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Table of Contents

Articles

Book Reviews

Articles

Ivan Zabaev

Humility in the Economic Ethics of the Russian Orthodox Church

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Using a number of concepts from Weber's sociology of religion (economic ethics/ethos, typology of asceticism/mysticism, Weber's reception of Nietzsche's idea of ressentiment), the author addresses the economic ethos of contemporary Russian Orthodoxy. An analysis of "humility" (smirenie) *— one of the key virtues of the contemporary economic ethics of the Russian Orthodox Church — is provided. The author builds a typology of various understandings of humility in Russian Orthodoxy today in connection with the economic practices of Orthodox actors. This article distinguishes seven types of humility. Each of the types may be associated with a vision of economics and social relations. They are grouped into two main clusters — humility associated with obedience to another person and humility not associated with such obedience. The author concludes that this key ethical category of Orthodoxy can denote very different types of relations and economic motivations. This, in turn, means that very different types can be preached at the same time, including those that have more or less productive and even possibly destructive ramifications. Examples are given that show that the fostering and development of some ethical ideas in social life can lead to ambiguous or problematic consequences.*

Keywords: Max Weber, humility, economic ethics, ressentiment, Orthodox Christianity.

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Problem Statement: The Church and Economics

THE contemporary Russian Orthodox Church rarely gives statements on the subject of economics, and if it does, they are extremely vague: two comprehensive church documents ("The Basis of the Social Concept" ["Osnovy sotsial'noi kontseptsii" 2000] and "The Code of Moral Principles and Rules in Economic Management" ["Svod nravstvennykh printsipov" 2004]) in their economic part contain almost no reference to contemporary problems and reiterate general moral instructions. The only (or one of a few) exceptions was probably Patriarch Cyril's speech in connection with microlending ("Patriarkh v parlamente" 2017). It seems that Orthodoxy does not see economics as one of its priority issues. Maybe this is as it ought to be; however, there seems to be a problem hiding behind this external calm insensitivity to economic issues. The problem lies in the thought formulated by the Russian philosopher and theologian Sergei Bulgakov a century ago: "Our time understands, feels, experiences the world as an economy, and human power is measured in terms of wealth" (Bulgakov 2000, 40). A hundred years have passed and the situation has somewhat changed, but some things have also remained the same. In the early 21st century, the famous Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben started his book, *Kingdom and Glory*, with the question, "why has power in the West assumed the form of *oikonomia*, that is, a government of men?"[1] In their texts, both Bulgakov and Agamben analyzed the connection between religion and economics. Their approaches are interesting and noteworthy, but the following question dominates today's discussion of this connection: "How does the religion (of a country) promote or impede economic growth (of that particular country)?" Or a little more broadly, how does religion contribute to modernization? Despite all criticism, economic growth is considered almost a panacea in the modern world, the position taken by Agamben and Bulgakov as well.

It is almost impossible to understand the attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church toward problems of economic development using its official texts. It is difficult to assess the church's real contribution to the economic development of today, and the current attempts to make such an assessment tend to consider Orthodoxy either as a less

1. Agamben 2011, xi. The work of G. Agamben focuses on the link between economics and *oikonomia*, and the word "oikonomia" in this quotation contains additional connotations.

"productive" denomination (for example, compared to other Christian denominations) or altogether unproductive (Guiso et al. 2006; Harrison 2014; Snegovaia 2010). In a world that is understood as an economy, the label of mismanagement, unproductiveness, or indifference to the economy virtually becomes "a death sentence." The problem is not only that such an actor will sooner or later become the subject of reform (Harrison 2014, 265–66), but also that contemporary people whose whole existence is reduced to labor and consumption do not have an opportunity to join such a denomination or find their place in it.[2]

At the country level, the same question has a different emphasis: if we assume that Orthodoxy inhibits development, does it follow that it needs to be reformed, and if so, in which way? What exactly should be changed in the church and Orthodox culture, with which over 80 percent of the population associate themselves? This is a painful question, especially if it is formulated in the rigid form of a choice between either modernization and the effectiveness of the economy, or the preservation of Orthodoxy.

If the Orthodox Church itself does not state clearly its relation to the contemporary economy and does not tell the believer how he should behave toward it, is it possible to detect its "economic style" as reflected in the implicit, unintended consequences of the actions of the church and its representatives, and to understand in which direction it guides its followers?

This seems feasible, and the initial formulation of the question, which was *explicitly* employed by Sergei Bulgakov, Giorgio Agamben, and modernization research, may help us here, namely the method of analyzing this connection that was proposed by Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.[3] In contrast to the "Protestant Sects," where Weber analyzed various institutional entities as the modes of *organizing the life* of American Protestants, which were more or less explicitly related to economic realities, in the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber analyzed the unintended consequences of decisions in an area that was not explicitly associated with the economy. Weber's argument was that in addition to the direct influ-

2. Regarding this point, see the elaboration of Weber's argument, for example, in H. Arendt and Z. Bauman (Arendt 2000, 103–74; Bauman 2007).

3. On the influence of Weber's argument on Bulgakov's and Agamben's treatment of the issue, see Bulgakov 1997a; Bulgakov 1997b; Agamben 2011, 3. On the application of Weber's argument to religion and modernization, see, for example, Eisenstadt 1968; Delacroix and Nielsen 2001; Barro and McCleary 2003.

ence of religion on the economy through creating institutions or formulating economic doctrines (about the sinfulness of usury or something of the kind), there was a tacit way for such influence to occur. By forming the doctrine of salvation and organizing pastoral practice aimed at salvation in different ways, churches shape — each in its own way — the character of their followers, which ultimately manifests itself in all areas of human life — in economic life, in the family, and in politics.

Thus, it seems possible to apply Weber's conceptual framework to answer the question, "What is the economic ethos[4] of Orthodoxy?" — or at the very least to suggest a hypothesis, or indicate a direction in which the elaboration of hypotheses should be made. Yet, before proceeding to the initial development of such a hypothesis, it is worth summarizing a number of points that were important for Weber when he developed his ideas of "economic ethics," and that may be important in a similar analysis today. There are actually four such points: (1) which question the economic ethics of a denomination should answer; (2) how "goodness" is understood in the *Protestant Ethic*; (3) how the problems of freedom and wealth are related using the example of Protestant ethics, and (4) what might be the primary typology for different kinds of economic ethics.

(1) In order to understand Weber's thought in the *Protestant Ethic*, we should focus on the ethical side of Weber's text. In a number of other writings, Weber considered various channels through which Protestantism (or other denominations) might influence the economy (or other areas of life). However, in the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber analyzed ethics, and this point is almost always underestimated by scholars. As is well known, ethics is the connection between the actions of a person (practices) and various goods and virtues; it is the means that can lead a person to goodness.[5] In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber used the concept of "ethics" quite rarely and nowhere gave it consistent explication or definition. He dwelled on it in some de-

4. The word "ethos," used by Weber, is interesting in itself. On the one hand, it denotes the ethics of a specific group or layer of the population, that is, the ethics attached to practices; on the other hand, it originates from the Greek "ethos," which means "character." Thus, it can be said that "ethos" represents ethics embodied in character (as opposed to, for example, ethics as a normative code). Later, this understanding will be elaborated by Weber's follower Alasdair MacIntyre, who introduced the notion of *virtue ethics* into the philosophical discussion.

5. See, for example, *Magna Moralia* (Aristotel' 1983, 296–374).

tail only once (Weber 2001, 54–56). By and large, for Weber's Protestant, the questions of ethics are formulated as follows: "How can I be saved? What should I do to be saved?" After describing the answer that Protestants gave to these questions, Weber proceeded to the description of the *economic* ethics of Protestantism, mainly in the section "Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism," where Weber quoted Richard Baxter:

> And he [the specialized worker] will carry out his work in an orderly way while another remains in constant confusion, and his business knows neither time nor place . . . therefore is a certain calling *the best for everyone* (the author's italics — I.Z.). (ibid., 107)

Considering the above fragment, the main question of economic ethics can be formulated as follows: "Does the economy have any meaning for salvation?" or in other words: "How do I need to carry out my economic activities in order to be saved?"

(2) In general terms, this is the question of Weber's economic ethics, but the way the question was posed in the *Protestant Ethic* has another important aspect. When speaking of good, Aristotelian or Kantian ethics mean precisely goodness, that is, something good. On the one hand, Weber received his inspiration from both these thinkers, but, on the other hand, he also followed Nietzsche, and in addition, he seems to have added some of his personal pessimism to the whole picture. The fact is that calling, one of the main categories describing Protestant ethical teaching, according to Weber, is both a blessing and a curse. It is a curse in two respects. First, Calvinistic ethics are based on the idea that, along with those who are predestined for salvation, there are some (and they are the majority) who will be condemned. Interpreting the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, Weber wrote:

> For everything of the flesh is separated from God by an unbridgeable gulf and deserves of Him only eternal death, in so far as He has not decreed otherwise for the glorification of His Majesty. We know only that a part of humanity is saved, the rest damned . . . (Ibid., 60)
>
> By founding its ethic in the doctrine of predestination, it substituted for the spiritual aristocracy of monks outside of and above the world the spiritual aristocracy of the predestined saints of God within the world. It was an aristocracy which, with its *character indelebilis*, was divided from the eternally damned remainder of humanity by a more impassa-

> ble and in its invisibility more terrifying gulf, than separated the monk of the Middle Ages from the rest of the world about him. (Ibid., 74–75)

Secondly, according to Weber's interpretation of Protestant doctrine, calling in fact is always just a search for a calling. A person can never be sure that he has found his calling, that he has done everything he had to and can finally relax. At the end of the *Protestant Ethic*, the combination of these two components of calling leads to the appearance of the image of the steel armor/iron cage, which is the curse of the modern man (ibid., 123). Despite the fact that the followers of the theories of modernization preferred to see the factor of economic growth (= well-being = happiness) in Protestant ethics, the problem of the iron cage was noticed almost immediately after the appearance of T. Parsons's translation of the *Protestant Ethic*.

In other words, it is important to note the ambivalent nature of calling in Weber's ethical theory. A blessing still turns out to be something bad. The *Protestant Ethic* shows how, in order to achieve the highest good of salvation, people degenerated into *Berufsmenschen* and *Erwerbsmaschinen* — "people entrapped in professions" and "acquisitive machines" (ibid., 114). These are the final epithets of the *Protestant Ethic* in relation to the modern man. In this way Weber deciphered Nietzsche's "last people," which the end of the *Protestant Ethic* alludes to (more on this below).

(3) But who are these *Berufsmenschen* and *Erwerbsmaschinen*? What does the Weberian theory arrive at here? And what does this give us in terms of elaborating on the problem of economic ethics (of denomination X)? The studies that perceived the *Protestant Ethic* in the framework of a rigid modernization paradigm reduced (and continue to do so) the argument of the *Protestant Ethic* to testing the hypothesis about the influence of Protestantism on economic growth (recorded first of all, though not exclusively, by the GDP) (Kapeliushnikov 2018). Sometimes, to develop this idea, they practically equate the spirit of capitalism with the thirst for profit. However, in doing so they lose a very important dimension of Weber's formulation of the problem — the problem of freedom, or "escape from freedom," as one of the elements of the problem of economics. The fact is that two important components of the spirit of capitalism in Weber are *Beruf* ("profession" and "calling" simultaneously) and *Erwerb* ("acquisition"). Using these concepts, a dependent variable — the spirit of capitalism — is introduced into the *Protestant Ethic*, based on the example of Benjamin Franklin's text.

Among other things, Weber has shown that the modality of the attitude toward the world has changed from "want" to "must" in the process of searching for a calling (see the quotation below). A free man turns out to not be free. And it is not some external structure (primarily the state) that is to blame for this, but persistent attempts to implement one's freedom. That is, the search for a calling. A person thinks only about how to actualize his calling, and everything that does not apply to this is considered unimportant; time spent on other activities unrelated to the calling is considered to be sinful. The person begins to see the world as something that needs to be acquired, obtained, and seized (*Erwerb*); the fullness of his life becomes sharply narrowed. This is a brief and metaphorical summary of the following part of Weber's argument:

> The Puritan wanted to work in a calling (*Berufsmensch*); we are forced to do so. [. . .] In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the "saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment." But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage. [. . .] In the field of its highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport. [. . .] No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved." (Weber 2001, 123–24)

If we return to the problem of economic ethics, it is important to note that the economic problem has its reverse side — the problem of freedom. In various forms, these issues are always side by side — whether it is Weber's question about the lack of freedom of a free person, or the problem of restricting market freedom by the state.[6] The question of economic action is always the question of freedom.

6. In this context, see, for example, Hayek 1992; Fridman 2006. Concerning the problem of escape from freedom in the Nietzchean-Weberian framework, see Davydov 1978; Fromm 2015.

(4) Can the *Protestant Ethic* or Weber's other works give us any other guidelines for analyzing the economic ethics of Orthodoxy? In the *Protestant Ethic* Weber insisted that the ethics of calling is a unique phenomenon. Yet, it is very likely that this is not usual for Russian Orthodoxy, which is characterized by something else. Weber himself said in this respect:

> There lives in the Orthodox Church a specific mysticism based on the East's unforgettable belief that brotherly love and charity . . . determine not only some social effects that are entirely incidental, but a knowledge of the meaning of the world, a mystical relationship to God.[7]

The term "mysticism" used by Weber is not a random word. In fact, the pairing of "asceticism–mysticism" defines the basic division of Weberian economic ethics. In Weber, mysticism and asceticism as rational methods of salvation are opposed to numerous relatively less rationalized religious techniques associated with orgies, magic, or rituals:

> Wherever there is a belief in a transcendental god, all-powerful in contrast to his creatures, the goal of methodical sanctification can no longer be self-deification (in the sense in which the transcendental god is deified) and must become the acquisition of those religious qualities the god demands in men. The goal of sanctification becomes oriented to the world beyond and to ethics. The aim is no longer to possess god, for this cannot be done, but either to become his instrument or to be spiritually suffused by him. (Weber 1963, 159).

In Weber, mysticism is a typological concept;[8] he used this word for designating perceptive religiosity as opposed to the religiosity of action, passive religiosity as opposed to active religiosity, religiosity

7. Toennies et al. 1973, 144–45. In the twentieth century, this position was shared by a number of authors. See, for example, Müller-Armack 1981; Buss 1989.

8. Representatives of various denominations can easily say that there are both mystics and ascetics in their denominations. Weber did not question this. He singled out some elements of reality and then analyzed the reality focusing only on these elements. In other words, some denominations would reveal more of the type of behavior that Weber would call "mysticism," while other denominations would reveal more of what Weber would call "asceticism." Weber neglected the diversity of reality in order to analyze the causal connections between (in this case) asceticism-mysticism and something else.

in which confidence in salvation is recognized by a certain state as opposed to religiosity in which this confidence is recognized by the result of actions. Finally, if to an ascetic calling is of primary importance to salvation, humility is of equal importance to a mystic. In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber uses humility to describe mysticism:

> In the place of the humble sinners to whom Luther promises grace if they trust themselves to God in penitent faith are bred those self-confident saints whom we can rediscover in the hard Puritan merchants of the heroic age of capitalism and in isolated instances down to the present. (Weber 2001, 67)

In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber often used the category of "humility" to describe the religiosity of Luther and Zinzendorf and distinguish it from the asceticism of the Calvinists and Puritans (ibid., 59, 68, 87).

This gives us a direction where we may look for the key category of economic ethics of contemporary Russian Orthodoxy. On the one hand, it may turn out that the humility of the Lutherans and humility of the Orthodox are different things; on the other hand, for constructing primary hypotheses, the distinction of "calling versus humility" may turn out to be sufficient. In addition, a number of empirical studies confirm that humility (and the associated categories), as revealed in the practices of Orthodox actors, plays an important (if not the most important) role in contemporary Orthodoxy (Zabaev 2015; Chirkov and Knorre 2015; Zabaev, Zueva, and Koloshenko 2015; Russele 2011).

Interpretation of the Category of "Humility" and Social Relationships (Analysis of Discourses)

If we assume that the ethics of contemporary Russian Orthodoxy is based on the category of humility, a number of new questions arise. What types, what variants of interpretation of this category can be distinguished in Orthodox discourse? And what type of social and economic relations will each such interpretation evoke or denote? A preliminary "typology of humility" will be offered in order to show the direction in which the formation of hypotheses in this area can move. The evidence will be presented as follows: first examples will be given of using the category of "humility" in pastoral and/or Patristic Orthodox literature, and in interviews collected during empir-

ical projects (in some cases we will point to other types of humility in the literature, including philosophy, fiction, management manuals, etc.). The second step will be to find the mode of actions in economic and/or social relations corresponding to this interpretation of "humility."

Below we offer an overview of the meanings of humility, which can be identified from our sources taken together. Accordingly, it can be assumed that these meanings are associated with different practices of church life and social life that revolves around the church. Some of these practices are also associated with another concept, "obedience," which describes both a type of activity (primarily in a monastery) and the corresponding attitude of a person toward other people (primarily, toward those who are more spiritually experienced). Often, humility is recognized from obedience, since obedience is much easier to see externally in following the instructions, orders, or decisions of another person. Possibly because of this, the variants of humility that imply the manifestation of obedience become more easily anchored in practice and culture.

A remark should be made in advance. The following overview of the types of humility will be based not only on the "correct" understanding of humility, which is transmitted through authoritative church sources, but also from the understanding that is shared by at least a part of the Orthodox community and is manifested in their behavior, which also finds support in specific interpretations of authoritative texts. Although the vulnerability of this position is clear, it seems that a similar tension between explicit ethics and implicit normativity behind real behavior is an important aspect of what Weber said in his *Protestant Ethic*.

(1) Humility associated with obedience to another person

A) Humility as submission is a capability and willingness to obey (orders, decrees, indirect orders, or hints at an order).[9] Various de-

9. One more understanding of humility is humility as acceptance of humiliation, search for humiliation, finding something beneficial in humiliation, and sometimes even provoking others to humiliate you. Cf. "And in order to acquire humility, strive and force yourself to welcome all afflictions and tribulations with a loving embrace, as beloved sisters, and to flee all fame and honors, preferring to be unknown and scorned by everyone, and to receive no care or consolation from anyone but God. Convinced of its beneficence, establish firmly in your heart the thought that God is your only good and your sole refuge, and that all other things are but thorns, which will cause you mortal

scriptions of this understanding of humility surface in the discourse available on the Russian segment of the Internet, including those from the Patristic literature:

> As a help to the others the great elder once pretended to get angry with him in church and ordered him out before the usual time. Now I knew that he was innocent of the charge laid against him by the pastor, and when we were alone I started to plead with the great man on behalf of the bursar. But this is what the wise man said: "Father, I too know he is innocent. But just as it would be a pity and indeed quite wrong to snatch bread from the mouth of a starving child, so too the director of souls does harm to himself and to the ascetic if he denies him frequent opportunities to gain crowns such as the superior thinks he deserves at each hour, through having to put up with insults, dishonor, contempt, and mockery." (John Climacus 1982, 99–100)

The use of the verb "to humble" (to teach, instruct, punish) and references to humility in the process of organizing activities also apparently belongs to this type. The indication of the absence of humility in someone by a priest allows him to legitimately stop a certain activity:

> Sometimes it happens that I would plan whom ("whom" refers to the priests from the deaneries) to give what and how much (food) from the warehouse; I estimate this based on what we have and what the situation in this or that parish is. And then one priest comes and asks me to give him more than I am giving. I refuse, he calls the Rector. . . . If I start arguing with him, he answers — "you are not humble" (laughing, as if she understands that this is nonsense). Then I have to give it, what can I do! (Interview, Research Project, "Organization of Social Work in the Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church," female, age 50, parish social worker)

This understanding of humility has another important aspect. "Accusations" and "insults" described by St. John Climacus, among other things (and perhaps first of all) cultivate a feeling of guilt in a person who is the object of these accusations and admonitions. These spirit-

harm if introduced into your heart. If you happen to be put to shame by someone, do not grieve, but bear it with joy, convinced that then God is with you" (Nicodemus 1904, pt. 2, ch. 17, 72–73).

ual principles of the Holy Fathers are also reproduced in contemporary pastoral literature. For example:

> A very important condition for constant abiding in humility is non-justification of oneself, of one's sinful manifestations. A humble person knows that any human truth being autonomous does not agree with the truth of God. This knowledge, in an almost theoretical way and not in a fully explicit form, is offered to a person who has just entered the path of life corresponding to Christian morality when he is asked "to repent," even if such person is only 7–8 years old. "Repent!" that is, acknowledge that you are guilty, which means that you are wrong. And so, the experience of one's own wrongness is revealed, gradually, half-consciously, to a person who is beginning to follow the paths of the right life. (Sveshnikov 2011)

The consequences of this understanding of humility in social relations have been previously pointed out by Boris Knorre (Chirkov and Knorre 2015). In our studies in the social work of the Russian Orthodox Church, we encountered examples of guilt as a driving force of volunteer action.[10] The average person — not an alcoholic, not a homeless person, not a drug addict, etc. — turns out to be guilty before alcoholics, the homeless, and others already by the very fact of their normalness, which becomes a kind of flaw. And the person's participation in the social work of the church serves as an eradication of this flaw.

B) Dependent humility is transferring the responsibility for oneself, for one's actions, to the person toward whom humility is "manifested." In Russian, the word "dependent" has different connotations, both negative (a person fit for work, who refuses to work) and purely social (economically dependent children, old people, etc.). Anthropologists have described the practices of dependency as extremely important for the formation of identity in a number of cultures (Ferguson 2013).

A similar modality exists in Orthodox communities, where "trust in the priest" lies at the heart of this attitude to life. The trust of young people of working age in the Orthodox priest today often entails certain consequences. It is associated with the adoption of a certain lifestyle, for example, creation of a family with many children. Large families require significant resources. In this situation, the family must somehow provide the appropriate income to its budget or its equiv-

10. It is likely that this is not specific only to Orthodox Christianity.

alent. A common practice is creating institutions that support large families in the community. These are various ways to circulate things in the community, such as joint purchases or deliveries at lower prices, family kindergartens, etc. (Vrublevskaia 2016). In other words, there emerges a kind of gift-exchange, extended in time, where humility and trust in the priest results in a set of mechanisms sustaining that trust as a return gift.

C) Ressentimental humility. The main characteristic of ressentimental humility, that is, humility proceeding from hidden offense, is the external acceptance of the will of another person accompanied by the desire to take revenge later or the desire for God to avenge.[11] Strictly speaking, this is not humility, and it is included in this list only because it is very often disguised as humility, has a lot of opportunities to be so disguised, and often can hardly be distinguished from this humility. Its features can also be observed in the typical position (mode of being) of priests/Orthodox persons, and even in the Gospels. The possibility for interpreting humility in this vein emerges not only from contemporary Orthodox discourse, where people use Orthodox prayers in various contexts, but also on the basis of the authoritative texts of the church:

> Unto what wrath? To the wrath of God. Now since what the injured man desires most to see is, himself having the pleasure of revenge, this very thing he gives him in full measure, that if you dost not avenge

11. Max Scheler, who tried to counter Nietzsche's criticism by working out an opposition to Nietzsche's doctrine of ressentiment, wrote: "Among the types of human activity which have always played a role in history, the *soldier* is least subject to *ressentiment*. Nietzsche is right in pointing out that the *priest* is most exposed to this danger, though the conclusions about religious morality which he draws from this insight are inadmissible. It is true that the very requirements of his profession, quite apart from his individual or national temperament, expose the priest more than any other human type to the creeping poison of *ressentiment*. In principle he is not supported by secular power; indeed he affirms the fundamental weakness of such power. Yet, as the representative of a concrete institution, he is to be sharply distinguished from the *homo religiosus* — he is placed in the middle of party struggle. More than any other man, he is condemned to control his emotions (revenge, wrath, hatred) at least outwardly, for he must always represent the image and principle of 'peacefulness.' The typical 'priestly policy' of gaining victories through suffering rather than combat, or through the counterforces which the sight of the priest's suffering produces in men who believe that he unites them with God, is inspired by *ressentiment*. There is no trace of *ressentiment* in genuine martyrdom; only the false martyrdom of priestly policy is guided by it. This danger is completely avoided only when the priest and *homo religiosus* coincide" (Scheler 2010, 18–19). It seems that M. Scheler's statements concerning Catholicism prior to Vatican II can at least partially apply to Orthodoxy.

