. [And what does that mean?] Something spiritual. They prayed. Papa wasn't religious. He was a bit of a rogue. On Saturday riding and smoking weren't permitted. He got on his bicycle and defiantly rode around town with a cigarette (ATsBI, Interview with Faina Lipovna Vol'per in Chernivtsi, 2009).

Typically, people whose behavior was strange and provocative (they went to synagogue every week), who stood out from most people even outwardly, were called fanatics. And generally, even when our informants speak of the piety of their parents, in which they are now beginning to take pride, they nonetheless emphasize their moderation and lack of fanaticism:

My father was truly a religious person, but, as they say, to a degree, not a fanatic. He went to the front and took with him his *tolos* [*sic*] and *tyvln* [*sic*]. And his prayer book. So — that means something. He did not always go to synagogue in his later years, because it was difficult for him, but when he went, they always designated a place of honor for him there, and he always read prayers at home on Saturday, and we knew this. All the holidays were always observed strictly before; we children all felt this, and the grandchildren (ATsBI, Interview with Anna Petrovna Miller in Chernivtsi, 2009).

Conscious Rejection of Tradition: The Repudiation and Ridicule of Classical Judaism

Our informants often apply their censure of religious fanaticism to contemporary young Orthodox Jews whom they have encountered

in recent decades in various organizations. Traditional religious prohibitions seem to them strange and bizarre. For example, an elderly Jewish woman said of her neighbors — a family of young rabbis: “They have wild eccentricities: you can do this, you can’t do that ... They bought a frying pan for themselves, they don’t let you wash their cups” (ATsBI, Interview with Salla Borisovna Uzvalovaia in Chernivtsi, 2007). Bessarabian Jews call the custom of placing stones on graves instead of flowers, a custom accepted throughout the whole Jewish world, including Israel, “foolishness” (ATsBI, Interview with Chizar Iosifovich Roitburg in Chişinău [Kishinev], 2010). Reading a short collection of Jewish laws (the *Abridged Shul’khan Arukh*) sent to a synagogue in Khotyn, our informants openly laughed as they came across certain regulations:

Here’s something so absurd that nobody could follow it [reads from the book]: “It is prohibited for two Jews who know each other, even if they are not friends, to sit at the same table if one is eating meat and the other dairy.” They’re not permitted to sit at the same table ... [laughs]. “You cannot wipe away spit on the floor with your foot — spit — but you may step on it with your foot but not wipe it away” [all laugh] (ATsBI, Interview with Iakov Aronovich Postel’nik, Khaim Mednik, Srul’ Vaisman and others, Chernivtsi, 2006).

When a new religious authority appears in a community that went without a rabbi for many years, his behavior often provokes sharp resentment among those who preserved tradition in a form somewhat modified from that accepted in Orthodox Judaism. For example, one of our informants recounted the burial of one of her acquaintances according to the Jewish rite. They invited many non-Jews, coworkers of the deceased, to the funeral, as well as a rabbi recently arrived in the town:

They invited this man, the rabbi, to read the prayer and that’s it. (...) All the employees, everyone from her office, her manager, and everyone. And it was quite awkward: her face was covered, and everything. And I said: “Well, let them uncover her face, so they can see her.” They were with her, they worked with her, they respected her a lot, it was like that. And I said something. As soon as he heard me, he got so angry! I wanted to run away! I said: “Well, what? I can read that prayer you’re reading myself.” Well, they barely managed to hold him back, and no, he didn’t uncover her face. They so wanted to bring flowers, and everyone wanted

so much, well, to see her, but they didn't see her. Actually she had been ill recently, and then they covered her whole face — he didn't allow it; with us it is not permitted. Yes, he held to that. Well, perhaps that was not as it should be but it was according to the law. When there's already a synagogue, then according to the law (ATsBI, Interview with Tsila Moiseevna Koifman, Chernivtsi, 2009).

The ritual behavior before burial practiced in non-Jewish circles came into sharp conflict with religious law, in that according to the Jewish burial rite the face of the deceased must remain covered. In this interview fragment, we observe an inner conflict, one that is very significant to the interviewee. On the one hand, she considers herself an adequate authority on religious matters, bristles at the strict rabbi, and is ready to read the commemorative prayer in Hebrew herself; but, on the other hand, “with us it is not permitted,” and “according to the law” is not “as it should be,” that is, the way that intuitively seems right to her.

Attitudes toward Israel and Contemporary Jewish Traditions: Ours and Theirs

An especially strained situation of conflict between one's own, familiar tradition, and the alien but “correct” Jewish tradition arises upon our informants' encounters with Israeli religious practices. It is precisely here that for the first time ever many of our interviewees encounter in person those they consider religious fanatics: “When you go around in the religious quarters in Israel, you think, this is exactly how they lived 100 years ago” (ATsBI, Interview with Itsik Berkovich Kleiman, Chernivtsi, 2008). Moreover, the negative attitude toward any open manifestations of even their own Jewish religiosity also persists in this case:

[In Israel] all the time there were Jews there, Jews, but there were Jews there. Well they weren't shy about anything; they go around with side-locks. These are the kind of Jews who don't do anything; they only pray and pray and pray. But when Jews already started leaving here, then they began to build everything. And there was nothing there; it was just awful. Those Jews do nothing for entire days except pray. And they go about in such long skirts, and even a husband and wife aren't allowed to sleep together in one bed (ATsBI, Interview with Berta Adol'fovna Zhrebetskaia, Chernivtsi, 2007).

In sum, all the successes of Israeli life are ascribed to the efforts of Jews from the diaspora. In a similar manner, religious customs that

differ markedly in Israel from those familiar in Eastern Europe eliciting the same hostility. This occurs especially often with regard to burial rituals, which differ significantly and which our informants, sadly, encounter most frequently:

And there are no worms there, nothing. And no coffins. You see, they took him, I was crying so hard, they took him by the feet and shoulders and put him in this grave and put these stones on top. That was it. You see, that's how it is with them, but we have earth, that's why. Well, I know, they buried my grandma, I remember, papa was still alive, they buried my grandma in a coffin, and everyone — papa and mama, too. In a coffin. Here, I guess, we have such a custom. But there — no. There they don't need coffins (ATsBI, Interview with Klara Moiseevna Kats, Chernivtsi, 2008).

Israeli customs are perceived as “foreign” (“with them”) and unpleasant (“I was crying so hard”), but at the same time interviewees find logical justifications for them. Moreover, in descriptions of funerals, generally stereotypical markers of an “Other” sometimes slip through — for example, the well-known false representation that in another tradition they bury people not as one usually does, but in a sitting position: “In Israel they don't bury people as we do — there they bury them in a sitting position” (API, Interview with Lev Shaevich Kolodenker, Tul'chyn, 2005). Curiously, this is exactly how Slavic neighbors describe the traditional Jewish burials without coffins that they witnessed as bystanders in early childhood (For more details see Belova 2005: 184–204).

An ambivalent attitude toward Israel reveals itself especially vividly in representations of the Wailing Wall: on the one hand, it is the holiest Jewish site in the world; on the other, here diaspora Jews encounter unfamiliar rules of “Jewish” conduct. See particularly how one of the female interviewees, a native of Chernivtsi, relates her visit to Jerusalem:

The Wailing Wall is there, they go, people come there from all over the world. And you know, I was there five years ago. I went there and they put some little notes in little holes. Well, and they pray. And when you go there, there are security guards there — girls, boys, they can't go there with bare arms or bare legs or without a headscarf. So ... you have to dress properly. If you don't, then she gives [one to you]. And you go in, and you pray there. When you leave there, she herself ... I go up to her and return this item of clothing. And she said to me, You will never weep anymore in life.

And you know, that's true. I swear to you that it's true [weeps]. You will never weep anymore. Never. Because they go there, so you weep, you ask God, so that ... And I had had such misfortunes — my daughter died, she died. My husband, my husband died. My children — my two sons left; I remained alone. And, you see, these griefs — I went to this Wailing Wall and I wept for them. And you know, that very year God gave me a man. He is very decent and good and we live together very well (ATsBI, Interview with Riva Fridrikhovna Gimmel'brandt, Chernivtsi, 2006).

However, the majority of our informants profess a different folk etymology for the name of this object: the weeping wall; the wall that weeps:

This temple. There is the Wailing Wall, the Wailing Wall. So people go there, and light candles and pray. And some of our people go there, too. People bring photographs. And only one wall remains there. The Wailing Wall, and it drips from there, and drips and drips. They say that ... it's like a spring (ATsBI, Interview with Roza Ovshieva Shternberg, Chernivtsi, 2005; similarly, ATsBI, Interview with Anshl Gershevich Pevzner, Bălți [Bel'tsy], 2012; API, Interview with Lev Shaevich Kolodenker, Tul'chyn, 2005).

This notion arose from attempts to explain the foreign name, which entered the Russian language through Christian culture. In Orthodox Judaism this place is called simply the “Western Wall.” The etymology noted above is on the whole somewhat reminiscent of the Christian veneration of myrrh-streaming icons and other sacred objects that of themselves effuse oil or dew. In addition, among assimilated Jews one sometimes encounters quite unexpected explanations of the origin of this place of worship:

Yes, it weeps and many go there and also pray to it (...) Yes, yes, yes, the wall drips. It weeps and they go there and ask God that everything would be well. (...) Jesus Christ once went there or passed by apparently or Jesus Christ once lived there it seems. They pray a lot there. From every country, from all over the world they go there. There's a men's side — the men pray and everyone prays in Hebrew (...) I went there with my sister. And there my sister gave her daughter in marriage (API, Interview with Liza L'vovna Mil'chenko, Balta, 2006).

In sum, among Soviet Jews removed from religion, an ambivalent attitude toward Orthodox Judaism has taken shape. There was the antag-

onism toward “fanaticism” (“the kind of Jews who don’t do anything; they only pray and pray and pray”) and the repudiation of the provocative garb and behavior, sharply different from the usual and linked to fulfilling the commandments. Not only Israelis but local rabbis, too, are perceived as “foreign” and “strange.” But at the same time respect for the religion of their parents and for long-standing folk customs evokes heightened interest among our informants in different ways of observing Judaic customs and often led to the formation of a new, individual piety unthinkable in traditional society.

The Formation of Individual Piety

The most striking example of the appearance of a new version of Jewish observance is the justification of knowingly eating banned pork. Kosher pork — this is a profound oxymoron of Soviet Jewry. (For more detail on this, see Shternshis 2006.) But, as became clear in the course of our research, some have found fully “halakhic” ways to differentiate between the kosher and non-kosher in the home:

You weren’t allowed to eat pork, for example. But ... we lived ... in a shtetl, I told you, the shtetl Kapreshty. And there were these little wooden hawkers’ stands, little booths, and this was connected with this Kapreshty, this ... Prodanesht. And there were these special butchers there who butchered pigs. And they sold ham there; when I would go by these stalls, such an aroma. Well, we youngsters, we all wanted some. Mama let us buy some, but we had to eat it on the windowsill! And we couldn’t cut it with a knife, you know, if we bought it there ... Well, not all the time, but, you know, they sold it smoked, just as it is now; it’s delicious ... She [mama] allowed us to spread newspaper there or something on the windowsill, and then, you know, look, wash your hands, rinse out your mouth, so you don’t go to drink water. And my late mama, she kept the law, I told you, a towel was for meat, for ... You see if you needed to eat dairy, it meant she absolutely had to rinse her mouth, to begin to eat dairy. She did not mix one with the other (ATsBI, Interview with Tamara Izrailevna Mundriian, Bălți [Bel’tsy], 2011).

