



STATE,  
RELIGION  
and CHURCH

RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL ACADEMY OF NATIONAL ECONOMY AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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ARTICLES

**Alexander Kyrlezhev.** A Post-Secular Conceptualization of Religion: Defining the Question

**Dmitry Uzlaner.** The Pussy Riot Case and the Peculiarities of Russian Post-Secularism

**Christopher Stroop.** The Russian Origins of the So-Called Post-Secular Moment: Some Preliminary Observations

**Dmitry Rogozin.** From Outsider to Parishioner: Religious Identity Among the Older Generation in the Ivanovo Archdiocese

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## From the Editors

DEAR Reader, welcome to the inaugural issue of *State, Religion and Church*, a peer-reviewed electronic religious studies journal. This new initiative of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (Moscow) was undertaken with the goal of bringing Russian contributions to religious studies into dialogue with global developments in the field. Our parent journal, *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom* (*State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide*) is a cutting-edge peer-reviewed print quarterly published in Russian that features both original research and translations of seminal theoretical contributions to religious studies originally published elsewhere. It has thus emerged as a leader in the development of new directions in religious studies in post-Soviet Russia.

*State, Religion and Church*, which will appear twice yearly, will complement the parent journal by publishing translations of original articles first published in *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov'*. In addition, our translations of book reviews will provide a window into the state of the religious studies field in Russia that will be of interest to specialists focused on Russia and Eurasia as well as other scholars in religious studies. But our mission is also broader. Readers can anticipate a diverse array of topics, including both empirically and theoretically oriented contributions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. In addition to publishing translations from Russian, we will also publish quality original articles written in English.

Thematically, this current issue deals mostly with Russian religious thought and praxis. It examines problems of religious identity among Russian Orthodox Christians in secular and post-secular ideological

environments in addition to exploring theoretical approaches to the concepts of secularism and post-secularism. Although the term was coined earlier, the concept of “post-secular society” has stimulated substantial and at times contentious discussion since its public invocation by Jürgen Habermas in his acceptance speech for the 2001 Peace Prize of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association. The debates surrounding post-secularism (whether as an empirical descriptive term or a set of normative assumptions) are perhaps especially relevant to contemporary Russia, where a militantly ideological secularist regime has been replaced by an order in which the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has returned to a position of power and close collaboration with the secular (or not quite secular?) state authorities.

Perhaps unsurprisingly in light of recent Russian history and the religious turn in the humanities and social sciences, religious life in the Soviet Union has become one of the hottest areas of inquiry in Russian studies both inside and outside Russia. In this issue of *State, Religion and Church* we bring you an original contribution in the form of Alexey Beglov’s historical and anthropological investigation of the evolution of practices associated with Holy Communion in the ROC from the late imperial period of Russian history through the entire Soviet period. Questions of proper religious practice (and who is allowed to define it) are also key to Dmitry Uzlaner’s interpretive study of materials generated by both state organs and civil society in connection with the Pussy Riot trial of 2012. This article, which speaks to the peculiarities of Russian post-secularism through the lens of the Pussy Riot affair, represents one of the first scholarly attempts to come to terms with this cause célèbre. Its close analysis, featuring many extended quotations, offers those unable to read Russian a glimpse into fascinating sources unavailable in English.

The problematics of post-secularism link Uzlaner’s article to Alexander Kyrlezhev’s essay, which, written within the tradition of Russian religious philosophy, seeks a theoretical conception of religion suitable for a post-secular world. Meanwhile, Christopher Stroop embarks on an intellectual-historical search for specifically Russian origins of the post-secular moment, which he defines as characterized primarily by an intense confrontation with the problem of nihilism. Finally, sociologist of religion Dmitry Rogozin presents readers with his analysis of an empirical case study of religious identity among members of the older generation in the recently established Ivanovo Archdiocese. Just as Uzlaner’s study of the Pussy Riot phenomenon does,

Rogozin's study sheds light on an important aspect of contemporary Russian religious life.

The translated articles offered here are just a taste of what *State, Religion and Church's* parent journal has brought to religious studies in Russia, and we are excited to be able to bring Russian scholarship on some of the most pressing contemporary issues in religious studies to a broader global readership. In future issues of *State, Religion and Church* we will expand the journal's scope beyond Russia and Christianity, but we will retain, as one aspect of our mission, a commitment to making Russian religious studies scholarship more widely available by publishing translations. We would like to take this opportunity to solicit original manuscripts written in English by scholars outside Russia. Those that make it through an initial round of editorial screening will go through a standard process of double-blind peer review.

Readers are welcome to send comments, questions or submissions to [religion@rane.ru](mailto:religion@rane.ru) or [cstroop@gmail.com](mailto:cstroop@gmail.com).

*With warm regards,  
The Editors*



ALEXANDER KYRLEZHEV

## **A Post-Secular Conceptualization of Religion: Defining the Question**

*Translation by Allison Rockwell*

**Alexander Kyrlezhev** — Consultant of the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow, Russia). kyrlezhev@gmail.com

*This piece lays out a new conception of religion applicable to contemporary post-secular conditions. In these conditions, neither the secular model of religion, typical of modernity, nor the pre-secular understanding of religion/religiosity comports with sociocultural reality. The article emphasizes that the secular understanding of pre-modern religion distorts religion's nature by allotting it a fixed and therefore limited place in line with the idea and practice of functional differentiation typical of modern European societies. In this way the article unpacks the "hidden" worldview behind secularism as an ideology. Kyrlezhev suggests that this conception should be replaced by one in which the "religious" is regarded as one pole of a bipolar sociocultural whole (the other being the "eternal" secular) and that the benefit of this model is that it can be applied to various historical periods and sociocultural settings.*

**Keywords:** religion, worldview, secular, secularism, functional differentiation, post-secularism.

First published in Russian as: Kyrlezhev, Alexander. (2012). "Postsekuliarnaia kontseptualizatsiia religii: k postanovke problemy." *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom* 30(2): 52-68.



SECULARIZATION is comprised of two main components: ideology and pragmatics. The ideological component of secularization posits that, unlike the old, pre-secular world, which was fully permeated with religion, a new world is advancing, a world that is gradually freeing itself from religion as from a sort of “illusion” (a process that Weber called the “disenchantment” of the world). The philosophical foundation of this secular ideology (secularism) is the belief that the world is intrinsically and entirely immanent; that is, it is closed in upon itself. From this point of view, any representation of the transcendent is something invented, added, and therefore artificial, whereas the reality of the world as such is natural, and in this sense is something man simply takes for granted and with which he must interact without any entreaty to a transcendent Other. Accordingly, if the world of the universe (*kosmos*) has no “second floor,” nothing external, no other dimensions beyond those encountered through direct experience (and it is specifically such dimensions that religion usually references), then the world of society (*societas*) should be fundamentally non-religious in nature; that is, its construction, its “madness,” should not be connected with religious meaning. Thus, the main ideological basis for secularization is an understanding of the secular as such; that is, the understanding of a semantic space that is completely free from the religious as from something superfluous.

Accordingly, the pragmatic component of secularization consists of the organization of social life in accordance with immanent, autonomous laws and rules. The world of society is understood in this case as an aggregate of specialized, “professional” spheres of life activity, interacting within a single public space while preserving conformity to its own internal laws (what is known as functional differentiation). In this picture of an internally differentiated sociocultural whole, there is room even for religion, which is assigned to a particular area alongside other areas, such as the artistic or political. In principle, religion is not forbidden, nor even repressed. Rather, religion is localized according to the general law of sociocultural differentiation, which does not deprive it of the opportunity to interact with other autonomous sectors of life activity. At the same time, as just one sector in the sphere of social life, it becomes isolated and confined to its specific borders, and therefore cannot penetrate other areas and impose itself as the requisite measure of those life activities. The world of society as a whole is secular and essentially non-religious.

It is quite obvious that the process of secularization has given rise to a particular concept or model of religion. This is an essentially new model that did not exist, and could not have existed, in pre-secular societies and cultures, where religion was not isolated from other sociocultural phenomena, but rather diffusely connected with them, so that these other phenomena necessarily had some religious dimension. The penetration of religion into every pore of social and individual life in the pre-secular context hardly needs specific substantiation here, as it is well known from history.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the process of secularization itself gives witness to this reality from the opposite angle as it is associated with the gradual liberation of various and, subsequently, practically all, subsystems of society from religious custody, while religion is simultaneously relegated to a strictly defined, “purely religious” sphere in the life and activity of individuals and their private communities.

It seems clear, therefore, that there are two mutually exclusive “models” of religion: the pre-secular and the secular. Historically, at least in the European cultural context, the replacement of the old model with the new was accompanied by a struggle: secularism advanced, strengthening its onslaught, whilst religion desperately resisted until it was forced to acquiesce to the new state of affairs. This “acquiescence” was simultaneously pragmatic and ideological, but was certainly acquiescence, since the new model of religion, imposed upon it from without by secularism, could in no way be harmonized with the long-held religious traditions that had formed and reached their peak in the pre-secular epoch. Examples of such “harmonizing” from the religious point of view (say, in the spirit of Bonhoeffer’s “non-religious Christianity,” or “the theology of the death of God,” to take the most extreme examples) are in no way representative of the entire religious field, and today must be acknowledged merely as special cases of the self-determination of religion in the secular context of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

There is, however, an approach that, on the one hand, might obscure the problem of the mutual exclusivity of the two models of religion, yet, on the other hand can facilitate its elucidation: this is the formulation

1. Everything that from the modern European secularist point of view is seen as “non-religious” or “profane” in pre-secular cultures (say certain economic, aesthetic, and even political texts that supposedly reflect the presence of differentiated spheres of life activity, including intellectual life that is “free of religion”) existed within the general confines of the religious universe and therefore, one way or another, was included in “the religious.”

of a general question regarding the relationship between the religious and the secular.

It is a difficult question. If it is asked in a general, theoretical way, rather than a specific, historic one, then its very posing explains much, since it is assumed *a priori* that secularism as such has always existed, that the secular possesses a sort of eternal and universal “essence.” The consequence of this is another *a priori* assumption: that the second term, the religious, also denotes some particular “essence,” distinct from the secular and either external or opposite to it. As a result, a fundamental and universal cultural schema for all times and cultural contexts arises, one in which two elements of different natures coexist. These elements can in some way be associated and even interact with one another, but, like water and oil, they cannot mix. Thus, the very posing of an abstract, theoretical question about the relationship between the secular and the religious is imbued with the secular representation of religion briefly described above.

The second difficulty with regard to this question lies in the fact that the verity of the theoretical approach is usually founded on specific historical examples from the distant pre-secular past — examples that are designed to show that even “ancient man,” in addition to the sacred sphere, lived in a secular, “natural” space of life, essentially indistinguishable from the life of modern man in the secular epoch. The secularist logic is thus: religion/religiosity has always existed as something with an identifiable quality, distinct from that which is not properly religious; even in pre-modern, pre-secular societies and cultures, for example, one can distinguish religious and non-religious authority. If these two authorities are occasionally combined in one person, then this constitutes a union of distinct elements. Examples include the Pope, the Caliph, and the Bishop of Montenegro. Or another example of secularist logic: a single activity — the kissing of the cross by an ancient Russian prince — supposedly had different meanings: a purely religious one when the prince kissed the cross after the liturgy, and an essentially secular one when it was a political gesture, a sign of reconciliation between principalities.

The problem, however, is that as persuasive as it may seem, this line of argument proves nothing. Specifically, it can “prove” opposing claims depending on whichever model of religion is assumed. If one uses the secular model of *separateness* of religion, then the kissing of the cross by the ancient Russian prince in two different situations proves the different natures of the religious and the secular. If one uses the pre-secular model of *diffuseness* of religion, then this same

example will demonstrate the opposite: power and politics were at that time inseparable from religion. In other words, historical examples are not arguments in and of themselves, but subject to interpretation within a general conception of religion.

At the same time, both the posing of this question regarding the theoretical relationship between the religious and the secular and the above examples are completely appropriate and useful, since otherwise there is no way to make sense of the mutually exclusive nature of the models of religion discussed above. We can deal with this conundrum under one condition: when the definition of “religious” is clear.

According to the secularist understanding, religion is one of the artificial spheres, a specific product of cultural creation, something fabricated, a “charm” that envelops the individual person’s and society’s essentially natural and secular life activities. If these charms are “broken,” what remains is “simply being-in-the-world” (*In-der-Welt-sein*). Correspondingly, one can retrospectively remove religious charms from, say, ancient politics, so that “just politics” remains (applied to the example given above, there is only feudal disunity and princely infighting, which should be distinguished from the supernumerary “religious” aspect).

However, it is also possible to examine these phenomena from another point of view. We can consider that which in the secular context has come to be called the *worldview* in relation to medieval actors, both “secular” and “religious.” In their day, everyone’s worldview was religious (there was no other worldview, or it existed only in quiet exceptions), and this means that the source of political power was God perceived as transcendent to the world. Therefore the distinction between secular authority and specifically religious (ecclesiastical) authority was not fundamental, but hierarchical and functional, occurring within a religious understanding of authority proper.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, it is simply impossible to separate the religious from the secular (in this case, regarding authority and politics) in accordance with the secular separationist model: religion in the pre-secular context was fundamentally diffuse, *despite the fact* that a so-called purely religious sphere of life (e.g. the worship service) existed. But this brings up a legitimate question: if the “purely religious” did, in fact, exist, then how can it be distinguished; that is, how can it be correlated to that which was not purely religious? After all, otherwise that which

2. This allowed for the possibility of varying approaches to authority, differing in configuration but unified in essence: take the Pope’s authority over the emperor, for example, as compared with Joseph Volotsky’s continuum of authority: God, the tsar, the bishops.

comprised “religion” in pre-secular culture would be indistinguishable, and thus it would be impossible to pinpoint exactly what was separated into a special sphere in the process of secularization.

The situation is thus very delicate. In order to answer the modern question about the relationship between the religious and the secular, the modern (secular) formulation of this question cannot be ignored, nor can the fact that this secular formulation, defined by a secular conception of religion, is irrelevant to the pre-secular reality of religion, and therefore distorts religion itself, along with its long history. In other words, we must answer a different question: what, precisely, is religion? How can it be adequately defined?

However, we encounter a problem in the fact that in the pre-secular history of religion (here we are concerned with Christianity in particular, since it is specifically within the European Christian context that the “classic” process of secularization takes place) we find no definition of religion that meets the modern, scientific standards required of a definition. After all, to define a phenomenon means to isolate it, to make it an object of knowledge separate from other phenomena and, through its juxtaposition with those other phenomena, to identify what makes its “essence” particular, in distinction to the “essences” of other phenomena. In order to define religion itself, it must be separated from other areas of the differentiated whole of society, particularly from politics. But how is it possible to separate pre-secular religion from politics? For example, early Christians were law-abiding in principle, yet refused to observe certain legally prescribed state ceremonies to the point of martyrdom: this is a clear intermingling of the religious and the political. To provide another example, both of these later “commandments” were religious: “Honor God as the Tsar of Heaven” and “Honor the Tsar as God’s servant on earth.” In fact, in general, the Christianization of the ancient pagan world relates simultaneously to both religious and political history, to the history of ideas and the history of daily life.

One can, of course, following the traditional secular approach of religious studies, point to doctrinal dogmas, church hierarchy, acts of worship, the practice of prayer and related psychological experiences as the intrinsically or “purely” religious. However, since these religious elements in the pre-secular epoch were an integral part of the whole of individual and social life, highlighting these distinct elements does not constitute a definition of the object or phenomenon of religion, but rather a distortion of the true role of religion in life and culture. This distortion is a product of using the modern secular model of religion as a lens through which to study and describe religion in the pre-secular era.

There is only one way out of this situation: to establish a new conception, or model, of religion, which, on the basis of the aforementioned, will be *post-secular*. This conception must take into consideration the actual pre-secular history of religion, and at the same time stand in contrast with the model of religion constructed during the secularization process in both its ideological and pragmatic aspects. In other words, the new, post-secular model of religion anticipates a conceptualization of pre-secular religion and “the religious” against a background of vigorous disagreement with the secular conception.

The use of the secular approach (that of religious studies and sociology) to describe and define modern religion is based on an understanding of a distinct “religious sphere,” which is itself still further differentiated. In social space, this sphere involves the voluntary religious associations of citizens; individually, it involves the experience of religious psychology; performatively, it involves religious worship and rituals; and ideologically, it involves a religious worldview. Hence, the religious is marked as a specific life activity, as *in general* a subclass of, respectively, the classes of voluntary association, psychology, performance, and worldview in general. In each case, the religious is an addition, inasmuch as it is understood as superfluous in relation to the natural and secular. Aggregately, religion is presented as a cluster of these individual and social activities with a corresponding infrastructure, a cluster that comprises one of many societal subsystems, or sectors, of a sociocultural whole. Furthermore, this approach is extended to pre-secular (or non-secular) culture, interpreting the religious as a particular “vestment” of the natural and secular, which have not yet freed themselves from religious custody.