> yourself, he means, God will be your avenger. Leave it then to Him to follow up your wrongs . . . And this he said both to humble the one by fear, and to make the other more ready-minded through hope of a recompense. For he that is wronged, when he is feeble, is not so much taken with any goods of his own as with the vengeance upon the person who has pained him. For there is nothing so sweet as to see an enemy chastised.[12]

It seems that the respondents speak precisely about this logic of relations in the interview:

> [When I was working in an Orthodox organization] sometimes it would seem to me that everything around was covered with some kind of dark cloud. No one would ever say anything openly. Those most experienced in this respect always looked like good people. Yet it was never possible to say whether they were actually good, or had some very clever plan. In an Orthodox organization, the one who actively sticks his neck out loses. You must be silent, you must endure, you must humble yourself, you must wait. Anyone who does something makes mistakes. And these mistakes are collected. This is where opportunities appear. Opportunities to squeeze you out of the job. There is nothing you can do against this "good." Only be kinder, more patient, more humble, only be able to wait more. Because the one who fights against good is evil. Therefore, one must wait . . . The humblest win. They save their reputation and some niche of their own or something, their own order of life. It seemed that I was living in a painting of Bosch. (Interview, Research Project "Economic Ethics of Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy," male, age 41, Moscow)

D) Humility as the use and receipt of power. The main characteristic of this attitude is that the person who humbles himself understands that in this, he is giving something to the one before whom he humbles himself, and subsequently, in strict accordance with the logic of gift-giving, the person before whom he humbles himself should give

12. John Chrysostom 1889, 22. We need to correctly understand the use of such texts as the "Homily" of John Chrysostom in the current discussion. We do not insist that such texts directly affect contemporary actors, although this can also be the case. Yet it is not about *influence* — there is another important modality, the modality of *legitimation*. Thus, if one needs to defend the ressentimental mode of action, authoritative texts that legitimize such a mode of action can be easily found in the Orthodox tradition. It should also be pointed out that such an attitude toward life is not specific to Orthodoxy. In this respect, see the above work of Max Scheler.

him a gift in return. In other words, the person who humbles himself receives some power over the person before whom he humbles himself, although outwardly this looks exactly the opposite. Christian doctrine would refuse to call this kind of attitude "humility," but its prevalence in the church as a subtype of humility, or something disguised as humility, compels us to include it in the list. The difference between this type and dependent humility is that we are dealing here with conscious exploitation of humility, while in the case of the dependent type it is often sincere trust and voluntary submission of oneself in taking a dependent position.[13]

Similar practices are described by various Orthodox actors:

> It also seemed absolutely disorganized; some basic things are not being observed, like a task is given with a deadline, but nobody cares if this deadline is overdue for months. It is somehow that bad. And yet, everyone knows that no one would reproach them, and for some reason people take advantage of that. That is, on the one hand, this is a very big plus that there is much more love in Orthodox organizations, much more of some kind of human attention, relationship to each other. But instead of being grateful for that, instead of appreciating that, a certain consumerism immediately emerges. And the person understands that well, I will not be fired anyway. The Orthodox do not like to fire people; everyone is used to this situation; they will humble themselves; everyone will endure my shortcomings. And everybody takes advantage of that. Somehow I painted everybody with the same brush, but I can see it in myself that I sometimes behave exactly in this same way. (Interview, Research Project "Economic Ethics of Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy," female, age 33, Moscow)

(2) Humility not associated with obedience to another person

A) Humility as meekness, modesty, quietness, smallness, and tranquility is probably the main theme that is manifested in the discourses. Priests during confession often give recommendations in accordance with this understanding: "Humble yourself!" This means something like, "Get over it! Don't be angry!" Sometimes a special et-

13. A typical example described in the literature is Charles Dickens's character Uriah Heep, who says the following: "'People like to be above you,' says father, 'keep yourself down.' I am very umble to the present moment, Master Copperfield, but I've got a little power!" (Dickens 1850).

ymology of the Russian word *smirenie* ("humility") is given: *smirenie* means to be "s mirom" ("with peace") (inside the soul and/or with other people).

> A humble person humbles evil beginnings, impulses, habits, lusts, thoughts, feelings, and the senses of his soul up to their utter dying (through repentance), and they become increasingly ineffective: there is nothing left that can fight. But the sweet peace that reigns as a result awaits and desires more: it seeks to establish itself as a good positive state . . . Christianity began to spread so quickly because in the person of Christ people saw the embodiment of their aspirations — aspirations of a lost but recoverable inner peace. The person who humbles himself finds this peace in the measure of his capacities. (Sveshnikov 2011)

Such moral principles turn out to be also related in pastoral literature to recommendations regarding economic behavior:

> When a person feels all the time that he has more money than others, it is very difficult for him to remain humble and modest. He is used to affording a lot of things, why cannot he afford this and that, and that? He starts to have a different worldview. And he stops noticing that at the time when he allows himself to luxuriate, there are many people in poverty nearby. He stops seeing them. Thus wealth can contribute to the development of moral blindness in a person, reduce the level of his moral feelings, ruin his conscience. (Vorob'ev 2007, 7)

In respect to social relations, this principle should be perceived as "being in peaceful relations with others, not quarreling, not taking offense, not taking revenge, continuing to communicate no matter what, being patient with another person." Such an interpretation has different social consequences. On the one hand, scholars have noted the importance of the virtue of humility for the formation of a family (see, for example, Farrell et al. 2015). On the other hand, they have also observed that humility may prove to be a useless or even harmful virtue in the political sphere.

B) Humility as a capacity to accept the perspective of another person, put yourself in your opponent's shoes, share his viewpoint, "take a wider look." One more definition of this kind of humility is *humility as a lack of attention toward oneself*, or *shifting the focus from oneself to another person*. Such an understanding of humility can be found among Orthodox priests:

> Humility is when the person's eyes are wide open. When a person is proud, he always looks at everything from his own, very narrow, point of view. People tell him:
> - Listen, dear, the table is brown!
> But he looks at the plate that is lying in front of him with one eye, while the second eye is closed:
> - No! It's white!
> Try to hear out another person! And if you see something narrowly, you should remember all the time that we all see like that! You should always try somehow to look from the side, wider. (Interview, Research Project "Economic Ethics of Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy," male, archpriest, age 43, Moscow)

A similar understanding of humility can be observed in a number of communities where parishioners are connected by close communication. Thanks to this understanding of humility, which makes it possible to accept a different point of view and receive help from another person and not to trumpet your own independence, productive economic practices emerge in such communities: for example, avoiding debt overburdening, especially when it is impossible to repay a loan.[14] Below there are three excerpts from a single interview, showing the situation of one parishioner in connection with the problem of borrowing money:

> But of course, I want to solve my problems on my own. [. . .] Maybe there is some lack of confidence in myself, what if . . . , but there is such a thing: well, I have to handle everything myself, I have to solve my problems with my own efforts. And at the same time, during these three years, the church, the parish have taught me that there is nothing shameful in saying, hey, guys, I have a problem, I would be very grateful if you help me solve it. [. . .] [*The parish*] *heals pride*. Why,

14. It is important to emphasize that humility here is in selective affinity with the pattern of gift exchange. This pattern is largely opposed to the pattern of market exchange and the corresponding concept of independent *homo economicus*, who maximizes his own usefulness. Marcel Mauss, the classic author of the gift theory, envisioned gift exchange as the sum of three types of transactions: to give a gift, to accept a gift, and to give a gift in response. Analyzing Mauss's concept, Grigorii Iudin wrote, "Mauss, apparently, was mistaken in the main thing, believing that the main anthropological transformation inherent in the market economy lies in undermining the third principle of the economy of gift-exchange — 'one needs to give an excessive gift in response.' In fact, modern utilitarianism gives the most striking blow to the second principle — 'one needs to accept the gift'" (Iudin 2015, 37–38).

> why don't we want to ask for help? Because somebody told us, someone persuaded us, that we need to be absolutely successful, that everything always should be amazingly great, one hundred percent. (Interview, Research Project "Life in Debt: Social Significance of Debt Practices in the Life of Communities in Russia," female, age 37, journalist, Riazan)

People living in accordance with this type of humility turn out to not be prone to debt overburdening, since they may take a loan from their friends when necessary:

> Now you can borrow, and now people say, you'd better take it — well, knowing some situations, they say: you'd better take [money] from me, you'd better ask me, you can return it later. But . . . Here, I say, there is one thing: I'm a small, but proud bird, yes.

Before becoming a part of the community, in case of financial need, the same respondent had not turned to friends, acquaintances, or family, but to credit services:

> Once I [took] a bank loan, I was so crazy — we broke a thermometer at home, and the mercury spilled. We have a very old parquet floor, and [the mercury] got inside, and I could not do anything to get it out, it kept going inside. And I simply went crazy, I had to urgently buy a vacuum cleaner, but we did not have a vacuum cleaner. I went and took a loan, and bought a vacuum cleaner. But I took the loan in "Home Credit," so in the end this vacuum cleaner cost me probably seventy thousand [rubles] instead of the three thousand that I paid for it.[15]

C) Heroic humility is humility toward God, acceptance of His will, and active search for His will. It differs from other types of humility in that it does not require mandatory obedience to another person. In this sense, it may resemble other types of valor in practices such as self-sufficiency, self-confidence, adherence to your vocation, etc.:

15. Practices from entirely different areas of life correlate with this understanding of humility. Thus, in his book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*, J. Collins analyzed the behavior of directors of companies that made a big leap in the market. Through specifically not focusing on themselves, these people could adapt good ideas even from people who personally criticized them (Kollinz 2012, 39, 44, 53).

> Alexander Nevsky was not humble, and even Alexander Vasil'evich Suvorov was not humble?! The person who goes to give his life realizing that there is something higher, even compared to his life, was this not humility? Humility can be defined as peace with God, always, even in the most extreme situations, when you are being beaten or when you are beating, you need to be humble and do the will of God, not losing peace with God. [. . .] Humility. . . The Lord is humble, but what about when he was expelling the merchants from the temple, was he not humble? We often perceive humility as a certain lack of will and passive submission to external circumstances. They offend me, but I endure it. For what reason? Do not endure what is not to be endured, but only with humility. (Interview, Research Project "Economic Ethics of Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy," male, archpriest, age 65, Moscow)

Such an understanding of humility is revealed in economic practices when a person has to perform some kind of work that for some reason is not close to his heart — he does not like it. In such cases, the ethos of humility helps the person to do the work, while the work, in turn, is perceived as strengthening this person in virtue:

> I earned money by private taxi driving [. . .]. Such a Christian work . . . you truly humble yourself. . . For example, I could drive people to some event that was held in the vacation hotel where I once went for some corporate event way back when I was working as the head of a broadcasting station. I myself was in that role, lived in a luxurious suite — and now I come here as a simple cab driver. Well, it humbles one, it really does. The sign of that is that I had tears when I came there. After that, of course, any fear I had was completely gone. . . . Well, in the sense that the fear of building up a sort of career, social status, and in general, even the fear of some kind of physical death. Like, see, here is a girl of a delicate constitution, but she drives big men and is not afraid. At first I was afraid, but not anymore. (Interview, Research Project "Economic Ethics of Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy," female, age 34, Minsk)

Conclusions

At the beginning of this text, we pointed out the unclear position of the Russian Orthodox Church concerning economics in the modern world. Moreover, since the modern world is perceived by contemporary people primarily as economics (or since such a perception is one of the main possible views), inattention to the economic formulation

of the question must inevitably create difficulties both for the church and for those who care about its instructions.

In order to analyze this situation, we proposed the use of Weber's method of analysis from his *Protestant Ethic*, which suggests focusing not on specific economic doctrines of the churches and not on specific economic institutions, but on unintended consequences of the salvation doctrine central to soteriological religions. It seems that in a situation of unclear economic doctrines and the (possibly) not fully developed economic institutions of the church, this approach makes it possible to analyze the direction in which the church directs her followers.

Using Weber's approach for analyzing contemporary reality, we have noticed that one of Weber's key concepts, the category of *Beruf*, can hardly be used today for analyzing the economic ethics of the Russian Orthodox Church. Both empirical research and Weber's conceptual constructions do not indicate that this category has ever been actively used by the Orthodox Church. However, in his *Sociology of Religion* (as in the *Protestant Ethic* and later in *Economy and Society* and *Economic Ethics of World Religions*), Weber built a typology of the relationship between religions and the world. At the most basic level, this typology is based on the dichotomy "asceticism-mysticism" and its corresponding pair of categories of economic ethics "calling-humility." The available empirical studies into contemporary Russian Orthodoxy suggest that the category of "humility" can be central both for the practical ethos of Orthodoxy in general, and for its economic ethics in particular.

It is worth recalling that the question of the relationship between religious ethics and economic growth, as a rule, has emphasized the importance of the category of calling for the development of a modern economy.[16] Moreover, according to a number of thinkers of the modern period, the ethics of humility (and obedience) turned out to be untimely or even harmful for people (see Davie 1999; Nitsshe 1996; Bulgakov 1997a; Bulgakov 1997b). Weber himself presented the transition from Lutheranism to Calvinism in the *Protestant Ethic* also as a transition from the ethics of humility to the ethics of calling.

In this context, the study turned to a preliminary analysis of the category of humility, in which it may be possible to discover the key

16. See, for example, the development of the typology "work-career-calling," beginning in the sociology of religion of Robert Bellah and his colleagues, and further research in this direction (Bellah 1985).

to understanding the ethics of Orthodoxy in the way it reveals itself in the contemporary (Russian) Orthodox discourse. We tried to isolate different understandings of humility in connection with the specific way of organizing social relations and/or economic practice in a narrow sense (that is, in connection with "economic" exchange phenomena, microlending, informal economy/reciprocity/organization of networks for mutual help, etc.).

A preliminary typology of the understandings of humility and (possibly) of related practices and relationships has been worked out. It contains various understandings of humility. A special study is needed for clarifying their actual impact. Previously, we divided them into two types: practices related to obedience to another person, and practices not related to such obedience.

It may be assumed that fostering the ethos of humility in one or another version will have various consequences for the Orthodox Church and for society as a whole, including economic consequences.

Thus, summing up this study, it could be said once again that the problem of economic ethics of contemporary Orthodoxy has a number of interesting and important aspects, both in terms of ethics and economy. If it is true that humility is the key category (or one of the key categories) in the economic ethics of Orthodoxy, a number of important questions follow: in what specific form is this category implemented by the actors? With what economic practices and types of social relations is this ethical category, using the Weberian language, in selective affinity? What will be the results of this interconnection? These questions require a comprehensive program of both theoretical analysis and empirical surveys. At this stage, we would like to limit ourselves to a more modest task and only outline the direction in which the formation of hypotheses can proceed for the subsequent investigation of this problem.

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"Vocation in the Flesh": Gender and Embodiment in the Religious Anthropology of Modern Catholicism

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In the early and medieval Christian tradition, the gendered body was understood as an obstacle to the cultivation of virtues on the one hand, and as a potential medium for transgressions on the other. Contemporary Catholic anthropology has another view of the subject's body and its senses and desires. This article is concerned with the pastoral project of increasing vocations and the way it is realized within Russian Catholic parishes. It also focuses on its rhetoric, placing significant emphasis on gendered embodiment. Based on participant observation materials and interviews with Catholics who have been "called," the author analyzes the strategies for making a calling to celibacy genuine and persuasive. By including gender and sexuality within the concept of vocation, such rhetoric not only makes it possible to show consecrated life as something attractive, intelligible, and real, but also to raise awareness of true masculinity and femininity. Even though church discipline prescribes solitude, in this rhetoric, celibacy does not require one to become a disembodied and asexual angel. Conversely, by applying gendered embodiment, religious specialists aim to emphasize its utmost importance for vocation, which presupposes celibacy, thereby confronting both the early Christian perspective on the sinful body and secular views on constructed gender.

Keywords: anthropology of religion, Catholicism, monasticism, gender, embodiment.

THIS article focuses on a single pastoral program of the Catholic Church that constructs and broadcasts two legitimate ways of living a gendered body and sexuality — marriage and lifelong chastity in the priesthood and monasticism — united by a common model of

the religious vocation. For people who have been socialized in a secular culture, this statement may seem incorrect or even absurd, because in their social imagination these two images are likely to be placed on opposite poles. This bewilderment may also be supported by well-known examples of asceticism in the early and medieval Christian tradition, which implied a consistent denial of the bodily dimension of existence and reached its climax in the state of angelic disembodiment of monks and priests. Indeed, according to Talal Asad, the basis of early Christian asceticism was the constant struggle against sin and the potential conditions for it, supposedly rooted in the body of the subject, which required relentless control. However, despite the rhetoric of self-denial, even in medieval monasteries the work of transforming oneself was not always reduced to a mechanical procedure of leveling the desires leading to sin. Analyzing the pedagogical program of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Asad demonstrates how the desires commonly associated with sin could be converted into a resource for the cultivation of virtues. It was mainly due to the fact that in the 12th century, the monasteries' admission rate changed significantly: while in early Benedictine monasteries the monk's life began in childhood, mainly adult men were entering the newly formed monastic orders, and they likely had some sexual experience. In this context, St. Bernard's disciplinary project did not require the repression of the body's desires through mortification techniques but rather implemented a new discursive practice of ritual dialogue, in which monks could reformulate their memories of past experiences based on the moral obligations dictated by their new life (Asad 1993).

In the modern Catholic Church, as noted by researchers of European monastic culture Isabelle Jonveaux and Stefania Palmisano, the understanding of asceticism has undergone specific changes in comparison with the medieval Catholic tradition. The rhetoric of acceptance has replaced the rhetoric of self-denial. For example, the representatives of the new monasticism of Piedmont, whom Palmisano is studying, abandon the idea of angelic likeness, and recognize the possibility or even the right to be the same as those people who have not been called to consecrated life (Palmisano 2016). The monks from the Austrian and French congregations, whom Jonveaux worked with, avoided using the word "ascetic" to describe their daily lives (Jonveaux 2011). Concerning celibacy in particular, Jonveaux also shows changes in the values attributed to it. Modern monks are integrating sexuality into the concept of chastity, positioning it as an alternative form of sexuality. For them, refusing marriage and related sexual relationships does not mean rejecting their experience of masculinity. Therefore, the emergence of desires

of the body and flesh is not the fault of the monks: the question is how they will continue to work with these desires (Jonveaux 2018, 197–98).

Today, studies of the perception of the body and celibacy in the Catholic Church, mainly represented by the works of European sociologists,[1] testify to the discursive "turn toward the body," which naturally intrigues the imagination of researchers. However, since this evidence is based not on long-term observation among religious specialists living in celibacy but on a series of conversations, many questions can and should be asked in this regard. I focus on one of them. I am interested in the discursive potential, pragmatic functions, and social consequences of this representation policy, which appeals to the categories of gender and sexuality and is implemented by the church elite for the lay audience. This issue will be considered on the basis of materials collected during observation in 2016–2018 in one Catholic parish located in the center of St. Petersburg, Russia.

"The harvest is plentiful, but laborers are few"[2]: Pastoral Support for Vocations

Like many other Russian Catholic churches, the parish of the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was revived in the early 1990s after a period of Soviet oblivion. After a long renovation in early 1997, regular worship services were resumed in the church. At the same time as the restoration of church structures, the first conversions to Catholicism and receptions occurred, as well as the active missionary labors of various monastic orders' representatives and priests — "ethnic Catholics," mainly from Poland and Belarus, and less often from other areas traditionally associated with Catholicism. A significant number of Russian Catholic laypeople have no relevant ethnic roots, and ethnoreligious sentiments have not dictated their coming to the faith. Although Catholic parishes in modern Russia have been and continue to be a center of attraction for ethnic minorities and those with relevant "Catholic roots," they do not constitute a majority in the main metropolitan parishes, such as the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. My informants were mostly brought up in a secular culture, and for them Catholic socialization was the first ex-

1. Jonveaux et al. 2014; Jonveaux and Palmisano 2016; see also the article by Esther Peperkamp on one of the consequences of "bodily turn" for laypeople — the spread of natural planning technology, i.e., the practice of non-abortive contraception, which involves self-monitoring of (female) fertility: Peperkamp 2008.

2. Matthew 9:37.

perience of churching — an experience they wanted to live as fully as possible, following what God had determined for them.

According to the teachings of the Catholic Church, every Christian is called to holiness (*Dokumenty* 2004, 86). The achievement of this state of holiness is directly possible in the unique type of life that God intended for each person. However, the knowledge of the destined path is not available to the Christian a priori: the calling must be revealed or otherwise discerned by the faithful himself or herself. The topic of vocations has been widely discussed in the Catholic Church, especially after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which established the principle of the universal call to holiness and the apostolate. It would not be an exaggeration to say that today the problem of vocational discernment is one of the most prevalent in Catholic parishes, which is not so surprising, because it is directly related to the main subject of a pious Christian's concern — the salvation of the soul. In the Russian context, it is not the scale of this concern that surprises, but the form it takes. For a better understanding of this context, it is worth mentioning several ethnographic details that distinguish the social space of the parish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary from other Russian Catholic parishes, as well as Russian parishes from the rest of the Catholic world. The first is the fact the Catholic Church exists in Russia as a religion of the minority. At the very beginning of my fieldwork, I met a young ministrant, Ilya,[3] who invited me to a mass in his parish. After the mass, we went to the nearest cafe to drink a cup of tea and to chat. The subject of our discussion was the story of one of Ilya's friends, who lived in celibacy until he fell in love with a woman and "returned to the world." According to Ilya, in their surroundings, this story caused unanimous condemnation of the hero, who for some people had been an example of "true vocation." However, Ilya's view of the situation was not condemnatory:

> — Of course, this is a problem for all Catholics, especially men, especially in Russia, this [idea]: "Maybe I should be a priest?"

But Ilya found it difficult to answer my request to explain the basis of this categorical judgment:

> — Well, because ... I don't know why. That's the problem for so many guys. Well, that only happens in our country. Like, bam! ... I had them [thoughts about vocation] too, but I realized it wasn't for me.

3. The names of the informants have been changed.

By the time I spoke to Ilya, I had already met a few people who were thinking about a calling to the priesthood or monastic life. While writing this article I concluded that among my informants a person who has never considered a consecrated life as their main life project is the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, this is true both for men and women, contrary to Ilya's opinion — he only paid attention to the gender specifics of this phenomenon.[4] What Ilya managed to notice subtly, though, was its local specifics. While support for priestly/monastic vocations is typical for the Catholic Church in general, in Russian Catholic structures this program has particular goals, conditioned by the idea of the necessity of developing the young Russian Catholic tradition fully, and avoiding exclusive association with their Eastern European neighbors. However, for the tradition to thrive, it needs religious specialists. Therefore, since the Catholic parishes have begun to be restored, care for new vocations has become one of the main issues on the Catholic ministry's agenda in Russia.