Just as Jews traditionally rinse their mouths after eating meat, before dairy products, and use specially separate dishes and the like, in this case, too, the mother of our informant introduced a similar rule for eating ham and even set apart a special place in the home — the windowsill, covered with newspaper.

We recorded yet another distinctive example of the existence of rules for eating pork in Chernivtsi:

[And do Jews eat pork?] Ooh, some do. You know, if I tell you honestly whether they do, it's still no big deal. You don't commit murder, you don't curse, you want to try it — well, what of it?! It's delicious, and I myself always take a little piece of pork. But you have to know — which piece! You can take a little piece of the front part. [The front part. And the back?] No. No. [But why can't you take from the back?] Because — that's where she gives birth! (ATsBI, Interview with Riva Fridrikhovna Gimmel'brandt, Chernivtsi, 2007).

On the one hand, such a justification has no basis in tradition — pork is a non-kosher product and may not be used in any way for food. On the other, it's clear that assimilated Jews, living apart from strict religious tradition, eat pork; and a need arises for them to work out a justification. That being said, it is interesting to note that the justification is completely traditional — the hindquarters of any carcass, even of a kosher animal, of a cow or sheep, are considered non-kosher, because there is one nerve [often translated as “tendon” — Translator] there that must be removed in a special way. One encounters the prohibition against using this tendon for food as far back as the Torah, when Jacob wrestles with the angel and the angel injures his hip: “Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle [“tendon” or “sinew” in some translations — Translator] that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle” (Genesis 32:32 [NRSV]; in the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 32:33). There is even a special Jewish profession, the *menaker* — a person who knows how to remove this nerve. But in Eastern European communities for economic reasons they preferred simply to sell the entire hindquarters of the carcass to non-Jews. Apparently this is how, in our informant's consciousness, this type of refraction of existing tradition was applied to another, non-existent tradition. Only the rationale changed — from it is forbidden to eat the hindquarters of a pig because it is ritually unclean to because births pass through that part.

The following example also demonstrates the kind of unusual transformation halakha sometimes undergoes in a folk context. According to an established Jewish religious custom, one must throw a small piece of dough into the fire when baking Sabbath bread to symbolize the setting aside of part of the bread — the challah — for the priests during the time of the temple in Jerusalem. (See the Mishnah,

tractate Challah.) But in popular practice the idea of an offering, inherent in this custom from the beginning, received a completely contradictory explanation:

[It happened that way, that they split off a piece of Sabbath bread and threw it into the oven?] Well, it happens, this was simply ... it wasn't the law. People just, a little piece ... they throw it. For the *domovoi* (house spirit). There's a house spirit in each apartment. And indeed everywhere. Not just among Jews, everywhere. It's called the master of the house. Well, we don't see him. And it happened that old people would say: "Well, this is for the *domovoi*! Well, it's for the *domovoi*." They throw it this little piece of khola [sic; challah]. [And how do you say "domovoi" in Yiddish?] Domovoi! (ATsBI, Interview with Zlata Usherovna Mednik, Khotyn, 2005).

This evidence apparently shows the transformation of an original halakhic regulation about setting aside the challah as a temple offering and its replacement in the consciousness of this bearer of tradition with a custom of ritually sharing with an unclean spirit living in the home. Evidently this act is not perceived as regulated by the Jewish religious authorities; it is just a custom. It is typical in such a case that the informant could not give the Yiddish name for this kind of unclean spirit and that she called it by the Russian word "*domovoi*," emphasizing that there is one in every home, not just among the Jews.

We have often documented conscious violations of Jewish customs that were justified by the necessity of building relationships with the surrounding non-Jewish population. Thus, for example, one of the informants explained to us why he buried his Russian wife in a Jewish cemetery:

Well, my wife was Russian, a Ukrainian. I put her in a Jewish cemetery. I didn't even think, I didn't think that that being the case, then we'll put her in a Ukrainian cemetery. And she has sisters. And before her death my wife says: "I won't be coming to visit you. There's no need for you to come to visit me — you must put me where you'll be." I say: "I won't be buried in a Russian cemetery." — "So that means, bury me there, too." Her sisters took offense, but what of it! I just made a distinction. Let's say, our parents — a covered grave according to Jewish [laws] has to have a slab, but she asked that there be flowers. I left it uncovered and I plant flowers all the time and look after them. And that's all, and it's not a big deal at all. They won't come to blows over it and won't fight. (ATsBI, Interview with Efim Khunovich Trakhtenberg, Khotyn, 2006).

Finding himself in an unusual situation, this man was compelled to independently develop religious practices that will straddle the line between standard observance (the covered grave) and innovation.

On the whole, funeral rites, as we have already noted several times, occasion glaring contrast between law and custom. So as not to offend non-Jewish neighbors and friends, people are prepared to violate normative rituals: to uncover the face of the deceased, to organize funeral repasts, to put flowers on a grave. Sometimes even the informants themselves admit that they ended up doing as everyone else did, because they had become accustomed to that:

With us flowers are not acceptable. Of course it was done. But I know that it isn't proper. It's proper to place small stones and that's all. (...). But you understand — well, you live in the kind of environment where people bring them. Not just Jews come to our funerals... Well, people bring flowers — what of it — would you throw them away? This would be offensive ... and to what end? This offends people, who ... And then we ourselves got used to it, that you should bring flowers. I myself bring them (ATsBI, Interview with Riva Efimovna Bogdanskaia, Chernivtsi, 2011).

Conclusion

One can conclude that Orthodox Judaism for the majority of our informants proved “foreign” in many respects, unfamiliar and extremely isolating from everyday life, even for those who encountered the functioning of traditional Jewish culture in natural conditions not distorted by Soviet atheistic propaganda. But at the same time a heightened interest in varied forms of observance of Jewish customs has endured among our informants, especially concerning everything connected with funerals and the commemoration of deceased relatives. This kind of interest in combination with hostility toward Orthodox Judaism or the impossibility of fulfilling its regulations often leads to the formation of a new, individual piety, inconceivable in traditional society. This article lays out several principal mechanisms of the development of Jewish “folk” religious practices: these include the transformation of existing halakhic prescriptions with the aid of ritual deception; alteration in the status of an object; and the application of traditional laws of ritual purity to an object known to be unclean.

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MARIA HRISTOVA

Imagining My Country: Pilgrimage as Postcolonial Reassessment of National Identity in Contemporary Russian Domestic Travel Writing

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This article examines Irina Bogatyreva's novella Off the Beaten Track (2008) through the prism of postcolonial theory, highlighting the specific ways in which an author can use religious elements, such as pilgrimage, to resist the totalizing ethnic or socioeconomic narratives imposed from the cultural and political centers of the Russian Federation. The incorporation of Orthodox, Soviet and pagan elements into the text allows Bogatyreva to question and critique the established worldview and to postulate an alternative identity model based on an opposition to the metropolis.

Keywords: Neo-paganism, postcolonialism, Orthodoxy, Irina Bogatyreva, travel writing, pilgrimage, religious revival, national identity, nature.

ON June 30, 2013, President Vladimir Putin signed a bill aiming to “protect the religious feelings of believers in the public sphere.” Following the controversial Pussy Riot case, this bill caused a heated debate in Western media (Elder 2013). While it is not unusual to take steps to protect the rights of believers, as attested by similar laws in the UK, Germany, Finland, and Israel, the timing of Russia’s “anti-blasphe-my” law’s ratification points to a convergence of political concerns about antiestablishment sentiments and cultural anxieties about the role of the Orthodox Church in Russian society.

The increased visibility of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the use of Orthodox values and of religious language in policymaking are the most visible Russian manifestations of the worldwide resurgence of all kinds of belief systems. As Dmitry Uzlaner argues in “The Pussy Riot Case and the Peculiarities of Russian Post-Secularism,” this seeming intrusion of the religious sphere into the secular one is characteristic of the post-secular period and, particularly in Russia, is defined by fragmented and competing ideologies: the “pro-authori-

ty” and the “oppositional” models (Uzlaner 2014: 29). While the Pussy Riot case highlighted the potential of the “pro-authority” model to employ the language and ideas of Orthodoxy as a tool to suppress political and religious dissent, the increased visibility of religion has also been a powerful force in presenting ways of negotiating the boundaries between the secular and the sacred that offer a more inclusive vision for Russian history and society. Within the wider circle of works that explore the potential of faith, whether linked to Orthodoxy or to some alternative system of beliefs, to bring together disparate social groups, religious traditions, and historical narratives, religious travel — essentially modern pilgrimage — has emerged as a significant social and literary phenomenon. In this article, I use the recurrence of the pilgrimage motif in contemporary Russian culture to discuss how the heightened visibility of religion in its many forms creates new venues and tools for cultural producers to examine, debunk, and reassess what it means to be Russian in the 21st century. As a starting point for my theoretical frame of reference I employ Alexander Etkind’s and Indira Karamcheti’s interpretations of postcolonial theories. As my case study, I use Irina Bogatyreva’s novella *Off the Beaten Track* (2008) to examine the specific ways in which an author can use the pilgrimage motif to resist the totalizing ethnic or socioeconomic narratives imposed from the cultural and political centers of the Russian Federation. The incorporation of Orthodox, Soviet and pagan elements into the text allows Bogatyreva to question and critique the established worldview and to postulate an alternative identity model based on an opposition to the metropolis. Furthermore, the melding together of unrelated religious traditions symbolically bridges the gap between the Slavic colonizers and indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation, on the one hand, and official imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet historical narratives, on the other.