In reality, however, in pre-secular culture, the natural and secular instead correspond to that which can be called the natural and religious. There, religiousness is taken for granted as the “natural” state of the individual and society, and as a rule, the only debate is over the truth or falsehood of a particular religion, its universal (Christianity, Islam) or local character, whether it is one’s own or alien (“paganism” is the religion of “tongues,” of different tribes and peoples).<sup>3</sup> Thus, pre-secular culture, in contrast to modern secular religious studies, has no notion of “religion in general” but only of true

3. This statement refers to the etymological relationship between the Russian word for paganism, “iazychestvo,” and the Russian word for tongue, “iazyk.” The Latin root for the English word “paganism” actually means “rural person” or “villager.” — The editors.

or false worship, veneration of one's own gods or foreign ones. In this sense, false worship or participation in foreign rituals is not "religion" at all, but a rejection of religion, religious betrayal.

Thus, with respect to religion there arise two interpretations of the "natural" that differ to the point of complete contradiction, and two interpretations of what can be added to the natural as something self-evident. If one takes into consideration both the pre-secular and secular understandings of religiousness, the following view on the relationship between the religious and the nonreligious (secular) can be proposed: they constitute *two poles* of individual and societal existence. In this case, what is understood as "natural" is the cumulative life activities of "man and people," which flow along an ideological and pragmatic plane of tension between the religious and the secular poles of culture.

The religious pole comprises the "purely religious," which is easily recognizable in practically all cultures. The opposing, secular pole comprises the pragmatic and this-worldly, all that is related to the very processes of living and surviving; in other words, it is *conatus*, or the "biological" (pre-cultural *in the logical sense*). Accordingly, when speaking about *culture* (in the most general sense), it is defined on the one hand by the religious pole, or the quasi-religious pole (on which see below), and on the other hand by the opposing, "biological" pole.

Here reference must be made to that intuitive truth that is present in the secular model of religion and culture. In relegating religion to a distinct sector of individual and societal life, proponents of this model have by the same token rejected the absolutization of the secular as such. Even if this was done for specific historical or pragmatic reasons, the result is the same. The modern *philosophy* of the secular has not been consistently thought through to the end. The secular conception of religion did not repudiate, but rather acknowledged and validated the *uniqueness* of the religious, recognizing religion as something possessing its own separate "essence" that nothing can replace. This truth has both pragmatic and ideological dimensions, since it is related to the liberal idea that freedom of choice, including choice of worldview, is an inalienable individual right.

At the same time, this incidental truth is in a sense accidental. Secularism as an ideology (and as "philosophy") undeniably presupposes the total disappearance of religion, the complete "disenchantment" of the world, the liberation of the person and humanity from every kind of enchantment, but above all from religious ones. Secularism's principle of freedom of religion is tied not to the maintenance of religious choice, but to the pathos of non-violence, since, according



to the ideology of modernism, to know and understand the world as it is known and understood by secularism, that is in its natural, this-worldly capacity, can be done only by “freely” recognizing the natural as truly natural, accepting the self-sufficiency of the natural as the truth of the world itself. Violence in this case is simply irrelevant, for this truth is revealed as obvious, is a kind of “revelation” subsequently confirmed by experience. And revelation can be violent only in the sense of the violence of the fact, of the true state of things.

In its logical, semantic aspect, religion is concerned with the ultimate ontological foundations of the world and humanity. But secularism as an ideology, by displacing religion from the sociocultural universe, not only pursues the removal of religious “charms” from culture, but as a consequence also creates a situation in which some other, non-religious (i.e. secular) cultural authorities are called to, and even must, engage with the question of the ultimate ontological foundations of the world and humanity. These cultural authorities are post-theological spheres of knowledge and thinking: secular philosophy and secular science (and indirectly “secular” literature and art in their logical dimensions). In other words, in confining religion to its allotted sphere, secularism farms out inherently religious questions to areas of the sociocultural universe that are by definition external to religion.

Thus, secularism acts as a substitute for religion, and thereby discovers its own quasi-religious features. In the new secular reality, secularism is the pole standing opposite the “biological” (logically pre-cultural) pole of life, and in this capacity it turns out to be just as diffuse as religion was in the pre-secular situation: it pervades everything, every sector of the functionally differentiated sociocultural whole. In short, it assumes the old function of religion in the new post-religious culture.

To avoid misunderstandings, it bears repeating: secularism does not destroy religion, does not drive it out completely, and does not replace it; the strictest atheistic secularist regimes are the exceptions that prove the rule. Moreover, secularism as an ideology and as a practice (secularization) not only permits, but logically implies contact and mutual exchange between the sectors of secular culture, for example, between literature or art and religion, or between philosophy and religion, and not only retrospectively, but currently. The religious can penetrate other cultural spheres, but not diffusely; that is, it cannot penetrate in such a way so as to logically define them. These other spheres remain autonomous and essentially secular. Religion in this



case acts merely as an “interlocutor” and as “leftover cultural material,” and not as a sociocultural pole.

This fact has important consequences. Religion is a pole of culture, but when another, *quasi*-religious secular authority arises alongside the actual religious authority, the religious pole bifurcates. In secular culture, religion’s function as a cultural pole is fulfilled simultaneously by religion as such, which appears in its “pure” form in just such a culture, and by secular ideology and practice, which provide a substitute for religion in a totally secular world.

Here arises an important point that must be emphasized: no matter how paradoxical it may seem, the very “theory and practice” of secularism — in a secular age as yet maintained by inertia — sheds light on pre-secular religion.

In contrast to that which was recognized as secular in pre-secular culture and which must be identified with the “biological/pragmatic” pole (*conatus*), the modern secular functionally replaces old religion; that is, it becomes typologically the “religious” pole of culture, that absolutely diffuse principle that, even having a “material” expression (worldview and values), acts in the culture as an all-pervasive logical force, influencing the entire field of polar tension, the entire sociocultural universe. This is a universal, but “incorporeal” principle, for it is merely a *quality* conceptually ascribed to, and prescribed by, every cultural phenomenon, with the exception of “religion proper.”

To reiterate the main thesis: from a sociological point of view religion is a requisite pole of culture understood as the sphere of the artificial or “man-made.” It is a pole in the sense of being a “source” of views about the ultimate ontological foundations of the world and humanity, which give rise to corresponding individual and societal practices. Religion proper is not the only thing that can act as such a pole; for example, so might ancient philosophies, which also fulfilled a religious function and which represented a kind of proto-secularist phenomenon, at least from the perspective of medieval European Christianity. In any case, as a sociocultural pole, the “place of religion” is indestructible.

Secularism splits this topos of the religious, but splits it asymmetrically, since it leaves to religion proper (with its inherent totality and diffuseness) the limited sphere of a social subsystem (in the best case), while secularism becomes the carrier of universal, all-determining, quasi-religious meaning.<sup>4</sup>

4. And even the Albanian secularism of the Communist era, pushed to its theoretical and practical limits, succeeded only in repressing religion to the “social subconscious.”

The quasi-religious — in the sense of constituting a second functionally religious pole — “essence” of secularism is particularly obvious in the secular understanding of the communal and the personal, or the public and the private. In short, secularism leads to a paradoxical universalization of the private. In the pre-secular context, the private was connected to the public as one side of a coin is to the other. In the secular context, the unit of the private is the individual as a “physical person,” which, though necessarily related to the public, retains fundamental autonomy.<sup>5</sup>

Here again we run up against secularism’s concession to religion. If the individual as an autonomous subject represents the fundamental value and primary social element, then the purely religious pole is in no way repressed: in the space of the individual’s “lifeworld,” religious influence is left with complete freedom. However, it is left on just “one side of the coin,” as the other, “public” side of the coin is absolutely and completely in the sphere of secular quasi-religion, inasmuch as the communal is “cleansed” of the religious (as described in the term “secular society”). Therefore “the social” as the common represents the cumulative effect of the interaction between individual-private units, taken in their “external” projection into a principally secular space.

Thus, the universalization of the private as the individual is a means of divorcing the two functionally religious poles: the individual, facing away from the public, may freely engage with the purely religious pole in his life activities; however, in facing toward the public, he finds himself in a different field of polar tension — between the “religious” and the “secular,” where secularism itself acts as the religious pole.

The instrument of this separation is “human rights,” including the foundational — both in the historical sense and with respect to terminology — right to the freedom of religious confession as a freedom of the individual conscience, that is, the right of a “private” individual to accept and share with others any answer to the question of the ultimate ontological foundations of the world and humanity. In other words, the universalization of the private represents a rejection of universally meaningful (supra-individual) values and the transfer of universality to instrumental or procedural values that are simultaneously individual and common.

5. Perhaps this is that very “man” who, according to Foucault, was invented comparatively recently, but is now dead or dying...

This important point is directly related to secularism's status as quasi-religion, not just in its function, but also in its content.

Privatization — the transfer of the search for answers to typologically religious, or religious-philosophical, questions about the ultimate ontological foundations of the world and humanity (answers that will in turn give rise to particular practices) to the competence of the individual and groups or communities of individuals — means that secularism refuses on principle to provide any substantive answers to such questions. At first glance, this very refusal must bear witness to the *secular* character of secularism, its substantive *neutrality* (*epoché*, so to speak); that is, secularism does not impose any kind of general *worldview*, but, on the contrary, establishes the conditions for the existence of many and various worldviews within the bounds of legitimate individual-private and individual-private-group creativity/commitment. That is, secularism acts as a fundamentally instrumental ideology, as a universal procedure, the primary goal of which is to remove and prevent conflict between concrete worldviews. This in turn must mean that secularism itself has no relation to *worldview* as such; that secularism, so to speak, is entirely procedural, which is why it is not substantively universal but specifically instrumentally universal.

However, secularism is *not* entirely procedural. Procedure, by definition, implies work with some kind of content, some “material”; strictly speaking, this is the *raison d'être* of procedure. Procedure is formalism, and it is universal specifically in a “formalist” sense. Substantive universalism is on a completely different plane than procedural universalism. However, if procedure as such proves to be the *only* expression of universalism, as is the case in modern secularism, then this indicates a repression of universal content as such. By insisting on its neutrality towards any particular worldview, secularism acts principally as a fundamentally content-less ideology, as a mere “tool box.” But this in and of itself conveys nothing about secularism, which, as seen above, in fact acts as a functional substitute for religion, as a generator of implicit answers to inquiries about the ontological foundations of the world and humanity.

The alleged and/or proclaimed instrumentality of secularism is illusory specifically by virtue of the fact that it accents its proceduralism in those situations where there is no, and cannot be any, universally shared *content*: all worldviews, including religious and philosophical ones, are by definition personal, private and without any general cultural significance. But if instrumentality has no material referent,

it ceases to be instrumentalism. This means that a “solitary,” or self-sufficient, instrumentality must have a hidden, implicit substantive referent, for the idea of an instrument without material to act upon is absurd indeed.

It is, in fact, a specific *worldview*, operating behind a mask of neutrality, that comprises the “material” for secularist instrumentalism. This worldview presupposes particular answers to the question of the ultimate ontological foundations of the world and humanity. This worldview must be reconstructed, since secularism avoids articulating it itself.

Particular secularists might define their worldview as “humanism” in its various forms. But secularism as a quasi-religious ideology, having accumulated the “views” of many particular secularists along with the diverse effects of the long-running process of secularization, is not synonymous with any particular modern European “humanistic worldview” (some of which have not been exterior to, opposed to, or intended to replace religion).

“Secularist worldview” here specifically means a sort of cumulative, implicit worldview that functions as a dominant ideology in secular culture as a whole; that is, in a culture whose poles are comprised of quasi-*religious* secularism and the eternal, *secular*, pragmatic *conatus*. Such a cumulative and concurrently socially dominant worldview is in direct contradiction to secularism’s own understanding of legitimate, private worldviews. This is secularism’s sore spot, and it simultaneously reveals its quasi-religiousness. From the secularist perspective, “legitimate” worldviews are always private; that is, they are principally limited regarding their general or societal significance. But the worldview that is distinguishable as a background, or the substantive and ideological foundation of secularism itself, is a typologically religious worldview. It is, so to speak, a “catholic” (*sobornoe*) worldview, possessing authority not by virtue of “pure logic” or by the observance of particular formal authoritative or ideological procedures, but specifically by virtue of a very real *dominance* in the general sociocultural space, which, functionally speaking, is essentially identical to the domination of religion proper in the conditions of the “old cultural regime.”

What is at the heart of this hidden secularist worldview, this *deus absconditus* of secularism? Its essence lies in the raising of the self-sufficiency, or immanence, of the world and humanity to the rank of a typologically religious truth. This relates specifically to: (1) the absolutization of the being/presence of the individual, and, as a

logical consequence, (2) the absolutization of the proceduralism of this being/presence.

Secularism is a “religion” to the extent that, acting in the public sphere as a replacement for religion itself (which is already locked away in a separate, autonomous sphere), by means of various authorities representing different sectors of the secular sociocultural whole, directly or indirectly answers questions about the ultimate ontological foundations of the world and humanity and, as a result, forms and inculcates those individual and social practices that correspond to these answers — from the daily to the political — as hegemonic. Its answer: there is no “God” except for determinate existence, given to a person through his perceptions and direct, spontaneous experience. Accordingly, prophecies about this “secular God” can only be recommendations, made with the use of appropriate tools, related to the effective pragmatics of existence in a one-dimensional world.

The “religiousness” of secularism — that is, the religious function that it “consciously,” indeed, one might say honestly and responsibly, took on after the ghettoization of religion proper — consists of providing an ultimate, perhaps even a metaphysical, quasi-transcendental meaning of the determinate being of the world and humanity, including human community.

Here we come up against what can be called the philosophical *naïveté* of secularism as an answer to ultimate religious-philosophical questions. This naïveté is connected with the problem of any immanentism, including atheism, as an anti-religious ideology: the world as a determinate sphere of existence has logical boundaries; the world’s boundaries exist because there is no boundlessness (infinity) in our personal experience. At the same time, the existence of boundaries suggests that there is a beyond. Thus, a rejection of the transcendent is only a pseudo-answer to the question of the transcendent and the immanent. The idea of immanence is possible only in conjunction with the idea of transcendence, and an emphasis on immanence as an absolute is also a metaphysical position that corresponds to a particular worldview.

The positive secular-scientific “picture of the world” doesn’t remove the problem of the immanent and transcendent, because the problem itself is “transcendent to” modern science which is post-theological and, in some sense, post-philosophical. For philosophy cannot avoid the problem of the transcendent without becoming “modern science.” In turn, the specific psychology of “man and people” cannot ignore the

limit of mortality, which, despite any “rational theorem,” points to the problem of the boundaries of existence.

Secularism, in contrast to religion proper, distances itself on principle from philosophy and ultimate questions. The distinction between secularism as quasi-religion and religion proper is important. In functioning in a modern, self-established context as “religion,” by virtue of a principled rejection of meaningful content (“neutrality”) in favor of instrumentalism (“pragmatic utility”), secularism also rejects any weighty philosophical component. Specifically, it accepts only social and political philosophy as its philosophical component. This is very revealing: secularism works only with social pragmatics — that is, only with those segments of philosophical thought that are concerned with questions that are immanent and of-this-world. It in no way thematizes or problematizes what are essentially forbidden “religious-philosophical” questions.

The conclusion presents itself: secularism as a quasi-religion has fallen into a “religious” trap. Having taken upon itself in the modern “secular world” a function formerly fulfilled by old religion, but at the same time logically and honestly leaving religion as religion to its separate sphere, secularism itself has created the conditions for the future transition to a “post-secular world,” a world in which religion will be ideologically and pragmatically restored to its rights, that is, released from the ghetto, while secularism’s functional and logical pseudo-religiousness will become an object of critical analysis, as will its worldview bias. If this does not unmask secularism’s declared neutrality, it will at least call it into question.

This is precisely the logical error of secularism as an ideology and a practice. The secularism that split the religious pole when it offered itself as a replacement for religion in the name of establishing an irreligious future for humanity demands that we today, after comprehending secularism’s logical error, seek a new understanding of religion that is consonant with contemporary religious and societal processes in various contexts, both local and global. The foundation of such a conception could be the idea presented herein of religion’s polarity, which can be summarized in the following way.