Pastoral support for callings aims to help every Christian to discover the "true self" and the path to holiness that God has defined for them. But this program can sometimes be seen as unevenly distributing its efforts. It is the calling to the priesthood and consecrated life that is regularly reflected in sermons, conferences, youth meetings, and informal conversations. This emphasis on the celibate vocations is particularly noticeable in the Cathedral of the Assumption. This parish is distinguished by being the part of the information space formed by three institutions: the parish itself, the only Russian Catholic major seminary, Mary the Queen of the Apostles, and the monastery of St. Anthony the Miracle Worker, which are united by formal and informal ties.[5] The parish hosts the main events of the liturgical year, in which both Franciscan friars and seminarians participate. Many seminarians are ordained deacons and priests in the same parish. Deacons, in turn, host a variety of activities in the parish, including regular meetings with young people, and Franciscan monks invite parishioners for informal conversation. Such conversations often revolve around vocations: priests, deacons, and monks talk over a cup of tea about how they were called by God.

The territorial and social proximity of the seminary and the monastery makes the so-called vocational crisis clear to a broad parish au-

4. While men have many options for self-fulfillment in Catholic ministry (priesthood and/or monasticism; a variety of liturgical ministries), there is little choice for women. Basically the foremost opportunity for them to be "not just a layman" is to attach themselves to a monastic order.

5. The Franciscan order has an apostolic character. Unlike the representatives of the contemplative orders, Franciscan monks can be actively involved in everyday parish life.

dience. In a wave of anxiety about this crisis in the late 2000s, laypeople formed a group to pray for new priestly vocations in Russia. In the same vein, both the seminary and the monastery are working to overcome the crisis, organizing regular opportunities for young unmarried people to reflect on their vocation. Even though this discursive field is a bit less about the vocation of marriage, there are events for engaged and married couples to reflect on matrimony. These initiatives are linked to the current course of pastoral policy, which affirms marriage and consecrated life as equally worthy paths to holiness. Despite the words of Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians that it is better for a man not to touch a woman, and that only if it is impossible to resist temptation should a man get married,[6] nowadays the emphasis has shifted toward the absolute equality of the call to marriage and the call to celibacy. Living in chastity is no longer seen as a sign of a higher spiritual state than living in matrimony.

These two images of self offered by the church *(a married person* and *a celibate person who have entirely devoted themselves to God*) may seem antagonistic to an outside observer due to institutional disciplining of embodied sociality and living gender identity. But both religious specialists living in celibacy and laypeople insistently reject this opposition. The evidence that Catholics may not be as sensitive to the difference between a lifetime of solitude and a lifetime of marriage as secular people are can be found in some vocational discernment trajectories. Laypeople may seek their calling for years — they may attempt to live in a monastery, then return to the world and enter into a romantic relationship, and then go back to the monastery; or go to the seminary, leave it assuming a vocation to marriage, but then try again to become a priest. To a large extent, this instability is determined by the method of recognizing one's vocation, which combines the autonomous interpretation of the signs of God's will and church control over this process. However, in this story I am more interested in how and why the call to celibacy, which in the early Christian tradition required the leveling of the gendered body, is presented in the modern Church not as the opposite, but as adjacent or equal to the call to marriage. In order to investigate this question, I propose to consider pastoral support for vocations as an inclusive project for all members of the church, which aims to disseminate knowledge about fundamental patterns of social behavior, linked by a common understanding of the gendered body. The goal of this project is not only catechetic (i.e., improving religious literacy)

6. 1 Corinthians 7: 8–9.

and pastoral (i.e., helping to recognize the calling), but also missionary (i.e., making someone consider the calling to a religious life). It should be noted that this project can be recognized as at least partly successful: although only a few people have reached ordination or have taken eternal vows, many consider the hypothesis "maybe I am not a husband or a wife" in their search for a calling. This undeclared missionary dimension of the pastoral program is conditioned by the particular rhetoric of persuasion that religious specialists use in order to masterfully appeal to images of the embodied interiorization of vocation.

"Here you are watching, and just falling in love with monasticism": The Aesthetics of Persuasion

In Christian cultures, one of the crucial instruments of missionary activity is the speech genre of testimony. In the Catholic milieu, however, a testimony is often considered not as a narrative but as a completion of actions (sometimes systematic), through which a Christian realizes their apostolic function. Various ministries can be considered such testimonies, as well as charitable activities and ordinances; even funerals can be a *beautiful* testimony. This epithet, as it seemed to me initially, is not so much a characteristic of the idiolect of the specific representatives of the community, but rather an essential and stable element of the sociolect of Russian Catholics, acquired in the process of socialization in the church.

The discursive emphasis on the aesthetic dimension of the vocation testimony is a vivid strategy of persuasion. Anthropologist Birgit Meyer proposes the consideration of aesthetics as a component of religion experienced through *sensational forms* of access to the transcendent or, more precisely, the forms of persuasion in the reality of this access and the authenticity of interaction with the transcendent. Despite the appeal to individual sensual experience, these forms of persuasion are tools for the realization of institutional power, which controls the stimulation of the correct feelings and emotions in the subjects (Meyer 2010). Hereby, aesthetics can be understood both in a broad sense — as a set of sensual modes of knowledge — and in a more familiar, narrower apprehension, limiting the aesthetics to the sphere of culturally specific beauty.

In the Catholic environment, observing God's vocation embodied in the human body often elicits an emotional response and becomes the starting point for the observer's reflection on their own vocation, which, in essence, characterizes a successful testimony. Even though the focus may be on the sisters of the congregation working with the

seriously ill or homeless, the bleeding ulcers on their bodies cannot spoil the image of the sisterhood's beauty. Here is an excerpt from my conversation with Svetlana. She and her mother both joined the Catholic Church in the 1990s, when Svetlana was still a teenager. According to her, in the past, when she attended the parish youth meetings, the topic of callings was one of the most discussed. Seminarians, monks, and nuns were invited to the meetings to talk about their journey to the priesthood and consecrated life to help guide young people in their choices. Marriage as a vocation was less discussed at that time, and, as Svetlana recollects, young people had difficulty choosing between vocations for the priesthood or monasticism and marriage. A significant milestone in her thinking was the moment of realization that these vocations are equal, and that marriage is a life as holy as it is *beautiful*:

> — No, they all seem to be the same, equally *beautiful* [vocations], because I've seen ... Well, I've been in touch with a lot of nuns and women, and I've seen ... from different orders, and I've seen that it was *beautiful*.
> — What do you mean, beautiful?
> — Beautiful [...] Well, you can see a person is happy, you can see that it is a vocation ... I don't know, I can't right now... that this is, like, some kind of dream come true. Well, beautiful; such beauty, I don't know, well, when you see a very beautiful family with many children [...] well, it is clear at once [...] that ... as if ... attractiveness ... here's a beautiful family — a very beautiful calling! [...] And so I could admire one calling and another at the same time. And here I should have chosen [Svetlana, catechist, thirty-two years old].

From this fragment, we can see that for a *beautiful* testimony it is not necessary to say or even do anything. The sight of a nun leaning against the wall during the mass may be as forcefully persuasive as the colorful stories of finding a vocation or spiritual singing in the monastery chapel. However, to claim nothing was happening to the faithful Catholic in the observed scene would be simplification. The material tangibility of the vocation also becomes real for the observer through olfactory and visual experiences. Distinctive description of such encounters with the mystery of God's call embodied in a person refers to a special glow coming from the body of the one called. For example, after deacon Ivan was ordained as a priest, many people noticed that he had changed instantly. "But he's a completely different man. He's shining! That is, he talks differently, looks differently, the photos show that he is different. It's happiness," one of the parishioners said in a conversation with me right after

the event. Based on the materials collected in a Mexican convent, anthropologist Rebecca Lester argues that strict monastic discipline has been replaced by a more subtle and almost imperceptible program of bodily self-discipline, which Lester defines as the *aesthetics of embodiment*. In the context of recognizing one's vocation, this implies the cultivation of new ways of experiencing one's own body and narrating this experience (Lester 2005, 36). I suppose that in deacon Ivan's case, the concept of aesthetics can be also used in a narrow sense and thus be expanded to include the mastering of techniques and body states that unequivocally refer to the experience of being called and causing bystanders to feel a direct encounter with divine beauty.

The body of the called person can also be metaphorically endowed with a pleasant fragrance:

> For example, you're looking at nuns. There are a lot of them, you know them, and one of them, you see, smells something very beautiful, in her faith. You see, she's really happy. And she knows how to spread that joy around her, that's sisterhood for her ... Here you are watching, and just falling in love with monasticism ... and it always, always goes along with femininity. [Father Anton, priest, thirty-seven years old].

Descriptions of a distinctive "odour of sanctity" are characteristic of the Christian hagiographic tradition (Albert 1990; Kormina and Shtyrkov 2017). Thus, the breath of the Blessed Herman of Steinfeld, who lived in the 13th century, was described as so fragrant that one might think he was in a garden of beautiful flowers. The 17th-century Venerable Benedicta of Notre-Dame-du-Laus was said to have exuded a divine scent that remained on everything she touched (Classen et al. 1994, 53). An aesthetic experience of closeness to the holiness of vocation, to the beauty of the body of a called Christian, which seems to shine and appears fragrant, supports the idea that God acts in the life of a Christian better than any narrative about the same thing.[7]

This beauty, which is attributed to the embodied call of God, is not gender neutral at all. Conviction in the authenticity of God's call will only grow if the called also has a natural attractiveness for the opposite gender. Ilya, whom I mentioned earlier, once showed me a picture of a young man on his smartphone and called me for confirmation that he had an unbelievable beauty. After I agreed with this statement, my interlocutor told me that this young man is a seminarian and will soon be or-

7. Robert Orsi calls this *experience of presence*, see Orsi 2008.

dained. Ilya confessed that he often shows the photo of this seminarian to his friends and acquaintances to amaze them. After all, in his opinion, there is no rational explanation for why a man with such an attractive appearance would choose to be celibate. This amazement is not only characteristic of Ilya: in the parish they say there are several nuns who are so beautiful that any man would be happy to marry them, and only God's calling to celibacy could explain such an unusual decision for a layperson.

Those who have been to Rome at least once could hardly have failed to notice the famous *Calendario Romano* — a calendar with photographs of the Vatican priests, whose appearance is entirely consistent with the standards of the fashion industry, as is well known, exhibiting strict criteria of attractiveness for the male and female. Characteristically, those Catholics with whom I have raised the issue of the usefulness of this high-profile project have assessed it in positive terms. The task of this calendar, in their opinion, is to play on contradictions, to shock ("Of course, when you look at a Catholic priest or monk, you always think: 'Why, why did he give up all this?'"; Irina, twenty-three years old), and through this conscious outrage to draw public attention to the existence of images of masculinity in chastity, alternative to popular secular images. Laypeople, monks, and priests who are most sensitive to beauty are looking for the same effect by using examples of a controversial combination of attractiveness and voluntary celibacy.

"We can see all this beauty too": The Ethics of Persuasion

A demonstration of the inconsistency between people's own desires and God's plan becomes one of the discursive forms of persuasion both in the truth of the calling and in its closeness for any person. The high symbolic value of love, with the family as its socially acceptable form, is a strong argument in favor of the fact that the person has not defined this calling for themselves, but that they were truly called to do so. This demonstration places a particular emphasis on gender and its connotations. As a possible illustration of this form of rhetorical expression, I will cite one case that occurred during the celebration of the patron saint of musicians, St. Cecilia's Day, by the parish choir and their friends. Everyone present (besides me, there were almost the entire choir, the deacon, the acolyte, and a group of active parishioners) was drinking wine and engaging in lively conversation when suddenly two nuns joined the company. One of them — Sister Aneta, an ethnic Polish woman — had known everybody for a long time, the second sister was new to me and others. Sister Aneta introduced Sister Inna

to the audience and invited everyone to talk about themselves briefly. When the queue reached one of the participants, Natalia, she ignored the given format of communication and started asking questions herself. The following is the dialogue that I have recreated between Natalia and Sister Inna, in which, it must be admitted, some other participants unsuccessfully attempted to engage:

> — It's my turn. Sister, how old are you?
> — Forty-three.
> — When did you think of the idea of becoming a nun?
> — In 2000. Then I became a catechist in my parish, then I went to study, finished theology. Then I went to Africa.

The deacon said that it would be better if the sister told everyone about the ministry in Africa. But Natalia protested harshly:

> — No, not better. Until you're twenty-something, it's a lifetime! I want to know what the woman experienced before she was twenty-five. Sister, by the time you were twenty-five, what did you have? A failed love, some broken dreams?
> — Actually, when I went to the monastery, I had a great job, an apartment, no car, but that's because I'm afraid to drive. I was fine. I knew some men. Some of them were even willing to marry me.
> — That's not an answer! Did you have a relationship with a man? I mean, a very deep love for a man.
> — Yes.

The participants once again tried to intervene, now more openly and insistently, stating that such topics should not be discussed in the presence of a wide audience. Natalia's daughter directly pointed out that she was being extremely indecent. The only person who remained utterly calm and unembarrassed at that time was Sister Inna. Assessing that her interlocutor considered the answer to be insufficient, the nun continued:

> — In fact, I was very much in love, and even when I went to the monastery, I was still in love. And now I'm in love with Jesus, and that's all.

This answer did not fully satisfy Natalia either, as she hastened to ask another question about the mutuality of this love. However, it remained unanswered because everyone began to get up from the table and to leave. Everybody felt very uncomfortable.

What was the cause of that embarrassment? Apart from the obvious — Natalia's harsh and assertive style of communication and her questions about the private life of someone she hardly knows — this conversation could also be considered as unsuccessful for another reason. Even though Natalia joined the Catholic Church several decades ago, in this conversation, she demonstrated an attitude that was not typical for the local environment. Natalia not only refused to describe the choice of monasticism in a favorable light, as is customary in the church, but she questioned the appropriateness of this choice. In fact, Natalia stated that a woman becomes a nun when life in the world, and in particular the realization of herself through an intense romantic love, is not successful. Significantly, Sister Inna readily and quietly disagreed with her interlocutor, using a counterintuitive thesis: she became a nun, though she was successful with men, and fell in love. It should be noted that Catholics living in celibacy according to their vocation often have to present rebuttals based on this contradiction — however, mostly to those who do not belong to the Catholic Church. These circumstances arise quite frequently in the Russian context. In a predominantly secular culture, where the experience of romantic love is closely related to the search for oneself and one's place in life and sexual freedom is connected to the affirmation of individual autonomy (Illouz 2013), the voluntary rejection of this form of sociality is puzzling and requires explanation. In the Church itself, such situations are rare, but as we can see, they are possible. Those few Catholics who, like Natalia, think that vows are a result of the ruined lives of "normal" men and women are usually considered to be lacking religious education.

Vocation narratives are often based on the scheme that a woman or a man discerned their calling for the religious life despite love, intense passion, dreams of marriage and family — feelings and desires associated with a gendered body. Articulation of this paradox is characteristic not only of such narratives but also of the description of one's state of mind after taking eternal vows or ordination. Both prospective and present monks, nuns and priests have a recurring thought that they share without any prompting from the researcher:[8] "In my celibacy, I remain a person who can fall in love. And what's more, it is a natural thing."

> No one says a monk becomes a saint at once. There is, of course, a struggle, human nature in him is present even after he wears a monk's robe,

8. The following are excerpts from interviews with priests and monks. Although these statements are addressed to the researcher rather than to laypeople, their citation is determined by the fact that similar statements in terms of content can be regularly recorded in the daily context of the interaction.

> yes. We also see all this beauty, monks and priests, we see all this beauty that is around us and that surrounds us. But nobody says it's right there, you know ... it's still physiology, too, it's still human physiology, that's all. But there are vows, there are vows, there are vows, which a monk or a priest gave to the Lord God. [Father Igor, Franciscan, ca. fifty years old]

> When I went to the monastery, I didn't stop being a woman, yes, and I think it's a good thing I agreed to it right away. [...] But I'm not giving it up, yes. Because I'm a woman. Not some sexless creature [...] but some specific one, with one particular gender. And it's probably very important to accept that I can experience different feelings, I can feel interested in some man. I can fall in love during my life. A billion of such situations can happen, and there is nothing terrible about that. [Arina, postulant,[9] twenty-four years old]

When Stefania Palmisano wrote about the representatives of the new monasticism of Bose, an ambitious monastic project created in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, she identified two key rhetorical strategies for this environment: "We're no angels" and "We're not holier-than-thou" (Palmisano 2016, 82). Russian Catholic monks and priests are more conservative than Palmisano's informants, but they hold similar positions on this issue. This similarity, in my opinion, is due to the ethical principles that the church offers to people who have a calling to the priesthood or a monastic calling.

The idea of being elected to this least common path in the Catholic Church has no connotations of superiority. Therefore, speaking about one's calling necessarily includes an emphasis on the fact that one has become a monk, not because of having reached an inaccessible spiritual level, but only because God has defined their path in that way. You're no better than anybody else, and maybe even worse than others. However, the speech genre of the vocation narrative is not unique. The same strategy of authenticity production can be found in hagiographic texts and the descriptions of the wonders of visionaries. This simple logic is based, for example, on the narrative of the phenomena of the Marian apparitions in Lourdes, which are crucial for the mod-

9. Formation (monastic training) is a multistage process that takes up to ten years. The prepostulancy is the first stage of formation, in which the candidate lives with the community in the cloister and gets acquainted with the experience of monastic life. The stages follow the prepostulancy: postulancy (preparation for obedience), novitiate (obedience and preparation for temporary vows), juniorate or clericate (preparation for eternal vows and preparation for eternal vows and ordination, respectively).

ern Catholic Church. Indeed, hardly anything in the personality or fate of visionary St. Bernadette Soubirous could have foreshadowed the famous events. Bernadette was young,[10] poor, with fragile health and with equally weak learning abilities, including religious ones. Andrea Dahlberg, in her study of the pilgrimage to Lourdes, notes that for the church authorities of the nineteenth century, who were in confrontation with philosophers and rationalists, visions, such as in Lourdes, became a resource for the establishment of the primacy of knowledge obtained supernaturally over knowledge acquired by intellectual effort. The first — mystical — type of knowledge was naturally related to "ordinary people," who were alien to intellectualism. Thus, the experience of Bernadette Soubirous became all the more convincing in the eyes of contemporaries precisely because this girl was absolutely "unsightly" in social, intellectual, and physical terms (Dahlberg 1991, 31). So in this context, vocation narratives of monks and priests are particularly consistent with the tradition of Catholic self-representation of selectivity:

> Some priests say before the seminary they did everything they could [*with the pressure*] to never be priests. So they've sinned so badly, and they've lived such a life that, uh, *a priest!* Not to be allowed in decent society. But it doesn't matter to God. [Father Nicholas, priest, forty-nine years old]

The second strategy, outlined by Palmisano, reveals the veiled polemics of religious experts with the assertion of the asexual and disembodied status of the called Christian in the early church. Today, monks and priests' presentation of themselves as people who are not outstanding in any way implies a reference to the gendered body that everyone has to take into account. A person called to consecrated life also bears the burden of original sin, is also prone to sin, and is not free from the desires of the flesh. Interestingly, this appeal to gendered embodiment is also a characteristic of the Catholic culture of rural northeastern Brazil, which was studied by the anthropologist Maya Mayblin. The saints venerated in this area are perceived by believers as close to them due to the commonly shared bodily experience in everyday life, especially the experience of daily bodily suffering. Reflecting on the earthly life of St. Rita of Cascia, known as "the married saint," or the Virgin Mary, Mayblin's informants think of their experiences in a specific gender dimension: they speak of married daily life and female physiology, the

10. About the young female visionaries and the persuasiveness of their images in the Catholic Church, see Maunder 2016.

torment of childbirth and the experience of motherhood. Even though the state of sanctity is inherently exclusive (saints lived and died according to a distinctive canon), for the faithful, it is the gendered nature of saints that in fact makes them the same as all ordinary people (Mayblin 2014, 272–73). References to the shared bodily experience of all and its consequences also create the effect of clarity and proximity of the vocation, making it easy to understand.

The Anthropology of Marriage and Celibacy

The call to a life of chastity per Catholic doctrine does not change human nature. The called Catholic continues to live in the same body, which has a desire for romantic love, and with the same vision, which sees attractiveness and beauty. In order to understand the mechanism of legitimization of this position, as well as its social consequences, it is necessary to return to Talal Asad's question about the construction of the relationship between sin and its potential condition. Let me provide another example regarding this question. One day, during the spiritual exercises at the Monastery of St. Anthony the Miracle Worker, the participants gathered in the monastery kitchen for tea and conversation in the time free from conferences and prayers. Franciscan friar Vasily was among those invited to the tea party. Lent was coming, so the discussion shifted to the subject of what they were inclined to give up during this period. One of the participants in the spiritual exercises in connection with this topic suddenly recollected the story of her Orthodox acquaintance. A priest came to one of the monasteries during the fast. Coming down to the dining room for dinner and finding the table almost empty, he wondered what the reason was for this restriction. "We've got fasting," women answered him. But the priest objected, "No, it's not a fasting. That's when everything's there, and you don't eat, that's real fasting." Everyone laughed, including friar Vasily. However, when the laughter calmed down, the monk shared the thoughts that the story had inspired in him and that were subsequently reconstructed in my field notes:

> We have three vows — chastity, poverty, and obedience. But the most important thing is obedience. Because if you are faithful to your oath of obedience, you will definitely preserve both chastity and poverty. For example, I have an interest in women, too. I'm a normal guy, too. And if someone says he doesn't like women, that he doesn't feel anything, that he's not interested, it's not normal, it's psychiatry, it's a sick person. Then why do you need these vows? It's got to be a healthy feeling, it has to be lived.

This somewhat provocative statement is a good illustration of the problem that Asad has raised. It is well known that an act, the sinfulness of which is beyond doubt, requires a direct countermeasure. But one must first determine whether sin (or its possibility) is actually a sin (whether it be feelings, thoughts, fantasies, somatic experiences, etc.) before becoming a subject of concern. What may fall into the class of potential conditions depends on the historical and cultural context (Asad 1993, 103). In comparison with the early Benedictine monasteries, which required the monks to renounce their personal desires and embrace humility of the flesh in order to achieve salvation, in this case, as in the case of Asad's investigation of the pedagogical program of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the relationship between the potential conditions of sin and the actual sinful action has a different nature and different pragmatics. Here if something the celibacy requires one to abandon remains, that is when the vow of celibacy acquires its full meaning. Awareness of one's sexuality is not an exceptionally dangerous precondition for sin, because it allows the person who is called to constantly experience his or her promise of chastity.

"I'm a normal man," says the monk, and this does not seem inappropriate to anyone present. It should be noted that there is no longer a significant distance from the opposite sex for Catholics living in the promise of celibacy, as required by the early Christian tradition. Today, female parishioners and priests/monks may have friendly relationships. The social manifestations of these relationships can vary: frequent individual meetings and so-called spiritual conversations, travels and pilgrimages, joint activities, and other ways of relating without religious connotations, such as compliments, including to the appearance of parishioners. These forms of social interaction are often understood in terms of masculinity and (spiritual) paternity, i.e., in a paradigm that refers to quite specific gender values and opposes the androgynous image of a priest/monk.