Religious Revival

The contemporary quest for enlightenment in Russian society is for the most part framed by the Orthodox Christian tradition. This is attested by a number of recent books and films that explore religious and/or anticlerical motifs, such as Elena Kolyadina’s controversial 2010 Booker Award–winning novel *The Flower Cross* (*Tsvetochnyi krest*, 2010); as well as Andrey Zvyagintsev’s Oscar-nominated *Leviathan* (*Leviatan*, 2014); Aleksei Balabanov’s last film, *Me Too* (*Ia Tozhe Khochu*, 2012); and Aleksei Fedorchenko’s *Silent Souls* (*Ovsyanki*,

2010), to name only a few. The heightened awareness of and interest in religious ideas and practices falls within the larger worldwide religious revival of the past several decades, sometimes studied under the rubric of post-secularism, that has been extensively documented and debated since the events of September 11, 2001.¹ While scholarly interest has been disproportionately focused on Islam, this global trend, however, is not limited to one geographical region or religious tradition. What is more, the growing visibility and popularity of religious practices in Russia is not limited to the ROC; rather, the increasing influence of the ROC is part of a religious renaissance in which Orthodoxy plays a focal role, but which simultaneously engages with and incorporates a number of other contemporary discourses that are a fundamental part of the post-Soviet experience: a renewed appreciation for nature, a preoccupation with ecological issues and an increased interest in the pre-Slavic and premodern past. Alongside the “traditional” Russian religions of Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism, there are thus a significant number of Christian sects and local neo-pagan groups.²

Postcolonialism and Neo-Paganism³

How exactly does religion, in this case both Orthodoxy and Neo-Paganism, fit within a postcolonial and post-secularist discussion of present-day Russian culture? To answer this question, I use the post-colonialist works of Indira Karamcheti and Alexander Etkind as a framework to examine Bogatyreva’s travel account. Much has been

1. See, for example, Juergensmeyer (2003), Saha (2004), Delong-Bas (2004), and Hegghammer (2010).
2. For a detailed discussion of a particularly striking example of contemporary Russian Neo-Paganism, see Golovneva and Shmidt’s article, “Religious Conversion, Utopia and Sacred Space (Okunevo Village in Western Siberia)” (2015).
3. The term Neo-Paganism emerged in the late nineteenth century in Britain and was used to distinguish modern practices from ancient pagan ones (Hutton 1999: 28–29). It was made valent in the United States in the twentieth century as an umbrella term to designate emerging religious movements based on modern interpretations of pre-Christian polytheistic beliefs (Magliocco 2004: 4). The cultural parallels and exchanges between Western Europe and the Russian Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries allow for the adaptation of Western scholarship on Euro-American Neo-Paganism to the examination of similar phenomena in the Russian Federation at present. The main difference in the post-Soviet neo-pagan practices is that the pre-Christian traditions used as the basis of the neo-pagan mythology and rituals are those of the ancient Slavic, Finno-Ugric, Turkic-Mongol, or Scythian peoples who inhabited the Eurasian lands in the premodern period.

written on postcolonialism and postcolonial literature in English-language scholarship; a detailed discussion of the topic falls outside the scope of this article. Much less work, however, has been done to adapt postcolonial ideas to the Russian and Soviet contexts. One of the works that attempt such an adaptation is Alexander Etkind's *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (2011), in which the author argues that Imperial Russia was engaged simultaneously in a dual process of internal and external colonization.⁴ Extending Etkind's argument to the contemporary period and taking post-Soviet Russia as a type of empire, characterized by an ethnically Russocentric Slavic Orthodox ideal, leads to the conclusion that a similar dual process would be taking place at present. In other words, a Russian Slavic identity based on a male-centered Orthodox cultural tradition overshadows not only ethnic or cultural minorities within the territories of the Federation, but is also presented as a model for the majority. The outcome of the Pussy Riot case and the subsequent bill protecting the feelings of believers could be interpreted as an example of this dual process of colonization.⁵

To understand how Bogatyreva fits in a postcolonial discussion of contemporary Russian literature, I use Indira Karamcheti's article, "The Geographics of Marginality: Place and Textuality in Simone Schwarz-Bart and Anita Desai," as a model to approach women's travel writing within the context of a Westernized or Europeanized patriarchal culture. Karamcheti uses as her point of departure the idea that anti-imperialism is about "an imaginative recovery of a 'local place'" (Karamcheti 1994: 12).⁶ She examines the limited and marginalized experience of Third World women writers from former colonies. Karamcheti analyzes how these authors find ways to engage with and subvert the preexisting imagined geographies that "oppose European

4. Etkind uses Vasily Kliuchevsky's formula to describe the Russian Empire as "a country that colonizes itself. The space of this colonization widened along with the territory of the state" (Etkind 2011: 2). In other words, intellectuals and administrators in the capital imposed visions of an ethnonational Russian identity, and, later, during the Soviet Union, a supranational one, both on the non-Slavic subjects, and on the general ethnic Slavic population. As a result of this dual process of colonization, the line between travels abroad and travels within would naturally become somewhat blurred when dealing with Russian accounts of journeys through the countryside.
5. For a discussion of the largely post-factum definition of what it means to be an Orthodox believer, see Uzlaner (2014).
6. Karamcheti uses Edward Said's idea that "imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control. (...) Because of the presence of the colonizing outsider, the land is recoverable at first only through imagination" (Said 1993: 77).

centrality to Third World marginality, and a male center to a female periphery” (Karamcheti 1994: 144). The writers she examines shift the balance of power through a new hierarchy of geography: they establish the center of meaning in what previously would have been a forgotten or overlooked place on the imperial map.

Karamcheti’s analysis of geography’s role both in “reclaiming” a local place and in affirming an identity opposed to an imperial worldview can be adapted to help interpret Bogatyreva’s travel account. *Off the Beaten Track* also succeeds in challenging the established imagined geography of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. The traveler or present-day pilgrim in the narrative posits a new and unorthodox center of meaning outside the urban, intellectual, and Westernized capital. The main difference between Bogatyreva’s story and the texts analyzed by Karamcheti is that the Soviet and post-Soviet experiences differ from Western ones, especially in terms of gender relations: in 1930 Stalin declared the “woman question” resolved, notwithstanding the realities on the ground (Rappaport 1999: 314). Officially, women no longer identified with domestic spaces and chores and their traditional roles were taken over by the state in the form of cafeterias, kindergartens, and laundry centers. This partially explains why, while the female protagonists in Karamcheti’s case studies remain stationary, never leaving the domestic space, Bogatyreva’s narrator, on the contrary, travels out and away from the male-dominated center to a periphery where she can reclaim a different type of space — nature — and come into her own.

The process of reimagining the periphery is, in fact, a physical rediscovery of unexplored, “wild” places unknown to the inhabitants of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Travel grants freedom from the urban status quo and allows for self-discovery and enlightenment in a manner unacceptable to the rationalistic dominant culture — through a neo-pagan reshaping of Orthodox tropes. In this way, the intersection of geography and religion becomes the conduit for the irrational or fantastic and a tool in questioning the established worldview. However, this act of leaving the center is paradoxically problematic. The shift of focus away from the capital draws attention to the “local places” and grants freedom of expression to the female narrator; however, it does so from a one-sided perspective, which leaves no room for local voices. Religious travel symbolically brings back what could be considered the “colonies” (Central Asia, the Far North, and the Far East) into the fold of the dominant Russo-centric imagination.

“Rediscovering” Russia through Travel

Irina Bogatyreva is a native of Kazan and a laureate of the Debut Prize for young authors for *Off the Beaten Track*. Since receiving the award, she has pursued a writing career, publishing several more works, including a historical-magical trilogy about the Altai Scythians, *Kadyn* (2015). Bogatyreva’s status as a promising young writer has been asserted by her participation in the anthology *The Red Arrow* (*Krasnaia strela* 2013), commissioned by *Snob* magazine and comprising works by such eminent writers as Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, Tatyana Tolstaya, Alexander Genis, Zahar Prilepin, and Olga Slavnikova.

Off the Beaten Track is Bogatyreva’s first work that explores the theme of a Russian pre-Slavic and pre-Christian past. It is a highly fictionalized autobiographical retelling of the author’s own adventures while hitchhiking to the Altai Mountains. The novella comprises several separate, but related, stories revolving around the protagonist and narrator, nicknamed Tisch (*Melkaya*), who lives in a communal apartment on Yakimanka Boulevard in Moscow, and her adventures hitchhiking with some of the other inhabitants of the commune. The main goal and reward in embarking on a hitchhiking pilgrimage to faraway sacred sites is to leave the habitual life behind and to acquire a new, more enlightened perspective on human existence. This is the premise for the central episode in the novella, which details Tisch’s trip to the Altai Mountains in search of the Enchanted Lake, where travelers are granted a moment of spiritual clarity. What is unusual in Bogatyreva’s narrative is the unique blend of realistic accounts of the contemporary Russian countryside, as well as the practical matters of hitchhiking, combined with magical elements, such as visions of imps and shamans. In fact, the writer successfully brings together the seemingly contradictory traditions of socialist imagery, Christian symbolism, and Russian and indigenous folklore.

The blending of the realistic and the fantastical in the travelogue serves to undermine “commonsense” understandings of life. The falsity of what mainstream society takes for granted in the city is revealed on the road. According to the narrator, “all the values that seemed self-evident in cities, after just two months on the road ceased to be meaningful (...) I could see how they could all be arranged like links in a chain, explaining one thing by another. (...) Where was the ultimate goal?” (Bogatyreva 2008: 212). In other words, the logical, causal, and chronological understanding of life, accepted as a given since the inception of the Enlightenment, is directly dependent on urban civili-

zation. In fact, empire itself can be seen as a project of the Enlightenment with its understanding of the world based on clearly defined and hierarchized categories both in a socioeconomic and an ontological sense. Thus, determining that an Enlightenment-like rationalistic worldview is inadequate to fulfill contemporary spiritual needs serves to undermine the very concept of empire. For example, Tisch sees an imp on the night when an attractive young woman comes to live in the commune, possibly as an expression of jealousy. She also experiences a hallucination-like vision of spirits and shamans at the Enchanted Lake. Through such episodes, the narrator carefully establishes herself against the tradition of the intellectual cosmopolitan traveler personified by Nikolai Karamzin or its reinterpretation by 19th-century intellectuals such as Fyodor Dostoevsky (on which see Arndt 2007). Tisch does not see the problem of contemporary existence in a West-East dichotomy per se, but in an overall loss of spirituality. The pagan elements and fantastical experiences in her story highlight the inadequacy of the existing worldview and the need to find a non-materialist and possibly irrational dimension to the contemporary human condition.

Religion offers the necessary frame for pursuing such an understanding of the world that goes beyond cause and effect. While it is easy to use established religious traditions to promote a monoethnic or monocultural worldview, the major monotheistic religions have syncretic origins, and Russian Orthodoxy long coexisted with elements of non-Christian folk belief in what has sometimes been described as “dual-faith,” or *dvoeverie*. Furthermore, Orthodoxy has a long and complicated history in Eastern Slavdom, beginning with the Kievan period, then spanning the history of the Russian Empire, ultimately surviving the Soviet Union’s anti-religious campaigns and retaining social significance in the present moment. The most important Christian holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, as well as a number of other holidays, are based on, and overlaid over, older, pagan, traditions. Incorporating some of the pagan elements into the Christian festivities was an easy way to adapt Church teachings to the local culture. Thus, while both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches are concerned with dogma and at present allow for very little freedom of interpretation, the Christian tradition is fundamentally eclectic. As a result, at present, it is relatively easy to find a historical and cultural precedent to serve as a model when seeking a scripted or recognizable narrative for spiritual enlightenment, while avoiding institutional structures and embracing heterodoxy. This explains the ease with which such authors as Bogatyreva are able to meld together Christian

and neo-pagan elements in order to co-opt Orthodoxy in a way that is meaningful to them.

In *Off the Beaten Track*, the neo-pagan and Christian aspects of life exist side by side. The narrator compares the landlord of the communal apartment, a hippie with dreadlocks who spends his time smoking marijuana, to a modern-day Jesus Christ because of his thin and pitiable appearance (Bogatyreva 2008: 81). Furthermore, the idea of universal love, one of the essential teachings of the New Testament, comes from Gran, the experienced hitchhiker who accompanies the protagonist on a trip to the Altai Mountains and who is another hippie and bohemian. Instead of the traditional for pilgrimage narratives quest to a holy Christian site, Tisch and her friends seek an Enchanted Lake, a place of great shamanistic power where forest spirits dwell. These examples show how Christian ideas and neo-pagan imagery are combined and reshaped in Tisch's search for a spiritual worldview.