Sociologically, religion must be understood first and foremost as a sociocultural pole; accordingly, the other pole represents some kind of non-religious “principle,” which can be called secular. Each pole, as one of the “principles,” establishes with the other pole a field of tension resulting in a certain dynamic, and is not a “sphere,” “space,”

or “domain.” Therefore the totality and diffuseness of religion must be understood as a consequence of its polarity: each of the field of tension’s poles acts upon the field “with totality,” precisely as a pole, encountering and energetically interacting with the energy and influence of the other pole. In other words, the entire field of tension is totally and diffusely “permeated” with “the religious” on one side and “the secular” on the other. It is important in this theoretical approach that the “secular” (not in the secularist sense) is not in any way repressed, and that asymmetry does not arise. Rather, it proves to be the “eternal secular,” since it is an indispensable constituent element of the dynamic structure of the cultural whole. In the same way, the “religious” is not repressed, for a *pole* cannot be imprisoned in a ghetto. This model applies to every cultural situation, whether the pre-secular and non-secular, the secular, or the post-secular.

The development and specification of this proposed conceptual approach will require further effort and appropriate articulation.

DMITRY UZLANER

## The Pussy Riot Case and the Peculiarities of Russian Post-Secularism

*Translation by April French*

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*This article analyzes materials generated by and related to the Pussy Riot Trial, which was conducted in response to the scandalous “Punk Prayer” performed by the musical group on February 21, 2012 in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow. These materials are used to illustrate the peculiarities of the post-secular situation in Russia, focusing on two particular issues: 1) The “Punk Prayer” and the religious-secular boundary; 2) The “Punk Prayer” and post-secular hybrids. Uzlaner emphasizes that post-secularism does not follow a single pattern and has not led to a unified normative vision. To understand the post-secular situation, we should turn our attention to collisions between different normative models of post-secularism, each supported by its own actors and activists. The Pussy Riot case and its discussion in the public sphere allow us to single out two such models: the “pro-authority” (supported by state and Church leadership) and the “oppositional” (supported by the political opposition and opposition within the Church).*

**Keywords:** desecularization, “Punk Prayer,” post-secular, post-secular hybrids, Pussy Riot.

MANY authors, including several from Russia, have studied the problem of post-secularism sufficiently well from a theoretical standpoint (Kyrlezhev 2004; Morozov 2007; Uzlaner 2008a; “Postsekuliarnaia filosofii” 2011; “Religiia v postsekuliarnom kontekste” 2012). There is, however, a clear lack of empirical research

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that could operationalize the current theory as it applies to Russian realities. In this article, based on material surrounding the Pussy Riot case, I intend at least partially to fill this lacuna.

Judging from its resonance in the mass media, the Pussy Riot case became the main event of 2012, if not in the social and political spheres, then at least in the area of religion. The essence of the case and the sequence of events can be briefly summarized as follows: on February 21, 2012, at the very height of the presidential election campaign, the musical group Pussy Riot, already well-known for its scandalous artistic-political protests, organized a performance in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior. The group entered the church in the guise of regular visitors; then the participants removed their outer clothing (under which multi-colored dresses were hidden), put on balaclavas, and began to perform a so-called "Punk Prayer"<sup>1</sup> called "Mother of God, Banish Putin!" on the soleas<sup>2</sup> of the church, directly in front of the Royal Doors of the iconostasis. Security guards and chance witnesses escorted the women out of the building. No one detained them, so they easily dispersed into the crown outside. While at the church, the women did not have time to sing the entire song, but later that day a video based on the performance appeared online, with the full text of the "Punk Prayer" and photos from the Cathedral of Christ the Savior ("Pank-moleben" 2012). By the next day, the Orthodox movement known as the World Russian People's Council had already filed a lawsuit with demands to bring criminal prosecution against the participants in the performance.

The Tagansky District Court of the City of Moscow subsequently sanctioned the detention of Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina, members of the punk group, on March 5. On March 16, a third member of the group, Ekaterina Samutsevich, was arrested. On July 30, Moscow's Khamovniki District Court started to review the

1. The song title "Punk Prayer" (the most widespread English rendering) is "*Pank-moleben*" in the original Russian. In order to grasp the extent of the radicalism entailed in Pussy Riot's invocation of this term, it is essential to understand that the word *moleben* refers to a special service of prayer that can be conducted either by a priest or a layperson. In Russian history, the *moleben* has been used in times of national crisis to beseech Christ or the Virgin Mary for protection. Neither "prayer" nor "prayer service" fully captures the essence of this term. When not using the term "Punk Prayer" specifically, we have varied between "prayer" and "prayer service" as contextually approximate English renderings on a case-by-case basis. — Translator and editors.
2. The technical term for the portion of the raised floor that extends beyond the iconostasis in an Orthodox church. — Translator.

essentials of the case. On August 17, Judge Marina Syrova sentenced the three members of Pussy Riot to two years at a minimum-security penal colony for hooliganism (Article 213, Clause 2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation<sup>3</sup>). This sentence was appealed to the Moscow City Appellate Court. On October 10, 2012, the City Court upheld the sentence of the Khamovniki District Court with no changes for Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina.<sup>4</sup> It did, however, commute Samutsevich's sentence to probation; she was freed at court.

The records of this case constitute a very interesting source for the sociological, anthropological, and psychological analysis of contemporary Russian society. This article will limit itself to the consideration of two themes that shed light on the specific nature of Russia's particular post-secular situation: (1) the "Punk Prayer" and the religious-secular boundary; and (2) the "Punk Prayer" and post-secular hybrids (to be defined below).

One of the key intuitions that guided me as I wrote this text was the notion that the post-secular situation is one of profound ambiguity, confusion, and fluctuation. Deeply rooted boundaries, constants, and definitions concerning the religious and the secular are now actually open-ended and have been called into question (Uzlaner 2008b). The standard secular vision of a socially differentiated society, in which the religious and the secular are separated into distinct corners, is beginning to break down. This creates the impression that religion is encroaching upon those spaces that are supposed to be alien to it (whether politics, law, culture, economics, etc.). In contrast to the prevailing opinion, however, the blurred boundaries characteristic of post-secularism and the incursion of religion into secular space (and of the secular into religious space) are not subject to a unified logic, nor do they fall in line with a supposed monolithic form of post-secularism. On the contrary, as will be shown based upon the materials of the Pussy Riot case, the issue at hand involves the collision of various competing normative models of post-secularism, each supported by its own activists and interest groups. In the course of our examination, we will delineate at least two such models, the "pro-authority" and the "oppositional." It is most interesting to observe how the secular state has been pulled into this conflict through the law enforcement and court systems. At times, this conflict has taken on the character of a (quasi-)theological dispute, and the state has begun to concern itself

3. Article 213 is located in Part II, Section IX, Chapter 24 of the Criminal Code.

4. On December 23, 2013 Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina were released due to amnesty.

with problems for which it does not have the corresponding expertise, language, or properly trained personnel to solve.<sup>5</sup>

Since this case has achieved such a high profile, I consider it necessary to clarify my position as a scholar. In this article, I do not aim to prove the correctness of one of the sides or one of the possible visions of post-secularism. Instead, using the materials of the Pussy Riot case, this article will lay out what constitutes Russian post-secularism, along with its associated conflicts.

### **The “Punk Prayer” and the Religious-Secular Boundary<sup>6</sup>**

As mentioned above, in the post-secular context, the boundary that separates the religious and sacred from the secular and profane is now in flux. Constant battles are taking place in order to determine exactly which way this boundary should run (Fenn 1978). The once well-defined boundary is now becoming “a frontier” in which various “activists and actors of desecularization” are staging front-line battles (Karpov 2012). Indeed, the very status — religious or secular — of one or another phenomenon is now disputed, as is the issue of who exactly has been vested with the authority to certify such a status. In this conflict, the final word of interpretation remains with the state, which must constantly resolve any conflicts that arise through its law enforcement agencies and court system, with the participation of specialist experts who are part of the state’s “ideological apparatus” (see below). After all, the unregulated dislodging of previous footholds is a constant and obvious threat to the state. In the new post-secular situation, the secular state thus finds itself pulled into (quasi-) theological disputes.

Pussy Riot’s “Punk Prayer” and the ensuing debate graphically illustrate these processes. The Russian court was pulled in *volens volens* to decide fairly specific theological questions in order to restore the blurry religious-secular boundary and to assert once again the balance destroyed by the “Punk Prayer.”

5. Traditionally, the Church has dealt with such issues, because it formulated what could properly be considered “religion” by sanctioning or anathematizing new forms of piety, authenticating miracles and relics, regulating new folk movements, etc. Yet, with the rise of the modern sovereign state, which asserts the full powers of its authority in a controlled territory, these functions have gradually been transferred to the jurisdiction of secular authorities (Asad 1993: 36–39).

6. This section is based on an earlier publication (Uzlaner 2012).

## The “Punk Prayer”: A Religious or Secular Activity?

The first conflict of interpretation that arose in connection with the “Punk Prayer” had to do with how to characterize Pussy Riot’s performance appropriately. Was the action religious (a prayer service, holy foolishness or Maslenitsa (Carnival) foolishness), or was it secular (sacrilege,<sup>7</sup> hooliganism, an artistic performance, or a political and civil protest)? People hold disparate positions as to whether it was a genuine (though radical and untraditional) prayer service, an intentional form of blasphemy and hooliganism, an inappropriate artistic performance, or a civil and political protest. Thus, it is not surprising that the specific classification of the “Punk Prayer” is being determined by the interests of warring sides, each of which is intent upon its own version of drawing the boundary between the religious and the secular.

Let us begin with the members of Pussy Riot. By all appearances, the group’s participants themselves did not fully understand how to describe what they had done accurately. Thus, in their idiosyncratic press release (Pussy Riot 2012a), there are signs indicating that it was a specifically religious act:

“Because peaceful demonstrations with hundreds of thousands of people are not producing immediate results, before Easter we will ask the Mother of God to banish Putin more quickly,” announced Serafima, the most pious punk feminist, to the rest of the team as they set out for the Cathedral [of Christ the Savior] in the February morning frost.

Yet, in one of their first interviews after their act (Dobrokhotoy 2012), there are signs that Pussy Riot took the act to be more like an artistic performance (i.e., something secular) masked by external Orthodox attributes:

Correspondent: So if you are turning to the Mother of God, does it mean that you are positioning yourselves as believers?

7. While “sacrilege” or “blasphemy” might generally seem to fall into the religious category, inasmuch as they are inconceivable apart from a religious context, the interpretation consistently implied in this article suggests that in the Russian context they are frequently regarded as an expression of secular ideology embodied in the deliberate entrance into the religious sphere with the intent to disrupt and/or disrespect. — Translator.

Kot [Cat]: Well, some of us are believers, but I certainly wouldn't say we were "Orthodox." This appeal was more like a game, an artistic move.

Schumacher: Yes, it was a unique subversion.

Here, of course, with the words "more like," the fundamental and emphatic ambiguity of the action becomes apparent. The ill-defined position of those who sang the "Punk Prayer" hindered its final classification as a religious or secular act.

Yet, in the end, the position that insisted upon the religious character of the "Punk Prayer" reigned until the beginning of active investigative proceedings, as demonstrated by this excerpt from a statement published on Pussy Riot's blog (2012c) on March 4, 2012 (i.e., practically at the moment of their arrest):

In all of our public statements, we constantly emphasize that the punk prayer "Mother of God, Banish Putin" was truly a prayer — a radical prayer directed to the Mother of God with a request to prevail upon the earthly authorities and the ecclesiastical authorities who take their cue from them. Among the two-dozen Pussy Riot members, many are Orthodox believers for whom a church is a place of deep prayer. Yes, our prayer overstepped the bounds of what is acceptable for many in a church. But we did not desecrate the church, nor did we blaspheme. We prayed, and many priests do not doubt that "Mother of God, Banish Putin" was a true prayer. We passionately prayed to the Mother of God, asking her to give us all the strength to fight against our incredibly merciless and wicked overlords. And we will continue to sing songs and will pray for those who want us killed and thrown in prison, because Christ teaches us not to wish death or prison on those whom we do not understand.

To what can such a clear emphasis on the specifically religious aspect of the "Punk Prayer" be attributed, as distinct from the earlier more ambivalent position that emphasized an artistic, subversive composition? Perhaps the defense attorneys encouraged this interpretation, since it allowed them to count on the most minimal punishment or even on complete immunity from legal prosecution on the basis of the constitutional right to freedom of religion (Article 28 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation). However, another interpretation is also possible: the "Punk Prayer" attains maximum radicalism when it is recognized as a prayer and not as an political performance art (a flashy but fleeting performance in the context

of global artistic events). When “Mother of God, Banish Putin” is understood precisely as a prayer, it turns out to be a courageous claim to Christian content and values, their reorientation into a different course from the one set by those who speak officially on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church.

For the purposes of this article, the crux of the matter is that the “Punk Prayer” sheds light on the “pro-authority” model of post-secularism, implicating it in the close interaction of ecclesiastical and secular authorities, complete with an unusual “exchange of gifts” (i.e., political protection in exchange for moral support in the context of a growing protest movement).<sup>8</sup> The “oppositional” model stands against this “pro-authority” model, with the “Most Holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary” at the head of a protest march and civil opposition. As a prayer, Pussy Riot’s performance is a challenge to the authority of the Patriarchate, a contestation of its monopolistic claims on both the Russian Orthodox legacy and the stipulation of the terms of this legacy’s interaction with the secular reality of Russia’s sociopolitical life. The members of the punk group exhibited an awareness of this point throughout the entire affair. Yet over time in their rhetoric, this awareness yielded more and more to an alternative interpretation of the “Punk Prayer” as political performance art, apparently as a consequence of the international campaign in support of the punk activists.<sup>9</sup>

Let us turn now to the perspective of the ecclesiastical authorities. By all accounts, the official representatives of the Church sharply judged the radical challenge of the “Punk Prayer.” From the very beginning, they fundamentally refused to see in it any kind of connection to a meaningful religious activity. Immediately following the initial news of Pussy Riot’s performance, Fr. Vsevolod Chaplin (2012), chair of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Synodal Department for the Cooperation of Church and Society, posted a piece called “Blasphemy at the Royal Doors” on his blog, *Orthodox Politics*. Vladimir Legoida (2012), chair of the Synodal Information Department, repeats Chaplin, writing that the performance was “a

8. Pussy Riot’s performance took place just as civil protest was on the rise. If we take the position of the group’s participants at face value, their act was incited by the support that the Patriarch showed for Vladimir Putin in early February 2012, at the time of Putin’s election to a third term.
9. Curiously, any record indicating that Pussy Riot once considered the “Punk Prayer” a religious activity has disappeared from the group’s official blog and is no longer accessible.

blasphemous and loathsome act.” In this interpretation, Pussy Riot’s “Punk Prayer” was an unmistakably secular action; the unsanctioned invasion of the profane — art, politics, and ideology — into a sacred space that is alien to it; and the perpetration of blasphemous and disorderly acts in that space.

Insisting upon the secular character of the “Punk Prayer,” official representatives of the Church demanded that secular authorities alone should handle the case. In the words of Chaplin (“Pank-feministki” 2012), “the crime committed (and I am convinced that it was definitely a crime) should be exposed and judged in the courts.” Here, one sees the Church’s desire to distance itself fundamentally from the legal process. As Legoida (2012) writes, “The Church does not have the right to directly interfere with the operations of the law enforcement agencies, which are working on this case seriously and conscientiously.” In this instance, we observe a categorical refusal to analyze the situation in theological language, to translate it to the level of religious significance, or to see in it echoes of any problems that might exist in modern Orthodoxy. Perhaps the harsh reactions of many Orthodox spokesmen against Archdeacon Andrei Kuraev’s position stemmed from such categorical refusals (Kuraev 2012b). Kuraev (2012a) attempted to place the “Punk Prayer” in a specifically religious context and to see in it a religious act that does not contradict Orthodox traditions (carnavalesque form of transgression during *maslenitsa*, a week of carnival before Lent), although he believed the women who participated in the “Punk Prayer” were not fully cognizant of this.

In their interpretations of the “Punk Prayer” as a secular act, Church authorities have sought to maintain for themselves the monopolistic right to delimit the religious and the secular and to sanction or forbid any non-traditional religious forms that arise inside the controlled space of Russian Orthodoxy. If the “Punk Prayer” were actually a prayer, it would be an unsanctioned attempt to redraw the boundaries that separate the religious and the secular. For this reason, under no circumstances can the Church grant it the status of a prayer. To them, it is nothing but blasphemy and hooliganism, and they believe that the particular form of post-secularism posed by the “Punk Prayer” should, therefore, be summarily rejected.