To a large extent, such positioning is conditioned by modern Catholic ideas about the subject. Discussing the question of whether there can be gender of sin, Maya Mayblin writes that in the Catholic Church there are two different models of the subject: dualist and universalist. The first is based on an early Christian vision of human nature through the prism of its primordial and unchanging gender duality. This anthropology postulates the possibility of human existence in two fundamentally different, but complementary spiritual and physical forms — as a man or a woman. The second model, which became widespread in the 20th century and is related mainly to the resolutions of the Second Vatican Council, emphasizes that sinfulness and access to holiness are

common to all people, and the differences are more conventional and contextual than ontological (Mayblin 2017, 143–47). The anthropological model of vocation, realized in the principle of the universal call to holiness, is obviously universal in its form. According to this view of the subject, the paths to holiness are diverse, but they are of equal value. This equality of vocations is supported by a common mechanism for achieving holiness through voluntary self-sacrifice (*Dokumenty* 2004, 470). Paradoxically, it is only by renouncing oneself that a person actually finds him- or herself.

The local anthropology of vocation offers believers two basic forms of existence: marriage and celibacy, which are equally holy and both require self-denial. However, it is much easier for most unchurched people and new Catholics to reestablish a symbolic connection between sacrifice and chastity than between sacrifice and marriage. The consequences could be contradictory: neophytes tend to see in celibacy the fullest possible spiritual realization, or, conversely, something beyond their capacity. The modern project of pastoral support for vocations is aimed at relieving this tension. None of the religious authorities I know would ever say in public discussion that marriage is a vocation "by default" for those who are not ready to devote themselves to ministry in the church and who therefore choose the easiest way. In addition, I hear more often now that marriage is even more difficult than monasticism and priesthood, and that the family requires more commitment than living alone. Among other things a successful Catholic pastoral exhortation (for those who are responsible for it) teaches that both marriage and celibacy are equally legitimate paths of achieving salvation.

Surprisingly, this model of the subject is made universalist also by the expansion of the semantic potential of vocation at the expense of gender and sexuality; whether it is marriage, where gender and embodiment are obviously of particular importance, or consecrated life requiring celibacy. This congruence of vocations, which surprised me so much at the beginning of my fieldwork, is also due to the holistic approach of modern Catholic theology to the individual, which does not oppose the soul and the body, but unites them into a single whole. Therefore, the acquisition of a vocation to a particular path takes place within the framework of a person's primary vocation to live in the male or female body. In this sense, the words of Svetlana, who once faced a difficult choice between marriage and monasticism, and now leads a catechism group and special meetings for married couples, are indicative. One of her main goals is to make it clear to a wide audience that marriage and chastity are not opposed to each other but have a common basis:

> It seems to me that now there is a lot of distortion in the world, what is femininity, masculinity. And how does that even make me want to talk to young people, here. And this is the basis for being a very good priest, a monk, you have to be a good man, you know, a good man, I mean, a *real* man, and at the same time it is the basis for marriage. [Svetlana, catechist, thirty-two years old]

This is what constitutes the paradox of the Catholic anthropology of vocation: how can the universal vocation for holiness be gender specific? Exploring two issues the Catholic Church is challenged by — the question of the female priesthood, and the crisis surrounding the sexual harassment by the clergy — Mayblin shows how church elites can turn to a universalist or a dualist model to legitimize their positions. The remark about the creative appeal to explanatory models is quite correct in the context of the case at hand. By constructing the line of reasoning through the concept of equality and community of callings, the church authorities are solving two pastoral problems at once. The common denominator of marriage and celibacy is the subject's gendered body and its desires, which expands the prospects for "popularization" of the vocation to the consecrated life in an environment where voluntary chastity is seen as hardly achievable. The second function of this program is reflected in Svetlana's statement. Through the idea of a single, generalizing concept of vocation, the Catholic Church asserts among its congregation the notion of human duality — the correct images of male and female. Thus, the universalist anthropology of vocation acts as a counterbalance to its ideological antipode — the same universalist but "distorting" model of the constructed gender.

Conclusion

By including gender and sexuality in the concept of celibacy, the Catholic Church is attempting to overcome the vocational crisis. Specific rhetoric makes it possible to present consecrated life as attractive, as comprehensible and real, and in fact, not at all terrible. Despite the prescribed discipline of physical loneliness, it is not equated to the status of a disembodied and sexless angel. On the contrary, the modern Catholic anthropology of vocation polemicizes with the tradition of such a conceptualization of the body.

Rebecca Lester, expecting to see in the Catholic convent nuns who sought to "escape" from their own gendered bodies as obstacles to achieving holiness, faced a more curious state of affairs. One of the

most frequent statements among these nuns was: "A woman should always be a woman 100%" — and it, perhaps, most successfully illustrates the disciplinary and pedagogical program of this convent as a formation institute. This program, according to Lester, also aims to place the experience of individual vocation in the context of a religious protest against the modern liberalization of women and, as a consequence, the loss of truth about themselves. Postulants were taught to comprehend their life experience as invariably contradicting modern models of femininity (first of all, the image of an independent and sexually active woman). For them, this contradiction became a special sign of selectness to another, consecrated life. Thus, the cultivation of an emphatically feminine subjectivity (which becomes an alternative to the modern one) takes the form of a political statement in the process of monastic formation (Lester 2005, 13). Significant parallels can be found with the current pastoral policy of the Catholic Church hierarchy.

The primary object of this pastoral support is young people, who are overwhelmingly brought up in unchurched families and socialized in a secular culture that affirms the individual autonomy of the subject, in particular in the field of sexual life. And religious experts are quite aware of this fact and make it an issue of public reflection. Within the framework of this reflection, contemporary manifestations of individual rights and freedoms, especially those related to gender, take the form of an undeclared war against the individual and his or her dignity. One of the main critical arguments of the modern Catholic Church toward secular culture is the accusation that it draws a line between the personality and the body as between subjective and objective, which makes the latter a space for various manipulations. Church intellectuals link sexual liberalization (which leads to seeing body as an object of sale), the legitimization of abortion, euthanasia, and so on to this semiotic division and the proclamation of a "secular body,"[11] as well as the dissemination of ideas about the social construction of gender. Placing the concept of non-binary gender as one of the negative (according to the Catholic Church) consequences of so-called gender ideology makes the concept of divine vocation with its articulation of the original masculinity/femininity particularly convincing. All in all, it also makes the pastoral activities aimed both at maintaining gender roles and at increasing the attractiveness of celibacy consistent and not contradictory in the slightest.

11. For a discussion of the boundaries of the concept of secular body, see Hirshkind 2011.

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"VseiaSvetnaia Gramota": Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Utopian Comparative Studies

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The post-Soviet cultural landscape is characterized by the popularity of nationalistic ideas and narratives, which apply conspiratorial explanatory models and suggest various versions of "alternative history." They are framed, in particular, with amateur concepts of language shaping what can be called cryptolinguistics. This type of cryptolinguistic discourse is illustrated in this article with the case of the so-called VseiaSvetnaia Gramota (the"WorldWide Script"), which teaches that an esoteric Slavic alphabet "encodes" the entire universe. The doctrine's discursive design and its interpretive patterns give an opportunity to track the connections between Western esotericism, the history of philology, and nationalism.

Keywords: "VseiaSvetnaia Gramota," *Book of Vles*, amateur linguistics, Aryan myth, conspiracy theories, Kabbalah.

Introduction: The Etymological Version of the Dulles' Plan

On MARCH 21, 2018, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Literary newspaper) published an article titled "Time Bomb Laid by Max Vasmer, or the Language We Speak." According to the author of this text, journalist Vladislav Pisanov from Chelyabinsk, Vasmer's *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language* is "an ideological diversion, a humanitarian bomb, the fragments of which have survived to the present day and are rooted in the core of Russian linguistics," because it intended to prove that "Russian speech came from a huge number of borrowings," and "the Russian language didn't exist, until words from other languages were borrowed." Vas-

mer, according to the article, was working toward the "linguistic-political fragmentation of the Russian Empire" (assuming, in particular, "the creation of an artificial Ukrainian vocabulary") proposed by a member of the "mystical society of the Ahnenerbe" and linguist Georg Schmidt-Rohr. For this purpose, Max Vasmer allegedly used concentration camp prisoners as respondents to collect dictionary material. When reading the article it becomes clear that the author mixes diachrony with synchrony, Indo-European correspondences with direct borrowings, and reads the etymological dictionary as a foreign vocabulary, each time drawing ethnoliguistically inspired conclusions:

> Take, for example, our birch, praised by mothers and poets. If we consult Max Vasmer's *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language*, which is fundamental for Russian science, it turns out that the Russians did not know how to call this tree until they were "prompted" by Dr.-Ind. Bhūrjas, as well as by the Alb. Bardh "white," Goth. Baírhts is "light, shiny." There are no birches in India? Well, so what? They're white after all! (Pisanov 2018)

The article ends with an attack against institutional linguistics, especially "academics who have received their degrees in comparative linguistics" inherited from Stalin-era conspiracy culture. As a plot it resembles a linguistic version of the Dulles' plan (more precisely, a variation of the plot of the occult war), because foreign invasion into the Russian language is perceived as causing irreparable damage to the unity of Russia, its political well-being and national identity.

How and why has language become so important for post-Soviet conspiracy theories? What are the trajectories of linguistic conspiracy in Russia and how are they related to trends of philological knowledge and studies of New Age religion? What are their modes of perception and existence, their cognitive and social functions? These are the issues that will be touched upon in this article.

"VseiaSvetnaia Gramota": Alphabet, Teaching, Movement

Post-Soviet nationalist ideas and narratives often use conspiratorial explanatory models and foster different versions of the fringe science, namely alternative history, in which concepts of language occupy a special place; folk linguistics, overlapping with conspiracy theories,

can be referred to as "cryptolinguistic." The term "cryptolinguistics," proposed by Vladimir Bazilev, describes non-professional language judgments based on the idea of its inherent hidden value and power (Bazilev 2012).

"VseiaSvetnaia Gramota" (further referred to as VG) serves as a vivid example of such cryptolinguistic doctrine. It is believed to be an authentic Slavic alphabet (associated with the primordial language of all mankind), which was later distorted and reduced by the enemies of the Slavs. According to the teaching, the VG alphabet has 147 letters (*bukovy*) and is several millennia old.

There have been two English equivalents of its name introduced by scholars so far — "Pan-International Charter" (Laruelle 2008) and "Planetary Writing (Alphabet)" (Bennett 2011). I would suggest translating it as "WorldWide Script" since a slightly Russified version of the Ukrainian word *vsesvitniĭ* (worldwide) is used while the word "script" can deliver the polysemy of the original; supporters of the doctrine can be called vseiasvetniks. The leader and founder of the movement was Ananii Abramov (1938–2019, he used the double surname Shubin-Abramov), who set out his doctrine in *Bukovnik* (The letter book) and over one hundred VG bulletins, and also created the public organization of the same name.

We know little about how and when the movement was formed, and about who inspired it. According to the conventional narrative, it began to spread back in 1979, but there is no independent evidence of this. As for Ananii Shubin-Abramov himself, according to the information provided on the website, he was a member of numerous non-existent academic institutions and secret state committees, and he was also considered divine. He represents himself as a descendant of the boyar clan of the Shubins, who allegedly decided to disclose the family secret and started to preach VG due to the global crisis of humanity.

The VG letters are stylized as Cyrillic uncial and semi-uncial lettering, with the pre-reform-looking names ascribed to them or designed for them; there are also letters modified in shape as well as ligatures. The way in which the rotation of the letters from different angles also changes their meaning can be seen as a reference to the idea of "Russian runes," especially since the guidelines for fortune-telling with runes, widely used in the early 1990s, are found, for example, in the magazine *Science and Religion*, which became a platform for neo-Pagan journalism.

Each of the 147 VG letters has its own esoteric meaning, which allows you to read any word as an acronym and learn its "true" etymology. The VG also employs a phonosemantic model of interpretation, but the process of intensive semiotization involves both material objects and the human body.

The knowledge embedded in the VG is considered to be overwhelming: participants usually describe it with the formula "all about everything," referring to the name of the famous popular science book series for children. According to the VG teaching, all letters are multidimensional and their flat resresentations, as well as the reduction of their number, has inevitably led to the loss of esoteric knowledge and power. Human history unfolds as the history of a gradual reduction in the number of letters, or rather malevolent attempts on the linguistic integrity of the VG. In this case, the narrative about the Jewish conspiracy is linguistically colored — the "theft" of letters is imputed to an influential ethnically marked group.

One of the key aspects of the applied "linguistic magic" in VG is the bodily one: almost all the letters of VG correspond to bodily "poetics," which implies a set of positions corresponding with the outline of each letter; this way it is supposed to provide contact with the universe. In fact, the "Mental and Corporeal Gymnastics" as a part of VG include elements of collective prayer within the framework of morning workout. The genealogies of such "Russian yoga" can be traced back to the 19th century. Pavel Uspensky, a disciple of George Gurdjieff, dedicated several works to the idea of the "fourth dimension" (first of all, the book of the same name, published in 1909 [Uspenskii 1910], which echoes the concept of the isomorphism of the letters to the multidimensional physical world, not given in the profane sensual experience, but comprehended by the developed sensoriums in the course of bodily practices similar to yoga). Correlation with anthroposophical practices of eurythmy is also possible.

VG has gained ground in the post-Soviet period; as a recognizable discourse and a number of practices formed. Congresses were held, lectures and classes were organized to study the *Bukovnik*, and several books were published interpreting historical events and offering etymologies inspired by VG (Beliakova 1994). Despite the fact that the majority of representatives of Rodnover (i.e., native faith) movements eventually rejected the VG (Aitamurto 2016, 98), its representation in the corresponding segment of

the Internet shows that the doctrine remained somewhat popular in the 2000s and the 2010s. During this period, some active VG enthusiasts regional communities (and, for example, provide regular meetings in the museum of the artist Konstantin Vasiliev in Moscow, which became a landmark for the Rodnover movement).

The popularity of VG has decreased compared to the 1990s and the early 2000s. There are 7,000 to 11,000 participants in its public groups in the social network Vkontakte (in 2019); at the same time, the VG congresses in the Kostroma region are usually attended only by about 30 to 40 people. I use materials collected at two of them (in 2017 and 2019). The regional, educational, and gender background of the participants was mixed: along with Moscow and St. Petersburg, big Ural and Siberian cities and small towns were represented, as well as post-socialist countries such as Lithuania, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. The leading roles at the congresses are played by elderly women, mainly provincial schoolteachers, who give lectures and workshops on VG during the congresses; in recent years this seems to have been the only way for many of the participants to communicate face to face with other VG believers; communication takes place at other times mostly online.

The study of cryptolinguistic ideas and narratives generally focuses on texts, and the communities that share them are rarely the subject of research, but a shift in focus toward the community and its practices can prove interesting. Some of the earliest evidence on the activity of VG "ideologists" dates back to the end of the 1980s and the very beginning of the 1990s. In the book by Mark Deutch, *The Browns* (meaning "the Brownshirts") the essay "Brown Verbiage" is devoted to the meeting of the leading members of the "Russian Academy" with the public.

There are a number of things in the description of the meeting characteristic of the VG movement to this day: the anti-Semitic and homophobic position of the speakers, naïve etymologization, as well as the bodily "poetics." Apparently the events have brought together various neo-Pagan "academicians" (it was announced that "before the beginning representatives of the pagan gods and then representatives of Orthodoxy will speak" [Deutch 2003, 30]).

The first VG bulletin was dedicated to the summing up of the results of this meeting, which opened with the "Resolution of the World Forum 'For Unity with the Purpose of Reviving the Right to

Life by the Mind Carriers.'"[1] According to the announcement of the chairman, the head of the "Russian Academy," "the other day it was the 7500th anniversary of the introduction of flat writing in Russia" (Deutch 2003, 30). Despite the contradictory information in different sources, the year 7500 according to the VG chronology is the year 1991: bulletin number 1 indicates the dates of the forum from August 26 to September 4, 1991; the meeting described by Deutch was dedicated to the same anniversary and was held in early September, when, in the opinion of the VG adherents, the New Year should be celebrated (these details are also recorded in Deutch's essay [Deutch 2003, 31]).

There are few direct references to any affiliations of the participants: "The only thing that was known about the Russian Academy was that it was founded by Ilya Glazunov together with some of our 'writers'" (Deutch 2003, 20). In addition, Deutch jokingly says that the choice of the Central House of the Soviet Army (Rus. TsDSA) in Moscow for the event was not random and cites one of the speakers about the solar particle "ra" and the idea that it is "not without reason [that] there is so much sunshine in the words 'army,' 'generalissimo,' 'general,' [and] 'marshal.'" Shubin-Abramov, called a "Russian academician" in the essay, will later present himself as a "people's academician," and militaristic images will also be reflected in his titles: "Orthodox and Military Academician, Doctor of Philosophy in Space Security." Ilya Glazunov, as a landmark figure for Russian nationalism, has often contributed to the implementation of various initiatives such as the meeting described above, including their sponsorship.

The celebration of the thousandth anniversary of the Baptism of Rus', regarded as a milestone that marks the beginning of the use of Cyrillic script, as a significant event in the late Soviet period can be considered a closer context of the VG. VG bulletins contrast this date with a more impressive one — 7500 years since the "introduction of flat writing," i.e., the simplified transfer of multidimensional letters on the plane[2] — thus, the chronology since the creation of the world gets a new (and also linguistic) interpretation.

1. Bulletin of the VseiaSvetnaia Gramota no. 1, 7500, l.
2. See Bulletin of the VseiaSvetnaia Gramota no. 30, 7504, p. 4, accessed March 2019, http://xn--80aaafahlb0egpvgbrh3sg.xn--p1ai/gramota/bulleteni/.

Amulet, Trademark, Totem

The outlines of most of the VG letters iconically represent their meanings (figs. 1, 2). An iconic interpretation of the alphabet borrows the illustrative tradition of the medieval figurative alphabets (for example, the alphabet books by Karion Istomin) and, presumably, is aesthetically oriented towards them (fig. 3). The letter "zelo" ("the sign of the sunset with no dawn following" [*Bukovnik* 31]) is the only negative one out of a hundred and forty-seven letters, is supported symbolically. Not coincidentally vseiasvetniks use only one Latin letter, "s," to denote it, iconically representing the snake, the image that actualizes connotations (including biblical) associated with danger and abomination. The letter is used, for example, to write the words *slo* (evil), *sombi* (zombie), *parasity* (blood-suckers), *lesbiistvo* (lesbianism), *sidy* (Jews), and *vrasi* (enemies) (fig. 4). In medieval art the snake represents sin, and scenes that depict fighting with it are called psychomachia as the fight takes place in the soul of man. Among vseiasvetniks this symbolism is reinterpretated so that the language in its written form turns out to be the main battlefield between good and evil.

Fig. 1. See description in the text.

Fig. 2. See description in the text.

Fig. 3. See description in the text.

Fig. 4. See description in the text.

Fig. 5. Author's photo, see description in the text.

As Brian Bennett notes, it is symbolism that connects esoterism and conspiracism, which are combined in post-Soviet alphabetic mysticism (Bennett 2011, 13). The VG essentially assumes a kind of irregular semiotic system in which the sign can belong simultaneously to three different types of the Peircean triad (iconic, indexal, and symbolic). The search for a universal language is carried out by destroying the conventionality of the signs. More precisely, symbols reveal themselves as "natural," they are metaphorically or metonymically connected with the natural world, which is covered by the symbolic system of

"antediluvian language." Thus, the primordial nature of the VG alphabet is proved by its "naturalness" — this can be called natural philosophic linguistics.

> Everything around, and nicks and notches[3] on birch trees, and the forms of scales, flowers, and feet of insects and other living creatures, as well as the rainbow, halo, and other Light-woven formations reflect the letters, Syllables, and even the Words of the WorldWide Alphabet. (Bulletin of VG 1 30 of 7504, 4)

It can be noted that VG signs have very limited application — they are mainly used decoratively and apotropaically. Letters are used for the organization of space (for example, window frames in the form of the letter "tau" — a kind of Slavic Feng Shui), they are sewn on clothes (from the stylized national flax shirt to the hoodie) and glued on the backlite of used Zhiguli, dying out on the worn-down roads, which, according to the memories of villagers, were last repaired "under the Communists." The participants of the congress put VG inscriptions on dishes and kitchen utensils — at the common table you can see coffee cups and mugs inscribed in this way (fig.5).

Thus, in a sense, the letters of the VG denote themselves; they mark a kind of "corporate" belonging of people and things. This visual culture is partly reminiscent of the pseudo-Russian logos of the 1990s, which were made in pre-reform spelling or Slavic ligatured script.

VG and the Discursive Role of Secrecy in Esotericism

Given the lack of reliable data on the environment where VG originated, what we know is gleaned mainly from various discursive "evidence." According to the Dutch researcher of Western esoterism, Kocku von Stuckrad, a discursive approach can help in understanding the unfolding of the cryptolinguistic culture characteristic of the VG. Stuckrad complements the Foucauldian concepts of discourse and epistemes with the poststructuralist ideas of Bourdieu's sociology, in particular the concept of the field (Stuckrad 2010). Considering the discursive approach not as a concrete method, but as a research style or perspective, he defines its subject as "the relationship among com-

3. Nicks and notches (Rus. "cherty i rezy") were used by illiterate Slavs to count and to read fortunes, according to the short treatise "On the Letters" of the 9th–10th century. Neo-Pagans often use this quote as evidence of the existence of a Slavic pre-Christian writing system. See Bennett 2011, 147.

municational practices and the (re)production of systems of meaning, or orders of knowledge; the social agents that are involved; the rules, resources, and material conditions that underlie these processes; and their impact on social collectives" (Stuckrad 2013).

A case in point is Stuckrad's view of the discursive function of secrecy and its social capital, which is characteristic of many esoteric communities: "From this point of view, the chief effects of secrecy are on the recipients of the secret, not on those from whom it is putatively withheld" (Stuckrad 2010). Shifting the focus to the group and its formation around the idea of secrecy is an interesting prospect. In the case of the VG, connotations relevant to Soviet culture are important, as the idea of state secrets, which permeated all levels of society's existence, contributed to the development of conspiracy theories. The most prestigious areas of professional activity — military, scientific, and technical — were related to secrecy. The "core" of VG community tend to represent themselves as related to some state project of enormous importance, secret and thereby mysterious (see Shubin-Abramov's titles above). One of the participants of the congress, who presented several conspiracy stories in the first conversation, concluded by saying that we have already "learned too much," and it would take at least two years for beginners to understand the secrets he had mentioned (he was propagating the so-called "Concept of Public Security"[4]).

It seems to me that the role of "discursive secrecy" of this kind cannot be overemphasized when it comes to the process of transmitting ideas, narratives, and practices in post-Soviet New Age religion. Here we deal with the cognitive attractiveness of the understatement that triggers interpretative creativity in which values, representations, and implications symptomatic for this or that group find a way out. In this sense, the story of the *Book of Vles*, which largely anticipated the introduction of VG and served as one of its direct sources, should be considered revealing.