The novella's central image of the red star embodies this process of melding different and disparate traditions into one. It appears on a night journey where Tisch and her friend are traversing Central Asian steppes of wormwood in the red car of a slightly drunken driver. In the darkness inside the car Tisch is left with the impression that the star is hanging in the sky behind them. The combined references to wormwood and the red star immediately bring to mind the Book of Revelation: "a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and (...) the name of the star is Wormwood" (Revelation 8:10–11). This Bible passage is often understood as foretelling a great cataclysm. In light of Russia's recent past, the quote could be interpreted as a reminder of all that has been lost in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet world. The red star, after all, is the essential symbol of communism and its bid for a utopian society, as in Alexander Bogdanov's science fiction novel *Red Star* (*Krasnaia zvezda*, 1908), or the red stars on the walls of the Kremlin in Moscow. The image of the star also conveys the sense of impending doom, both for the present moment, as the driver is drunk (this may be a metaphor for the state of Russia's leadership as a whole), and also for the future in general, as everything around and in front of the travelers is dark.

The fields of wormwood are also part of a long tradition in literature, both classical and Soviet. The plant, which grows abundantly in the Russian steppes and can serve as a metonym for the countryside, has a strong smell, particularly in the summer months, and is forever associated with life at the dachas or in the villages. It is a recurrent symbol in village prose, where the smell of wormwood is associated

with the home.⁷ Unsurprisingly, it is also present in folklore as a potent herb for its cleansing and protective qualities. (See for example *Polyn' protiv 100 boleznei*: 2006.) Thus, the image of the hitchhikers traversing the steppe at night brings together three layers of cultural allusions: biblical images, folklore traditions, and Soviet symbology. This process of overlaying different strata of signification succeeds in revealing new ways of interpreting preexisting symbols such as the red star. In this way, the journey presents to the reader a syncretic view of the world where seemingly incompatible cultural and historical narratives can merge into a new whole.

This key moment in the novella not only reconciles disparate cultural traditions and generates new possibilities of interpretation of existing symbols, but also highlights the larger problems at stake for the writers of Bogatyreva's generation. The very possibility of alluding to such a wide range of disparate cultural narratives speaks to historical discontinuity. As the writer shows, her generation lives at "the junction of two eras" (Bogatyreva 2008: 183), in a liminal time-space, defined by an ideological vacuum where the symbols of the previous socio-political systems have lost their significance and need to be reinterpreted in order to become once more relevant to the present moment. Bogatyreva's generation matured during a transitional period, when the past had to be reassessed and in some cases rewritten. Official Soviet historical narratives have been shown to be unreliable, with new and controversial versions of such focal events as the Great Patriotic War undermining the traditional Soviet approach. At the same time, personal history is often no longer available, with censorship, the purges, and the war having irrevocably obliterated both family members and family archives. To take an example from *Off the Beaten Track*, the protagonist cannot trace her family tree beyond her father's reminiscences: "one of his grandfathers was killed in Stalin's purges and everyone carefully forgot him. Another was 'expropriated' as a rich kulak" (Bogatyreva 2008: 184). The narrator's experience reflects the way social classifications and categorizations were already destabilized during the Soviet period, with Stalin himself being delegitimized after his death. In a similar manner, in the post-Soviet decades victims of political repressions have been "rehabilitated" and commemorated, and many of those despised as "kulaks" and enemies of the people during

7. In classical Russian literature the word "wormwood" (*polyn'*) is linked to the countryside in such famous works as Leo Tolstoy's "Childhood" ("Detstvo," 1852). During the Soviet period, wormwood is a recurring element in the Village Prose movement of the 1970s and 1980s in such works as Vladimir Soloukhin's *Grass (Trava)*, 1972).

the Soviet period have been recast at the end of the 20th century as victims of the regime.

Old social categories, thus, are seen as unreliable. The new ones, which arise in a market-oriented society based on financial success or workplace hierarchy, however, are insufficient to capture the wide range of post-Soviet identities, especially among the younger generations. These varieties of modern life are depicted in *Off the Beaten Track* through the multitude of episodic characters who, alongside Tisch, search for meaning in their lives. These include: a skinhead singer, Julia; Roma Jha, the grungy landlord who spends his life in a marijuana haze; Tolja, a poet and artist who bemoans the lack of direction and ideas in the younger generation; and Lenka, who has come from the provinces in search of a better life in Moscow. However, it is impossible for the young people in Bogatyreva's story to establish an identity within the confines of socially acceptable frameworks. The Yakimanka inhabitants have no great visions for their lives, no aims, and no aspirations to change the world for the better. They are completely disengaged from society and are often forced to undertake underpaid part-time work, such as distributing flyers or delivering documents, in order to get by. As one of the characters laments, theirs is a "generation of airheads (...) [that] don't give a toss about anything. You don't want anything, you aren't going to change anything. (...) What are you? A courier! We live in a country of managers and couriers" (Bogatyreva 2008: 175). As a result, the characters either remain in the communal apartment, going through the motions of a meaningless existence, or, alternatively, they choose to move out and embrace mainstream aspirations and chase jobs, money, and social stability.

Those that stay at the Yakimanka communal apartment are anything but part of the emerging business-savvy segment of society. They are, or feel they are, isolated and alienated from everyone else. For example, when the communal apartment owner and two others, including Tisch, are hired to play music at a soirée for rich businessmen, they choose to remain detached observers of the evening's seedy proceedings. On the way back to the apartment they have difficulty finding transportation despite the fact that they are walking along one of Moscow's busiest roads. Just as the cars speed by leaving the three young people to trudge through the rain on the side of the road, the mainstream of society ignores the Yakimanka inhabitants and leaves them to struggle through their bohemian living arrangements on the margins of urban life. Their inability or unwillingness to integrate into the mainstream prompts such individuals to distance themselves

from society and seek meaning outside of the established social hierarchy. As the story gradually reveals, it is through travel and hitchhiking that it becomes possible for them to leave the urban status quo behind and to establish a new sense of identity, one that is based on the idea of spiritual enlightenment and a different type of community — one of fellow travelers.

The hitchhikers' awareness of an imagined community of likeminded others creates a sense of belonging. Tisch articulates this idea by quoting her friend and mentor, Gran: "We and they are traveling the same road. Do you see now why we have to love everybody?" (Bogatyeva 2008: 212). In this phrase, the "they" encompasses "everybody," even those people who do not hitchhike. Furthermore, the sense of belonging is heightened by use of the plural "we" adopted by the narrator at the beginning and at the end of the story. The pronoun encompasses all hitchhikers into the same community even though the actual act of hitchhiking is normally a solitary endeavor. This counterfactual use of the plural expresses the belief held among hitchhikers that every time they embark on a journey they actively participate in a communal effort, which does not depend on the other participants' ethnicity, social status, or national identity.

The concept of a supranational community is historically linked to the pilgrimage tradition. In the Middle Ages, pilgrims journeyed to sacred sites within what they saw as a greater Christian community, which superseded any local differences in language or customs. The sense of belonging to a larger Slavic culture is encapsulated by Riccardo Picchio's concept of *slavia orthodoxa* or Orthodox Slavdom that comprises the Slavs in the Balkans and in Eastern Europe from the tenth to the fourteenth century (Picchio 1958).⁸ At the same time, feeling united to other individuals through faith in a common project is at the heart of the internationalist aspect of communist ideology. Citizens of Soviet and Warsaw Pact republics, as well as other socialist states, could in theory rely on a shared sociopolitical framework, which was meant to transcend national, ethnic and religious differences.

At the same time, religious travel is also traditionally connected to an anti-establishment worldview. To take an example from Russian history, one of the sects that renounced Patriarch Nikon's 17th-centu-

8. Riccardo Picchio proposes the term *slavia orthodoxa* to refer to an Eastern European cultural revival shaped by South Slavic texts and scholars (the "Second South Slavic Influence"). According to him, what took place in the late 14th and early 15th centuries is the transference of a certain set of spiritual values from Byzantium to Russia within a supranational religious community — the *slavia orthodoxa*.

ry liturgical reforms, the Runners (*beguny*), preached that salvation was to be found in eternal wandering. Since the Runners believed that they lived in the age of the Antichrist, society for them was innately sinful; thus, travel was a way to isolate themselves from the world and to disengage from the state (Brockhaus and Efron 1890–1907: 725). In a similar manner, the hitchhikers in the novella are not only able to perceive themselves as part of a greater community, but to also disengage with “accepted” and regulated modes of travel and behavior. Tisch and her friends refuse to be part of the materialistic cultural hegemony shaped and perpetuated by the desire to succeed in the post-Soviet free market economy. In this way, Bogatyreva frames hitchhiking in terms similar to Dostoevsky’s interpretation of wandering as the ultimate expression of Russia’s national essence and as a counterpart to the alienated Westernized elites (Arndt 2010). For the contemporary hitchhiker, however, the ethnic core of the nation might not be necessarily found in Orthodoxy, but rather in a heterodox appropriation of it, allowing for the incorporation of non-Slavic or non-Christian elements.

Religious travel or pilgrimage and wandering are more often than not connected to a sacralized view of nature. In such a binary opposition, city life emerges as the cradle of evil or, at least, of an unhealthy and shortsighted way of life. The narrator underlines this opposition by stating:

Towns were points along our way, places we were aiming to reach. Yet they were not the reason we were on the move, and neither was being on the move an end in itself. The goal lay somewhere beyond all that. (...) Suddenly everything that weighed me down fell away and the meaning I was searching for was revealed. It was only a moment, these epiphanies of mine. They arose from the contrast between the life of the city and my own, and it was impossible to hold on to them (Bogatyreva 2008: 218).

In this quote, traveling unequivocally goes beyond the physical process of displacement from one location to another. According to Tisch, spiritual enlightenment has to do more with leaving behind the known and mundane realities of life, and not so much with reaching a set goal. As she states, cities are through-points, not endpoints. She insists that there is a greater goal, a higher truth, but that it is not connected to any one place or person. This is reminiscent of the Runners and their incessant travel from one holy place to another. And like the pilgrims and wanderers who rely on alms, the hitchhikers in Bogatyre-

va's novella depend on the help of others both for transportation and accommodation.

