



## From the Editors

Dear Reader,

**I**N 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 desecularization in the post-Soviet space.

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

*Happy reading!*  
*The Editors*