The *Book of Vles* as Precursor to the "VseiaSvetnaia Gramota"

The *Book of Vles* is one of the most prominent forgeries in the history of Russian paleography, as well as an extremely important text for

4. "The Concept of Public Security (Russia)" (CSR) is a conspiratorial and totalitarian political program of the movement "Course of Truth and Unity." For more information, see Ob"edinenie Storonnikov Kontseptsii Obshchestvennoi Besopasnosti, accessed March 2019, http://kob.su/.

many Russian nationalists, especially the neo-Pagans. Despite the unambiguous expert opinion exposing the forgery (Zhukovskaia 1960, 142–44), in the 1970s there was an upsurge of public interest in it (Mitrokhin 2003, 415–16). This interest remained largely unsatisfied — access to the text itself, which was distributed illegally and not in full, was difficult, and the text was associated with foreign (i.e., oppositional and of higher quality) content. The official press only mentioned the *Book of Vles* as a "mysterious" manuscript that provoked disputes among scientists.[5] Although the reaction from experts was clear and there was no scientific controversy over the authenticity of the *Book of Vles*, their negative findings were easily presented as part of an imaginary scientific discussion. Comparisons of the narrative about the *Book of Vles* with the story of "The Tale of Igor's Campaign," "sacrilegious" according to many members of the academic community, in fact explain a lot of the success of the *Book of Vles* (Tvorogov 1990, 43:170–234; Shnirelman 2015, 1:150).

The full text of the *Book of Vles* became widely available to Russian readers in various forms only in the 1990s: it was published in a detailed academic review as a falsification by Oleg Tvorogov and at the same time was "translated" into Russian by Alexander Asov and published in many thousands of copies (Tvorogov 1990). The reasons that gave rise to such a strong cultural impact of the *Book of Vles*, and perhaps partly clarifying its popularity, are rooted in the growing strength of the Russian nationalist movement in the 1970s, which was both officially based and supported by underground intellectuals (Mitrokhin 2003).

Cryptolinguistic hermeneutics, implying the etymologization of any foreign words as if it was derived from Russian, goes back to the prescientific stage of Russian linguistics, as it inherited and spread particular ideas (for example, that the word "Etruscans" is derived from the word "Russians" (Bogdanov 2013, 100–114). Examples of its use in Soviet scientific discourse can be found in the works of Boris Rybakov, who has undertaken a dubious reconstruction of the pagan belief system of the ancient Slavs (Rybakov 1981).

The content of the *Book of Vles*, as a chronicle that recorded the heroic victories of the Ruthenians during the seven thousand years preceding the adoption of Christianity and the Cyrillic script, as well as some ritual instructions, lies in the field of folk-history; in the case

5. Skurlatova 1979, 55–59. The article is also included in the collection "Tainy Vekov," 26–33. The reference is provided in Tvorogov 2004, 47–85.

of the "VseiaSvetnaia Gramota" the alternative history of the Russian Empire is implied. It is worth mentioning that, according to those who support the authenticity of the *Book of Vles*, it was the Nazi organization the Ahnenerbe that hunted for the secret knowledge embedded in the "book" and stole it during the Second World War.

The system of writing of the "original" *Book of Vles* is called *velesovitsa* (Bennett 2011, 140–50). Representing a distorted but recognizable version of the Cyrillic alphabet, *velesovitsa* is the result of reverse deciphering of the allegedly ancient manuscript. Linguistically, this effect of antiquity is achieved by the obscure semantics and syntax, as well as by the mixing of features characteristic of different Slavic languages. Of course, the linguistic creativity of the VG creators extends much further, but the careful elaboration of a hundred and forty-seven letters, the rules of accentuation, and a kind of "literary norm" express the idea that the older the language, the more opaque and incomprehensible it must sound and look on the page. This works according to a cognitive principle that provides ritual viability to sacred texts that have undergone desemantization to a certain degree (Boyer 1990, 79–93). In this sense, the linguistic work that we see in the VG texts can be called radical without exaggeration.

Finally, there are numerous borrowings from the *Book of Vles* in VG, which are quite common in the "cultic milieu" of the post-Soviet New Age, so that direct acquaintance with the original was optional.

So, we can say that VG is a kind of a grassroots version of the *Book of Vles*. The inaccessibility of the full text of the *Book of Vles* in later Soviet times led to the fact that it became partly "imaginary" and was replaced by a story about itself. What matters here is that the VG exists outside of any text that claims to be authentic. Like the *Book of Vles*, it is intended to demonstrate the existence of pre-Cyrillic script in Russia, but VG is given by itself, not in the text, but in the alphabet. Moreover, there is little attention to writing practices in the VG story — rather writing becomes an attractive existential metaphor, and its comprehensive and pervasive nature manifests itself in natural phenomena, human physiology, and universal processes. In a way, it is the ideal foundation of the universe and the dynamics of creation. Such a model of hermeneutics and encoding, which are constantly evolving into each other, can be called Kabbalistic — it is certainly not a question of direct orientation to the Kabbalistic tradition, but rather of the history of some ideas and worldview systems entwined in the history of European esotericism and the New Age.

Philology as an Esoteric Discipline

In discussing the discursive genealogies of VG, it is necessary to take into account the historically significant place of esoteric hermeneutics in the formation of the philological tradition and the mutual influence of these forms of knowledge. When considering esoteric knowledge as stigmatized, it is important to understand that this status is historically dynamic. In the Renaissance period, neo-Platonism and Christian Hebraism played a crucial role in the formation of humanist doctrine (Stuckrad 2010). The origin of philological criticism, including pre-Reformation criticism (e.g., by Johannes Reuchlin) was connected with the study of biblical translation. Therefore, the pursuit of the vseiasvetniks can be seen as a philological one in many respects: it is a peculiar version of the reconstruction of the primordial language, building a new type of semiotics and critique of translation, revising "corrupt" language. Thus, the sphere of applied philology expands to the cosmic scale as the world order is regulated linguistically, and an alternative version of history is attached to the "linguistic" agenda.

Kabbalistic tradition is associated with the ontologization of letters, which were endowed with mystical properties and were thought to be the basis of the universe. Interpretation became an act of creation, implied a special cosmic combinatorial approach, and claimed to decipher the immanent course of nature. Its assimilation by the later philological tradition led to the existence of a special kind of subtext that underlies hermeneutic practices, the transformations of which through the end of the 20th century could be a separate subject of research.

Vladimir Solovyov and some of his followers, whose thinking was more of an exceptional than a typical phenomenon in Russian religious philosophy, introduced Kabbalistic spirituality to Russian culture. Solovyov pointed to the deep resemblance of the Christian Kabbalistic tradition to Orthodoxy, and connected both with hope for the future of Russian theocracy.[6] Marlene Laruelle, one of the few re-

6. Solovyov's precedent of intellectual appropriation of the Kabbalistic tradition was not followed up directly. As Judith Kornblatt writes, "despite frequent references to the Kabbalah, Solovyov's heirs did not possess sufficient knowledge of Kabbalah's teachings to separate Kabbalah from the dualism of Gnosticism and save it from dissolution among other esoteric systems" (Kornblatt 1997, 87), and "the return to the occult in Russia today often has a clearly anti-Solovyov and anti-Semitic connotation" (ibid., 76). See also: Burmistrov 2016, 47–65.

searchers who has paid special attention to the VG, notes its "unacknowledged" "Kabbalisticity," one of the sources of which could be the practice of onomatodoxia (*imiaslavie*), widespread on Athos in the early 20th century and condemned by the Synod in 1913 (Laruelle 2008, 306). The similarity with Kabbalah (in the way the name of God is endowed with divine nature and "reified") should be considered typological, since it originates from the practice of hesychasm, in particular, the repetition of the Jesus Prayer.

The attractiveness of this practice in grassroots religious life is undeniable — the proof is the sectarian movements of Russia in the modern period that adapted them (in particular, Khlysts). Comparing them to the VG and, more broadly, the post-Soviet new religious movements (NRM) can make sense in the context of antimodernization attitudes and eschatological aspirations. Anti-"technocratic" ideas are associated with post-Soviet ressentiment, which is one of the unifying factors of the movement in terms of its social origins (Seriot 2012, 186–99). Post-Soviet religious movements gave rise to a kind of hermeneutics, often referred to as "cargo cult science" (Panchenko 2012, 122–39).

Brian Bennett regards the conspiratorial image of Kabbalah as a part of a broader phenomenon in post-Soviet religion, which he labels as alphabetical mysticism, including such alternative scripts as runitsa, vlesovitsa, and VG. So given the absence of a Kabbalistic tradition itself, Kabbalah appears as a widespread powerful image created by the conspiratorial imagination (Bennett 2011).

Alexander Panchenko, following literary critic Frank Kermode, considers eschatology as "a cognitive mechanism of meaning, placing individual life and the history of human communities in the field of final causes and consequences" (Panchenko 2018, 300–317). It can be assumed that the etymological "obsession" revealed by the followers of VG, along with the adherents of other diverse cryptolinguistic teachings, provides the same ordering effect opposing the entropy of historical processes. The return to the protolanguage in this logic is thought to be a means of "salvation from history" and highlights the utopian nature of the linguistic project of VG.[7]

7. Brian Bennett suggests a somewhat similar explanatory model for alphabetic mysticism: "I will then suggest that the connecting link between esotericism and conspiracism is the notion (borrowed from William James) of 'unseen order,' and that alphabets are a way of making this order visible" (Bennett 2011, 134).

Interestingly, the cited article by Panchenko is devoted to the "paleocontact hypothesis" in the New Age culture of the late Soviet Union on the example of the writings by Slavic philologist Vyacheslav Zaitsev. A kind of "cybernetic" hermeneutics influenced both Zaitsev's ideas and "methods of reconstruction of 'modeling semiotic systems'" proposed in the first half of the 1960s by Vyacheslav V. Ivanov and Vladimir Toporov (ibid.). Kocku von Stuckrad, whose approach to the study of the history of esoterism was mentioned above, begins the chapter of his book on Kabbalistic tradition with an insight into the history of scientific language. The researcher traces back the dead metaphor of "coding," central to the language of genetics, as well as in cybernetics, to the very sphere of esoteric-philological knowledge. DNA is understood textually as a divine code consisting of combinations of four letters. But for von Stuckrad this metaphor is significant in an epistemological context, as it makes it possible to witness the "deification of the human being through combinations of letters" and the textual ideology of European culture, which inspired the urge to make space "readable" (Stuckrad 2010, 89–93). Interestingly, DNA becomes a powerful metaphor for vseisvetniks, who teach that letters are bioenergetic entities, encoding universal processes.

However, when discussing the origins of cybernetic hermeneutics, one should not forget about the institutional history of late Soviet (oc)culture: Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder in their famous book on Soviet parapsychology point out the fact that many research groups were attached to cybernetic and bionic laboratories (Ostrander and Schroeder 1970, 143).

The (Post-)Soviet Psychic Project and the Problem of Mediation

As mentioned above, the leader and founder of the VG, Shubin-Abramov, repeatedly pointed to his connection with secret military projects, mentioning, in particular, military unit 10003 and General Alexey Savin, who headed it. The work of the psychic program under the Ministry of Defense covers the period from the late 1980s to the early 2000s, coinciding with the peak of VG popularity. Without going into detail, it is important to note a number of significant differences from similar US projects. In particular, as far as can be seen, it did not involve experimentation with psychotropic substances, but was also less focused on remote viewing. According to the published

memoirs of former Stargate project participants, Soviet psychic intelligence often relied on measurements and indicators generated by various devices, which Americans tended to explain as related to the materialistic essence of Marxist ideology (Savin et al. 2016). Indeed in studying the scientific imagery of the late and post-Soviet culture of the New Age, we should keep in mind the context of the Soviet secular project.

The extrasensory program in many respects inherited the early Soviet experiments and, moreover, was based on the philosophical tradition of "Russian cosmism," understood via Carl Jung, which was "invented" in the late Soviet era (General Savin in collaboration with V.I. Antonenko in the early 2000s wrote an essay titled "The Fundamentals of Noocosmology" [Savin and Antonenko 2013]). In many ways, it is from this discursive field that the specific sociolectus of the VG must have been drawn, in which the "Collective Spirit-Mind" (*Kollektivnyi Dukh-Razum*) is a hybrid of the Jungian "collective unconscious" and Vernadsky's noosphere. Interestingly, Savin mentions Vladimir Solovyov, whose Sophiology he also reads in line with the Russian religious philosophy included in Russian cosmism, and in connection with the image of the Kabbalah:

> The analysis of V.S. Solovyov's religious and philosophical works gives grounds to believe that he is entirely based on Christianity. At the same time, the idea of the creative beginning of the world is developed by him in the wide spiritual context of Platonism, Buddhism, biblical traditions, the philosophical teachings of Jakob Böhme, Benedictus de Spinoza, and Friedrich Schelling, Berndt Andreas Baader's mystical teachings, and Kabbalah, taking into account personal mystical experience. (Savin and Antonenko 2013, 410–11)

The narratives on psychic experiments still constitute a significant resource for the argumentation of VG experts. In them, the materiality of thought is clearly expressed and can be measured. Speaking of VG genealogies, it is appropriate to recall the practice of spiritualism in which communication with spirit was often meditated graphically — with the help of a sequence of letters folded into a message, and bodily — by the medium.

The issue of mediation in this context is particularly challenging and important. The very concept of the material is problematic and interpreted extensively — esoteric neo-Platonism is complicated by the separation of densely material objects and thin-material phenomena

and processes, which introduces metaphysics into the field of physics (Savin and Antonenko 2013, 503). It can be assumed that here, in full accordance with Marshall McLuhan's aphorism, the means of communication determine its nature. In my opinion, it is crucial to understand how VG works as media, as a secret code for decrypting the world.

Graphic Artifacts and Bureaucratic Kabbalah

Webb Keane's approach marks a turn to materiality in semiotic research: "representations exist as things and acts in the world... A medium of representation is not only something that stands 'between' those things it mediates, it is also a 'thing' in its own right" (Keane 1997, 8).

As anthropologist Matthew Hull notes, "one of the most fruitful insights to emerge from the general rehabilitation of materiality in the social sciences and humanities is that representations are material. Anthropologists have long recognized that things are signs, but until recently they have often ignored that signs are things" (Hull 2012, 13). This aphoristic formulation rather accurately captures the conceptual inversion conceived by Keane. Hull seems to be seeking to develop the idea of semiotic ideologies, which have a more convincing empirical application. *The Government of Paper*, a book on the bureaucracy of urban Pakistan, explores office infrastructure given in its materiality (Hull 2012).

Following Webb Keane's proposal to expand "linguistic ideologies" to the semiotic level, Hull offers his own, "graphic" ideologies, which shape "semiotic functions and non-discursive uses of graphic artifacts" (Hull 2012, 14). In addition to the mediation of the semiotic, graphic artifacts are objects involved in non-semiotic events and incidents (ibid., 22).

Hull draws attention to the processes of recontextualization, both material and semiotic (ibid.). Graphic ideologies, as he notes, may also include more general representations of the ontology and authority of graphic artifacts and their ability to represent or produce truth, meaning, and so on.

Hull's attention to the regimes of materiality of documents allows us to take the next step and fix the moment when the form is separated from the material carrier and asserts its own materiality. As he notes, "The powers of graphic artifacts depend on their place within a regime of authority and authentication. However, the focus on the

normative commitment to following rules or on the aesthetics of form can lead to the view that the specificities of individual documents are secondary, even unimportant, beside their formulaic and pro forma aspects" (ibid., 27).

Form does not exist without matter, materiality presupposes form. Form (even if free) dominates all bureaucratic genres, and formality largely determines the deployment of their content. Therefore it is possible to see an unexpected resemblance between bureaucracy and folklore.

The semiotic ideologies of the VG are characterized by such tension between written and oral, in which the authority and authoritarian nature of written culture leaves a deep imprint on people's linguistic imagination. Indeed, the typical popular etymology of *folk linguistics*, based on consonances in VG, is complemented by deciphering words as acronyms. The words of everyday language are endowed with a second secret sacred meaning, the key to which is the VG alphabet.

The VG bulletins also contain references to bureaucratic genres (in the example below it is directly related to secrecy as social capital):

> With this small official statement from STGI[8] we will slightly restore in your Motherland the Historical Truth about the Childhood of Mary — the Future Mother of God. It is a pity that so far we have had to conceal the exact place of Mashenka's birth, so that the enemies [враги] couldn't defile it by "building" in this place any kind of industrial monster, drinking house, or toilet, as it has already happened in desecrated Judaism (more often than not by the grandparents of the present-day shitheads) of Svyato-Rusya [Holy Russia]. (Bulletin No. 17 of 7502, p. 1)

Characteristically, in some cases comprehensive abbreviations tend to take an acrostic form that combines the metaphysical understanding of each of the letters into long attributive constructs, often containing an indication of the subject, object, purpose, and mode of action (fig. 6).

8. STGI of VG stands for the School of the Teachers of the Great Initiation (Shkola Uchitelei Velikogo Prosveshcheniia).

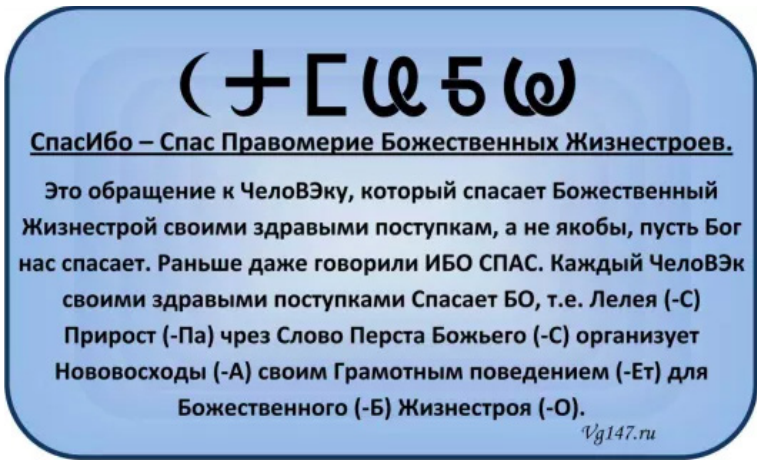

Fig. 6. See description in the text.

> The letter on the plane projects the process of materialization, i.e., the creation of matter. We say, remember, the word is material [. . .], so we do magic.[9]

The form of the letters of the VG appears as a constitutive force of universal scope. The mode of communication with the cosmos, the praying language, the ideal language, the language of paradise turns out to be inspired by the Soviet bureaucracy.

VG and Utopian Geometry

Matthew Hull, addressing the study of document flow and urban planning documentation of Islamabad, recalls the metaphor proposed by James Scott in his book *Seeing Like a State*: the bureaucracy makes society "readable" to the state (Scott 1998). (Hull adds that this process involves more than one channel of mediation [Hull 2012, 155–56].) Scott puts together, among other things, the artificial forests, the utopian urban planning of high modernism, and the radially organized transport system connecting the outskirts and the center. This visual aesthetics and clear geometry meet the requirements for a rationally organized, ordered space, "readable" for the state. The same goal was

9. Workshop "Mnogomernoe pis'mo" [Multidimentional writing], https://vk. com/vgakademiya? z=video-151469882_456239064%2F2eb60e25ac1f114422%2Fpl_wall_-151469882, published on August 20, 2019, available as of August 26, 2019.

achieved by language standardization, which ensured the overcoming of linguistic impenetrability of the territories inhabited by speakers of different dialects (see Scott 1998, 9–85).

As mentioned above, the VG offers its own standard of literary language, the observance of which is strictly controlled in everyday speech. The "proper" speech in the VG version is not only free from lexemes that are recognized as the foreign ones (post-Soviet borrowings, mainly English), but also, in some cases, implies the rejection of conventional word usage in favor of some peculiar made-up variants. Thus, special attention is drawn to the use of intransitive reflexive verbs as well as negative particles. The colloquial emphatic use of the word "(to like) awfully" is regarded as an oxymoron. All of these cases seem to be united by a striving for literalization and the destruction of the metaphorical and idiomatic nature of language.

Such linguistic moderation — benevolent, but insistent — seems to be one of the most common practices not only among the vseiasvetniks, but also in New Age culture as a whole. It is partly rooted in popular psychology, which connects thoughts and words with their bodily "materializations." However, among its prerequisites, it is worth recalling the high social prestige of literate speech in the Soviet era. The vseiasvetniks carry out an alternative codification and offer an alternative literary standard, demonstrating in this sense truly imperial ambitions. One of the sessions at the congress in Orlovo was devoted to multidimensional writing; in the course of it the participants put down the names of the small peoples of Russia written on the blackboard (the list included, among others, such pseudo-ethnonyms as "Pelasgians").[10] These actions were regarded as acts of practical magic to help the representatives of these peoples. The workshop ended with reading a poem glorifying Vladimir Putin (the president's surname was the source of the image of the man who composed the "heavenly ways" and was looking for the "ways of saving the Earth"[11]).

Urge to systemize, which is easy to see in the bulk of writings by vseiasvetniks, is definitely inseparable from the visual culture of VG. It is no coincidence that the adherents of the teaching com-

10. Some identify this ancient Slavic civilization with the Aryans or the Pelasgians or the Etruscans (or all three). See Bennett 2011, 146.

11. The association is based on the meaning of the Russian word *put'* ("the way").

pare it with the periodic table, introduced by Dmitri Mendeleev — while its elements are marked by letters and their combinations, VG letters turn out to be the primary elements. In this context, Mendeleev's table is both a symbol of scientific knowledge (and intuitive at the same time, since it is believed to have been revealed in a dream) and its "icon." The world and man are brought into conformity with linguistic geometry (in many respects the same way as in the Renaissance Kabbalistic tradition) by the utopian model of high modernist authoritarian social engineering — standardization and classification. And in this sense, behind the seemingly complicated universe of VG, there is a simplification. To be more precise, VG's success is in balancing between secret and common knowledge, anchoring esoteric symbols in popular scientific facts; delivered in the children's encyclopedia, as if promising that this shared popular knowledge stands for deeper and essential meanings and thus post-Soviet people appear to be well-equipped when facing global catastrophes.

Relatively recent history knows many examples of the Cyrillicization of the writing of non-Slavic and non-Christian peoples as an instrument of Soviet colonial policy. Invented alphabets are known as a tool not only for nationalistic fringe science, but also for authoritarian national politics.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the stigmatized knowledge in contemporary American culture, Michael Barkun notes the blurring boundaries between it and the mainstream, caused mainly by the spread of the Internet (Barkun 2016, 1–7). The media context is a crucial factor in this case. In the late and post-Soviet period, the opposition between stigmatized knowledge and mass culture often seems counterintuitive. Since the weakening of institutional control over print content and informal dissemination practices, this opposition has, at least for some time, become irrelevant, and the high demand for all the bulk of published texts has been generated, rather, by the existing trust in their credibility and uncritical appropriation. While such magazines as *Nauka i Religiia* (Science and religion), or publishing houses such as Molodaia Gvardiia (The young guard), can be said to have been controlled by specific communities or subcultures, their large audience was mostly united not by belonging to certain groups, but by the conventional ways of consuming information. Stigmatized knowledge was thus

becoming widespread at least a decade before the Internet became widely accessible, and has since then been characterized by the reverse process of marginalization. At least, this seems to be the case with neo-Paganism and a wider range of phenomena within the post-Soviet New Age.

Thus, VseiaSvetnaia Gramota — a seemingly rather marginal doctrine, obsessed with fear of the Western world — can be inscribed in one of the most ambitious and significant cultural trends in the whole European culture — namely, what Umberto Eco called "the search for the perfect language" (Echo 2007). Comparative linguistics, engaged in the search for a primordial language, can be considered in the same paradigm. While the *Book of Vles* was still largely "elitist" knowledge, the "VseiaSvetnaia Gramota" profanes, esotericizes, and radicalizes it at the same time. Anatoly Doronin, the founder of the Konstantin Vasilyev Museum of Slavic Culture, as well as a former associate of his, scornfully characterizes VG as "profanation," and even Valery Chudinov, an honorary academician of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences[12] and one of the most famous Russian "linguistic freaks," speaks about it at best condescendingly, exposing the ignorance of its creators.[13]

Both the author of the scandalous article in *Literaturnaya gazeta* and the academicians of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who drew up an indignant letter about this article, may be equally committed to linguistic nationalism (see the article by A.V. Pavlova and M.V. Bezrodnyi about the subtexts of Russian neo-Humboldtianizm [Pavlova and Bezrodnyi 2011, 11–20]). However, the manifestations of this linguistic nationalism can be very different, since extralinguistic in nature.