In line with a long tradition of infusing nature with sacral meaning, Tisch outlines her understanding of nature as a sacred place where it is possible to achieve enlightenment after reaching her goal in the middle of the Altai Mountains, a mysterious and mystical place, associated with the pre-Slavic heritage of the Ural region and Siberia. She states: "from up here in the mountains with the frosty breath of glaciers I have a larger and broader view of the world than you get down there in the towns and the valley" (Bogatyreva 2008: 158). The tradition of imbuing nature with a divine meaning dates back to the Romantic period and even earlier to the religious worldview of the 16th and 17th centuries, and earlier still, to the pagan rituals of the ancient Slavs. This description falls in surprisingly easily with what Christopher Ely outlines in his book *This Meager Nature* on 19th-century Russian representation of nature: "provincial Russia was never successfully designated a *scenic* space for tourism because the Russian landscape came to acquire a special significance resistant to scenic interpretations" (Ely 2002: 5). Ely's study of the emergence of the unique Russian school of landscape painting and its connection to the establishment of national identity seems to be just as relevant to the contemporary nation-building project. His "special significance" echoes what George Nivat stipulates to be at the center of Russian identity: "the cult of the Russian space: precisely space, rather than landscape. (...) Painting was, of course, called to crystallize this feeling of space, of a void not yet shaped, of a promising incompleteness, of a layer of spirituality under the desolate surface, this paradox of 'rich poverty' so surprisingly omnipresent in Gogol and among his Slavophile friends" (Nivat 1987: 60). Ely's and Nivat's ideas overlap and point to an invisible, but implied quality of the Russian landscape — its spiritual or non-material merit. G. P. Fedotov in his book *The Russian Religious Mind* (1946) describes this as the perception of the Russian "consciousness of belonging to nature, of being deeply rooted in it" as well as "the religious appreciation of nature" (Fedotov 1946: 371). The modern perception of "Russianness" is intricately connected to this perceived link between nature, religion, and ethnic essence, whether as a tool in or an outcome of the nation-building project.

However, this very perpetuation of what are entrenched tropes of Russian identity, albeit through the lens of neo-pagan ideas and imagery, remains deeply problematic. While going away from urban centers and seeking enlightenment in nature seems to bring "authentic"

Russian experience to the forefront, in a way that undermines what are seen to be the values of the center — a rationalistic approach to life and a single-minded pursuit of material success at the price of moral integrity — the very depiction of the countryside or periphery still falls to a large extent within the accepted framework or the “imagined geography” of the center. The idea of travel as a pilgrimage to nature might seem positive, as it leads to introspection and to a deeper understanding of the meaning of life; however, conceptualizing the countryside as a locus of the divine or transcendental reiterates established clichés and highlights the juxtaposition between the spiritually fulfilling experiences on the road and the erroneous logic of urban existence. This serves to further strengthen the perceived cultural and spiritual binary opposition between metropole and periphery. As the economic imbalance between the two is real and rapidly growing, this substantiates the idea of two separate spheres of life, in a cultural, moral, political, and economic sense, that coexist alongside each other, but do not overlap. Bogatyreva’s travel account can be seen as bringing forth a local or counter-culture way of life and system of beliefs. It also has the potential to subvert, to an extent, a monolithic understanding of “Russianness.” Nevertheless, it still affirms vast spaces, poor but hospitable inhabitants, and, most importantly, an essential capacity for spirituality as inherently Russian. This can be used to justify the lack of attention to the periphery’s very real economic and social problems, reifying an idealized vision of the countryside as “authentically Russian” as a kind of compensation for its interminable poverty.

Conclusion

Politically and socially, renewed interest in religion has resulted in a number of instances of the use of religious values and language in the affirmation of certain interests of the establishment, as attested by a number of laws passed in Russia in the past several years. Furthermore, the overlap between the ROC’s economic and political interests and those of the Russian government calls for a reassessment of the transparency and rationale of contemporary Russian policymaking. As Uzlaner points out, the Pussy Riot case became “an arena for the battle between the proponents of different visions of post-secularism” (Uzlaner 2014: 54). And while the female performers lost the trial, it is important to recognize that the battle itself is ongoing. In the cultural sphere, in particular, the heightened visibility of religion has made available to cultural producers a new and nuanced range of re-

sponses to some of the major problems of the contemporary period: social fragmentation and disenfranchisement, poverty and unemployment, environmental and economic concerns. For authors such as Bogatyreva, in fact, resorting to religious themes and symbols, including elements of pilgrimage and Neo-Paganism, allows them to engage other cultural trends. Travel allows for questioning of the accepted worldview and the established social hierarchy. Furthermore, the Christian subtext of *Off the Beaten Track* is not necessarily a means of affirming an institutional Orthodox identity, but opens a way to discuss the lack of spiritual, ethical and humanistic values in urban-centered life in contemporary Russia. The narrator's worldview brings together and layers Christian, pagan, and Soviet imagery, as a way to bypass institutional doctrine and to experience a divine and depoliticized moment surrounded by nature. This connects contemporary Russian identity to the tradition of sacralization of nature. At the same time, bringing pagan and fantastical elements into the narrative serves to question the rationalistic Enlightenment or socialist worldview. Finally, travel brings to the forefront the concept of the local, the "authentically Russian" experience, by turning to nature and the countryside. Nevertheless, establishing such non-political and non-bureaucratic ties between the capital and the periphery can be problematic: while the countryside is once again depicted in terms of a spiritual cradle and locus of genuine "Russianness," the inequality between them is simultaneously reaffirmed and grows more pronounced materially and more entrenched psychologically.

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The Recent Publishing Initiatives of the Sefer Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization

Translation by Liv Bliss

Irina Kopchenova (Ed.). (2013). *Zheludók: The Memory of a Jewish Shtetl (Zheludók: pamiat' o evreiskom mestechke)*. Moscow (in Russian). — 328 pages; Svetlana Amosova (Ed.). (2013). *Neighbors No More: Jews in the Cultural Memory of the Inhabitants of Latgale; Expedition Materials, 2011–13 (Utrachennoe sosiedstvo: evrei v kul'turnoi pamiati zhitelei Latgalii; Materialy ekspeditsii 2011 — 2013 godov)*. Moscow (in Russian). — 382 pages; Mikhail Chlenov (Ed.). (2014). *Pages From the History and Culture of Georgia's Jews (In the Footsteps of the 2013 Expedition). (Stranitsy istorii i kul'tury evreev Gruzii [po sledam ekspeditsii 2013 goda])*. Moscow (in Russian). — 136 pages; Irina Kopchenova (Ed.). (2015). *Jews on the Map of Lithuania: Biržai; Problems of Preserving the Jewish Heritage and Historical Memory. (Evrei na karte Litvy: Birzhai; Problemy sokhraneniia evreiskogo nasledii i istoricheskoi pamiati)*. Moscow (in Russian). — 366 pages.

These collections comprise first-time publications of primary materials and analytical articles collected and written by members of research expeditions sponsored by the Sefer Center for University Teaching of Jewish

Civilization. The Center, in collaboration with various partners, has been organizing field schools on Jewish ethnography and paleography for undergraduate and postgraduate students and young researchers since 2003.

Expedition participants have conducted studies in Belarus, Latvia, Moldova, Russia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Georgia, and Lithuania, both where Jewish communities continue to exist to this day, in whatever form, and in areas where nothing attests to the Jews who once lived there except deserted synagogues, cemeteries, and the memories of their former neighbors.

Zheludók: The Memory of a Jewish Shtetl covers various aspects of the life of a Jewish community in a western Belarusian shtetl. It should be noted that it not only launched this series of field-school publications but also represents a groundbreaking effort by Russian-speaking scholars to address the topic of the Jewish shtetl as a unique cultural phenomenon based on the example of one small hamlet, by collecting and analyzing diverse sources (ethnographic sources, archival materials, memoirs, and manuscripts). As a specifically Jewish space, Zheludók, like most others of its kind, has been wiped from the map of Eastern Europe; its Jewish population — 70 percent of its residents before the war — was obliterated in May 1942. Sergei Pivovarchik and Irina Sorokina's introductory article, a fairly detailed and comprehensive historical essay on Zheludók, offers an abundance of interesting historical and statistical infor-

mation. Maria Sidorova-Shpilker's "Jews of the Zheludók Shtetl" ("Evrei mestechka Zheludók") is based on archival materials related to, and residents' recollections of, the tragic events of May 1942. Sidorova-Shpilker makes several interesting observations of the way that today's settlement residents perceive the "inconvenient" Jewish theme and makes a number of suggestions that might help them make sense of what happened in 1942.

In the article "Neither Insiders Nor Outsiders: Jews in the Social Space of Belarusian Peasants in the 19th and 20th Centuries" ("Ne svoi i ne chuzhie: evrei v sotsial'nom prostranstve belorusskikh krest'ian XIX — XX vekov"), Olga Shatalova analyzes the reason for changes in Belarusian peasants' attitude toward Jews, tending to explain its deterioration mostly in terms of economics, in that competition gradually supplanted what had been a relationship of mutually advantageous cooperation. The Polish oppression that both sides experienced had rendered the Jews more acceptable "outsiders" in Belarusian eyes. Shatalova concludes with comments on the "softening" of the Belarusian perception of Jews after the Holocaust, although this, in my view, contradicts her earlier examples of those former neighbors' efforts to provide a rational ex-

planation for the annihilation of the Jews — efforts that may be summarized in five short words: “They brought it on themselves.” Olga Belova’s “A Portrait of an Ethnic Neighbor: Jews through Slavic Eyes” (“Portret etnicheskogo sosedá: evrei glazami slavian”) and Olga Shchur’s “Jews in the Minds of the Villagers of Farnyi Konets” (“Evrei v predstavlenii zhitelei derevni Farnyi konets”) expand in part on the topic that was broached in Shatalova’s article. Using a wealth of field materials, they showcase the shaping and persistence of traditional stereotypes regarding Jews in that area. This book also contains a catalog of Zheludók’s Jewish cemetery and the memoirs of Miron Mordukhovich, who was born and raised in the shtetl.

The collection *Neighbors No More*, also published in 2013, is a study of the ways in which notions of the past are shaped within a society — in this particular case, memories of Jews in contemporary Latgale. The book opens with Mikhail Alekseevskiy’s “‘Jewish National Character’ in the Ethnocultural Stereotypes of the Residents of Latgale” (“‘Evreiskii kharakter’ v etnokul’turnykh stereotipakh zhitelei Latgalii”). Alekseevskiy notes that the respondents’ comments on Jews were on the whole more positive than negative, and proposes that the disappearance of Jews

from the area is connected with the formation of that positive image. One result of that disappearance was the respondents’ idealization of their former neighbors, which manifested in the positive coloration of the current range of ethnic stereotypes. But, somewhat puzzlingly, Alekseevskiy overlooks the attendant circumstances, which are, of course, mentioned but are never factored into his hypotheses for the causes of the idealization of Jews in that area. Yet it is a known fact that Latgale’s Jews were annihilated mainly by the Latvian police with active support from the locals. May it not therefore be supposed that a collective sense of guilt was at least one of the reasons for the substitution of certain stereotypes with others?