Let us now examine the views of the so-called “schismatics” (i.e., those Christians in opposition not only to the Russian Orthodox Church, but also to the existing political regime). Considering the above, it is unsurprising that “schismatics” have been inclined to place



decisive emphasis upon the religious character of the “Punk Prayer.” Thus, according to Yakov Krotov, a priest from the Kharkov-Poltava Diocese of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, which does not recognize the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church:

Based on the canons of the Byzantine Church, this particular act was not *sviatotatstvo* (sacrilege). The main root of *sviatotatstvo* is the verb *tat'*, the stealing of church valuables. In this case, there was no robbery at all. What is more, strictly from a formal standpoint, there was not even blasphemy. Thus, it was technically a prayer within a church. The methods and forms of this prayer are untraditional for central Russia, but it was technically a prayer (Sharyi 2012).

Vladimir Golyshev (2012), the author of the satirical play *Lyzhneg* about the current Patriarch,<sup>10</sup> repeats Krotov’s sentiments:

1. The girls came to a house of prayer in order to pray.
2. They prayed in the way they considered most fitting for our time and for the given location.
3. Today, in the liturgical practice of Russian Orthodox parishes, there are so many wild, unauthorized ad-libs — all of them vulgar, tasteless, and often openly blasphemous — that to speak of the violation of any kind of “rule” by the Pussy Riot girls is simply laughable.

Such an interpretation makes a claim to a redefinition of the boundaries of the religious and the secular, asserting boundaries that differ from those defined by the ecclesiastical authorities. The “Punk Prayer” is a religious protest not only against Putin, but also against the Church itself. According to these newly drawn boundaries, many of the Church’s practices turn out to be outside the bounds of the sacred, unlike the scandalous “Punk Prayer.” Put another way, Pussy Riot’s performance, in this interpretation, becomes a symbol of another, “oppositional” version of post-secularism, in contradistinction to the “pro-authority” version.

Let us turn at last to the wider Russian public sphere. In Russian society, the “Punk Prayer” evoked widely varying approaches to its proper classification. For example, Yuri Samodurov (2012), a human

10. The title of this play, *Lyzhneg* (lit: lover of alpine skiing), refers to the rumors that Patriarch Kirill is addicted to alpine skiing. This implies that the Russian Patriarch is fond of worldly pleasures.



rights activist and the former director of the Andrei Sakharov Museum and Public Center, underscored the particularly secular, political performance art character of the “Punk Prayer”:

(...) for a moral, political, and legal evaluation of this religious blasphemy, society (including citizens who are believers), the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church, and law enforcement agencies must consider that the meaning and purpose of [Pussy Riot’s] performance was absolutely *not* to be a *militantly atheistic or anti-religious act*; it was a purely secular and unquestioningly *political act*.

For how else is it possible to conscientiously and appropriately interpret the oft-repeated lyrics sung by the girls in a beautiful chant much like a genuine prayer — “Mother of God, rescue us from Putin!?”

The opposition politician Alexei Navalny (2012) showed solidarity with those supporting this interpretation of the “Punk Prayer” as a secular action when he described Pussy Riot as “silly girls who committed minor hooliganism for the sake of publicity.”

For the opposition, such an interpretation of the “Punk Prayer” makes complete sense. On the one hand, the opposition does not wish to argue with Orthodox believers, who constitute a significant portion of the electorate, so it does not look for a religious meaning in the act. On the other hand, it seeks to see in everything a political subtext and a civil protest that must take on more and more exalted forms.

Yet by no means did all of Russian society sympathize with this secular interpretation. For example, the curator and art critic Andrei Yerofeyev, who together with Samodurov was a defendant in a criminal case against the exhibit “Forbidden Art,” does not agree with Samodurov’s treatment:

“It seems to me that in this instance, the question is not about a performance (aktsiia) of contemporary art, but about an act (aktsiia) of young believers,” he said, adding that the act became an expression of protest against the way the head of the Church, without consulting his flock, is supporting one of the candidates in the presidential election.

“These young believers came to the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, to the home of the Patriarch, and conducted a prayer service — that is what Pussy Riot called their musical appeal to the Mother of God. This uncanonical form of prayer is a prayer service in a punk style” (Karev & Krizhevskii 2012).

Thus, the “Punk Prayer” found itself at the intersection of various interpretations. And behind each one stood a preferred version of the correct position of the religious-secular boundary and a particular normative vision of post-secular Russia.

### **The Cathedral of Christ the Savior: Religious or Secular Space?**

A second conflict of interpretation was associated with the location of the “Punk Prayer,” the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. Is this church a secular/profane or a religious/sacred space? Again, one or the other answer to this question emanates from the different normative visions of post-secularism defended by various sides.

Official representatives of the Church saw the “Punk Prayer” as a secular/profane behavior, hooliganism, and blasphemy conducted in a religious/sacred space. The participants in this performance, however, took the directly opposite position, saying that they conducted a religious act — a prayer service — in a place that is actually profane. An official statement by Pussy Riot (2012b) declared:

We believe that it [the Cathedral of Christ the Savior] is not a church, but a shame (ne khram, a sram). The Shame of Christ the Savior. And it is not a house of the Lord, but an office of the Russian Orthodox Church. We came formally to the office of the Russian Orthodox Church to speak out. Rather than a place of spiritual life, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior looks more like a business center — banquet halls rented out for exorbitant prices, a dry cleaner and laundry service, and a parking lot protected by security guards. The website of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior shows that “The Hall of Church Councils is a multi-purpose hall (...) Various events take place in the Hall of Church Councils, including concerts of church choirs, folklore ensembles, and symphony music, solemn ceremonies and other events.” The hall is equipped with two snow makers, two smoke machines, and a bubble maker. As you see, everything was prepared for our “Punk Prayer.” We presented our church choir and our solemn punk-act prayer service using the 64-channel Midas Heritage 2000 sound board owned by Russian Orthodox Church, Inc. and included in the list of ecclesiastical equipment on the church’s website.

Krotov agrees with the view that the Cathedral of Christ the Savior is a secular space: “[Pussy Riot] chose a church that does not belong to the

Russian Orthodox Church but is the property of the Moscow Mayor's Office. It has often been said that topless runway modeling takes place there and that women display diamonds. And the response has been: "This is not [a part of] the Patriarchate, but the property of the Moscow Mayor's Office" (Sharyi 2012).

The logic of these people's rhetoric, which excludes the Cathedral of Christ the Savior from religious space, is perfectly clear. They are criticizing the Church's current policies and the version of post-secularism on which the Church insists. They have chosen to target the Cathedral of Christ the Savior as the chief symbol of these policies. As in the case of the status of the "Punk Prayer," we again find ourselves in the very epicenter of a multi-faceted conflict of interpretation, as various sides attempt to draw the religious-secular boundary in their own way.

### **Just Who Are "Believers"?**

The third and final interpretive conflict touches on the fundamental question of who exactly count as "believers," since it was "believers" whose feelings turned out to be injured by the "Punk Prayer." It was in the name of "believers" that the entire judicial process took place, and members of Pussy Riot went to prison specifically for hatred toward "believers." Yet who can be called a believer? Who can be recognized as a rightful representative of the social group "Orthodox believers", whose religious feelings were or were not insulted and against whom did Pussy Riot (or did they not) direct intentional hatred?

With respect to this question, we once again encounter serious disagreement. For example, the journalist Maxim Shevchenko, who identifies himself as an Orthodox believer, justifies his indignation toward Pussy Riot by rehashing the absolutely secular idea of Samuel Huntington concerning the "clash of civilizations." Shevchenko (2012) sees the "Punk Prayer" as "an invasion of the front-line squadrons of liberal Western civilization into the personal life of millions of Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Georgians and Armenians."

Yet some people who identified themselves with Orthodoxy voiced even more radical judgments:

- They should have dragged the whores out of the church by their hair and impaled all that filth on a stake, so no one would dare to mock the Russian Orthodox faith again.

- (...) do not be offended if they break your legs next time. Christians are sick and tired of being weak.
- If I had been one of the church clergy, I would have stripped them to their underwear, rolled them in honey and *pukh* [poplar down], shaved them bald and thrown them out in the freezing cold in front of the gathered television cameras.
- For the desecration of the church, they must be burned (...) PUBLICLY!... They are beasts.
- Hanging should be the punishment for things like this. I wonder, will they die tomorrow or will they first be tortured?<sup>11</sup>

To what extent is such a reaction characteristic of a believing Christian? How can the court certify that the lawsuit was truly submitted by believers and not by an ideologue in the highest degree, a person directed by fits of passion and thoughts in keeping with Huntington's ideas?

Fr. Igor Gagarin, a believer of a rather different sort, offers another reaction:

The Christian has something that no one else in the world has. There are words that are not comprehensible to many, yet to us, they are not simply comprehensible but also, I believe, extraordinarily precious. "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you..." (Matt. 5:40<sup>12</sup>). It seems to me that the very essence of the difference between us Christians and all other people is encapsulated in these words. Many people say that we should not take revenge. As far as I know, even Islam says that to avenge is good, but to forgive is better. To forgive? Yes! Not to take revenge? Yes! But to LOVE?! Humanity has never heard such a thing except from Jesus Christ. And so the proposals to punish these lost sheep sound unchristian.

In many blogs, I have read things like, "What would they have done to those hooligans if they'd gone into a mosque?!" We don't need things in our churches to be like a mosque! Let the Muslims deal with those who defile their mosques in a Muslim way, but we will handle things in a Christian way. And how exactly? "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink..." (Rom. 12:20). And right there we also read, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom.

11. For a collection of such pronouncements, see Marsh Nesoglasnykh (2012, March 3).

12. The correct reference is Matthew 5:44.

12:20<sup>13</sup>). What could be more wonderful and exalted? And how bitter will it be if we refuse to do so in practice? By responding to evil with good, we do not give ourselves over to evil, but we conquer it with the only true victory. If we respond to evil with evil, then who is the victor but the one who pushed these foolish girls into their act [i.e., Satan]? Are we really going to be his puppets?!

Human justice requires that evil be punished. But we want something else, something more. We want evil to turn to good. The latter is so much higher than the former! Perhaps this seems utopian and completely impossible. But, praise God, every once in a while, such things do occur, and not all that rarely. Are there really so few examples?! (“Pank-feministki” 2012).

The members of Pussy Riot, along with their defense attorneys, followed the same logic. They did not want to recognize the parties injured by the “Punk Prayer” as believers who have the right to complain about their insulted religious feelings.<sup>14</sup>

Krotov unambiguously draws attention to the impossibility of considering the injured parties to be believers:

Correspondent: Can they [those who feel insulted] publicly demand punishment?

Krotov: No! If they believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior, they cannot do it even in their hearts. If they do not believe this, then, of course, their reaction can be exceptionally cannibalistic, or they can hanker to throw punches and knock out a few teeth. But if a person has had even the slightest experience of an authentic encounter with Christ, with the Kingdom of God in this world, he understands that a desire to avenge and punish is satanic (Sharyi 2012).

As we see, the religious-secular boundary is disputed even on the level of the injured parties. Are the persecutors of Pussy Riot really genuine believers or just pseudo-believers? And is it really true that genuine Orthodox Christians cannot allow themselves to demand punishment, even in their hearts? Here, we again step into a (semi-) theological issue that had to be decided by a secular court.

13. The correct reference is Romans 12:21.

14. See examples of this in the later part of the “Investigators and Judges as Theologians” section below.

Thus the “Punk Prayer” caused the boundary between the religious/sacred and the secular/profane to hang in midair. In the subsequent public reaction, the “Punk Prayer” rendered things that had previously seemed fully defined and immovable — prayer, church, and believers — ambiguous and flexible.

### Investigators and Judges as Theologians

The paradoxical nature of the situation is that in the Pussy Riot case, we do not simply encounter eternal disputes about eternal issues (e.g., Who are Christians? What is a church? What can legitimately be called genuine prayer?), but we encounter an *eternal dispute* that must receive a *concrete, instant resolution*. Otherwise, public peace will not be restored. The state must definitively decide this dispute as the sovereign arbitrator, putting the contested religious-secular boundary into place and separating the opposing sides into distinct corners. In order for this to take place, both the court and the investigators must have solidarity with one of the possible interpretations, effectively recognizing its truth in a given concrete historical situation.

Let us consider how the court decided all three questions discussed above (i.e., how to classify Pussy Riot’s performance, the church’s space, and real believers). The indictment explicitly interpreted the “Punk Prayer” as a secular action, the essence of which was common hooliganism carried out under the inspiration of religious hatred toward the social group “Orthodox Christians” (Article 213, Clause 2 of the Criminal Code). In the interpretation of the official indictment (*Obvinitel’noe zakliuchenie* 2012), what the Pussy Riot members called “a radical prayer addressed to the Mother of God” became “the commission of a rude violation of public order, expressing clear disrespect for society motivated by religious hatred and hostility and motivated by hatred with reference to any social group, by way of performing provocative and insulting actions in a religious building while attracting the attention of a wide circle of believing citizens.”

In the indictment’s interpretation, the “Punk Prayer” was reduced to “provocative and insulting actions.” It denied any intentionality of the acts committed, recognizing only the motive of “religious hatred and hostility.” According to the indictment, the girls:

vulgarly, provocatively and shamelessly moved around the soleas and ambon [a projection of the soleas], access to which is strictly forbidden to visitors. Over the course of approximately one minute, motivated

by religious hatred and hostility, they shrieked and yelled out expletive phrases and words that were insulting to believers. They also jumped around and lifted their legs, imitating dances and the striking of blows against imaginary opponents with their fists (*Obvinitel'noe zakliuchenie* 2012).

The indictment's position depended upon the third evaluation prepared by a team of expert witnesses, after the first two had not found anything objectionable in the "Punk Prayer." The defense accused the third team of expert witnesses, who prepared this evaluation, of clear bias (see below). The text of this expert evaluation is especially interesting in that it explicitly classifies the "Punk Prayer" in sacred-profane terms. The expert witnesses reduce the purpose of the performance to "a ploy to intermingle the sacred with the profane and foul" (*Zakliuchenie komissii ekspertov* 2012). They interpret the "Punk Prayer" as a profane phenomenon rudely invading sacred space:

The sacred space here was a place of worship [an Orthodox Church], its interior with the corresponding religious paraphernalia, containing objects venerated by Orthodox believers. These include a portion of the Lord's Robe, one of the religious relics venerated by all Christians.

The profane and foul here includes the entire performance itself, as well as its separate elements — the song's deceptive invectives against Orthodox clergy and values, the use of obscene and expletive language, shrieks, and the bodily movements of the women who took part in the performance, etc. (*Zakliuchenie komissii ekspertov* 2012).

As the investigation progressed, any interpretation of the "Punk Prayer" as an unconventional but still religious activity — complete with prostrations, signs of the cross, and the singing of psalms — was fundamentally rejected. At best, the witnesses allowed into the trial interpreted the act as an intentional mockery and a parody of religious behavioral patterns. In particular, according to the interpretation of Mikhail Riazantsev, sacristan at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the actions committed by the girls are reminiscent of "the activity of the League of the Militant Godless from the 1920s and 1930s, an organization that jokingly parodied sacred rites conducted by the Russian Orthodox Church, such as processions of the cross, public prayer services, etc." (*Obvinitel'noe zakliuchenie* 2012). Other witnesses upheld Riazantsev's position, classifying the "Punk Prayer"

either as an intentional mockery of Orthodoxy or as a type of “demonic activity.”<sup>15</sup>

In its sentence (*Prigovor* 2012), the court was in full solidarity with the position of the prosecution, classifying the “Punk Prayer” as hooliganism, that is, a secular action wholly devoid of any substantive aspects. The “Punk Prayer,” according to the logic of the court, entailed nothing but hatred toward the social group “Orthodox Christians.”

Of course, it is worth recalling that the position of the members of Pussy Riot themselves did change slightly. At court, they were already inclined to interpret the “Punk Prayer” as a secular phenomenon. They emphasized that it was political performance art directed against the fusion of political and ecclesiastical power at the highest level.<sup>16</sup> Echoes of their previous position (that the “Punk Prayer” was a prayer service) only occasionally crept into the statements of both the accused and the defense. In particular, defense attorney Violetta Volkova noted during a court session, “The court is attempting to retreat from politics into the criminal sphere. Yet the girls are being tried not for brightly colored dresses and an incorrect sign of the cross; they are being tried for a prayer, and this prayer was political” (Kostiuchenko 2012c). During her questioning at trial, Tolokonnikova referred to the words of Krotov: “It was not blasphemy. This is clear if you simply read the text carefully. The priest Yakov Krotov spoke out about our prayer. He said that the form of the prayer was untraditional for central Russia, but that it was technically a prayer” (Kostiuchenko 2012b).