The popular culture of the late and post-Soviet New Age is unlikely to deal with Kabbalah directly. Rather, there is a kind of Russian version of "grassroots philology" that has absorbed pan-European linguistic nationalism. Considering the configuration of nationalism and comparative linguistics, which have historically developed along with the idea of the providential role of the Ar-

12. The Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, RANS (Rossiiskaia Akademiia Estestvennykh Nauk) is a non-governmental organization; its members' activity is often associated with pseudoscience.

13. See "Iakoby zakrytye istochniki Vseiasvetnoi gramoty," Institut drevneslavianskoi pis'mennosti i drevneevraziiskoi tsivilizatsii, http://www.runitsa.ru/publications/466#37837.

yan race in the history of mankind, Maurice Olender traces the philosophical and scientific tradition of contrasting the Christian-European world to the Semitic world, based on the Orientalist opposition of progress and statics (Olender 1992). East European nationalism, adapting these ideas, turns them upside down: the Russian (Slavic) tradition is regarded as sacred and static while the distorting effect of modernization comes from Western (Jewish) culture. Such inversions in the discourse of the modern New Age are constantly observed, and numerous examples of de- and re-contextualization argue for the viability of smaller units of transmission than narratives.

A significant part of the studies mentioned above were preoccupied specifically by the origin of the alphabet, the reconstruction of the supposed initial cryptograms, and the restoration of its geographical and cultural trajectory. The alphabet was thought of as a cultural storage medium in an extremely compressed form (almost a genome of culture), therefore the historical precedence was so fiercely contested. The case of the "WorldWide Script" as an example of grassroots New Age subculture shows how esoteric discourse transforms when meeting with vernacular practices and what role mediation plays in this process.

As can be seen, VG signs are hypersemiotic on the one hand, and non-semiotic on the other. They are intrinsically, but imperceptibly material: on the one hand, their postulated multidimensionality makes them fully accessible only to extrasensory perception, on the other hand, they become visual mediators while semiotic relations are replaced by mimetic ones.

Word formation models of Soviet newspeak are known to have long been productive material for language games. But they also gave birth to a peculiar hermeneutics of the state, which highlights the ritual nature of the Soviet bureaucratic sociolect, the opacity of which contributes to its "sacralization"(Bogdanov 2008, 300–337). This esoteric potential of officealese is in demand by post-Soviet cryptolinguistics. It becomes a domain of creativity — linguistic and ritual — and provides the patterns for communication with the cosmos. The whole world becomes involved in the Slavic cosmic bureaucracy, or rather, its virtual expansion of universal scale. When related to the state, secret becomes sacred (Taussig 1993), and the national language turns out to play crucial role in the never-ending circle of its deciphering and encoding as if the printed culture would stand for the state itself.

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Popular Religiosity and Images of the Priesthood during the First World War and Revolution

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*The article investigates the reasons for the spread of negative images of the clergy, captured during World War I in the letters of ordinary people and, after 1917, in visual sources. The author explores the state of the systemic religious crisis in the Russian Empire, which manifested itself at different levels: in the relations between those who waited for the convocation of the Church Council (*Pomestnyi sobor*) and those who resisted it; intraclerical conflicts between representatives of the lower and higher hierarchies; conflicts between the parish clergy and parishioners; and contradictions in the writings of the religious philosophers. It is noted that the Great War contributed to the spread of mystical and eschatological sentiments among the different social groups, the growing popularity of sects, and the simultaneous wave of dechurching* (rastserkovlenie).

Keywords: folk religiosity, *rastserkovlenie*, Russian Orthodox clergy, World War I, Russian Revolution.

THE revolution of 1917 was an event that had been developing since the beginning of the 20th century. The First World War intensified the confrontation between government and society and created conditions for a new form of violence, spreading the psychology of the "man with a gun." It was the gun that was perceived as a real mandate of the new government in 1917, and the spare soldiers who did not want to be sent to the front turned out to be the main actors of the revolution (Buldakov 1997, 55–76). Indeed, in the days of February's social unrest, the symbol of revolutionary violence became a machine gun. It is noteworthy that the mass consciousness included representatives of the clergy in the discourse on machine guns. Only by taking into account the social and psychological characteristics of

the epoch is it possible to understand the place that images of priests hold in the mass consciousness and the reasons for their formation.

Despite the fact that contemporaries had been speaking with confidence of the inevitability of the revolution since the autumn of 1916, its arrival was a surprise for the average citizen, and also formed a complex emotional atmosphere, in which fear was present along with delight and euphoria (Aksenov 2017). One of the most widespread was a phobia about the "Protopopov machine guns": according to rumors, Interior Minister A.D. Protopopov had placed machine guns on the roofs of the capital in order to provoke unrest in the capital and then brutally suppress it. However, the rumors about priests firing machine guns from the bell towers seemed much stranger. And educated people such as A.N. Benoit, Z.N. Gippius, and others repeated these rumors (Gippius 1929, 90; Benoit 2003, 124). Further, they said that machine guns were delivered to the church at night in coffins. This demonization of priests could be attributed to the nervousness of Petrograd society in the early days of the revolution, but what is important is that these reports were believed in the provinces: the local clergy sent requests to the Petrograd diocese to clarify whether the capital's clergy really helped the police in suppressing the unrest (RGIA f. 797, op. 86, 5 st., d. 22, l. 157). Refutations of these rumors had to be published in the newspapers as far away as Tomsk, as well (*Sibirskii zhizn'*, 8 March 1917). Nevertheless, the image of the machine-gunner priest turned out to be very tenacious. As a result, in April, the *New Satiricon* published a cartoon depicting a priest shooting a machine gun with a cross in his hand. The text in the picture explained: "During the revolution, many machine guns stood on the belfries, from where the rebellious people were fired on" (fig. 1).

This drawing is not the only example of the image of a counter-revolutionary priest — in 1917, mockery of the clergy was a common theme in magazine satire. At the same time, the images existing in the mass consciousness corresponded to the new relationships between parishioners and the parish clergy: a wave of violence against priests swept across Russia in the spring and summer of 1917.[1] The militia arrested some of them right on the pulpit during the divine service and searched churches and monasteries (RGIA f. 797, op. 86, 5 st., d. 22, ll. 139, 161). In a number of cases, the spontaneous activity of the masses found organizational support from local committees and

1. These events have been well studied in historiography. See, for example, Rogozny 2008; Buldakov and Leont'eva 2015).

Fig. 1. B. Antonovsky, "One of the 'Fathers,'" Novyi satirikon, no. 14, 1917, p. 7. "One of the 'Fathers' — We are accustomed to humbling the people with 'this' and 'this.'" Top caption reads: "In the days of the revolution many machine guns stood on the bell towers; the rebellious people were fired upon from there."

councils, which began to interfere in church affairs. This forced the chairman of the Provisional Government, G.E. Lvov, to send a telegram to the provincial commissars on June 17, proposing to take measures to eliminate unauthorized interference in church life by rural, municipal, district, and provincial public committees (ibid., 171).

The clergy were also charged with indecent behavior: bribery, drunkenness, sexual perversion, etc. In the illustrated magazine *Twentieth Century* the section "Monastery Secrets" appeared, which asserted that the monks of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra were allegedly engaging in fornication, drunkenness, and card games; the nuns of the Novodevichy monastery were engaged in prostitution and even set up a "factory of child angels" — a cemetery for strangled babies; Valaam hermits sinned by means of sodomy, etc. (*XX vek*, nos. 18, 22,23, 1917). Against this background the machine-gunning priests looked pretty civilized.

In order to understand the reasons that the clergy became discredited in the eyes of Russian society, it is necessary to refer to the previous history of relations between the church, people, and the state.

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that at the beginning of the 20th century the church was a sick organism. The historiography shows that the inevitability of reforms was obvious to the clergy, religious thinkers, and secular power (Kartashov 1991; Firsov 2002; Freeze 1983; Roslof 2002; Bremer 2007; Chulos 2003). In the 1890s–1900s, a renewal movement developed, whose participants advocated for the convocation of a church council (*pomestnyi sobor*); in Moscow and Petrograd, there appeared religious and philosophical societies, which discussed topical issues of church life at their meetings. After the 1905 revolution, the government realized the need for changes in the church, which led to the creation of a pre-sobor commission (*predsobornoe prisutstvie*). At the same time, members of the Synod, ruling and nonruling bishops, secular theologians, and representatives of the clergy all had differences in views on the future structure of the church (Smolich 1931, 65–75).

The relationships within the church were complex: the church servitors had problems with the deacons, the deacons with the priests, and the priests with the bishops. The Synod received complaints from priests about each other, and difficult relationships between clergy are found in materials from the inspection of private correspondence. Thus, on October 28, 1916, the archpriest of Minsk wrote about the local bishop George (Eroshevsky):

> It's hard even in dreams to imagine a bishop like ours. This is some kind of a mummy, without life, activity, mind and purpose. . . It's sad for the future of the church. And at the top, she seems to be completely rotten (GARF f, 102, op. 265, d. 1047, l. 24).

Parish priests complained to the diocese about some of their colleagues, accusing them of drunkenness, adultery, and even criminal offenses, while the diocesan authorities were charged with bribery and the sale of parishes (the bribe for receiving the priesthood was 1000 rubles) (GARF f. 102, op. 265, d. 1006, l. 82).

At meetings of religious-philosophical societies, representatives of the clergy noted the "church collapse" of Russia, blamed the episcopate, who ruined the parish clergy by their actions, and even called for the revision or abolition of the church canons ("Preniia po dokladu" 2009, 192–93). Russian religious philosophers were extremely negative about "decadent Orthodoxy" and "the Orthodox bureaucracy" (Berdiaev 1990; Rozanov 1994). D.S. Merezhkovsky was particularly harsh about the Orthodox Church when he wrote about the three faces

of Ham, and if he saw the face of the future Ham in hooliganism, vagabondage, and Black Hundredism (*chernosotenstvo*), and he saw the Ham of the present in autocracy, then the philosopher called the third face, the Ham of the past, "the face of Orthodoxy, giving Caesar what is God's," "the dead positivism of the Orthodox bureaucracy, serving the positivism of the autocratic bureaucracy" (Merezhkovskii 1906, 37).[2]

The "disease" of the Russian church spread far beyond the clergy. Religious philosopher L.A. Tikhomirov described the lack of spiritual unity within the Orthodox parish: "Here live both truly Orthodox and non-believers, and people who are ready to use the parish organization for political or social purposes, and there are also direct enemies of the Church. Here there are a variety of shades of heterodoxy . . . They are not 'brothers,' voluntarily joined to the church, but completely random people" (Tikhomirov 1907, 6).

This situation could not but affect the image of the clergy in the perceptions of the general public. During the first revolution of 1905, the priest M. Levitov in the pages of the *Church Messenger* (*Tserkovnyi vestnik*) stated that "the clergy does not enjoy any influence, is hated and despised by the people, and serves in its eyes as the personification of greed, covetousness" (*Tserkovnyi vestnik* no. 32, 1905). Nine years later, the situation had not changed:

> It is well known that in our time the clergy found themselves in the position of a class that is humiliated, downtrodden, and pushed into the background. Numerous facts confirming this are before everyone's eyes, and everyone can observe them in the sphere of so-called society, and — especially in recent times — even among the common people. (*Tserkovnyi vestnik*, no. 31, July 31, 1914, col. 933)

The attitude of parishioners toward the clergy is most clearly illustrated by the statistics of conflicts dealt with by the Synod. A sharp upsurge in conflict occurred during the first revolution. Thus, in comparison with 1903, the number of complaints of parishioners against the clergy in 1907 increased by 297.6 percent (125 vs. 497). After this, the average annual growth from 1907 to 1912 was only 15.6 cases, that is, 2.7 percent. However, on the eve of the war in 1913, the number of conflicts sharply increased — by 43 percent compared to 1912, amounting to 821 cases

2. Merezhkovsky uses a pun here — in Russian, "kham" (Ham) means "boor," "lout," or "swine," but also refers to the biblical Ham, son of Noah, whose son was cursed because Ham viewed his father's nakedness (Genesis 9:20–27). — Ed.

(RGIA f. 796, op. 183, 188, 189–92, 190–92, 191–92,193, 195, 197). During the First World War, the number of such conflicts tended to decrease by an average of 13 percent annually. However, given the departure of a large part of the peasants to the front, and the fact that the dioceses, when sending priests to the front, sought first of all to get rid of the most scandalous members of the clergy, one can hardly speak of a 13 percent improvement in the relations between the clergy and the world. And the minimum number of conflicts reached in 1916 (531 cases) exceeded the minimum of post-revolutionary 1907 (497 cases) by 6.8 percent.

In the historiography, most often the explanation for conflict is reduced to the financial position of the parish priests: low incomes forced them to raise fees for their services, which caused discontent among parishioners. At the same time, it should be noted that there is no unanimity of opinion on the material status of the clergy among researchers — depending on the diocese, the income of parish priests is determined to have been from 100 to 1000 rubles per year (Rozanov 1904, 24–51; Leont'eva 2002).

The church itself preferred to see the impact of "dark forces" as the main reason for the de-churching of parishioners: "various agitators and rogues trying to arm the parishioners against the clergy" (*Tserkovnye vedomosti*, no. 12, March 22, 1908, 596). Some representatives of the Orthodox clergy shortly before 1917 explained the revolutionary activity as obvious Jewish propaganda; they called the events of 1905 the "Jewish Revolution" (*Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, no. 22, May 30, 1915, 351). In this context, the view that the Orthodox clergy had a low level of culture is also fair. Contemporaries drew attention to the fact that talented young people left the spiritual estate. V.V. Rozanov wrote: "Will we, then, wait, will the spiritual establishment itself wait, and finally, even the government, until there remains in the field, in the so-called 'village clergy,' only the stupid? Because this is what the situation is coming to" (Rozanov 1904, 249–51). N.A. Berdyaev explained the "brain drain" through the mental conflicts of the period of modernization, noting that the seminary youths' vigorous protest against "decadent Orthodoxy" and the "obscurantist atmosphere of the theological school" developed together with the ideas of Enlightenment (Berdiaev 1990, 40). In 1916, the chief procurator of the Synod stated that "the degree of education of the diocesan clergy is quite diverse, from persons with higher theological education to persons with little education," and in the Siberian and Ural dioceses, not more than 38 percent of priests had a full seminary education (*Vsepoddanneishii otchet* 1916, 40).

The structure of clerical punishments according to the content of the offense for the second half of 1916 and first half of 1917 in the Stavropol, Don, and Kazan spiritual consistories explains the reasons for the dissatisfaction of parishioners with their priests. In 46 percent of cases, parishioners accused priests of unseemly behavior (rudeness, profanity, and drunkenness); in 35 percent of cases of bad faith in the performance of their duties (refusing to give communion to dying patients, to conduct funerals, being late for service, etc.); in 13 percent of cases of financial fraud (increased fees for religious rites, extortion of money from parishioners, embezzlement of church sums, etc.), and in 6 percent of adultery (RGIA f. 797, op. 86, otd. 3, stol 5, d. 32, ll. 2–5, 13–15a [ob.], 22–25). Also among the cases brought against priests there were cases of the murder of parishioners in drunken brawls, accusations of the rape of peasant wives, and robberies (RGIA f. 796, op. 199, otd. 4, stol 1, dd. 315, 36).

It should be noted that sometimes peasants sent anonymous denunciations out of a sense of revenge, attributing crimes to priests that they did not commit. After the proceedings, the dioceses did not take action on such statements, but it must be admitted that in most cases the denunciations were confirmed. Thus, in 1915, the Novgorod Theological Consistory examined eighty-nine cases of accusations against priests, of which fifty-eight cases (65%) involved pastors who were found guilty and punished (RGIA 797, op. 86, otd. 3, stol 5, d. 136a, l. 14).

The outbreak of World War I was a definite challenge for parishioners and the clergy. The tsar's manifesto on the declaration of war trusted in Almighty Providence and mentioned Holy Russia, that is, it imparted religious content to the armed conflict. Church printing supported this enthusiasm for the confrontation of Holy Russia with sinful Germany (*Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, nos. 30–31, July 26, 1914, 554). Archimandrite Hilarion, while discussing the European theory of progress, reduced it to Germanic militarism, viewed it as part of the doctrine of evolution, and called for the rejection of the idea of progress as alien to the patriarchal origins of Orthodox *sobornost'* (*Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, nos. 47–48, November 28, 1914, 953).

Some members of the clergy saw the beginning of the war as proof of the people's fall into sin. In July 1914, during a prayer service in the Moscow City Duma, Bishop Arsenii said: "The Lord sends us, dear brothers, a great test. A terrible, terrible storm hangs over us, a war. . . Why do we have such a test? Let's not talk about what our fault is before the Motherland. Each of us knows this well if we remember the last decade, when there was a vacillation of minds, disrespect for old

covenants, the holy faith" (*Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, nos. 30–31, July 26, 1914, 552). The same was said by professors of the Moscow Theological Academy (*Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, no. 32, August 6, 1914, 585).

However, this concept of war as a punishment for sins did not find sympathy in the masses of ordinary church-going people. In addition, part of society was dissatisfied with the official propaganda campaign, which painted a picture of universal enthusiasm and unity. In fact, patriotism was characteristic of a certain stratum of Russian intellectuals, politicians, and clergy, but the Russian peasant, caught up in the war in the midst of agricultural work, did not feel a great desire to go to war. In private correspondence, Russians were outraged at how the official press distorted the real attitude of the people to the war (GARF f. 102, op. 265, d. 976, l. 48).

The patriotism of the soldiers did not increase after they were sent to the front. Young officers in letters from the front described the mood of the soldiers as a wild despair, contrasting their own observations to official patriotic propaganda: "All the heroism, which is described in the newspapers, can only be a dream of the most ardent fantasist, and all the courage and pride attributed to the hero is a complete fiction of hotheads" (Astashov and Simmons 2015, 236). Rank-and-file soldiers spoke out even more bluntly in their letters (ibid., 490). Faith was an integral part of the patriotism imposed on soldiers, but the soldiers' consciousness began to protest against its ascription to everyone: "It is sickening to read endless lies. Whatever issue of the newspaper you look at, every Russian soldier is an altruist, a Christian, a hero" (Aramilev 2015, 97). This irritation was eventually transferred to the regimental priests, who were charged with keeping track of the soldiers' moods and maintaining their morale with appropriate patriotic speeches.

Contemporaries noted that during the first months of the war the visits of ordinary people to churches became more frequent, but this rise in religiosity was a consequence of the spread of mystical and fatalistic ideas; to talk about the growth of Orthodox religiosity is hardly justified. One of the soldiers wrote from the front: "And there are tears for us here: you go left — there is fire, right — water, you go forward — bullets and shells are exploding, and if you go back, you will be stabbed with a sword. There's nowhere to go. So we have to die for the glory of Russian arms" (Atashov and Simmons 2015, 141). At the front, the phenomenon of "trench religiosity" developed — in the face of death, even a person who did not believe in God was imbued with mystical moods, searched for hidden meaning in signs, etc. However,

this did not always bring soldiers closer to the regimental priests. The soldier Kuznetsov wrote to a priest he knew in February 1915:

> I have formed the following idea of battle: the battlefield is a Temple, where both believers and non-believers go reverently, without any bragging; in this Temple the presence of the Godhead is felt, palpable every second. . . It is a pity that our soldiers are not developed enough to comprehend it. . . And you know who is to blame? You, the priests — that is, the ridiculous system by which our pastors are trained. Well, where do you, scholastics, influence the soul of our Russian people, when you are not taught to talk to them? You have fallen behind our intellectuals, and you have not attached yourselves to the people, and you are not able to give them anything more than bookish morals. (Ibid., 119–20)

Soldiers in letters from the front complained that priests spent most of their time with officers, and that they were not available to the rank-and-file, that they serve when they want to, raise the prices of candles, collect the unburned ones and resell them several times to the soldiers, etc. (ibid., 451). "And the priests who serve here repel our suffering heroes, they have no access to them, you do not see many of them at all, and if you do see them, it is dangerous to approach them, because they behave like leaders, move only among the leaders, the soldiers treat them disrespectfully, with contempt" (ibid., 361–62). It is noteworthy that photographs from the period of the world war allow us to confirm the validity of soldiers' claims: the priests were depicted in the still photos published in illustrated magazines in a comfortable atmosphere, surrounded by officers, sipping tea (*Niva*, no. 38, 1915, 706). Usually, the regimental priests were criticized by representatives of the lower clergy. One psalm-reader wrote home in October 1916: "My priest is so golden, it would be better if he hadn't been born. . . All the priests, as long as I know them here, all play cards without exception, and on occasion [indulge in] a tipple. And right behind their backs a wounded, gray hero, who has already become no one, not necessary, suffers and dies without confession and communion. And there are orphans at home" (Astashov and Simmons 2015, 463). "Although there is a priest in the regiment, he is lazy, and sits in the wagon train and not even the forces of heaven will compel him go to his position at the headquarters of the regiment," said a soldier of the 8th Siberian Rifle Regiment (ibid., 732). In 1916 among the soldiers there was a story how on the eve of Easter the Germans made a bold sortie and caught the headquarters of the regiment off guard, in which there was

a drinking party with the participation of a local priest. They took prisoners, however the next day they returned the priest, writing on the back of his cassock "we don't need devils" (ibid.).

Of course, not all regimental priests were despised by the soldiers. Part of the correspondence described examples of the heroism of the military clergy when priests inspired soldiers in the attack or under the hail of enemy bullets gave communion to dying soldiers in the field. There were stories about how the prayer read in a hopeless situation led to an unexpected turning point in the battle. However, in addition to the image of a hero priest who reads a prayer during the battle, there was also the image of a coward priest who shuddered during prayer in the rear from any loud sound. It is noteworthy that in the discourse about regimental priests there were two almost identical stories, but with different endings: a priest near the front line held a prayer service, and suddenly enemy airplanes appeared, dropping bombs. In one case, the bomb blew up a part of the church, but the priest did not even shudder, while the praying soldiers all fell to the ground; in another case, the priest fled from an explosion that thundered in the distance, deserting the praying soldiers, or he fell into a faint. The second version of this story was given in the memoirs of A.A. Brusilov, however, in his story the prayer was still brought to the end after some interruption (Brusilov 1963, 192).

Despite real examples of the heroism of the clergy, as well as appropriate propaganda, the image of the priest-hero did not take its deserved place in the visual record of the era. If we look at the patriotic posters and prints of the period of the First World War from the collection of the State Museum of the Modern History of Russia, we will not find a single image of the priest in 391 storage units (Shumnaia 2004). Images of participants in the war include soldiers from all kinds of forces (infantry, sailors, aviators, artillery, cavalry); civilians, such as village women; captive enemy airplanes; children; doctors and nurses; leaders in the attack on infantry; but the regimental clergy is absent.