To briefly recap other materials here that are connected in some way to religion, there is Daria Tereshina’s “‘Lots of Jews, and Traders, Every One’: Memories of Jewish Trading Stalls and Itinerant Peddlers in Pre-War Latgale” (“‘Mnogie evrei ... oni vse zanimalis’ torgovlei’: vospominaniia o evreiskikh lavkakh i brodiachikh torgovtsakh dovoennoi Latgalii”), which further pursues the topic of stereotypes, this time with reference to a basic sphere of commercial activity among the Jewish population. Also noteworthy are the following: Svetlana Amosova, Yulia Andreeva, and

Vladislavs Ivanovs, “The Jewish Religion, Religious Practices, and Synagogues in the Accounts of Long-Term Latgalian Residents” (“Evreiskaia religiia, religioznye praktiki i sinagogi v rasskazakh starozhilov Latgalii”); Mikhail Alekseevskiy, “Understandings of Jewish Burial and Memorial Traditions in the Accounts of Latgalian Residents” (“Predstavleniia o evreiskikh pokhoronno-pominal’nykh traditsiakh v rasskazakh zhitelei Latgalii”); Viktors Andruškevičs and Marina Gekht, “Tales of Jewish Festivals” (“Rasskazy o evreiskikh prazdnikakh”); Svetlana Amosova, “They Will Capture, They Will Kill, They Will Drain the Blood and Mix it into that Matzo of Theirs’: Accounts of Blood Libel in Latgale” (“Poimaiut, ub’iut, krov’ vytiagnut i pribavliaiut v etu matsu’: rasskazy o krovavom navete v Latgalii”) (which revises the somewhat idealized picture presented in Alekseevskiy’s first article); and Yulia Andreeva and Maria Viatchina, “‘The Kosher Table’ and ‘Khazer’: Jewish Dietary Practices in the Minds of Non-Jewish Latgalians” (“‘Koshernyi stol’ i ‘khazer’: pishchevye praktiki evreev v predstavlenii neevreiskikh zhitelei Latgalii”). These original studies cover various aspects of the religious and everyday life of Jews as understood by their alloethnic neighbors. They contain a wealth of field findings that re-

quire further analysis with reference to comparative material from elsewhere.

The second section of this volume offers articles based on a variety of sources (oral, archival, and literary) on the 20th-century history of Latvia’s Jews. Inesa Runce’s “The Attitude of the State toward Jewish Communities in Latvia in the 1920s and 1930s” (“Otnoshenie gosudarstva k iudeiskim obshchinam v Latvii v 20–30-kh gg. XX v.”) deals with changes in independent Latvia’s official policy regarding Jewish communities. Runce’s conclusion is that, like other “non-traditional historical” religious minorities in Latvia (Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, and Old Believers) during the period under study, Jews experienced no particular oppression.

Karīna Barkane’s “The Observance of Jewish Traditions in Soviet Latgale (Mid-1940s to Early 1960s): Between Archive and Memory” (“Sobliudenie evreiskikh traditsii v Latgalii v sovetskoe vremia [vtoraia polovina 1940-kh — nachalo 1960-kh gg.]: mezhdou arkhivnymi dokumentami i vospominaniami”) is of great interest. Here, Barkane studies certain elements of everyday and religious Jewish culture that survived into the postwar period, even after the Holocaust had dramatically altered the ethnic balance in Latgale. She also looks

into the Soviet government's anti-religious policies.

Among the most successful of these articles is surely that by Didzis Bērziņš, which covers salient features of the memory of the Holocaust in Soviet literature. Bērziņš prefaces his piece with a brief review of the present state of memory studies with respect to the Holocaust, noting that Western and Eastern Europe diverge somewhat in this area. He suggests that contemplation of the Holocaust was not chronologically continuous and identifies three phases in postwar Latvia during which Soviet fiction tackled the subject of the catastrophe.

It remains only to regret that the reader of this altogether highly commendable collection has not been given the opportunity to assess how the memory of the Holocaust is presented in contemporary oral narratives or how this may have influenced the shaping of Jewish stereotypes and the perception of the Jewish tradition among the local population.

The next edited volume under review, published in 2014, deals with Georgian Jewry. That ethno-confessional group is among the least studied Jewish ethnic groups and is more integrated than others into Georgian society, but its history is even now hard to distinguish from mythology. The members of the expedi-

tion on whose findings this collection is based worked in two directions, ethnographic and philological, as they strove to encompass the unencompassable by bringing history into the present day. Konstantin Lerner, the author of the first article in the collection, "Georgia's Jews: Acculturation without Assimilation (2nd Century BCE — 20th Century CE) ("Evrei Gruzii: akkul'turatsiia bez assimiliatsii [II v. do n.e. — XX v.]"), copes especially well with this task. He notes that the study of Georgian Jewry is of great value not only to the field of Jewish Studies but also to general sociological theory, as "the history of the Jewish community in Georgia vividly exemplifies a successful strategy for the ethno-religious and economic survival of a small group within a dominant society" (p. 14).

The next noteworthy article, written by the famous Russian ethnographer Mark Kupovetskii, concerns the Jews of Kakheti in the 14th to 17th centuries. Kupovetskii remarks on the paucity of the available primary sources on the history of Georgia's Jews and indicates a need to supplement the Georgian sources with Russian, Western European, and Persian sources of the same periods. This approach enables this article to break new ground by reconstructing the conditions of

life in Kakheti's Jewish communities and the circumstances surrounding their disappearance.

Field materials from the expedition are represented here in Svetlana Amosova, Maria Viatchina, and Elena Sabantseva's "The Jews ... Either Doctors or Shopkeepers They Were" ("Evrei ... ili vrachi byli, ili prodavtsy"), which is based on short interviews on the life of Georgian Jews. But what is lacking here, in my view, is an analytical commentary to point up the universality or uniqueness, etc., of the Georgian ethnic stereotypes. That void is to some extent filled by Anastasia Chizhova's "The Relations Between Georgia's Jewish and Judaic Communities" ("Vzaimootnosheniia evreiskoi i iudeiskoi obshchin Gruzii"), which, descriptive as it is, still allows the reader to contextualize the above-mentioned interviews somewhat.

This collection also contains two intriguing articles by Maciej Bone, "The Jews of Georgia and Their Polish Books" ("Evrei Gruzii i ikh pol'skie knigi") and "The Image of the Jews in Polish Descriptions of the Caucasus" ("Obraz evreev v pol'skikh opisaniakh Kavkaza"); Natalia Kashovskaia's "A Philological Excursion to the Mountain Village of Lailashi" ("Epigraficheskaia ekskursiia v gornoe selenie Lailashi"); Lela Tsutsashvili's "Georgia's Jewish Cultural Legacy" ("Evreiskoe

kul'turnoe nasledie Gruzii"); Guram Lortkipanidze's "New Archival Materials on Georgia's Jewish Diaspora" ("Novye arkhivnye materialy po evreiskoi diaspore Gruzii"); and Shota Bostanashvili's "The Synagogues of Georgia" ("Sinagogi Gruzii").

Finally, the last of these collections to be published to date reverts to issues of historical memory, drawing this time on Lithuanian materials. These scholars have focused on the small town of Biržai, where a rabbinical community once peacefully coexisted with a Karaite community. Several locally initiated projects are presently under way here to study and revitalize the local Jewish cultural heritage.

The book opens with articles by Ruta Anulyte and Krzysztof Bielawski that discuss the problems of preserving the Jewish legacy in Lithuania and Poland. Both countries have lost virtually all of that legacy, and in both, the tragedy would not have attained the scale it did had the local population not been actively involved in carrying out the Holocaust. These articles consider how the attitude toward the Jewish legacy (primarily material but not only that) changed in this regard and how, given that no Jewish communities remained afterward, the custodianship of the legacy fell to the state and the local population.

ply additional grist to the mills of those wishing to verify existing theories and others intending to develop additional theories in this sphere.

In concluding this brief overview, I would like to make a few points on the series as a whole. On the one hand, the value of these materials is indisputable. Most are unique contributions that have ushered new primary sources into the scholarly mainstream. But on the other hand, the analytical component of these publications is insufficient, and, as a result — in accounts of blood libel, say, or narratives on ethnic stereotypes in Latvia, Lithuania, and Georgia — the reader has to

perform his or her own comparative analysis to pinpoint what is universal and what is unique in them. Also, articles in a given collection sometimes cover the same ground, which, although inevitable in that the authors are working with a single field archive, could have been minimized by some judicious editing. Presumably these features may be expected to change for the better over time. On the whole, though, all four collections will certainly be of great interest to historians and students of religion and will have much of value to offer to the ongoing development of academic Jewish Studies.

Zhanna Kormina, Alexander Panchenko and Sergei Shtyrkov. (Eds.). (2015). *The Invention of Religion: Desecularization in the Post-Soviet Context (Izobretenie religii: Desekuliarizatsiia v postsovetskom kontekste)*. St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Evropeiskogo universiteta (in Russian). — 280 pages.

This book is the result of the work of a brilliant and significant school of anthropologists that has formed around several important scholarly institutions in St. Petersburg: the Kunstkammer (the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences), the Pushkin House (the Institute of Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences), and the

European University at St. Petersburg. While the contributors to the volume are not exclusively Petersburgers (there is a broad geographical representation here, from America to Armenia), the school itself is Petersburg-based. The book under review here is the second collection of articles this school has produced, and it is as interesting as the first one (Kormina, Panchenko, Shtyrk-

ov 2015). It is also worth noting that individual contributors have also published their own monographs and significant articles in the recent past (L'vov 2011; Kormina 2012; Panchenko 2012; Shtyrkov 2013, 2015). This school is distinctive for its decisive dedication to the method of “thick description,” a tendency toward meticulous methodological reflection (including the researchers’ self-reflection), and thorough familiarity with contemporary theoretical trends in anthropology.

Moreover, the volume has been organized around a specific, clearly articulated and transparent theoretical approach and an equally well-defined conceptual framework that focuses on post-Soviet religion. In general, we can describe the volume’s approach as that of constructivism, which is now widely accepted in the humanities internationally as wholly respectable, but which has not been as clearly articulated in Russia as elsewhere. This approach is connected with post-modernist sensibility (though not at all with the post-modernist agenda *per se*), with the broadly assimilated techniques of deconstruction, with skepticism toward classical schemas, with interest in speech practices, with the dismantling of boundaries between official, elite, popular, and everyday forms of discourse and be-

havior. This approach, *grosso modo*, stands in opposition to what we can broadly categorize as adhering to essentialism, that is, to asserting some kind of unchanging essence in a given cultural phenomenon (for example, religious tradition).

When applying this approach to post-Soviet religiosity, as these authors do, a certain general conception of the latter spontaneously takes shape; this can be seen even in the volume’s title. We have a panorama of possible “inventions” before us — inventions of “one’s own religion,” and “one’s own self.” Let us look at the main characters in individual essays. Female temporary workers (*trudnitsy*) in Orthodox Christian convents interweave their own hopes and fears into the standard model of “obedience” in the course of serious work on oneself (Daria Dubovka); young Armenian intellectuals create a primordial Armenian-Aryan paganism and, contrary to all stereotypes, daringly impart to it a written form (Yulia Antonian); women who lay claim to a special gift of spiritual vision, record certain (supposedly “traditional”) Altaic “epistles” of a (supposedly “traditional”) Altaic religion that is set forth as the base for an oddly eclectic indigenous identity (Dmitri Arziutov); inhabitants of the Mari village of Tium-Tium attempt to find their place at the intersection of the in-

fluence of “traditional Mari religion” and local Orthodox structures (Ksenia Gavrilova); nativists from the “Anastasia” movement create an ecological utopia with a comprehensive program — from housekeeping methods to an understanding of distinctive spiritual space (Yulia Andreeva); Russian and Armenian Pentecostals construct an identity of individual holiness on the basis of images of “spiritual warfare” with global evil (Alexander Panchenko); and a tiny group of trans-Carpathian Protestants invents for itself — literally under the anthropologist’s gaze — a new Jewish identity (Alexander Lvov).