During the trial, the defense attempted to write the “Punk Prayer” into a religious context with the goal of proving that Pussy Riot did not violate any Orthodox canons with their actions. Volkova said, “The expert witnesses claim that the girls parodied Orthodox rites through ‘excess movements.’ They do not specify which ‘excess movements.’ The girls blessed themselves with the traditional three-fingered sign of the cross and performed full prostrations. And in not one of the eight church councils, which by now I know practically by heart, is it forbidden to cross oneself with one’s back to the altar. One can pray with one’s back to the altar; one can pray!” (Kostiuchenko 2012b). Thus, Volkova attempted to prove that on formal grounds the “Punk Prayer” could be considered a prayer service and not the violation of a

15. See, for example, the testimony of the witness L. A. Sokologorskaia.

16. See below for more on the intersection of the religious and political spheres as a “post-secular hybrid” that was problematized over the course of the proceedings.



church's unwritten rules of behavior. Furthermore, Samutsevich gave a revealing response to a question by the prosecutor:

Prosecutor: Is it permissible in a church to dance and sing, while yelling out battle cries like “Holy shit!”?

Samutsevich: Do you want me to read you a lecture on the traditions of travelling minstrelsy (*skomoroshestvo*)? Minstrelsy has been in the Church, and it exists to this day.<sup>17</sup> It is permissible (Kostiuchenko 2012a).

For what reason did the punk group members reconsider their position? Why did they reject the religious conceptualization of their own action for a more comprehensible interpretation of the “Punk Prayer” as political performance art? Although one can probably not answer this question definitively, perhaps this transformation was connected to the reaction of the worldwide public sphere concerning the Pussy Riot case. The West interpreted Pussy Riot’s case primarily as a limitation of the group members’ political freedoms and a denial of the artist’s right to self-expression (e.g., Human Rights Watch 2013). It is entirely possible that this reaction predetermined Pussy Riot’s final position.

In the conflict concerning the location of the performance of the “Punk Prayer,” the defense continued to insist that, from a legal standpoint, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior is a profane space. Volkova directed attention to the fact that “the church building belongs to the Foundation of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. According to its bylaws, the foundation does not have a religious function. In other words, illegal religious rites take place at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. The upper sanctuary is a replica of a religious structure, much like a representation of a person. It has hands and feet, but no soul” (Kostiuchenko 2012c). The court, however, rejected the defense’s interpretation and favored solidarity with a more conventional reading:

The defense argues that the actions of the accused cannot be viewed as having taken place in a church, since the Cathedral of Christ the Savior

17. In this statement, Samutsevich seems to be following a recent tendency in Russian popular culture to equate the term *skomoroshestvo* (medieval East Slavic traveling minstrelsy) with holy foolishness (*iurodstvo* in Russian, a term with a long history in Eastern Christianity, prominently in the Byzantine Empire and medieval Russia). We should stress that these are in fact two different, although somewhat related, historical phenomena. — Translator and editors.

is not actually a church, nor has it ever been transferred to the Russian Orthodox Church, but it has only been granted for use by the Foundation of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. According to these arguments, the conduct of ecclesiastical rites is not part of the statutory activity of the Foundation, so the Cathedral of Christ the Savior is [merely] a replica of a religious structure. The court finds these arguments untenable.

In its outer appearance, the building of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior corresponds fully with an Orthodox church, having cupolas crowned with crosses. The interior space of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior also corresponds with Orthodox canons. It has annexes, an altar, an iconostasis, a soleas, an ambon, and other such facilities. The church's walls have been painted in conformity with Orthodox tradition. The Orthodox Church recognizes these premises as a church and conducts religious events (rites) there in accordance with its statutory purposes.

The building complex of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior belongs to the city of Moscow. The church's foundation runs the operational administration of the complex. The Cathedral of Christ the Savior has been transferred without charge to the Russian Orthodox Church for permanent use.

As for ecclesiastical administration, this church has the status of a metochion [parish dependency] of the Patriarchate of Moscow and all Rus', an organ of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Bishops' Council conducted a religious ceremony called the Great Sanctification, which conferred on the Cathedral of Christ the Savior the status of a church, according to Church canons.

The presence of this building (address: 15 Volkhonka Street, Moscow)—along with the facilities used for the performance of ecclesiastical rites and other spaces such as a hall for Holy Synod meetings, a refectory, and even a parking lot—does not, in the eyes of believers, diminish the designation of this structure as a church.

In order to evaluate the status of the given building in connection with this criminal case, it is also material that the accused entered into the building as into a church, desiring to perform the aforementioned actions there, as in a cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church. They did not hide this fact (*Prigovor* 2012).

In this way, yet another (semi-) theological dispute—specifically the dispute over whether this building could be considered a church—was decided in the courts.

Finally, in a somewhat curious way, the court also ruled on the question of who can be recognized as a believer and how to

define the social group “Orthodox Christians.” How did the court (and before that, the criminal investigation) delineate the social group “Orthodox Christians,” toward which hatred was shown in the performance of the “Punk Prayer”? And how did the criminal investigation, and subsequently the court, select the people who would be recognized as legitimate spokespersons for the entire insulted “social group?” The simplest means of doing this would be to use obvious formal criteria: self-identification, proof of baptism, knowledge of the Creed, prayer and church attendance. If viewed from the surface, the investigation did work along these lines; at least the testimony of nearly every witness was prefaced with a similar story: “He is an Orthodox Christian who was baptized as a child and affiliates himself with believers.”<sup>18</sup> Yet, if one were to dig slightly deeper, it would become clear that these criteria played only a secondary role. The truth is that many defense witnesses who matched these criteria were not recognized as representatives of the requisite social group and were correspondingly deprived of the possibility to testify at court.<sup>19</sup>

If one relies on court records, one finds that the social group “Orthodox Christians” was formulated as the trial unfolded based upon a person’s attitude toward the “Punk Prayer.” This was the decisive criterion for a person to fall into this group. As a result, the social group “Orthodox Christians” did not logically precede the “Punk Prayer” and become insulted by it. On the contrary, this group came into being in the process of the investigation and court trial precisely *through* a negative view of the “Punk Prayer.” The court constructed this social group on the basis of feelings of humiliation and insult brought on by the “Punk Prayer,” and on the basis of a desire to punish the offenders. Only those who conformed to these criteria — those who were ready to admit that they were insulted, to consider themselves the object of hatred, and to demand punishment — were admitted as witnesses.

Such social construction could not satisfy the side of the defense. Defense attorney Volkova brought up the point that the group “Orthodox Christians” was far from unified: “It is unclear why Orthodox believers are separated out into a single group! Among

18. This particular example comes from the testimony of the plaintiff S.V. Vinogradov, assistant to the chief power engineer of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior.

19. For example, Aleksei Navalny, a politician and Orthodox Christian, was not accepted as a witness for the defense. See “Sud nad Pussy Riot: Svidetelei zashchity ne puskaiut v zdanie, u politseiskogo epilepticheskii pripadok” (2012).

the Orthodox, there are many groups, and they are far from friendly to one another” (Kostiuchenko 2012b). In her final statement to the court, Tolokonnikova attempted to give an alternative interpretation of the category “believer,” highlighting the importance of compassion and mercy for any Christian:

(...) I know that right now a huge number of Orthodox people are advocating for us. In particular, they are praying for us at the court, praying for the Pussy Riot members who are held in confinement. We have seen the small booklets that these Orthodox believers are handing out. The booklets include a prayer for those held in confinement. This alone is a demonstration that there is no such thing as a unified social group of Orthodox believers, as the prosecution is trying to present. It does not exist. And now, more and more believers are coming to the defense of Pussy Riot. They are of the opinion that what we did is not worth five months in a pre-trial detention center, nor is it worth three years of incarceration, as the esteemed prosecutor wants (Kostiuchenko 2012d).

According to Tolokonnikova, the category of “Orthodox believers” constructed by the court should hardly be recognized as such: “It was not in vain that Christ spent time with prostitutes. He said, ‘It is necessary to help those who are stumbling’ and ‘I forgive them.’ But for some reason, I do not see this in our trial, which is taking place under the banner of Christianity. It seems to me that the prosecution is trampling Christianity underfoot!” (Kostiuchenko 2012d). In other words, Tolokonnikova tried to oppose the court’s interpretation with her own vision of who is a genuine Christian. In the interpretation of the defense and the accused, a much larger stress in the construction of the group “Orthodox Christians” is placed on mercy, forgiveness for all, and compassion.

From this brief overview, it is evident how initially the investigation, and then the court, resolved the ambiguous (semi-) theological problems that arose in connection with the Pussy Riot case. In fact, they did not so much solve the problems as they restored the boundaries that had been blurred by the “Punk Prayer,” thereby confirming the course of the particular model of post-secularism that the state has attempted to establish in recent years. Yet the questions brought forth by the “Punk Prayer” — concerning what constitutes a genuine prayer, a genuine church, or a genuine Christian — have hardly disappeared after the rendering of the verdict. With a sufficient measure of certainty,

one can, therefore, predict that the temporarily reigning calm on the religious-secular boundary will soon explode again at the hands of proponents of other answers and of another normative vision of post-secularism. And the state, for its part, will again have to involve itself in “theological matters” to which it is unaccustomed.

### **The “Punk Prayer” and Post-Secular Hybrids**

The court and the investigation played a key role in unfolding of what I call “post-secular hybrids,” a second interesting development pertaining to the Pussy Riot case. These “post-secular hybrids,” which are characteristic of the post-secular situation, stand out in the records of the case.

Let us begin with a theoretical digression. What do we mean by the concept of “post-secular hybrids”? As is well known, one of the most noticeable manifestations of secularization was the process of the so-called “institutional segregation of religion,” which, in its turn, was incited by the more general process of social differentiation. In the most general sense of the word, social differentiation is the process of the complication of society through its specialization. Every function of a society has its corresponding institution (Wilson 1966: 56; Berger 1969: 113). Karel Dobbelaere (2000: 22–23) explains that, as a result of modernization, a society differentiates itself along functional lines that develop corresponding functional subsystems (economics, politics, science, family, etc.). Every subsystem acts on the basis of its own mediating element (money, power, truth, love) and also on the basis of its own values and norms (success, the separation of powers, reliability and trustworthiness, the primary significance of love, etc.). Such a modern, socially differentiated society stands against the traditional as against “a social order regulated by religious requirements” (Wilson 1976: 10). Correspondingly, in the process of secularization, the social order frees itself from religious requirements, and each of its subsystems (including religion itself) achieves autonomy.

The transition to post-secularism is leading to a further transformation of this social differentiation of society. This transformation, however, is not going in the direction of a return to the pre-modern situation “of a social order regulated by religious requirements,” but rather to a situation of the emergence of post-secular hybrids marked by the interpenetration of religion and societal subsystems from which it had once been isolated. Talal Asad was one

of the first to direct attention to this phenomenon. With reference to “the revival of religion” (a fact long acknowledged in scholarly literature) and its conversion into one of the key factors in both domestic and foreign policy, Asad (2003: 182) asserts:

When religion becomes an integral part of modern politics, it is not indifferent to debates about how the economy should be run, or which scientific projects should be publicly funded, or what the broader aims of a national education system should be. The legitimate entry of religion into these debates results in the creation of modern “hybrids”: the principle of structural differentiation — according to which religion, economy, education, and science are located in autonomous social spaces — no longer holds.

This process has also had an impact on Russia. The Pussy Riot case shed light on several very striking Russian “post-secular hybrids.” I intend to examine three of them: the intersection of the religious and political spheres; religion as part of the public order; and confessional experts on religion.

### **The Intersection of the Religious and Political Spheres**

The most obvious post-secular hybrid of post-Soviet Russia is the formation of an elaborate apparatus for the intersection of the political and religious spheres. Some call this “the clericalization of the Russian state,” while others call it “fruitful collaboration between state institutions and the representatives of Russia’s traditional confessions and their corresponding institutions.” From the standpoint of the theory of desecularization, it is fully possible to consider the Russian political regime as an example of “a desecularized regime.” Vyacheslav Karpov (2012: 142) offers a definition of this term as “a specific normative and politico-ideological course of action, whereby desecularization manifests itself, expands and is supported.”

According to the conception of the Pussy Riot members, their “Punk Prayer” was directed against the particular post-secular hybrid that developed as a result of the actions of the “desecularized regime.” The essence of this hybrid, in Pussy Riot’s interpretation, is summed up as follows: a rapprochement between the presidential administration and the Moscow Patriarchate, in which the former receives moral and spiritual support in its struggle against the opposition, and the latter receives political influence and economic

benefits. “Indignation” motivated the actions of the punk group members in the church. Tolokonnikova in particular directed indignant words at the Patriarch in her final statement to the court: “See what Patriarch Kirill says! ‘The Orthodox do not go to protests’” (Kostiuchenko 2012d; cf. “Patriarkh Kirill” 2012). During her questioning, she clearly explained the motives of her behavior at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior: “We sang part of the chorus and ‘*Sran Gospodnia*’ [Holy Shit]. I have apologized and will continue to apologize if that offended anyone, but that was not my intention. This idiomatic expression referred to the previous verse about the fusion (*srashchivanie*) of the Moscow Patriarchate and the state, Putin and Kirill. ‘*Sran Gospodnia*’ is our evaluation of the situation in the [Russian] state” (Kostiuchenko 2012c). Samutsevich, in her final statement to the court, more explicitly described her view of this post-secular hybrid and subjected it to criticism when she spoke word-for-word about “the intersection of the religious and political spheres” (Kostiuchenko 2012d).

According to the logic of the Pussy Riot members, their “Punk Prayer” struck a blow against the particular intersection of the religious and political spheres offered to Russia by its “desecularized regime.” If we return once again to Karpov’s article (2012), then in this context it is fully possible to examine Pussy Riot’s performance through the logic of the typology of a “grassroots” reaction to the establishment of desecularized regimes “from above.”<sup>20</sup> From all appearances, such extensive public uproar and such an angry reaction to the “Punk Prayer” were due to the song’s interference with a process of the directed hybridization of politics and religion *controlled from above*. This implies that controlled hybridization can take place only in specific ways and through specific channels that have been officially or unofficially sanctioned. Orthodoxy and Christianity in general can increase their influence on society, but only in ways that are sanctioned, protected and *politically safe*. Any other hybridization is outlawed and subject to prosecution.

In her final statement to the court, Samutsevich turned her attention to this state of affairs: “In our presentation, without a patriarchal blessing, we dared to combine the visual image of Orthodox culture with the culture of protest, leading intelligent people to the thought that Orthodox culture belongs not only to the Russian

20. If we employ Karpov’s classification, the “Punk Prayer” is a reaction that combines elements of an “innovative” strategy with a strategy of “rebellion” (Karpov 2012: 146).



Orthodox Church, the Patriarch, and Putin, but it can also be on the side of civil insurrection and the oppositional mood within Russia” (Kostiuchenko 2012d). Through its performance, Pussy Riot placed the credibility of both Church and state authorities under question. The group did so by declaring that Christianity and Orthodoxy belong not only to those authorities, that Christianity is multifaceted, and that it is not compelled to fall in line with the “pro-authority” model of post-secularism.

Key to understanding the “Punk Prayer” is that it was not directed against the very possibility of the intersection of the religious and political spheres or against the very possibility of post-secular hybrids as such. It was directed against a concrete manifestation of the post-secular hybrid – the *symphonia* of state and Church. The “Punk Prayer” instead advanced another kind of hybrid as an alternative, one in which Orthodox culture turns out to be on the side of civil protest (i.e., the “Punk Prayer” set the “oppositional” model of post-secularism against the “pro-authority” model). In this context, Pussy Riot proposed a radically different, innovative reaction to the post-secular situation: instead of a classical, secular reaction that implies the intention to terminate the developing post-secular hybrids and to separate religion again from that with which it had become intertwined, the punk group, acting in the logic of new post-secular realities, attempted to set one hybrid against another.

Apparently, in the conditions of post-secularism, the question is not about the restoration of the old stubborn boundaries and the overcoming of hybridity as such. It is a question of the choice between *different* hybrids. In place of the hybrid that Pussy Riot rejected, it proposed its own. The “Punk Prayer” was an act of the appropriation of religious content and the use of religious space with the goal of redirecting them to another course not sanctioned by the authorities. The fundamental radicalism of Pussy Riot’s “Punk Prayer” consisted in the way it directed Christian content against the prevailing policy of the country.