In the officially published, illustrated *Chronicle of War*, visual images of regimental priests made up only 0.8 percent of the total number of drawings and photographs, and the bulk of them are group, multi-figure compositions (photos of prayer services), in which the representatives of the clergy can barely be seen, and only three portraits of priests, shot in close-up, were published in the *Chronicle* during the three years of war: one portrait of Archpriest I.S. Yarotsky, who received a concussion at the front and was captured, and two portraits of the head of the military clergy Protopresbyter G. Shavelsky.

It is noteworthy that the verbal images of the clergy in the *Chronicle* were better, the deeds of some of them were described in the magazine, but were not accompanied by illustrations, such as hieromonk Antony Smirnov, who served as a priest on the minelaying ship "Prut," who gave up his place in the lifeboat and descended into the hold of the sinking ship to the wounded sailors. Thus, we can talk about some discrepancy between the verbal and visual images of the war.

In the literary-artistic journal *Niva*, there was a slightly higher percentage of images of priests at the front in 1914–1916 than in the *Chronicle* — 1.5 percent. However, the religious theme was not as unpopular in illustrated magazines as portraits of the clergy. In a number of cases, photos of prayer services and religious processions were published, in which priests were simply absent. For the Easter issue of the *Chronicle* in 1915, artist E. Butrimovich painted the picture *In Galicia: Procession of the Cross on Easter Night*, where the procession was led by a nurse, an officer, and a doctor, followed by soldiers, but the regimental priest was nowhere to be seen (*Letopis' voiny*, no. 31, 1915, 499). In the same issue priests were also absent from a painting by S. Kolesnikov, *Red Egg in Galicia*, depicting peasant women who treated wounded soldiers to eggs and kulich for Easter, as well as in A. Petrov's *In the Hospital Christ Is Risen!* In this Easter issue there were twenty-seven illustrations and only one — *His Imperial Highness the Supreme Commander-in-Chief among the Officers of One of the Cossack Regiments* — with a representative of the church perched at the edge (ibid., 490). The April issue of *Niva*, which was issued on Easter, was not entirely devoted to the holiday of resurrection, however, in two photos of forty-two illustrations clergy were present (*Niva*, no, 16, 1915, 303).

Visual sources suggest that the religious holidays were actually reprivatized from the church and control was given over to the people. These trends are not surprising given the specifics of "trench religiosity." Soldiers from the front wrote that, having lost hope in the help of priests, they acquired their own icons and arranged in trenches and dugouts something like places for prayer, where they invited their comrades: "I have an icon of decent size, I have made a candlestick and wax candles are burning, I bought all of this with my last wages; soldiers who like to pray, come to me and pray and read the Gospel" (*Pis'ma s voiny* 2015, 379). In this regard, popular religious creativity developed: peasants themselves drew icons, often violating the canons, and made images and crosses and sold them to soldiers and officers. This image was even published in *Niva*, and, judging by it, such folk art was popular among the military (*Niva*, no. 13, 1915, 251). *Niva* published photos of

examples of soldierly ingenuity: they would build a crucifix on a century-old oak tree, then gather a camp church of spruce branches (*Niva*, nos, 12, 17, 1915). At the same time, the religious sentiments of the soldiers of the period of the world war did not exclude the clergy completely from the religious discourse, but often replaced the modern regimental priests with the legendary representatives of the church. Thus, more often than others, Peresvet and Oslyabya[3] appeared in the visual religious-historical discourse for obvious reasons.

Not only mystical and fatalistic, but also eschatological moods were manifested in "trench religiosity." Natalya Goncharova, who carefully studied the folk *lubok*,[4] created series of lithographs in 1914 called "Mystical Images of War," which, on the one hand, reflected the official religious discourse about the sacred Russian army, accompanied by angels and attended by the aforementioned Peresvet and Oslyabya, departing for war with Germany, but, on the other hand, also clearly manifested eschatological themes in the works *The Pale Horse*, *The Doomed City*, and *Woman Riding a Beast*. The world war was perceived by the people in the context of the End Times, the peasants said that a new King Herod was born, and some believed that it was Nicholas II (RGIA f. 1405, op. 521, d. 476, l. 332). As an example of the discrepancy between the official and popular pictures of the war, it can be noted that the official propaganda deliberately exploited the eschatological theme, calling William II the Antichrist. Corresponding posters depicting the German emperor in the form of a beast were issued. At the same time, there were disputes between peasants as to whether the Antichrist was actually the German or the Russian tsar. But perhaps one of the most paradoxical twists in the folk religious-eschatological consciousness was a series of rumors that the Antichrist would soon appear, Jesus would be crucified again, and then the peasants would be immediately given the land they had long dreamed of (ibid., 278; Melgunova-Stepanova 2014, 41–42).

This attitude to the Antichrist, if not complimentary, was tolerant enough to indicate a certain philosophical crisis, an inversion of good and evil, which is fully consistent with the extreme times of the world war. Soldiers from the front reported that for them the battlefield seemed like hell: "the shells are buzzing, the guns are rattling, the bombs are exploding, you are standing there and you think that you are surrounded by hell" (*Pis'ma s voiny* 2015, 242). However, soon all of

3. Peresvet and Oslyabya were relatives (perhaps brothers) and monks who are said to have fought against the Tatars in the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380. –Ed.

4. Popular prints. –Ed.

life in the front turned into a continuous hell: "Here all is commotion, everything is the same hell — before there was a hell of danger, anxiety, a hell of death, and now — hell moves without rest and without end, the hell of the rear with all its mud," wrote an ordinary noncombatant from a company of the Zhitomir Regiment (ibid., 573–74). Hell's habituation also led to reconciliation with his lord, the Antichrist. Moreover, as the war dragged on, collaborationist sentiments spread among the people, who said that if William (the Antichrist) won, then life would get better (RGIA f. 1405, op. 521, d. 476, l. 141). The official Orthodox prayers of regimental priests could not satisfy new religious needs of soldiers from the point of view of such eschatological ideas.

Sooner or later, soldiers began to pay attention to the contradictions between the church's military-patriotic rhetoric and Christian ethics. For example, in November 1914, the *Moscow Church Gazette* (*Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*) published the article "Patriotism and Christianity" by Professor S. Glagolev of the Moscow Theological Academy, in which the author objected to the thesis that all people are brothers, justifying the statement that Russians should be loved more than Germans, and, therefore, the latter can be killed (*Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, no. 44, November 1, 1914, 882). The new recruits were given classes in the camp before they were sent to the front, where they were taught military regulations, and they also interpreted Filaret's Catechism, in particular the sixth commandment, in such a way that it turned out that it was not only possible to kill the enemy, but also the officer has the right to kill soldiers who disobeyed, and such a murder was not contrary to Christianity (Aramilev 2015, 62–63). The new ethics also penetrated the visual and symbolic space of wartime. A very ambiguous illustration appeared in the journal *Niva* in 1915 called *Magi of the Twentieth Century*, in which the kings presented the baby Jesus with gifts of shells and weapons (*Niva*, no. 44, 1915, 809). Obviously, the viewer's perception of it was ambiguous. A soldier who faced death every day and saw the collapse of former humanist values, began to feel the collapse of Christian civilization more subtly, it began to seem to him that the world was plunging into pagan times with their sacrifices to the bloodthirsty gods:

> After the first battle near Belaya at the sight of disfigured, bleeding people and horses, an unresolved question involuntarily came up before me: what is all this for? Hundreds of thousands of human lives are sacrificed for strategic, political and other purposes. This is not the old idolatry, which we condemn without any regret, but the improved worship of

> the God-War. Previously, single sacrifices were made to the gods to satisfy religious feelings, and now entire states with millions of people are being destroyed. . . Wherever you look, the ghost of death is everywhere. (Astashov and Simmons 2015, 640)

Illiterate peasant soldiers argued more simply, but in the same direction:

> I've already cursed this war is it really given from God that I killed and also it's not from God, God gave us life so we would live with each other not kill so that we remember the sixth commandment. (Ibid., 652)

The soldier's logic was very simple: since war is contrary to the commandments, it is not from God, but then the clergy, calling them to go and kill, is also not from God. In December 1916, a soldier wrote with anger and sarcasm about the regimental clergy:

> I am going this winter to die heroically and move to the promised paradise that our priests built there from the creation of the world for laying down our life for our Friends, these priests constantly promise to us an Eagle in the clouds, and they thrust bombs and rifles in our hands, to go boldly and heroically die for the Faith, the Church and our dear and abundant Fatherland. (Ibid., 724)

The rejection of official religiosity required filling in the gaps formed in religious consciousness, which gave rise to alternative forms of worship close to sectarianism. Thus, "conspiracy letters" — the prayers that were supposed to be rewritten, sent further along by trench mail, and whose text was learned and regularly repeated — became very popular among the soldiers. One of those letters said:

> In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord, have mercy on me, and have mercy on me, and send an angel to protect me, your sinful servant. . . Christ was coming from the seven heavens, carrying Christ the life-giving cross; I, Vladimir, am a servant of God, for 24 hours, around the clock, from the blade of a bayonet from lead steel copper bullets and from cast iron grenades of shrapnel and other metals, and if my life were stronger than that of Peter the Tsar, and if my body were stronger than the stone of the wilderness. My enemies will shoot with rifles, machine guns, and canon; fly bullets and do not hit me in the clear field in the wet ground I would be unharmed for all eternity Amen Amen Amen. (Ibid., 359)

The periodical press reported that similar prayers were also found on German prisoners and Austrians (*Vokrug sveta*, no. 4, 1915, 64).

During the war years, due to the transition of the Orthodox population to other faiths, the Orthodox population declined in number. One of the most widespread currents was Stundo-Baptism, the popularity of which inhabitants explained in private letters as the dissatisfaction of the population with their priests and penetration into society of Western (German) cultural values (GARF, f. 102, op. 264, d. 1012, l. 227). In 1914, there were 146 people seduced from Orthodoxy in Moscow diocese (most became Lutheran, followed by Baptist) (RGIA, f. 796, otd. 6, stol 3, d. 109, l. 2). In Smolensk diocese, the number of Stundo-Baptists increased by 23 percent in 1915 (from 441 in 1914 to 531 in 1915) (RGIA, f. 797, op. 86, otd. 3, stol 5, d. 136a, l. 47). In 1915 in Stavropol diocese 481 people left Orthodoxy for other religions and sects (401 for the sect of spiritual Christians) (ibid., l. 159). It should be noted that the departure from Orthodoxy was partly due to the lack of parish priests, who for objective reasons could not keep their flock (researchers estimate the ratio of clergy to parishioners fluctuated from 1:1000 to 1:2000) (Firsov 2002, 24; Leont'eva 2002, 17).

The priest's ability to preach played a special role in the relationship between the clergy and the flock. The priest who was able to find common ground with the parishioners was forgiven a great deal. But often the church press noted that the sermons of the Orthodox faith did not reach the minds of parishioners because of the difficult, pompous style. The lack of understanding of the sermons led to the gradual de-churching of the people, conflicts, as well as the emergence of so-called "brothers" who could interpret the holy texts in an accessible way. Missionary D. Bogoliubov said this about them:

> The people, yearning for a righteous life, put forward their brothers to the pulpit, according to their thoughts and intentions. What the "brothers" say, of course, is bad in its literary form; but to the people their words seem to have a holy meaning, like a "living gospel." (*Prikhodskoi sviashchennik*, no. 16, 1911)

In order to somehow improve the quality of sermons and make them more accessible, as well as to counteract sectarian brothers, the Synod recommended that parish priests refrain from improvisation and read sermons that had been published in church magazines. But even this did not help the parishioners' skepticism toward their priest. An illustrative case took place in March 1917 in the village of Turishchevo

in Yeletskaya diocese, when local priest Nikolai Bulgakov preached a sermon to the parishioners on the Feast of the Annunciation from the magazine *Spiritual Conversations* (*Dukhovnye besedy*) on the theme "Beware Networks of Cunning Germans," in which the following words appeared:

> A bird released from the cage is often unable to live free and dies. Often she knocks again at the window, at the cage, escaping from cold and hunger; often she is unwise and falls back into the fowler's net. My brothers, no matter what happens to us when we get rid of the German yoke, we will not fall again under the Germans. (RGIA, f. 797, op. 86, stol 5, d. 22, l. 197–197ob.)

However, the peasants interpreted Bulgakov's words as pro-German agitation for the preservation of the old system, and sent a message to the bishop of Yeletsk about it. Such cases of cognitive conflict were common in different places (ibid., ll. 290ob.–291).

The struggle against the spread of sectarianism during the war years affected the soldiers who fell under the influence of "trench religiosity" and attached great importance to all sorts of signs that were interpreted in a mystical way. Military censorship seized those letters that contained noncanonical descriptions of Christ and the Virgin Mary. Thus, in August 1916, of all the letters withdrawn by military censorship at the main post office of Petrograd, 12 percent were letters containing sectarian propaganda (noncanonical interpretation of sacred texts, mystical signs, etc.) (RGVIA, f. 13838, op. 1, d. 18, ll. 1–544).

However, what was forbidden to ordinary soldiers was allowed by the official press, both secular and religious. One of the most common mystical subjects at the front — the phenomenon of the angelic "white lady" (to be distinguished from the ghost of the "white woman") — appeared in 1915 in the *Chronicle* in a reprinted picture by the British artist G. Scott, depicting a translucent woman in white clothes, hovering over the fallen soldiers (*Letopis' voiny*, no. 71, 1915). However, Russian soldiers, retelling rumors about the "white lady," often gave her the more familiar features of the Virgin Mary from the Orthodox visual tradition. One of the most famous mass visions allegedly happened on the night of September 7–8, 1914, on the eve of the Battle of Augustów — the Mother of God appeared in heaven with the baby Jesus in her arms, with one hand she pointed to the West, then the vision was transformed into a great cross and disappeared (Preobrazhenskii 1916, 55). The rumor about it quickly spread in the army, an article was printed in the

Stock Exchange Gazette (*Birzhevye vedomosti*), and in the same year an appropriately patriotic poster, "The Sign of the Augustów Victory," was issued, and people's artists began to paint the icons of the Mother of God of Augustów. The Synod opened a case "On the investigation of the miraculous event of the apparition of the Mother of God" and on March 31, 1916, officially recognized the apparition of the Mother of God and decided to bless the commemoration of the Augustów icon in churches. It is noteworthy that in the original folk version of the Augustów Mother of God, she was dressed in noncanonical white clothing, which corresponded to the original etymology of the rumor of the "white lady."

In addition to the phenomenon at Augustów, recognized by the church, there were many private stories of soldiers about the phenomena of the Virgin Mary. In a number of cases, the storytellers were shell-shocked and in a half-conscious state. During the war, traumatic psychosis spread among the soldiers, accompanied by delusions, deceptions of sight and hearing, so that visions as well as auditory hallucinations due to concussions became constant companions in military daily life.[5] So, the ordinary soldier who survived shock, who miraculously escaped from under the enemy shelling and reached the hospital, being in a state of extreme emotional distress, told the story how one of his company survived, and when he climbed out of the trench at night, he saw the Virgin Mary, who descended to his dead comrades and placed a crown on each one's head, then she came up to the soldier and, pointing to the north, said: "Go over there, to your own. Don't be afraid! Go this way with courage. No one will hurt you." Despite the fact that the fight continued and bullets were flying, the soldier reached the hospital unharmed, where he immediately told everything to the first nurse he met (Preobrazhenskii 1916, 59–60). V.M. Bekhterev, in his article "War and Psychosis," considered the phenomenon of the "Augustów Mother of God" as a typical collective hallucination experienced by a group of people who were in a state of extreme distress (Bekhterev 1914, 329–30).

In addition to rumors about the "white lady," rumors about the "white general" were widespread, but to a lesser extent. During the battles near Warsaw in October 1914, it was said that at the most difficult moment a "white general" appeared over the Russian army, who hovered over the soldiers and commanded them. The "white general" sometimes met the soldiers on the march: and if he looked into the

5. For mental disorders on the front, see Fridlender 1999, 315–25; Astashov 1914, 340–414; Merridale 2000, 39–55.

Fig. 2. "A Heavenly Vision," postcard published by the Martho-Mariinsky Monastery, 1915.

eyes of a soldier, he would live until the end of the war, and if he passed by and did not look the soldier would not escape death (Kandidov 1927, 52). The origins of this image are less clear. It is worth remembering that the nickname "white general" was given to M.D. Skobelev in his time, which was reflected in the popular print that depicted him on a white horse in white clothes. The popular print from 1914, "Suvorov and Glory," on which the grey-haired Russian commander was depicted watching the battle of the Russians with the Germans from heaven next to a white-winged archangel in armor and with a sword was also well-known. It is probably necessary to recognize the collective character of the image of the "white general" from among hero-command-

ers. Taking into account the specifics of popular religiosity, by analogy with the "white lady" it can be assumed that the image of Christ might be concealed under the "white general," especially as magazine illustrations and popular prints replicated the image of Jesus in white robes, who came down to earth to bless the soldiers (*Niva*, no. 46, 1916).

Despite the apparent lack of canonicality of these images, the church press responded to mystical sentiments and replicated them on its pages. Thus, the *Volyn Diocesan Gazette* reported in 1916 that the Virgin Mary in the form of a woman in white attire frightened the Germans with fiery eyes. Protopresbyter G. Shavelsky, who understood the need to adapt the official faith to the soldiers' religiosity, contributed to the spread of a number of rumors about the miraculous signs. Shavelsky himself told journalists about his own prophetic dreams (*Novoe vremia*, December 15, 1915). Thus, a contradictory picture was created: the authorities, who officially prevented the spread of the soldiers' mystical rumors, allowed themselves to print stories similar in meaning, as if privatizing the popular mystical discourse. However, this did not raise the prestige of the clergy, as such stories were considered to be the property of soldiers' "trench religiosity" and were spread regardless of how the church reacted to them.

By 1917, the authority of the clergy was also discredited by the fact that they had to persuade the peasants to carry out wartime obligations, in particular, not to resist the requisitions of cattle. On this basis, clashes were not uncommon, accompanied by beatings and insults directed at the clergy by the peasants (RGIA, f. 797, op. 86, otd. 3, stol 5, d. 129, l. 1). Blasphemy penetrated into the popular obscene vocabulary, and often cursing addressed to God ensued in conjunction with curses against the tsar — in this case, both the desacralization of the monarchy and of the church was observed. Thus, for example, in February 1916, in response to the comment of a police officer that it is not necessary to play the accordion loudly near the church in which the service was going on, Gerasim Samarin, a peasant of Tomsk province, replied: "Fuck . . . the Church, God, the Tsar and the government" (RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 476, l. 362–362ob.). Another peasant, cursing the tsar, reproached him for not preparing for war, but only building taverns and churches (ibid., l. 391). Savely Berezin, a peasant of Kazan province, came to the conclusion in April 1915 that instead of going to war, the Synod and the royal palace should be blown up (ibid., l. 112). At the same time, a song brought from Siberia by former convicts was popular: "There is no God, there is no need for a tsar, we will kill the governor, we, the swindler-convicts, will cross the whole of

Russia!" (ibid., l. 286). It is noteworthy that from the autumn of 1916, the army began to receive a large number of criminals, including convicts, who had previously not been allowed to be drafted (Astashov 2016, 75). As noted by researchers, they made a significant contribution to the criminalization of the army, and promoted unrest among the soldiers. The tradition from the criminal world of making tattoos on the body, including religious content, gained a new meaning at the front: they said that one soldier escaped punishment with a rod because of the image of the Savior on his buttocks — inquisitors were afraid to whip the image of Christ (Astashov and Simmons 2015, 395).

Political opposition protests at the front became criminal offenses, while criticism of the supreme power, as a rule, implied an anti-church stance. In August 1915, I.T. Yevseev, a peasant deputy to the Fourth Duma, received a collective letter from wounded soldiers that criticized the government, which did not want to end the war, and this was immediately followed by strong accusations against the church:

> Our culturally backward Orthodox Church, headed by rude, uncultured, dirty, disheveled, cruel, greedy, selfish, ambitious egoist-priests and bishops, is the cause of the suffering of the people. The Christian priest's ideal is humility and other Christian virtues, from patience to self-denial. And our most vile priests interfere in politics, evading Christian duties and generating religious strife and enmity. (Ibid., 645–46)

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to portray the clergy in one political tint and to place them exclusively on the side of the authorities. As has already been shown, the spiritual class was extremely diverse in terms of material wealth, education, and political views. During the war years, the authorities repeatedly paid attention to the opposition of priests. In 1914, the governor of Kazan described the local clergy as left-wing, in connection with which he petitioned for the allocation of priests to a special curia at the congress of landowners (RGIA, f. 1282, op. 1, d. 732, l. 26). In Samara province, the clergy's two-faced behavior was noted: "officially registered in moderate organizations, they sometimes submitted notes with the names of the left in the elections" (ibid., l. 49ob.). In Riazan province, the priest Ostroumov, who was elected a member of the Duma, first signed up as a nationalist and then moved to the Octobrists (ibid., l. 58).

However, even among the bishops there was growing dissatisfaction with the supreme power, which delayed the convocation of the Church Council. In September 1916 in Petrograd there was a rumor

that Antony Khrapovitsky was telling how the bishops came to the sovereign to talk about the convocation of the council and the choice of a patriarch. The emperor expressed his sympathy on this issue and asked if the bishops had identified a candidate for patriarch. The bishops, each of whom dreamed of becoming a patriarch, were silent. Then the tsar proposed the following: he would renounce the throne in favor of his son, divorce his wife, become monks and then they would elect him patriarch. The stunned bishops did not answer, and then the tsar left in silence (Tikhomirov 2008, 85).

The opposition of the parish clergy grew as the war dragged on, with priests making insulting remarks about the supreme authority during sermons. Thus, on July 28, 1915, in Kazan province, the village priest Kondratyev addressed the peasants with the following words: "Peasants, it is getting bad for you: His Imperial Majesty the Emperor Nikolai Alexandrovich sells the whole of Russia. It's time for the whip for him on the back of his head — he can't wage war (RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 476, l. 394). Among the priests there were those who were convicted during the First World War under article 103 of the criminal code — for insulting the reigning monarch. There are cases when priests were openly engaged in revolutionary propaganda and even tried to organize the parishioners into combat brigades — "red hundreds" (RGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 476, ll. 86–88).

Despite the diverse political palette of the Russian clergy, the revolution of 1917 painted it in the black of counterrevolution. The caricature by the artist A. Khvostov from the magazine *Budil'nik* (Alarm clock) is indicative — monks repainted their black robes red. Meanwhile, the abbot said: "Put the paint on thicker, citizen, so that there won't be a single spot of the old black left."

Despite the metaphorical nature of the image, it should be noted that Khvostov managed to anticipate the real facts of the spring of 1917: in the early days of the revolution, some priests pinned red bows on their clothes, decorated iconostases with them, and sometimes even changed into red robes (Kolonitskii 2001, 62). The red bow became the symbol of a citizen's revolutionary identification and in the conditions of developing forms of spontaneous violence some people wore it for security purposes.