These almost interchangeable verbs — to invent and to construct — impart rhythm and meaning to this entire collection. We are presented with many examples of what may be called, following Claude Lévi-Strauss in his *Pensée sauvage — bricolage*. In each essay we see how various types of protagonists — intellectuals (*intelligenty*), cultural and educational workers, and simple village dwellers — construct unexpected puzzles of lived religion. As a rule, they use ready-made elements already extant in their social environments, which when unpacked can reveal anything and everything — decomposing myths, prophetic dreams, ethnic phobias, Soviet stereotypes, post-Soviet hopes. At

times what is already present is not enough, and then they need to really invent, and the more or less spontaneous, almost subconscious process of everyday *bricolage* is replaced by a fully conscious process of cultural engineering.

Daria Dubovka opens her essay with this statement: “Today’s Orthodox monasteries are a paradise for constructivists,” thereby announcing her own academic identity. It is possible that not all of the authors would agree with such a candid self-positioning, but, to some degree or other, they all seem to be in a researcher’s paradise. This paradise is post-Soviet society in all of its fullness, in which, indeed, it has been necessary to reinvent an enormous number of things to varying extents — individual and collective identities, moral norms, life goals and strategies, and so on. And of course, new religions. Even if, as in the case of revived Orthodox monasticism, these religions stubbornly call themselves timeless and traditional. Here the innovation is not in the external, traditional tableau of cloistered life, but rather in the depth of emotional experience. As Dubovka shows, the resident of convents, who have come from a completely different, non-religious environment in a rush of neophyte insight or in flight from a life crisis, must on

a daily basis invent and recreate themselves, adapting the strong expectations of their egos to the monastic system of humility and obedience. And if this observation about innovation and construction can be applied to the great and “omnipresent” Russian Orthodoxy, then certainly it can be applied to numerically modest groups such as the Ukrainian charismatic Pentecostals that Catherine Wanner discusses, to Mari-El or Armenian “Pagans,” or to the Russo-Ukrainian Judaizers. Even if in all of these instances everything looks like a “revival” or a “rebirth,” we know (and the contributors demonstrate) that we are speaking here more about *reconstruction*, and every reconstruction involves modernizing the significance of the object of reconstruction.

And one further observation: what unifies the majority of the religious inventions described in this volume is resistance to the “System,” to some sort of alien and hostile force, and the attempt to display one’s own alternative voice and scenario, which recalls, in a certain sense, the *hidden* or *alternative transcripts* of post-colonial discourse. It is precisely the search for “one’s own voice” that is the initial trigger for active invention. As inheritors of the “secret code” of the Catacomb Church of the Soviet period, Orthodox strugglers against new

identification technologies continue the tradition of a desperate battle with Big Brother, this time in the form of electronic monitoring of individuals. And, however paradoxical it may seem, this monitoring is firmly associated with the impersonal, neo-liberal West (Kathy Rousselet). Orthodox nuns and novices try to reconcile their “egos” with the system of absolute obedience that forced Michel Foucault to talk about the “totalitarianism” of Christian monastic institutions. Ethnographer-enthusiasts who are inventing an Armenian Neo-Paganism are challenging the Apostolic Church with its claims to cultural monopoly; the inventors of a “Mari traditional religion” attempt to liberate themselves from the weight of Orthodox pressure, while the inventors of an “Altaic traditional religion” do the same against the threatening pressure from another (also partially invented) official system, Buddhism, which is being promoted by local authorities (see the articles by Yulia Antonian, Ksenia Gavrilova and Dmitry Arziutov). An anti-“System” agenda is also absolutely characteristic of the “Anastasians,” who are fleeing from the “Big Brother” of rational urban civilization to “Nature” (Yulia Andreeva). Conservative Pentecostals, as well as aggressive Orthodox opponents of individualism, wage an uncompromising spiritual bat-

tle with the Evil that is constantly generated by the liberal West, while charismatics from the Kyiv-based Embassy of God, founded by Sunday Adelaja, call us to “overthrow the kingdom of darkness,” that is, modern secularism (Alexander Panchenko and Catherine Wanner, respectively). In all of these cases, a relatively small alternative initiative is set in opposition to some kind of hulking, domineering agent, real or imagined. It is interesting to note that Big Brother can assume different guises in different situations. It is also significant and natural that the “inventors” of small religions strive to identify a powerful opposing referent, from whom they win back space for new meanings (even if at times they set themselves a wholly maximalist eschatological task). At the end of the day, an alternative identity — some kind of distancing from the dominant cultural grammar — is characteristic of new forms of religiosity. In the post-Soviet, and, to some extent, in the post-colonial context, this is precisely how religiosity is invented — as a space for individual searches and group alternatives.

It is interesting that this model of “fighting the system” resonates with the methodology chosen for the most part by the contributors to this volume, specifically their distrust of stereotypical theoretical explanations. For example,

Daria Dubovka takes issue with Ivan Zabaev on the question of an Orthodox economic ethos: she proposes that it is unlikely that such a thing exists *de facto*, or at least it cannot be deduced from a collection of theological or pastoral texts to create some sort of ideal model that could then be projected onto actual behavior (for example, the trope of obedience). It is not an ideal, abstract model that creates human reality, but people themselves (for example, the inhabitants of convents) create this reality from the material of ideas, emotions and instincts that they bring with them so as to relate them to the canonical matrix that they are presented with.

In this connection Michel de Certeau’s analysis of the negotiations that people undertake with cultural norms and rules or with those who claim authority to set cultural norms is relevant. In Alexander Lvov’s example of the Judaizers, these negotiations are conducted through “textual rationalism” (an adapted, individual reading of the Bible), which is compared with (and sometimes opposed to) the authority of “Judaic norms,” represented by a rabbi who came from Israel. For Lvov, what is most important methodologically is how the authors export their expectations into the space of normative dissonances (in this case,

between the Torah and the Talmud). Ksenia Gavrilova is dissatisfied with earlier explanations of the Mari revival (in the works of Sergei Filatov, Boris Knorre, Victor Shnirelman, etc.), and particularly its classification as “Paganism” or “Neo-Paganism,” in opposition to Christianity. It would seem that “Pagan” discourse creates an ideal model for the anti-System pathos of a rebellious minority. However, Gavrilova goes further: having assimilated the declarations of urban religion “entrepreneurs,” she turns to the living voices of the residents of a single ordinary village. These voices strengthen, as it were, a second stage of deconstruction: at the level of everyday practices, the urban creation of a “Mari religion,” with its visible systematization that imitates Christianity (in order to be capable of competing with it), becomes dubious. Her refined and careful micro-analysis demonstrates the lack of a fully resolved, informal equilibrium between competing and equally self-imposing systems — Christianity and the “Mari religion.”

However, if we are to speak of one Big System whose pressure is palpable in all cases, it would be the collective memory of the Soviet past. Soviet habits, the Soviet *habitus*, Soviet mentality — for now this is the ineradicable store of material from which new

forms of thinking and practice are molded. This Soviet material is not the only material, but it is probably the fundamental one; it permeates all the book’s chapters. In the introduction, written by Zhanna Kormina and Sergei Shtyrkov, Soviet influence is conceptualized; this introduction is dedicated wholly to the “pre-history of post-Soviet desecularization.” The authors refute widely known explanations for the increase in religiosity: for example, the idea that religion filled a “spiritual vacuum” after the fall of the USSR, or that it was needed to overcome general post-Soviet *anomie*. Risking some exaggeration, Kormina and Shtyrkov suggest something else: there was no break or rupture, but rather a gradual transition during which ideas and practices were re-formatted in the depths of late Soviet culture over the course of decades; ideas and practices reformulated in the spirit of desecularization came to fruition. To explain this, they refer to the concept of *recycling*, introduced by Sonja Luehrmann to capture precisely such a thorough transformation by exploring how entirely secular Soviet ideological tropes were gradually reconceptualized in a religious spirit, and their bearers (cultural and ideological workers) were transformed en masse into subjects of religious agency.

How exactly did this re-formatting take place? Kormina and Shtyrkov write: "As we want to demonstrate in this book, in actuality the groundwork for the religious enthusiasm of the beginning of the 1990's was laid during a prolonged process involving the legalization of religion during Soviet times through its localization in the sphere of 'culture.'" Using a variety of sources, they proceed to wonderfully and subtly demonstrate how, beginning in the 1960s, there was, if not a linear, then a hidden rehabilitation of religion by means of its "recoding" in the categories of museum heritage, its use in ideologemes related to culture, and its inclusion in a kind of reserve of national spiritual memory. In the late USSR, the need for something higher than the "everyday" was increasing, and religious meanings, converted into cultural or aesthetic meanings, as well as into markers of ethnic identity, were very a propos. Of course, there was also interest in the specifically religious dimension, outside the bounds of Soviet utilization of religion (as in the works of Soloukhin, Tarkovsky, etc., not to mention the religious quasi-underground itself). Nonetheless, these were exceptions: as Kormina and Shtyrkov demonstrate, the majority of "workers and creators of culture" were preoccupied with the "re-coding of

religious symbols into the secular Soviet language" (for example, viewing a church building as an "artifact of the history and culture of the Russian people.")

Here is one more marvelous quote: "During the active modernization and urbanization of Soviet society, religion, as a component of life, began to be understood as an ethnographic archaism that was incompatible with the everyday life of the modern person. On the other hand, the frame of cultural heritage makes religion (or more accurately, the fragments of its external life) useful for society. And in the 1990s, museums became something like a store of stem cells for the future religious rebirth" (20).

In the 1990s, the need for a cultural and ethnic camouflaging of religion ended. The religious was latently prepared to become something publicly recognized. It became possible to speak of religion as religion, and of a church building precisely as a religious place and not merely as a museum or repository of national spirituality. Ideological workers (including teachers) could now replace their secular language with openly religious language. Precisely this is "desecularization": as described by Talal Asad, cited by the authors in their introduction, the imaginary border between the secular and the sacred becomes

moveable, and the prior status of religion as a sharply limited, semi-secret space hidden behind a tall fence is negated.

And now we get to the most interesting observation: the prohibitions are removed, the religious has the right to be “simply religious” rather than a hypostasis of something else (something “fantastical,” “national,” etc.) — but the flavor of Soviet interpretations does not disappear — it remains in the mentalities of the new believers, the new religious activists and even the priests themselves (as well as imams, shamans, “Neo-Pagan” priests, etc.). No full de-culturalization of religion is taking place. The bridal train of secular interpretations does not disappear. In my opinion, this is precisely the most significant aspect of post-Soviet desecularization — this ineradicable Soviet flavor that colors religion and its powerful ethnic and folk connotations; the collectivist overtones; the peculiar leftist conservatism; and the stubborn opposition to the modern, to liberalism, and to the West. Alexander Panchenko provides a summary of this Soviet background in his study of Pentecostals, specifically underlining the merging of the religious not only with (secular) concepts of literature and culture, but also with Soviet “forms of social discipline” (Komsomol and Party meetings, etc.).