There is every indication that the expert witnesses, the prosecution, and the court were all disinclined to see the obvious political component of the “Punk Prayer” due to this radical course toward the construction of alternative modes of intersection between the religious and political spheres. The depoliticization of Pussy Riot’s performance was one of the internal conceptual threads lending coherence to the entire legal process, from the pre-trial investigation



to the reading of the sentence. For example, the expert witnesses (*Zakliuchenie komissii ekspertov* 2012) depoliticized the performance as follows:

Taken as a whole and judging from the song's general conceptual composition, an analysis of the lyrics of the Pussy Riot song under investigation exposes the clear artificiality and logical groundlessness of the inclusion of the following textual fragment, which was placed at both the beginning of the song and repeated at the end: "Mother of God, Virgin, Banish Putin/Banish Putin. Banish Putin."

This textual fragment appears to be completely disconnected from and out of context in the song, which was fully devoted to the insult and mockery of the social group of Orthodox believers, not of Putin. The aforementioned fragment, considering that insulting words and expressions were not used in relation to this person [i.e., Putin] within the song itself (as opposed to other figures who were mentioned therein), can thus testify only to the ancillary and secondary nature of the song being performed for any motive of political hatred or hostility.

It is highly likely that the participants, fully cognizant of the possibility of incurring liability for performing this act and foreseeing the incurrence of such liability, employed the surname "Putin" in their song in order to create a basis for the subsequent artificial positioning of this performance as an expression of political protest against authorities and high officials, etc., and in order to make themselves out to be "prisoners of conscience who were persecuted by the authorities for their criticism" and so on. In actuality, it was a familiar technique of "the removal of responsibility," a common ruse (*Zakliuchenie komissii ekspertov* 2012: 18–19).

The Prosecutor employed this same strategy of depoliticization, virtually repeating the logic of the expert witnesses:

The defendants' statements about the performance's political motive are unfounded. Not one surname of any politician was pronounced within the church. An analysis of the song exposed the clear artificiality of the inclusion in the text, of "Mother of God, Virgin, Banish Putin!" The text was actually devoted to insulting the feelings of Orthodox believers. Putin's surname was mentioned only in order to create a pretext for the subsequent attempt to position the performance as a protest against the highest authorities (Kostiuchenko 2012c).

The attorneys for the plaintiffs used the same logic. In the words of attorney Lev Lialin, “When I entered this case, a civil crisis took place in my consciousness. I finally knew what a civil war was. The mass media was packed with outcries about politics and political prisoners. They were saying, ‘The girls are innocent...’ But it was not politics; it was filth!” (Kostiuchenko 2012c). In the sentence (*Prigovor* 2012), the judge showed unambiguous solidarity with the depoliticized interpretation: “There was no music or singing; there was chanting. There were no political motives or slogans; there were actions that insulted believers. It is improper to conduct oneself this way in a church.”

The court more or less unequivocally rejected the arguments of the defendants and their attorneys that it was impossible to ignore the political subtext of the “Punk Prayer.” As a result, Pussy Riot’s defense attorney Volkova felt compelled to state:

The court is attempting to retreat from politics into the criminal sphere. Yet the girls are being tried not for brightly colored dresses and an incorrect sign of the cross; they are being tried for a prayer, and this prayer was political. It would be a sin to turn our backs on this nail being driven now into the Constitution, from which blood is flowing. The Church has been turned into a memorial at the grave of justice, law, and human rights, all of which have been mockingly infringed (Kostiuchenko 2012c).

Tolokonnikova summed up the trial with the words, “This really hurts. They will not hear us” (Kostiuchenko 2012b).

Both the court and the investigators sought to deprive the “Punk Prayer” of its most radical dimensions. According to these authorities, the particular post-secular hybrid associated with the intersection of the religious and political spheres, the contours of which are discernible in Pussy Riot’s performance, had to be destroyed. It was necessary to disentangle the unsanctioned interlacing of religion and politics by showing that there was nothing in the “Punk Prayer” but hatred to Orthodoxy, for which certain insignificant political subtexts served as formal cover. Just as Pussy Riot undermined the post-secular hybrid created by the “desecularized regime,” so also the court had to destroy the hybrid that threatened to become its alternative.

In the context of post-secularism, religion and politics have become entangled. They are already inseparable. Yet a series of problems emerges. Who controls the conditions of this entanglement? Who

determines the legal channels by which it takes place? Finally, who should be declared the legitimate actors in this new post-secular space?

### **Religion as Part of the Public Order**

A second post-secular hybrid that became apparent during the Pussy Riot trial was the intersection of the internal norms of religious associations and the universal norms of state order. During the court proceedings, one issue came to a head: in a secular state, can the internal norms of religious associations be considered part of the public order and public principles to the extent that one could be sent to prison for violating them? In short, can someone be put in prison for violating the canons of the Council of Trullo?<sup>21</sup>

An open letter from various Russian attorneys (“Otkrytoe pis’mo” 2012), written immediately following the disclosure of the indictment, clearly specified this issue. In particular, the attorneys wrote:

Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alyokhina, and Ekaterina Samutseвич are accused of violating the rules of conduct in an Orthodox church. [According to the indictment,] they thereby demonstrated “blatant disrespect for the believers who were visiting and serving at the church”; “deeply insulted and denigrated the feelings and religious compass of believing Orthodox citizens”; “set themselves up against the Orthodox world”; and “demonstrably and pointedly attempted to dismiss centuries of preserved and hallowed ecclesiastical traditions and dogmas.” In the published indictment of these Pussy Riot members, there is not one word about activities that disturbed the public order or infringed on public safety.

The investigators accuse these women not of infringing on public order and safety, but of violating the canons and traditions of the Orthodox Church. Their behavior neither contradicted general state order nor undermined public safety. The operation of those prescriptions and proscriptions that they violated extend only to the territory of an Orthodox church. If they had done the very same thing outside of a church, it would not have been possible to accuse them of anything. The

21. The third expert evaluation enumerated the guidelines of the Council of Trullo (692 CE) as evidence of Pussy Riot’s violation of the rules of conduct within a church. This expert testimony laid the groundwork for the official indictment.

investigation does not demonstrate their violation of anything other than ecclesiastical rules.

The declaration of their activities as “hooliganism” equates the canons of the Orthodox Church with the norms of state order and signifies that the Orthodox Church is an inalienable part of the state. The filing of the indictment of “hooliganism” against Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alyokhina, and Ekaterina Samutsevich is not merely a misuse of the Criminal Code, but also contradicts the secular character of our state, guaranteed by Article 14 of Russia’s Constitution.

The expert testimony, written by representatives of the specific post-secular hybrid associated with “the equation of Orthodox Church canons with the norms of state order” and the declaration that “the Orthodox Church is an inalienable part of the state,” argues:

It is important to note that the state confirmed the validity (...) of the internal constitutions of religious organizations through the legal norm of Clause 2 of Article 15 of the Federal Law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations” (No. 125-F3 from September 26, 1997, including subsequent amendments). This law has enacted that the state respects the internal constitutions of religious organizations if said constitutions do not contradict the law of the Russian Federation (*Zakliuchenie komissii ekspertov* 2012).

In its decision, the court virtually sanctioned this post-secular hybrid, ruling that “the citation of ecclesiastical nomenclature and ecclesiastical norms, particularly the canons on conduct in a church, is employed solely for the purpose of defining whether or not there is a violation of the public order and a motivation of religious hatred and hostility in the actions of the accused” (*Prigovor* 2012). The effect of this argumentation is that from now on the canons of the Council of Trullo (as well as the canons of all other church councils) may very well be considered prescriptive with respect to the norms of public order.

In the same way that the court earlier sought to obliterate the specific post-secular hybrid discernible in the “Punk Prayer” — a hybrid that concerned the intersection of the religious and political spheres — Pussy Riot’s defense attorneys attempted in every way possible to demolish the specific post-secular hybrid sanctioned by the court. In particular, one of the defense attorneys noted, “[O]nly publicly disclosed rules apply. Where is the Council of Trullo published

[in our nation's laws]? Why are we citing ancient legal norms? We cannot live by the standards of Hammurabi, because that society used to cut off a person's hand for theft, and this does not accord with our understanding of humanism" (Kostiuchenko 2012c).

The Pussy Riot case has determined the course for the integration of the norms of religious associations into the body of ideas concerning the public order. This applies not only to Orthodoxy, but also to all of Russia's traditional confessions. In particular, the court gave such serious consideration to the position of the Council of Muftis in Russia that, in Pussy Riot's sentence, it quoted a letter written on April 3, 2012, by one of the organization's representatives:

From the standpoint of the canons of Islam, the unapproved public performance that occurred on February 21, 2012, in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior is conduct that must be condemned and that demands public apology for offense to the feelings of believers. Without question, any sanctuary (*khram*) contains holiness and is pervaded by a correspondingly exalted atmosphere, which those who are present should support, preserve and solemnly protect. Such a bacchanalia [i.e., Pussy Riot's act] discredits the status of the sanctuary and challenges the traditional way of life and the centuries-old traditions of the peoples of this country. It is clear from the perspective of Muslim culture that such behavior, not only within the walls of a religious sanctuary, but also outside of its confines, is sinful and damnable (See *Prigovor* 2012).

The expression "the spiritual foundations of the state" figures in the records of this case—particularly in the indictment, according to which Pussy Riot impinged upon said foundations. The use of this expression in court records represents the direct recognition of Orthodoxy as an inalienable part of the state. Although this expression had disappeared from the court's sentence, the pathos of the entire trial testifies to its being directed primarily against the denigration of these "spiritual foundations" by the "Punk Prayer."

### **Confessional Expert Witnesses**

A third post-secular hybrid that manifested itself over the course of the Pussy Riot case was the figure of the "confessional expert witness" (i.e., an expert witness who has certain confessional sympathies). Vsevolod Yurevich Troitskii, Vera Vasilevna Abramenkova, and Igor Vladislavovich Ponkin, who made up the third team of expert

witnesses, served in this capacity. In the final analysis, it was they who played the key role in forming the definitive logic of the indictment. It was they who gave the investigation the formulation with which the punk group was convicted after a rather expeditious trial (in particular, the statements suggesting a violation of the Apostolic Canons and the canons of the church councils). And it was they who came to the assistance of the prosecution when the two previous expert evaluations, conducted by the State Unitary Enterprise known as the Center for the Technology of Information Analytics,<sup>22</sup> found no basis for charging the members of Pussy Riot with the commission of any crime.

Timothy Fitzgerald (2004) has already clearly described the figure of the expert on religious matters as part of “the ideological state apparatus.”<sup>23</sup> The task of this ideological apparatus is to trace a line in the interests of the state that separates religion from that to which it does not belong, thereby implementing a semblance of police control over the latter. Yet, in the example of the Pussy Riot case, we see how the figure of the expert witness has been transformed. Secular expert witnesses were needed in the age of the ascendancy of secular ideology, but in the current situation of a transition to post-secularism, the state needs a somewhat different “ideological apparatus.” This apparatus must reposition itself under the policies and strategic tasks of a “desecularized regime.” The “confessional expert witness” nicely embodies this new characteristic of the “ideological apparatus.” Indeed, it is now no longer necessary to separate religion from social subsystems that have been fundamentally isolated from it. On the contrary, the state now deems it necessary to promote the formation of acceptable post-secular hybrids.

The Pussy Riot case legitimized the presence of clear confessional bias within expert testimony. Defense attorneys spent several hours trying to prove the invalidity of the expert testimony and the

22. The Center for the Technology of Information Analytics is an organization created by the Moscow City Government and the Administration of Moscow Province. It functions in part as a legal examining body. For the Pussy Riot case, center staff prepared two expert evaluations (*Pervaya ekspertiza* 2012; *Vtoraia ekspertiza* 2012) concluding that there was no basis for a criminal investigation of the women who took part in the “Punk Prayer.”

23. Louis Althusser introduced the concept of “ideological state apparatuses” in order to provide a more precise understanding of the operational nature of systems of government coercion, which act not only through violence, but also through ideology: “the Repressive State Apparatus functions ‘by violence,’ whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function ‘by ideology’” (Althusser 2001: 97).

dubiousness of the handpicked expert witnesses. For example, Mark Feygin ascertained that “the expert witness Ponkin had a connection to a certain M.N. Kuznetsov, who is representing the interests of Potankin, a plaintiff against the punk group’s actions in this trial.” Feygin provided evidence for this: “Kuznetsov was one of Ponkin’s advisors when he defended his dissertation for his Juris Doctor degree. The dissertation was entitled *The Contemporary Secular State: A Constitutional and Legal Examination*. Moreover, [Ponkin and Kuznetsov] have co-authored books entitled *The Disgraceful Discussion about Religious Education in the Secular School: Lies, Substitutions and Aggressive Xenophobia* and *On the Right to Critically Evaluate Homosexuality*” (Kostiuchenko 2012b). Judge Marina Syrova, however, did not allow herself either to doubt the expert testimony or to summon the expert witness Ponkin for clarification. Similarly, she defended the post-secular hybrid that had crystallized during the trial, not allowing the defense to sever the coupling of secular science and confessional bias — a fusion inadmissible under secularism.

## **Conclusion**

This article has examined a variety of conflicting interpretations concerning the religious-secular boundary and what we have called “post-secular hybrids.” These conflicting renditions advance alternative normative images of post-secularism, and various groups are waging a battle for the fulfillment of their particular vision. We emphasized two such normative images: the “pro-authority” and the “oppositional.” I would like to underscore once more that the issue here is not about a choice between a dangerous post-secularism and a salvific return to the previous situation of a socially differentiated society. Rather, the main choice in the current situation is between various models of post-secularism and between different forms that can and should be assumed in particular by the hybridization of religion and politics, of public order and religious norms, and of secular knowledge and confessional belonging. It is likewise a choice between different approaches to drawing the constantly contested religious-secular boundary. The logic of the post-secularism dictated by the “desecularized regime” is not the only possible logic, as is evident from the Pussy Riot case files. The trial of the women who took part in the “Punk Prayer” became an arena for the battle between the proponents of different visions of post-secularism. The conclusion

of this battle is not yet predetermined. The state, the Church and society will have to continue searching for solutions to the issues raised by the “Punk Prayer.”

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CHRISTOPHER STROOP

## The Russian Origins of the So-Called Post-Secular Moment: Some Preliminary Observations

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*This piece argues that there are a number of paths through which we might investigate Russian connections to the emergence of post-secularism, with the collapse of the USSR and the post-Soviet revival of Russian Orthodoxy representing only the most obvious. A thus far less developed but important approach involves unraveling an intellectual-historical trajectory by focusing on the influence of anti-Bolshevik Russian religious philosophers in the West. The article shows that after the founding of the Soviet Union, the anti-Bolshevik Russian emigration emerged as a significant vehicle for the transmission of Russian ideas in the West, contributing to the development of an anti-secular discourse with roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that was able to achieve some prominence thanks to the Cold War. This discourse associated religiosity with freedom and atheism with unfreedom. Stroop argues that this discourse, in the development of which Russian intellectuals played an important role, emerged in reaction against the perceived cultural threat of nihilism, and he suggests that it is a similar concern over the possible consequences of nihilism that has led to the emergence of the post-secular moment.*

**Keywords:** religious, secular, post-secularism, nihilism, atheism, Communism, Russian Orthodoxy, Russian religious philosophy, Russia and the West, Sergei Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdyaev, Lev Shestov, Russian emigration, Cold War, anti-secular discourse.

WHILE my approach today will be more descriptive and interpretive than normative, my investigation into the Russian origins of the so-called post-secular moment is motivated in part by a conviction that our current debates about

secularism and the role of religion in the public sphere — which are themselves an expression of the post-secular moment — might benefit from increased awareness of the historical background from which they arose.<sup>1</sup> I'm convinced that the problematics of post-secularism, which I see as part and parcel of the ongoing broader rethinking of the categories "religious" and "secular" that has been blossoming in recent years, represents one of the most important intellectual tendencies of our time. I'm equally convinced that there's plenty of work to be done in, if you will, cross-fertilizing Russian studies with this broader intellectual project, and that the time is ripe for it.<sup>2</sup> In fact, although it's embryonic, this seems to be an emerging trend. For example, José Casanova was the keynote speaker at a conference called "Post-Atheism: Religion, Society and Culture in Post-Communist Eastern Europe and Eurasia" that took place at Arizona State University's Melikian Center on February 7, 2013.<sup>3</sup> As some of you know, this June 7–9, we are also planning to host an international conference in Moscow at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration called "The Varieties of Russian Modernity: Rethinking Religion, Secularism, and the Influence of Religion in the Modern World."<sup>4</sup>

This piece has been slightly revised from a lecture I delivered at the Institute for Human Sciences (*Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen*) in Vienna, Austria on April 29, 2013 as part of the lecture series "Colloquia on Secularism." I am grateful to IWM for the invitation, to Clemena Antonova for her able organization of the series and her hospitality in Vienna, and to the Austrian Science Fund for its financial support of the project. I would also like to thank the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration both for supporting the research laid out in this lecture and for allowing me to develop and teach an interdisciplinary humanities course during the 2012–2013 academic year called "Religion and Society: Contemporary Debates and their Historical Origins." Teaching this course helped me to clarify my thinking on the issues explored in this lecture.