The journalistic cartoon very accurately recorded the public moods, focused attention on the subjects that worried society, and conveyed the hidden fears of ordinary people and attitudes toward one or another public institution. The ridicule of priests was characteristic of the vast majority of magazines. However, in quantitative terms, there were not very many caricatures of the clergy (the most popular sub-

Fig. 3. A. Khvostov, "Turncoats," Budil'nik nos. 11–12, 1917.

jects were: ridicule of the old system and members of the royal family, the economic situation, and from the summer of 1917 — the threat of anarchy). In the magazines *Strekoza* (Dragonfly), *Bich* (Scourge), *Novyi satirikon* (New satiricon), and *Baraban* (Drum) the clergy were mocked in only 1.8 percent of the images. Of course, the distribution of cartoons among magazines was uneven. Thus, in the journal *Strekoza* only 0.3 percent of cartoons were of priests, while *Bich* can be called the leader of anti-church propaganda at 6.4 percent. At the same time, there were more caricatures of priests in *Bich* than of Nicholas II (5%). However, "quality" often compensated for the quantity in the sharpness of the statements. In this respect, *Strekoza* did not fall far behind *Bich*. The main vices ridiculed were the greed and graft of priests, support for the old system, church marriage (which in the context of the discussion of marriage reform was seen as slavery), and cowardice (fear of being sent to the front). It is noteworthy that, despite the presence of the theme of clerical sexual perversions in anti-church articles, it was not visualized in journalistic caricatures (in

contrast, for example, to the theme of intimate relations of the triangle of Alexandra Feodorovna, Rasputin, and Nicholas II). In this respect, it can be said that artists, unlike writers, spared their object of criticism, realizing that the visual image has a more trenchant effect on the addressee.

Most of the cartoons were in April and May: one of the central events of April, depicted in the cartoons, was the new red Easter, which in some cases tried to oppose the old Easter and even to carry out its symbolic desecularization. In the Easter issue of *Bich* a "comic" appeared, which told about the attempt of the clergy to cancel Easter 1917, but despite everything, the soldiers celebrated it (*Bich*, no, 13, April 2, 1917). Just as curious are the cartoons in which the clergy nailed Jesus to the cross, lamented that they had sold Christ for only 30 pieces of silver, and reflected on how to hang and crucify him (*Bich*, no. 18, 1917; *Novyi satirikon*, no. 13, April 1917). At the same time, some ordinary people gave the revolution sacral and religious content and perceived it as a moral and spiritual revival of Russia, contrasting the old church with a new one. Analyzing conflicts between parishioners and priests in the spring of 1917, it appears that peasants, berating old priests, demanded new ones from the diocese (RGIA, f. 797, op. 86, stol 5, d. 22, ll. 48, 139). Nevertheless, we cannot speak of widespread trust in the "new" clergy, which had begun to make changes in church life, including in terms of interaction with parishioners. In May, satirical magazines prepared a series of anti-church cartoons for the opening of the Congress of Representatives of the Clergy and Laity in Moscow. On one of them, called the "Cross-Spider,"[6] the pope was depicted in the image of a spider, luring parishioners into the network of the church.

Despite the fact that in 1917 the Congress of Clergy and Laity was held, the Church Council was initiated and a patriarch was elected, the revival of the church did not happen. The beginning of the civil war pushed the religious issue aside, putting physical survival on the common people's agenda. In addition, the political propaganda of the Bolsheviks actively used anti-church rhetoric: clergymen were classified as enemies, they were described as bourgeois, they recalled absurd accusations, which they retransmitted through rumors. The plot of the cartoon about the machine-gunner priests from *Novyi satirikon* was repeated in the later poster by artist N.N. Kogout, "The Cross and the Machine Gun."

6. This is a play on words—*krestovik* relates to "cross" and thus the clergy, but *pauk-krestovik* is also the proper name of *Araneus diadematus*, known as the European garden spider, cross spider, and crowned orb weaver, among other names. –Ed.

Fig. 4. "With a Cross and a Machine Gun — February Days 1917," a poster of the Civil War period.

In some cases the rumor about priests firing machine-guns from belfries in February 1917 was transferred to the Moscow events in October (Kandidatov 1930, 21). In mass consciousness, religion and the machine gun were linked. Later, rumors about machine gun emplacements on the belfries (objectively a convenient position for firing) repeatedly appeared during the Civil War and became a reason for violence against priests.

Thus, the church, and with it the religious consciousness of the subjects of the Russian Empire, was in a state of crisis at the beginning of the 20th century. The First World War did not lead to the unity of the church, state, and people; the regimental priest, who advocated for the war, caused irritation in the face of rising anti-war sentiment among soldiers; the soldiers at the front and the peasants in the rear were imbued with anti-church attitudes, leading not only to local conflicts with the parish clergy, but also to the departure from Orthodoxy

into sectarianism and other faiths. Even in the official visual patriotic propaganda the image of the priest at war was extremely faint. At the same time, the religiosity of the people did not disappear, but acquired mystical forms: the world war was often conceived of in eschatological categories. The revolution of 1917, which abolished censorship, established a natural point in the development of the images of the clergy: the counterrevolutionary priest, the most striking embodiment of which was the priest-machine gunner, embodied the accumulated years of popular distrust. Bolshevik anti-church propaganda during the Civil War, which picked up absurd but popular rumors about clergy, found gullible listeners among the former subjects of the empire.

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A New Look at the First Anti-Church Decrees of the Soviet Government

Review of: Vladimir Vorob'ev and L.B. Miliakova, eds. 2016. *Otdelenie tserkvi ot gosudarstva i shkoly ot tserkvi v Sovetskoi Rossii, Oktiabr' 1917–1918: Sbornik dokumentov* [Separation of church from state and school from church in Soviet Russia, October 1917–1918: Collection of documents]. Moscow: PSTGU (in Russian). — 944 pp.

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The early decrees of the Soviet government, including those affecting the religious sphere of Russian society, have been published repeatedly in both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. It would seem unlikely that any new discoveries in this area would arise. However, a collection of documents published by the publishing house of the Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University of Humanities provides a new perspective on the earliest stage of the formation of state and church relations in the Soviet period. Previous publications, as a rule, gave preference to documents created by the party and state, or those that covered events in one region or a single problem (for example, Soviet educational policies).[1]

The authors of this peer-reviewed edition have set a different goal for themselves. They did not limit themselves to documents created by the party and state, but supplemented them with church documents, including religious protests, as well as publications in the press. The authors sought to present a complete picture of relations between the church and the state in 1917–1918 — to create "a di-

1. Cf: N.A. Kazakevich, V.V. Markovchin, T.S. Tugova, et al., *Pravoslavnaia Moskva v 1917–1921 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* [Orthodox Moscow in 1917–1921: Collection of documents and materials]. Moscow, 2004.

verse thematic collection of documents on the most acute problems of the history of the church in the early years of Soviet power" (36).

Materials of the central and Moscow archives served as the basis for the published corpus of documents: the State Archives of the Russian Federation (the files of the Sovnarkom [Council of People's Commissars], the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, the People's Commissariats of Justice, Education, Property, and Internal Affairs, and the Holy Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of 1917–1918); the Russian State Archives of Social and Political History (the files of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party [Bolsheviks], the Sovnarkom of the RSFSR, and the personal papers of the leaders of the party and the state); the Central State Archives of the Moscow Region (the papers of the Moscow Soviet of People's Deputies [Mossovet], the county councils of Moscow Province, and the Commission on Protection of the Party; and the State Archives of the Moscow Region (the files of Mossovet, the county councils of Moscow Province, and the Commission on the Protection of the Orthodox Church). Along with archival documents, the authors include a wide selection of periodical publications, both Bolshevik and oppositional (44).

As a result, the collection includes documents that come from both the Soviet authorities (at various levels) and the church (from all levels of the hierarchy, including simple believers); documents created in various regions of Russia that were under the control of the Bolsheviks at the time; and different types of documentary materials (laws, protocols, reports, letters, petitions, resolutions of gatherings, punishments, etc.). The overwhelming majority of these materials are published here for the first time. All this makes the reviewed collection "the most complete academic publication on this subject" (43).

Chronologically, the documents included in the collection cover events that took place in the country from October 1917 to the end of 1918. The editors also publish a number of documents from 1919 that refer to the events of 1918 (primarily in connection with the beginning of the campaign to expose holy relics). The collection is divided chronologically into two parts (October to December 1917 and 1918). The second part contains six thematic sections: the drafting of secular legislation, the creation of state structures for its implementation, and the attitude of the church and believers

to state policy; the nationalization, requisitioning, confiscation, and looting of the property of monasteries and churches, and the imposition of subsidies and taxes on the clergy; the implementation of decrees on dissolution of marriage and civil marriage, and the drafting of a decree on cemeteries and funerals; the appeal of the clergy to the rear militia and the performance of labor conscription; the exclusion of the church from public and daily life; and the separation of schools from the Orthodox Church. From the titles of these sections it can be seen that the thematic coverage of the collection is extremely wide.

Undoubted innovations include the publication of documents showing the reaction of the church to the decrees of the Soviet government; materials related to the examination of the Moscow Kremlin after the artillery shelling in October 1917; and numerous materials on the resistance of believers and their attempts to find new forms of existence in a hostile reality. Petitions, appeals, stories about the organization of religious processions and the reaction of local authorities to them, reports on the requisitioning of church property, including monastery premises, attacks on monasteries, the organization of believers to protect church heritage, protests against the imposition of huge indemnities and taxes on the clergy, as well as against their conscription to the rear and the recruitment of workers — most of these materials are published for the first time.

A number of documents in the collection cover the activities of the delegation of the Holy Council of 1917–1918 in negotiations with the Sovnarkom, which was tasked with reviewing the discriminatory legislation. These materials are accompanied by documents related to the activities of N.D. Kuznetsov, a thinker, a religious and public figure of the prerevolutionary period, and an active participant in the Council of 1917–1918, who, in fact, took on the role of the main defender of the rights of the clergy and believers before the Soviet authorities in the period under review.

The documents on the economic activities of church organizations in the revolutionary period are of great interest, in particular, those on the fate of candle factories, which the authorities planned to nationalize, including the reasoned objections of the Central Committee for Candle Factories and Warehouses. A number of documents address attempts to preserve house churches closed by the Soviet authorities, and in particular, attempts

to preserve the house church of Moscow University. Other documents relate to attempts to preserve the Petrograd Theological Academy by merging it with Petrograd University.

The compilers of the collection sought to ensure the inclusion of the maximum number of contemporary voices for each of the topics: not only representatives of the authorities, but also believers; residents not only of Moscow and Petrograd, but also of remote provinces. This polyphony is the most important feature of the publication, which distinguishes it from previous works.

In addition, the editors tried to find the most convenient way to present the entire variety of documents on a particular topic for the reader. Inside the thematic sections there are both single documents placed in chronological order and collections of documents dedicated to a specific event or problem. These collections have their own title (and hence number), and the documents within them are also titled, numbered, and placed in chronological order. For example, section 3 of the collection contains a collection of documents titled "On Requisitions in the Alexander-Svirsky Monastery of Olonets Diocese" (454–65), including the report of the bishop of Olonets to Patriarch Tikhon (November 14, 1918), the statement of N.D. Kuznetsov in the Sovnarkom on this occasion (December 20, 1918), and the report of the Olonets Cheka on requisitions (March 22, 1919). In this case, the selection is placed among other documents of the section in accordance with the date of the section's first document. The abovementioned collection is placed between the documents dated November 11 and 15, 1918. And although the chronology of the documents published in this case is not maintained (this should be borne in mind by the reader of the collection), the collections allow each of the events to be seen with exhaustive completeness.

Finally, the collection is provided with the necessary academic apparatus (comments, indexes), and the documents are preceded by three introductory articles: a historical introduction written by the compiler of the collection, L.B. Miliakova (PSTGU); a source study by S.G. Petrov (Institute of History of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences), a leading expert in the study of sources pertaining to state and church relations of the Soviet period; and an archaeographic preface authored by I.A. Ziuzina and L.B. Miliakova.

What is the overall impression of the collection? When

reading documents of various origins, a high degree of bitterness on the part of the authorities toward believers is evident. This can be seen not only in the reports about the firing squads in different parts of the country (144–45 and passim), but also in the way that the opposite side is described. Thus, the newspaper *Bednota* (Poor thing) describes a procession in Moscow on Red Square that took place in May 1918 on the feast of St. Nicholas of Myra as a collection of marginalists and provocateurs and calls it "a demonstration of obscurantism" (295). The photos of this procession show that it actually appears as a giant national celebration (Red Square is entirely filled with people). But the article in *Bednota* does not just distort reality, it is imbued with the desire to dehumanize the enemy, even if this enemy is all people of faith. It is becoming clear that not only the hierarchs and clergymen, but also ordinary believers found themselves in an atmosphere of daily psychological pressure.

This peer-reviewed edition undoubtedly makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the initial stage of Soviet anti-religious policy. This collection of documents is poised to become a handbook for researchers dealing with the early evolution of state and church relations and the protest of believers in the Soviet period.

A.L. Beglov

That Whereof We Cannot Speak, Thereof We Must Imagine

Review of: A. Zygmont. 2018. *Sviataia negativnost': nasilie i sakral'noe v filosofii Zhorzha Bataia* [Holy negativity: Violence and the sacred in Georges Bataille's philosophy]. Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie (in Russian). — 320 pp.

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Alexey Zygmont's monograph is an event in Russian-speaking religious studies; at least, it claims to be, challenging the scientific community with the very title.

The main works of French thinker Georges Bataille such as *L'expérience intérieure,* [1943], *La Part Maudite* [1949] and others are available in Russian

(Sakral'noe 2004; *Summa Atheologica* 2016), but we cannot claim close acquaintance with them; Bataille is avoided in academia. Zygmont demystifies the image of the "contradictory author" in a good way, consistently and patiently tracing the development of his philosophical conception of the identity of violence and the sacred. The author designates his goal as the building of its genealogy, for which he takes up the consideration of a genesis of those two core notions. He interprets the genealogy as a study of the movement of meaning (p. 25), and presents it in the book's conclusion in the form of an original scheme. *Holy Negativity* is fundamentally different from previous books in Russian addressing Bataille's philosophy, specifically in its methodology. The author's chosen approach makes it possible to update Bataille much more broadly than before, which unequivocally distinguishes this study from those preceding it, not to diminish their contributions (Fokin 1998; Timofeeva 2005; Evstropov 2008; Weiser 2009; Shutov 2016). For famous researchers and translators of Bataille's corpus of works like Sergey Zenkin (2012) and Sergey Fokin, Bataille is primarily a litterateur, and this view determines their focus. Zygmont, instead, takes up the specific philosophical content of Bataille's conception, which other authors often fail to address (p. 20). It is fair to say that such avoidance is not an accident. The dive into Bataille's philosophy requires a special stance, and the author of *Holy Negativity* seems to find a proper one, formulated in relation to the essay "The Sun's Anus," from which this study begins: "it is practically impossible to say what this text is about, but it makes sense to look at what is going on here" (p. 33).

In offering his original reading of Bataille, Zygmont is engaged in a lively dialogue with his predecessors. The fact that he contextualizes other interpretations and statements from the voluminous body of existing research literature in several languages adds to his persuasiveness. The author of the monograph himself is a translator of Bataille into Russian, which is manifested in the special attention he pays to the nuances of the translation of original quotations.

The monograph consists of five chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. The logic of the structure is based on a chronology of the development of the ideas of the sacred and of violence, from unarticulated to identical. Thus, the period from the end of the 20s to the 60s is divided into four periods that were devoted to different topics, which, in the

end, resulted in the conception of violence and the sacred. The fifth chapter is somewhat different from the others: it highlights the issues of war that permeate all stages of Bataille's theorizing.

The introduction prepares the reader for a thorough inventory of Bataille's ideas by identifying the main problems that captured the philosopher. The first and perhaps the main problem is that of individualization, understood not as a choice and rejection of the community, but, in Nietzsche's words, as a *spell*. The path to unity among people, as Bataille points out, is through "liberation from the prison of individual existence, from a stuffy closure in oneself" (p. 11). In fact, Bataille continues the Hegelian line of reasoning, solving the Nietzschean problem through the idea of *desubjectivation*. It is precisely in desubjectivation as the unlocking of the singular that the general meaning of the concepts of violence and the sacred lies (p. 16). Bataille's second concern is the rationalization of European society, which he considered an infringement upon the irrational part of human nature. The dreams of a "genuine community" and the attempts to put them into practice reflect his worries as clearly as his studies do. The author of the monograph also defines Bataille's place in the history of Western philosophy, tracing his intellectual environment and his influences. He pays special attention to the way in which "the collision of Hegelianism with the theory of the sacred and the complexity of Bataille's vocabulary, mixing ontology with psychology, is born" (p. 16).

The first chapter, "The Blinding Sun of Violence," is devoted to the image of the sun, often overlooked by Zygmont's predecessors, in which he sees the "non- or prephilosophical content" of the ideas of the sacred and violence, which makes it possible to clarify their genesis (p. 29). He also introduces the concept of the unreal as preceding the sacred, but the association between these concepts cannot be attributed to the influence of Durkheim's definition of the sacred, as Zygmont suggests (p. 44). On the contrary, Durkheim describes such an association as erroneous and distances himself from it by localizing the sacred in the social reality sui generis (Durkheim 1995, 226–27). In that sense, Bataille is rather against the Durkheimian point. The same is true in respect to Nietzsche: "If Nietzsche's ecstasy and violence relate to reality, his, on the contrary, relate to irreality" (p. 104).

The second chapter, "First Experiments in Theory," reviews the span of 1929 to 1934. All the various topics and related images are presented in three sections. The first is built around the concept

of "low materialism," from which Bataille develops the science of heterogeneity (heterology). The second section demonstrates how the philosopher's empirical observations contribute to the rapprochement of religion and violence in his theory, and the third describes the system of concepts that shape Bataille's primary theory of violence.

As the author notes, Bataille thinks of heterogeneity as totality and not as opposition, because it is based not on the duality of the world, but on "the coexistence of two ambivalent poles of the same continuum without any synthesis" (p. 81). In this sense, Bataille is close to Freud and this is well illustrated in the book through the relationship between love and death (Eros and Thanatos). Bataille also finds some intellectual resources in psychoanalysis, in particular, the concept of *aggression*, which is employed to understand the *transition* between poles. Aggression is the basis of violence, not just as a release of negative energy, but as an intended transformation through the destruction of borders, i.e., *transgression*.

It is important to keep in mind that Bataille's fascination with the ethnography of Aztec, Hindu, Japanese, and other religions is directly proportional to his rejection of Christianity. For the first time in his writings, Bataille involves a category of otherness precisely in relation to the religious. Otherness in fact is already akin to the sacred, which lacks any contents in his terminology, but appears as the main object of religion by provoking attraction and communication (p. 101). In the light of Durkheimian theory, this is a predictable route to follow, but Bataille will go further in developing an idea of the sacred that closely relates to the concept of *message,* which cannot be expressed in words.

Bataille's message appears as "an energy field destroying the subject-object distinction and as if fusing what he sees" (p. 69). This concept is, of course, at the heart of his philosophy, because it directly addresses the problems he struggles with: individualization and rationalization. Bataille calls out the crisis of the modern world and asserts that it can only be saved by the "restoration of sacred values," i.e., affective values, the essence of which is "communication in death" (p. 106). It is the image of the executed King Louis XVI, which *Holy Negativity* starts with, that Bataille associates with the idea of a true community born of *sacrifice*. "The King's Dead Eyes" is a communication in death of all those who had looked in them. However, it is extremely important that Bataille's community is conceived as an alternative to the "community of death"

(Blanchot 1988). The monograph clearly shows this.

The third chapter, "The Beheaded Community," is devoted to the issues of community, with the hypothesis that "the community for Bataille is sacred in its very nature, and violence in some concrete or purely abstract form is a force that allows to unbind isolated and closed human beings and to unify them in a single body of the community" (p. 122). Now the sacred is treated as lost intimacy — either with an animal or with a paradisiacal state — which can only be recovered through the opening of individual existence borders, i.e., through an act of violence (p. 195). To test this hypothesis, the key image of Acephalus is used and discussed in detail. Acephalus appears as a single body of the community, which has gone through violence and has become *special* and therefore attractive (p. 170). His missing head announces the conversion of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous, i.e., the sacred.

In the fourth chapter, "The Dream of Sacred Violence," which corresponds to the postwar period of Bataille's intellectual creativity, the sacred and violence appear as identical. Turning to Bataille's economic theory, the author explains why the sacred is always on the other side of everyday life and can only be achieved through a violent rupture, equivalent to sacrifice. Homogeneity as a sphere of the profane is defined through endless work, production, and accumulation of material, leading to the closure of the individual to himself, and thus excluding any communication. Zygmont asserts that the sphere of the homogeneous arises in the gap between work and its alienated results, i.e., when a person does not live for himself (p. 111). Along with Marx, Bataille problematizes dissolution in work, which he addresses as a (false) substitution for the desubjectivation that makes community possible, because it reduces an individual to a function.

It can be said that in the course of rationalization, human life becomes a product in and of a solid capitalist economy, where there is no space for *waste*. The victim appears as an unproductive, pointless waste, i.e., the *donation of* his or her own and, literally, of himself or herself, which allows, through the denial of economic activity (and thus of a profane existence), the achievement of community. The world in which man exists is opposed to the world of animal welfare (p. 195). The difference between human being and animal is, first of all, in the awareness of death and its separation from life, i.e., in overcoming the continuity (p. 198). At its core, violence directly couples life and death and

thus brings back continuity: "Violence is not murder, but annihilation, and it destroys an absolutely certain premeditated content, i.e., the substance of man" (p. 205). Next, Zygmont takes up the task of explaining how violence has lost its purpose and become just a profane instrument, but rather briefly, which is why it is still unclear; this passage provokes questions (p. 207). The reasoning in the fifth chapter, "The Sacred against War," in which Zygmont undertakes a separate study of war in Bataille's philosophy and explains why "in the present war nothing remained of the sacred," is much more successful (p. 240). Here, however, all the signs of sacred violence come together and it becomes clear that Bataille despises the Christian church (but not its ideals!) for the substitution of sacred violence with profane violence. In contrast to the profane, sacred violence is described through the victim's voluntariness and focus on the inner (not outer) of the community and, above all, on himself.

The answer to the question of the possibility of "being together" is given in the final part of the fourth chapter, which reveals why verbal communication between people has nothing to do with real intimacy, while the source of solidarity may be a *myth* as a "living active force" (p. 226). While language itself, a "function of the world of work" (p. 231), is alien to continuity, because it is a distinctive system, the myth is a joining of language and violence: it refers to continuity while awakening the imagination. The appearance of myth in Bataille's thinking once again confirms the influence of Nietzsche and perpetuates it in the context of the French philosophy of the 20th century, where myth is one of the main topics (p. 224). After all, it turns out that true violence "is essentially imaginary, and that actual murder and bloodshed in it makes sense only to the extent that it serves as food for the imagination" (p. 237). However, when sacred violence is not at least imagined, the capitalist economy wins.

Bataille's understanding of the sacred can be perceived as a way to get out of the captivity of prescribed categories that lack vital dynamics. It is hard to abandon Bataille's belief that the pure/correct sacred is only a derivative of the violent and infectious sacred (p. 21). For example, the idea of the sacredness of human life in modern Western European morality is unthinkable apart from the context of violence wherefrom it originates (Agamben 1998; Joas 2013).

I would like to emphasize that, although Bataille's idea of the sacred differs radically from the one that has become embedded in religious studies, it is quite le-

gitimate in the context of Durkheimian theory, which is often oversimplified. Moreover, Bataille is probably the most consistent Durkheimian, since he is the one who delves deeper into the questions posed but left unanswered by Durkheim: first of all, the possibility of a community in the modern world. Bataille's merit is that he locates the essence of sacralization in emancipation from the slavery of the utilitarian world by means of qualitative change (up to destruction) for the sake of returning to the wholeness of life — continuity, immanence, intimacy, — meaning the absence of any distinction; the merit of the author of *Holy Negativity* is that he manages to clarify it.

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