In light of these ruminations, the book’s conceptual framework becomes entirely clear. Let me reiterate: rather than a discussion of a religious “renaissance” that simply freed itself from atheist pressure and filled in lacunae in meaning and symbolic values, we have a discussion of precisely its “invention” — its construction from a set of secular Soviet interpretations mixed with new sources. Kormina and Shtyrkov do not discuss the latter in their introduction; their task is to show the genealogy and reveal the inherited substrate. The authors of the subsequent chapters analyze how new ideas and practices are built on this substrate, flowing forth onto the territory of the dissolved empire.

And here it turns out that all these various religious experiments, all of these curious attempts at *bricolage*, are essentially just one episode, one aspect of a large-scale re-formatting of an entire society and its inscription into the new frameworks — pluralist, consumerist, global, entailing a market economy; into newly rebuilt ideological topics; and into new frames of personal, individual identity. Some of the articles in this book address this ultimate, and methodologically extremely difficult to capture, restructuring of personality, since the invention of religion is a personal event — and an indicator of the invention

of a new “ego” from the old *homo sovieticus*. For example, in Catherine Wanner’s essay, Ukrainian Pentecostals argue over a new interpretation of money and wealth within the categories of good and evil; the Russian-Armenian Pentecostals in Panchenko’s contribution or the female Orthodox neophyte workers in Dubovka’s essay search for a new *modus vivendi* in a changing world, and work to resolve difficult moral dilemmas and recreate themselves in accordance with newly conceived expectations.

In her excellent contribution, Daria Tereshina steps beyond religion proper into a wider space where she reveals the complex vicissitudes of the invention of identity. Her essay looks at Russian distributors for the marketing company Amway (an abbreviation of American Way). By addressing their speech practices, Tereshina analyzes how Amway’s ethos of success and corporate solidarity — which was initially so foreign to the Russian mentality — forces people to fundamentally rethink their “selves.” This transformation of subjectivity (understood in the framing of “personal growth”) suggests a break or rupture with the past, and to some extent a break with their former social environment. However, if the norm is a desire to suppress the memory of earlier difficulties and traumas, in other situations an explicit ther-

apeutic narrative of overcoming trauma, a “victory over oneself,” the break of the old “self” and the creation of a new “self” is used.

Here we are presented with obvious associations with a religious conversion: even if people do not have direct, conscious references to such an analogy, their experience of transformation resembles a religious one. We reach an important conclusion: conversion is, perhaps, one of the central mental categories of post-Soviet societies. In the last quarter century we have seen millions of “conversions” in one sense or another, millions of examples of personal transformation. This has been just as evident in the religious sphere as in other spheres, and possibly even more pronounced. Conversion is always an invention of the self, and from this we have the inevitability and universality of the creation of adequate symbolic structures, including religions, from both old and new available material. For this reason, we can conclude that the book under review, which does not claim to present a comprehensive picture of post-Soviet religiosity (since it does not address many of its forms), “hits the nail on the head,” and brings into focus a certain central characteristic not only of religion, but of the era in general.

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(Translated by Natasha Kolchevska)

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Nikolai Seleznyov. (2014). *Pax Christiana and Pax Islamica: On the History of Interconfessional Relations in the Medieval Middle East. (Pax Christiana et Pax Islamica: Iz istorii mezhkonnessional'nykh sviazei na srednevekovom Blizhnem Vostoke)*. Moscow: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet (in Russian). — 268 pages.

The monograph under review synthesizes the research of N. N. Seleznyov in the field of the constructive social and intellectual interplay of religious communities. The author bases his work on the study of historical experience as conveyed by original (Arabic) theoretical texts. Seleznyov publishes and analyzes sources that allow him to achieve a theoretical reconstruction of a situation of fruitful coexistence

of religious communities in the broad cultural space of the Islamic world. This material provides a foundation for tracing the historical logic behind the construction of interrelations between confessional groups that are oriented around the value of tradition. The data on the historical experience of such interrelations was not sufficiently taken into consideration by earlier researchers. Many earlier studies focused on

the polemical contents of written records of Arab culture from the period in question. There are few studies that address the creative interaction of distinct and historically competing Christian confessions in the context of the development of Arab culture, which led to the formation of an essentially ecumenical paradigm of mutual interaction, and for this reason the present volume is of particular interest.

The book's materials are arranged in a logical sequence in the spirit of a major work, *The Summa of the Fundamentals of Religion and the Basic Essentials of Authoritative Knowledge* (*Majmū' uṣūl al-dīn wa-masmū' maḥṣūl al-yaqīn*), which was written by Mu'taman Abū Iṣḥāq Ibrāhīm Ibn al-'Assāl, a thirteenth-century Coptic Arab encyclopedist who came from an influential intellectual family, the Awlād al-'Assāl. This philosophical-liturgical composition "is based on the heritage of Ibn al-'Assāl's ancestors, which is organized into a philosophical interpretation of Christian teachings. The author's overview includes those confessions that are known to him, and in all of them he attempts to see reasonable formations, note contradictory positions, and point to the possibility of their rational solution" (8). Among the abundant material included in Ibn al-'Assāl's

Summa, we find a narration of a series of texts by "the worthy Melkite priest Naẓīf ibn Yumn, a Baghdādī doctor; a summary of compositions by Elias, Metropolitan of Jerusalem, of the same topic, which he called [*the Book*] of the *Concordance of Faith and a Concise Exposition of Religion* (it was said that this was a work by 'Alī ibn Dāwūd); a short version of the treatise "How to Comprehend the Truth of the Confession of Faith" by the "most-revered, the only one knowing worthy wise man, philosopher and doctor, Ḥunayn ibn Iṣḥāq; and a reproduction of "The Eleventh Chapter of the Works of the Nestorian Ibn al-Ṭayyib, with a list of people's opinions on unity and their conclusions."

All of these are included in the volume under review. We should particularly note the chapter dedicated to the [*Book*] of the *Concordance of Faith and a Concise Exposition of Religion*. The book's author not only presents a translation and discussion of the sources of this work, but also gives us the original text itself based on a manuscript in Garshūnī (recording of Arabic text in Syriac script), Ms. Ar. 657 in the Vatican Library. As Seleznyov observes, "the fate of this work turned out to be no less ecumenical than its author's original idea. Created by a 'Jacobite' scribe, this treatise was distribut-

ed under the name of the ‘Nestorian’ Metropolitan that ‘copied’ it, was used by a Coptic theologian, described by a Maronite scholar, transcribed in ‘Chaldean’ letters... and finally was used as proof of the antiquity of the two-fingered sign of the cross by historians of Russian Old Belief” (43–44).

The research into Ibn al-‘Assāl’s sources in this volume is incorporated into a larger context. The volume opens with a chapter about the meeting of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius with Īshō’yahb Catholikos of the East-Syriac Church (in the seventh century) and ends with a liturgical treatise by a Coptic-Arab author that is a review of the features of Christian communities in the East that characterizes them as traditionally Eastern Christian as well as including some representatives of the West, Franks who had come to the East. Thus, the volume under review can also be seen as a series of enticing excursions into various areas of intellectual creativity by representatives of the Christian segment of the medieval Muslim East. It reveals the intensive cultural contacts and notes unifying tendencies, which give the volume its name. The title *Pax Christiana et Pax Islamica* plays on the theme of the search for Christian unity in connection with the development of Arab-Muslim thought.

The volume demonstrates the broad erudition of Seleznyov, who orients himself easily in this enor-

mous corpus of historical sources. Among the book’s obvious achievements, let us also note the author’s mastery of classical (Greek, Latin) and Eastern (Syriac, Arabic) languages. Texts in those languages are presented in the original and in the author’s translations, which significantly increases the scholarly value of his study. Perhaps, the only criticism related to translation that can be made would be to address the author’s repeated use of a particular type of Arabicism, namely his attempt to use the conjunction “and” when it comes at the beginning of a sentence for the Arabic “wa,” as well as his scrupulous adherence to the Arabic original in translating other conjunctions or parts of speech, which in the original play a role in connecting sentences (“then,” “it follows,” etc.). Such scrupulousness would be justified if Arabic syntax were more similar to Russian syntax. However, the reality is just the opposite, and in this case, conveying a letter in the text can turn out to be a deviation from the text, since in fact it distorts the text, conveying to the Russian reader a feeling of artificiality and intentionality, whereas in the Arabic original it is merely adhering to a linguistic norm.

In what scholarly field should we place Seleznyov’s book? While this may seem like a simple question, its answer is not. On the one hand, the subtitle, which includes the word “history,” would seem to

put it in the historical discipline. It is difficult to object to this, but such a characterization does not exhaust the volume's contents. The author acts not only a historian but also as a philologist, and this philological orientation is apparent both in the attention that he pays to the texts, and in the careful and loving treatment of primary sources, and even in the amount of textual space devoted to reproducing the originals and their translations. The text does not hide "behind a screen," nor does it remain somewhere "in the author's research lab." Rather, it is persistently and visibly present on the pages of the volume. There is no division between these two hypostases (I hope the author will forgive me the allegorical use of this word, which is one of the key terms in his book). Rather, they organically intertwine and justify each other: history is studied through the primary sources, and a detailed philological study of these texts turns out to be essential for the historical research. Such a means of narrating history or showing the life and contents of a text is especially noteworthy and, in my opinion, is an essential virtue of the author's style.

However, it is not just a question of style. A combination such as this — history through text and text interlaced with history — is augmented by one more, no less substantive feature. Seleznyov is

interested not just in the words in the text but also in the thought behind it, which may not be directly expressed; he is interested in history not only as a chain of events, but also in the causes that created and molded it. In my opinion, Seleznyov's research gravitates toward philosophizing, toward looking behind what is obviously presented to us, and thereby to understanding what explains it and how it became possible. It is for this reason that the individual essays in the book are unified not only externally via historical events, but also at the level of the internal idea, the theoretical. As we move from one part of the book to the next, we gradually begin to *understand* how this fruitful coexistence of Pax Christiana and Pax Islamica came to be not destroyed by, but, on the contrary, nourished by the dogmatic disagreements between the faiths, not to mention the internal differences of the various branches within each. It is most likely that this ultimately became possible thanks to a unified thought space, set and molded by common thought models.

I will name two of these that are clearly examined in the text and that are among the most frequently used and important in theoretical discussions of Arab-Muslim culture: these are the *aṣl-far'* (root-branch) and the *lafz-ma'nān* (word-meaning) concepts. As far as we can tell, these models are also used

by Christian authors when evaluating the question of the unity and heterogeneity of faiths (39, 88, etc.). Thought models have a formal character that is therefore one that is independent of its concrete contents; we can say that they stand above dogmatic (content) differences. It is not impossible that at the foundation of mutual understanding — not destroyed by dogmatic differences and supporting the coexistence and cultural exchange between the two worlds — not of the least importance was precisely the use of the same methods of thinking, formalized as these named models, terminologically marked, and therefore easily recognized and reproduced in their logical fullness by the listener.

I am sure that readers will receive not only benefit but also great intellectual satisfaction from Seleznyov's work. Though replete with scholarly apparatus and all sorts of quotes, the book nonetheless maintains a fresh, lively style and is not covered with the boring dust of the academic study. It is as if the author is bringing us into his circle of close friends, who are inviting us into their conversation, desiring to share their efforts with us and to enrich us with the results of their deliberations. We wish readers the joy of familiarizing themselves with this volume, and its author the joy of continuing down his chosen path, not falling off of the track.

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