1. For similar thoughts on the ability of historians and other scholars to contribute to contemporary debates, see Strup (Stroop) (2012); Schmalzbauer and Mahoney (2012). Strup (Stroop) 2012 is available for download here: <http://www.academia.edu/2637606/>, accessed November 18, 2013.
2. Although the question of which aspects of Russian historical experience here should qualify as "non-Western" is one for further discussion, I see scholarly efforts to integrate the rethinking of secularism with Russian Studies in part as a response to the call put forth by some of the leading secularism scholars who have suggested that the best way forward may lie in exploring non-Western experience (Taylor 2011: 36; Casanova 2011: 73).
3. The program can be downloaded at the following url: [http://melikian.asu.edu/events/20130207\\_Post\\_Atheism](http://melikian.asu.edu/events/20130207_Post_Atheism), accessed November 18, 2013.
4. This conference did take place, and a continuation of the project involving a second international conference is planned for the 2013–2014 academic year.

Now, as noted in the subtitle of my lecture, the research I'll be presenting today is in a preliminary stage, so in discussion after the talk I'd particularly welcome suggestions for developing in it from here. I have worked on and am working on narrower projects that I have come to see as pieces of this larger puzzle, and I hope that today I'll be able to put together enough of those pieces to convince you that there are Russian origins of our post-secular moment and that they are worth investigating. By framing the question in terms of Russian origins I am of course by no means claiming exclusively Russian origins, as disappointing as that may be to any Russian messianists who may be in the audience. What I am claiming is that Russian actors and ideas, along with events of Russian history, have contributed to the emergence of the post-secular moment not only within Russia but well beyond it, and that their impact in this regard has not been fully appreciated.

I should stress here that the material I will be presenting today represents just one possible approach to the broader question of Russian origins and contributions; over the course of my lecture I will gesture toward others. My hope is that my preliminary observations might be received in a programmatic sense. My talk should not be regarded as the presentation of something finished, but rather as the initial framing of an important problem that has arisen from my previous research and research in progress.

The story about the Russian origins of the post-secular moment I've come here to tell today is perhaps really two interrelated stories. One has to do with the impact of the rise and fall of the Soviet Union; the other is an intellectual-historical trajectory that seeks to trace the influence of anti-Bolshevik Russian religious thinkers in the West. To relate these stories to the post-secular, of course, requires defining a term that over the last decade or so has taken its place among those cantankerous concepts, such as "modernity" and "religion," that are critically important to the humanities and the social sciences but at the same time notoriously difficult to define. But let me bracket that for now — I will return to it later — and for the time being simply make what I think will be a relatively uncontroversial claim.

The post-secular moment would not have come about without the historical persistence of anti-secular impulses that have become increasingly visible over the last few decades, resulting in a crisis of secularism (understood here as an ideology rather than a condition of disenchantment or consciousness of pluralism). Keeping this in

mind, the simplest story of the Russian origins of the post-secular moment is the story of how the Soviet Union, with its anti-religious persecution and officially atheist ideology, aroused the opposition of religious believers who increasingly defined themselves against the Communist Other. This process forged an important link between anti-secularism and anti-Communism.

The Cold War thus encouraged and sustained an anti-secular discourse that associated religiosity with freedom and atheism with unfreedom. As the superpower rival of the USSR in a bipolar world, the USA even went so far as to officially encourage at least moderate religiosity and civil religion (Bellah 1967). The most famous example of this is probably the Congressional insertion of the words “under God” into the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag that was signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954. But prior to this time, the idea of a “Judeo-Christian” or “Tri-Faith” America had already begun to emerge (Herberg 1955; Schultz 2011).

While not all Cold War era US believers took a hard anti-Soviet line, many Evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants and some Catholics certainly did, and American historians have recently begun telling the story of the American religious right – a group associated with contemporary discussions of “resurgent religion” – as a Cold War story. On Angela Lahr’s telling, the pervasive anti-Communism of the 1950s allowed Evangelicals, who had previously largely withdrawn from active political engagement, to reenter the American mainstream (Lahr 2007). The kind of anti-secularism they represented was in a certain sense largely latent from the 1960s into the 1980s, at least in the experience of elite Western scholars and intellectuals moved by the classic secularization thesis to think of religion as increasingly irrelevant, and therefore primed to ignore the Evangelical influence on the conservative resurgence. The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, both emboldened exponents of conservative Christian political theology and caused them to become more visible to non-religious elites and advocates of classic secular liberalism.

Personally, I am surprised that the disintegration of the USSR, which can be understood in part as a reflection of the global crisis of secularist political ideology, has not received more (and more detailed) attention in interdisciplinary discussions of secularism and post-secularism. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the revival of Orthodox Christianity in Russia are mentioned fairly often, but mostly in passing, while the exceptional religiosity of post-Communist Poland

is frequently noted.<sup>5</sup> If the end of the Cold War has received less attention in this regard than the developments in the Islamic world that preceded it, particularly the Iranian Revolution, this is likely in part because these earlier developments, which were of great interest to prominent philosophers such as Michel Foucault and John Rawls, had already sufficiently established the continuing relevance religion as a problem that philosophy needed to confront (Mendieta 2012).

Other factors are probably also in play. I suspect, for example, that the relative lack of sustained attention may have to do with skepticism toward the nature of the post-Soviet revival of Russian Orthodoxy. This revival is frequently viewed as representing mere window dressing for Russian nationalism or a replacement ideology for Marxism-Leninism that is not much more than skin deep (Young 2013; Mitrofanova 2005; cf. Greeley 2003: 89–121). Our failure to thoroughly assess the contributions of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR to the emergence of post-secularism may well also have to do with a certain insularity that the field of Russian studies unfortunately sometimes exhibits.

In any event, the end of the Cold War must certainly be credited with revealing the continuing social significance and political relevance of Catholicism in Poland and with giving Christian political theology a new lease on life, not least in Russia itself. As far back as 1973 Leszek Kolakowski suggested that regime change in Russia would result in the revival of Orthodox Christianity (Kolakowski 1990: 67); while the actual post-Soviet religious revival's breadth and depth are open to question, we have observed the reemergence of a tightly interwoven church-state nexus and the assertion by the Russian Orthodox Church of the right to a prominent place in the Russian public sphere. It is no coincidence that the topic of post-secularism has received attention in both the popular and more elite intellectual Russian press and blogosphere.<sup>6</sup>

5. In 1999, Peter L. Berger did take note of the post-Soviet revival of Russian Orthodox Christianity as well as Samuel Huntington's suggestion that the Cold War would be replaced by a clash of civilizations, but his analysis of "desecularization" focused much more on Islam, Catholicism, and the global spread of Evangelical Protestantism. In recent comments, Jürgen Habermas has put forth a list of important contemporary religious phenomena similar to Berger's, but Orthodox Christianity did not make his list (Berger 1999: 6–8, 14–15; Habermas 2010: 19–20).
6. The December 24, 2012 issue of popular Russian magazine *Expert* was dedicated to this issue, for example (<http://expert.ru/dossier/story/postsekulyarnyj-mir/>, accessed November 18, 2013). Religious studies and philosophy journals have also dedicated issues to the post-secular in relation to religion and philosophy (*Gosudarstvo, religiia*,



But now I want to return to America and the anti-secular discourse the Cold War helped to sustain there. After presenting some illustrations of American Protestant anti-Communist rhetoric, I will segue into the second — less fleshed out but probably more interesting — story of the Russian origins of the post-secular moment, and I will eventually bring that story back around to American Cold War connections. Here, however, the story becomes very sketchy, and the question of the extent of direct influence of Russian ideas on US anti-Communist rhetoric must remain one for further research. Nevertheless, as I will demonstrate, the parallels between early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Russian Christian anti-Communist rhetoric and mid to late 20<sup>th</sup>-century US Protestant anti-Communist rhetoric are striking, and I think I'll be able to show that the notion of diffuse genealogical influence, as opposed to mere convergence, is at least plausible. Let us turn to some of that rhetoric now.

On September 27, 1958, "America's pastor" Billy Graham preached a revivalist sermon under the title "What's Wrong with the World?" In this sermon, Graham confidently declared, "The race problem is a symptom. War is a symptom. Crime is a symptom. The sociological problem is a symptom. Something deeper is wrong." He went on, "Man's nature has a disease. (...) Wickedness, deceit, blasphemy, lies, foolishness — when you put all of these evil things together, they produce war and social tension. Jesus said these things come from inside the man.

"Now that is where communism and Christianity have a headlong clash." In Graham's description, Marxism saw the problems of the world entirely in social terms. Christianity, on the other hand, insisted that "social problems are only symptoms of a deeper problem" that came from within, a problem, Graham declared in his deep, booming fire-and-brimstone Southern American voice, that Jesus called "S-I-N, sin" (Graham 1958). While Graham's understanding of sinful human nature has a strong Augustinian-Protestant flavor that is arguably incompatible with Orthodox ideas about original sin, the notion of social problems as symptoms of a spiritual disease that he lays out in this passage has antecedents in late imperial Russian religious thought. Nikolai (sometimes Anglicized to Nicholas) Berdyaev, for example, wrote the following in 1909: "Political liberation is only possible in

*tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom* [State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide] 30(2) (2012); *Logos: filosofsko-literaturnyi zhurnal* [Logos: A Philosophical-Literary Journal] 21(3) (2011). The issue of *Logos* in question was produced under the guest editorship of Dmitry Uzlaner, editor-in-chief of Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov'.

connection with spiritual and cultural rebirth, and on this foundation” (Berdyayev 1967: 22 (footnote)). Berdyayev’s comment was part of a harsh critique of the revolutionary intelligentsia, which, borrowing Graham’s terms, certainly saw problems only as “social,” while Berdyayev, who would go on to achieve prominence in interwar Europe as a Christian existentialist and philosopher of freedom, continued to insist on the primacy of spiritual reality throughout his life.

Now let’s move on to the early 1980s to take a brief look at Francis Schaeffer’s *A Christian Manifesto*. One of the intellectual founding fathers of the American religious right, at this point Schaeffer, who spent most of his adult life in Switzerland, was concerned that increasing godlessness would lead America down the path of totalitarianism. In making the case, he often used the experience of Russia as a cautionary tale. According to Schaeffer:

The humanists push for “freedom,” but having no Christian consensus to contain it, that “freedom” leads to chaos or to slavery under the state (or under an elite). Humanism, with its lack of *any* final base for values or law, always leads to chaos. It then naturally leads to some form of authoritarianism to control the chaos (...). With its mistaken concept of final reality, it has no intrinsic reason to be interested in the individual, the human being. Its natural interest is the two collectives: the state and society.

Later in the book, Schaeffer asserted, “But the humanist world view with inevitable certainty leads in the direction of statism. This is so because humanists, having no god, must put something at the center, and it is inevitably society, government, or the state. Russia is the perfect example” (Schaeffer 1982).

These are not only arguments about Russia, but are in fact Russian arguments — or at least they were Russian arguments some seven decades before Schaeffer made them. The leading Christian intellectuals in late imperial Russia were deeply concerned with liberation and freedom, and equally concerned to show that freedom and the dignity of the individual could only be grounded in an integral religious worldview.<sup>7</sup> In the same 1909 piece quoted above, for example, Berdyayev intoned, “For our Russian intelligentsia valued

7. This is a major theme of the 1909 volume *Landmarks: A Collection of Articles about the Russian Intelligentsia* (*Vekhi: Sbornik statei o russkoi intelligentsii*), which was widely read and debated. On its reception see Read (1979).

*freedom* and professed a philosophy in which there is no place for freedom”; he also accused the revolutionary intelligentsia of espousing a kind of ersatz religion in an attempt to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, one whose utilitarian and atheist premises would leave no room for valuing the individual (Berdiaev 1967: 18–20). When the actual events of the Bolshevik coup and its aftermath confirmed their predictions and seemed also to confirm the incompatibility of atheism with the protection of individual human dignity, Russian Christian intellectuals did not hesitate to say so, to both Russian and foreign audiences. The 1918 volume edited by Peter Berngardovich Struve *Out of the Depths: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Revolution* (*Iz glubiny: Sbornik statei o russkoi intelligentsii*) represents an early example.

Of course, not all the ideas found in Schaeffer’s statements quoted above were original Russian arguments, and by the time Schaeffer espoused these ideas, they had been “in the air,” if you will, for quite some time, making it difficult to parse out influences. If there was any direct Russian influence on Schaeffer’s view that apart from a system of higher values the state would put itself in the place of God, it may have come from Dostoevsky, directly or indirectly.<sup>8</sup> We recall Shigalev’s statement from the 1872 novel *Demons*, for example: “Beginning with absolute freedom I conclude with absolute despotism. And I would add that apart from my solution to the social question, there can be no other” (Dostoevskii 1990: 252). Of course, in the 1880s, Nietzsche also warned about the dangers of the state as “The New Idol” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and this idea — surely in part a reaction against Hegelianism — must have been picked up directly from Nietzsche by numerous religious and non-believing thinkers (Nietzsche 2005: 43–45). I do not doubt that Nietzsche as well as Dostoevsky had a direct influence on discussions of the problem among Russian Christians in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, Schaeffer’s suggestion that a secular liberal society cannot last is also reminiscent of T. S. Eliot’s 1940 *The Idea of a Christian Society*, in which Eliot presents liberalism as having served a useful historical purpose, but a purely negative, critical purpose, making liberalism inherently unstable and ultimately unsustainable.

8. Since making this comment I have been informed by Schaeffer’s son, Frank Schaeffer, that as far as he recalled his father “never got into any of the Russian religious writers. He would have had a working knowledge of their names/works but that’s all” (Personal Communication with Frank Schaeffer 2013). Francis Schaeffer himself died in 1984.

9. For an example see Trubetskoi (1917), and for the broader context see Kolerov (2000).

This representation of liberalism as exclusively negative in content also recalls Thomas Carlyle, who was himself an important influence on turn-of-the-century Russian Christian thinkers. According to Eliot, then, liberalism was destined to be replaced with some positive idea, and Eliot took the candidates to be either Christianity or “paganism,” by which he meant totalitarianism (Eliot 1940). The same concern over the inability to constrain the state from deifying itself in the absence of religion was shared by many prominent interwar and mid-century French intellectuals, not least Albert Camus, who, of course, did not believe in God, but was profoundly concerned with nihilism (Camus 1964; Siljak 2012).

In *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot referred to one such French intellectual, the Neo-Thomist theologian and personalist philosopher Jacques Maritain, as a direct influence on his own thinking (Eliot 1940: 6). This will bring us back around to the Russians since, as we know from the research of Catherine Baird, Maritain, whose accomplishments include having a hand in drafting the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was directly influenced by Berdyaev, who played an active and visible role in interwar French intellectual life (Baird 1995).

Now, the point of this whirlwind tour, which I fear may have been a bit dizzying, has been simply to show that what we are dealing with here is a discourse, an anti-secular — some would say anti-modern — discourse with roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Russian intellectuals have undoubtedly contributed to this discourse, which has gained new purchase and visibility in our current post-secular moment. What most fundamentally links the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with our present time, I think, is anxiety over what I have elsewhere referred to as “the perceived cultural threat of nihilism” (Stroop 2013). Here I do not mean only those schools of thought that have defined themselves as nihilistic, which were of course an important part of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian intellectual history (Kline 1969), but more fundamentally the problem of the inaccessibility of absolute truth that could ground absolute values.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many intellectuals perceived nihilism as the root of the social ills that had accompanied the decline of Western civilization, thereby connecting nihilism with the rise of Communism and fascism. Maritain, for example, is among those Catholic thinkers cited by James Chappel in a recent article called “The Catholic Origins of Totalitarianism Theory in Interwar Europe.” As Chappel points out, totalitarian theory — now largely superseded

as a scholarly model, but one that has framed an enormous amount of scholarship — is generally regarded as a secular discourse (Chappel 2011).

Thus, to uncover the religious origins of totalitarian theory is an exciting development, one of many new directions that has come about with the “religious turn” in modern historiography, which is itself an outgrowth of what has been called “the post-secular academy” (Clayton 2002; Howard 2006; Schmalzbauer and Mahoney 2012; Haberski 2013). Of course, theologians must have been well aware of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Christian criticism of totalitarianism all along. I’m afraid that we are only beginning to bring religious ideas out of the isolated divinity schools that became a hallmark of the secular academy and back into intellectual history, where, by virtue of their social significance, they certainly belong. In this regard, we have a lot of catching up to do. My own research is uncovering Russian Orthodox Christian origins of totalitarian theory.<sup>10</sup> These Russian origins may well be prior. It was, after all, to the Russian émigrés whom Europeans and Americans turned in and after the 1920s when they wanted to understand what was happening in the Soviet Union. I will now briefly tell the story of how this came to be.

Late imperial Russia’s politically unstable and revolutionary climate gave rise to an anti-nihilist and anti-secular discourse, a kind of Russian political theology, that was a socially significant phenomenon. In the waning years of the old regime, the nascent Russian public sphere, especially in the freer climate after 1905 (Costello 1978), was rife with discussions about modernization, secularization, and the relationship between religion, state, and nation. These discussions took place in a European context. The Russian participants spent considerable time abroad, conducting research and attending lectures of leading European intellectuals such as Wilhelm Windelband and Edmund Husserl. They published in European journals. For example, during this period Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov (ordained Fr. Sergius in 1918), who would later become a leader in the interwar ecumenical movement, contributed to contemporary European debates about methodology in the social sciences (Evtuhov 1997: 184). Prominent West European intellectuals were also known to visit and present in the Russian capitals.

10. One interesting Russian text that deals with totalitarianism (using the term) at length is Bulgakov (1948).

The project of Russian religious philosophy, which is not nearly so exotic as it has been painted, was heavily involved in these discussions. Its leading representatives were Christian apologists attempting to defend the reasonableness of faith against the tide of growing atheism, and also advocates of a kind of Russian civil religion who believed that only a state resting on a religious moral foundation could properly provide for the welfare of its citizens. Finding the roots of social ills in secularization and nihilism, they longed for the reunification of the Christian Churches and the re-Christianization of Europe. For many of them, these goals were associated with Neo-Slavophile Russian national messianism, with the belief that Russia had a Providential calling to reawaken Western spiritual life and ultimately that of the entire world. As evidence that they or at least the Russian literary tradition has had some enduring success at popularizing this idea, we might point to pop culture references such as those in the “Hellboy” series of comic books and films, in which the title character’s destiny seems to be to usher in the apocalypse, which he can only do in Russia.

In any case, this Providentialist Russian national messianism led its exponents to perceive World War I as a battle between Christianity (primarily embodied in Russia) and the nihilism of modern civilization (primarily embodied in Germany).<sup>11</sup> Of course, the October Revolution quickly changed the equation. The divine judgment against modern godless civilization that was the war — a view of the war that could be found among religious believers not only in Russia — was now also a divine punishment on Russia in the form of revolution. As has been well documented, these events led Christians of various confessions to seek means of working together in the interwar period to stand against common threats, not least Communism (Geffert 2010: 30–48).

When the Bolsheviks came to power, they did not so much suppress these ideas, which were already part of broader European intellectual trends, as they did ship them abroad — by expelling over 100 of Russia’s foremost intellectuals in late 1922 (Finkel 2007). These intellectuals continued to develop their ideas not only in Russian émigré circles, but also in European intellectual and religious circles. Many Europeans were eager to hear their interpretation of unfolding events. Writing from Geneva in 1920, for example, the brilliant Russian-Jewish existentialist Lev Isaakovich Shestov put it this way:

11. On the responses of leading Russian Christian intellectuals to the First World War and other developments described in the preceding paragraphs, see my Ph.D. dissertation (Stroop 2012), which is available for download at the following url: <http://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/9616719>, accessed November 29, 2013.

Ever since I arrived in Europe, everyone with whom I've happened to meet, both my fellow countrymen and foreigners, poses the question: "What is Russian Bolshevism; what's happening in Russia? You've seen everything directly, with your own eyes, tell us; we don't know anything and don't understand anything. Tell us everything and, if possible, calmly and dispassionately" (Shestov 1920).

While Shestov wrote these words in Russian, the piece was made available in French the very same year (Shestov (Shestov) 1920). Another piece of evidence is provided by a letter of May 7, 1923 from Oswald Spengler to Shestov's close friend Berdyaev: "During my next stay there [Berlin]," he wrote, "I would be very pleased to be acquainted with you and your friends, and especially to speak with you about the religious problems of contemporary and future Russia" (RGALI, f. 1496, op. 1, d. 833, l. 1).

So, if you had asked these Russian emigrants about Bolshevism, what kind of answer might you have received? If Shestov's pamphlet *What is Bolshevism?* is any indication, from him you'd have heard that Bolshevism was parasitical, bureaucratic, reactionary, antithetical to freedom, essentially destructive, and incapable of construction — and he'd have added a warning that the ills it had caused could soon befall Europe. From Berdyaev, you might have heard — most likely with much rambling repetition — that "religion cannot be a private matter, as modern history wanted," and that Communism understood the comprehensive nature of religion. Communism thus "demands 'sacred' society, 'sacred' culture, the subjection of all aspects of life to the religion of the devil, the religion of anti-Christ." In this respect Communism had already gone beyond modernity into the "New Middle Ages," the essentially religious epoch into which Berdyaev believed the world was transitioning in the 1920s (Berdiaev 2002: 229–30).

From some Russian Christians, you would probably have gotten the answer that without belief in God, man is nothing but an animal and thus behaves accordingly — an idea that had roots in the late imperial Russian public sphere (Trubetskoi 1912: 9). Of course, you could have gotten a similar idea directly from Dostoevsky, a profoundly influential religious thinker in the West, not least with respect to nihilism. Dostoevsky's famous suggestion that if there is no God, everything is permitted poses a problem that many believers and non-believers alike have taken seriously.

But if, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, you were the sort of person who took a serious enough interest in Dostoevsky to read not



just his own books, but also books about him, your understanding of Dostoevsky might well have been shaped by Berdyaev. In 1918, Berdyaev called Dostoevsky “a prophet of the Russian revolution” who had “understood that revolutionary moralism has as its reverse side revolutionary amorism, and that the resemblance of revolutionary holiness to Christian holiness is the deceptive resemblance of anti-Christ to Christ” (Berdiaev 1990). A few years later, in 1923, Berdyaev developed similar themes in a study of Dostoevsky’s worldview that included a chapter on revolution and socialism. The book was translated into German by 1925, French by 1929, and English by 1934 (Berdiaev 1923; Berdjaev 1925; Berdiaeff 1929; Berdyaev 1934).

Now, if you had posed your question about the meaning of the Russian revolution to Bulgakov, you might have heard that the revolution was an “irrevocable judgment of history” and a spiritual disease, along with the hopeful statement that: “Every serious illness which cannot be arrested has its crisis, dangerous and exhausting, but if all goes well, leading at last to recovery.” On the other hand, this analysis may well have come with a plea for financial assistance and a stern warning: “If (...) you do not wish the Red Leprosy sooner or later to devour yourselves, nations of Europe and America, you must even now bring us your Christian help” (Bulgakov 1924). There were Western Christians who were ready to do so.

Everything I’ve just quoted from Bulgakov comes from an article published in 1924 in English. The piece does reveal that the Russian emigration had, in the description of Marc Raeff, an internal “mission (...) to preserve the values and traditions of Russian culture and to continue its creative efforts for the benefit and ongoing spiritual progress of the homeland” (Raeff 1990; Finkel 2010). But the pursuit of this mission inevitably brought the leading Russian émigrés into contact with Westerners, who were themselves, as I’ve already shown, often eager for that contact. One of the most important partnerships was between Russian Christians and the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), which played a prominent role in the ecumenical movement.

Thanks to the recent research of Matthew Miller and Robert Bird, we have an excellent general understanding of the relationship between the YMCA and the Russian diaspora (Miller 2012; Berd (Bird) 2000). In addition to providing a great deal of direct humanitarian aid, the YMCA helped émigré Russians preserve and develop Russian culture and Orthodox Christianity through the publication of books and also a journal called *Put* (*The Way*). Berdyaev was the editor of *Put* and of



the Russian YMCA Press, and in that capacity he worked very closely with American YMCA leaders (called secretaries), people who were well connected in humanitarian and government circles.

My own current research project, based primarily on the Paul B. Anderson Papers and the Donald A. and Helen O. Lowrie Papers housed at the University of Illinois Archives, is concerned with showing just how influential Berdyaev was in shaping these American humanitarians' understanding of Communism from a Christian point of view. Time will not allow me to go into detail, but I do want to note that Lowrie, who translated some of Berdyaev's works into English, was deeply devoted to popularizing Berdyaev's ideas in the United States, and this will bring us back around to the Cold War.<sup>12</sup>

The YMCA was a moderate, ecumenically inclined religious organization, and Lowrie might be described as a moderate anti-Communist. When working with Soviet refugees from German prison camps in the 1940s, for example, he was capable of admiring their Soviet patriotism, which he described in a letter to unspecified friends as a "flaming fire." Worried about the younger soldiers' missed schooling, Lowrie also related how he was instrumental in getting the Swiss government to help establish a Russian school that used Soviet textbooks. According to his letters, during encounters with Soviet refugees, Lowrie discussed religion only if they brought it up. But for all that, he remained a devout Christian who was opposed to Soviet atheism (UIUC 15/35/53, box 4, folder "1944").

The Berdyaev that Lowrie presented to the United States was very similar in outlook. And this was not such a great distortion of the "real" Berdyaev; one can see how the two became close. Berdyaev, after all, never accepted that a nihilistic worldview could ground a healthy society, just as he had always opposed external military intervention in the Soviet Union, as he believed that Russian culture had to be renewed from within. After Berdyaev's death in 1948, Lowrie participated in the founding of an organization called the Berdyaev Society, whose constitution lists among its goals the support of those dedicated to developing Berdyaev's "ideology" (UIUC 15/35/54, box 5, folder "Nicholas Berdyaev Society, 1946, 1948–53, 1956–61"). Despite the moderate attitude of Lowrie and Berdyaev toward the Soviet Union,

12. The topic of my presentation at the Varieties of Russian Modernity conference was "Nikolai Berdiaev and the YMCA: A Case Study in Russian Contributions to Twentieth-Century Christian Anti-Communist Discourse." The publication of this essay is projected.

one can certainly surmise that more conservative anti-Communists would read their works in order to understand Communism.

In the 1960s, Lowrie published a Berdyaev anthology with commentary and a biography of Berdyaev that is frequently criticized for being hagiographic (Lowrie 1960; Lowrie 1965). In my view, we can make the best use of Lowrie's biography by ceasing to regard it chiefly as a secondary source with certain deficiencies and beginning to regard it as a primary source — not only for memoiristic firsthand information about Berdyaev, but also for investigating the influence of Russian Christian ideas in Cold War era America and Britain. How successful was Lowrie in his project of spreading Berdyaev's ideas? For now, I'm afraid, that must remain an open question, but for my part I plan to pick away at researching Berdyaev's reception in both the United States and Europe as I have the opportunity.

What I can say with confidence today is that the kinds of ideas Berdyaev espoused were part of a broad anti-secular and anti-nihilist discourse with roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that achieved some prominence in response to the horrors of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To many exponents of this discourse, the Soviet Union eventually became the most threatening actually existing political and social embodiment of nihilism. This occurred even as this anti-secular discourse quietly retreated from the mainstream of public life. But today, in our post-secular moment — a moment of economic crisis, and also widespread identity crisis that can, I believe, be traced in part to the end of the Cold War and uncertainties surrounding globalization and the emergence of a multi-polar world — this discourse is back in force.

At the beginning of my talk I promised that I would not leave the term “post-secular” undefined, and so in place of a traditional conclusion I would like to spend the remainder of my time reflecting on the concept of the post-secular. I have, as you'll have noticed, dropped the cumbersome “so-called” from my subtitle. In the course of working on this project, I have warmed to the term, which need not be taken to suggest that the immanent frame, as described by Charles Taylor, has ceased by and large to set the parameters of modern experience, or that pluralism is no longer a fundamental condition of modernity, in which religious faith is just one option among many (Taylor 2007). Nor need the use of the term be associated with advocating anti-secular ideology, although this has been a worry. As Eduardo Mendieta has observed, for example, “The approving use of the term ‘post-secular’ incites visceral reaction because it is taken to

suggest that now religion can and should be mingled with the state” (Mendieta 2012).<sup>13</sup> While Mendieta is among those who consider the post-secular to be compatible with, and even integral to, post-metaphysical and post-foundational philosophy, political theology does have increased appeal in times like ours.<sup>14</sup> This is a historical and empirical observation about something that I consider to be an identifying feature of post-secularism. It is most certainly not a normative claim to the effect that, given the crisis of the times, we ought to embrace political theology.

The turn of the last century, during which European intellectual life underwent what the intellectual historian H. Stuart Hughes described as a “revolt against positivism” (1958), was similar to our current time in at least one critical respect.<sup>15</sup> Then as now there was a pervasive worry that with the secularization that accompanied modernity, Western civilization — and Russia, to the extent that it had followed this Western path — had lost its way, with potentially disastrous moral consequences accompanying the breakdown of traditional faith, traditional families, and strong communities. Consider comments made by Sergei Bulgakov in 1912 about “the decay of all the old supports: religion, family, morality, the traditional way of life,” all of which he linked directly to the rise of atheism among the youth under the influence of “*intelligentsia nihilism*” (Bulgakov 1912: 189–90).

Apart perhaps from the phrase “*intelligentsia nihilism*,” these comments do not sound out of place in our present moment, which is marked by what Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen have described as “the recent and full-throated return of political theology” (2011: 4). Indeed, political theology is a current concern among intellectual historians, philosophers, and advocates of secular liberalism, including, for example, Mark Lilla, who has traced a predominantly Protestant story of the emergence of 20<sup>th</sup>-century political theology; and Jürgen Habermas, whose recent references to political theology have been

13. For a refutation of the simplistic equation of using the terminology of post-secularism with espousing anti-secular ideology, see Uzlaner (2013).

14. In the words of prominent sociologists of religion, “Where identity is threatened in the course of major cultural transitions, religion may provide resources for negotiating such transitions” (Wallis and Bruce 1992: 18). For more on the important relationship between religious rhetoric and communal identity in the context of crisis, see Murphy (2009).

15. I am not the first to point to Russian participation in this European phenomenon. See Evtuhov (1997: 16, 153, 246).

framed primarily with regard to Catholicism in general and to Carl Schmitt in particular (Lilla 2007; Habermas 2011: 19–23).<sup>16</sup> Both Lilla and Habermas recognize the powerful appeal that political theology holds in a time like the present — a time of crisis and the breakdown of community. But by laying out ties between anti-liberal political theology and Nazism as cautionary tales, of course, both these intellectuals are attempting to warn us against succumbing to the temptation of political theology.

The temptation is real. Some scholars who are rethinking secularism call into question whether secularism is essential to democracy, and others who wish to “rehabilitate” secularism go well beyond what Habermas and other 20<sup>th</sup>-century liberal theorists would be willing to countenance with respect to the relationship between religion and the state (Stepan 2011; Bhargava 2011). I tend to think there are good reasons to push back against the clear-cut boundaries that would have been imposed by the early John Rawls, but a very important question remains: how far is too far?

Meanwhile, there are those who are arguing, *contra* Habermas, that in the wake of post-modernism’s undermining of all absolutes, there is no longer a rational basis for an absolute distinction between philosophy and theology. This is the argument of Dmitry Uzlaner, who is one of the leading contemporary Russian scholars of religion and secularism, and, given that this is a talk about the Russian origins of the post-secular moment, I should probably note in passing that very similar arguments were made by Russian Christians in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Uzlaner 2011b; Ern 1913). Uzlaner is a key participant in a forthcoming research project supported by the John Templeton Foundation on “Rethinking the ‘Secular’ in Russian and Western Context” that will involve bringing leading Western theorists of

16. For interest in political theology in Russian intellectual history, see also Poole (2013). This piece remains forthcoming at the time of my revising this lecture; I thank Randall A. Poole for sharing his unpublished research with me. The distinction Poole (and others) draw between the old political theology, used for the “ideological legitimization of power,” and the new political theology, devoted to “the theological analysis, criticism, and justification of politics, society, and history,” is important. However, the distinction is not absolute or clear-cut, and we should be careful of an overly simplistic equation of old political theology with social harm and new political theology with social good. Both entail positive conceptions of liberty of the sort opposed by 20<sup>th</sup>-century liberal philosophy with its insistence on negative liberty. It is also the case that social justice Christianity is not immune to the temptations of what I call the “politics of Providentialism” (Stroop 2013), which can lead to the emergence of Christian nationalism, as the case of the Russian religious intelligentsia clearly shows.

secularism, including Taylor, to Russian and Ukrainian cities where they will deliver lectures.<sup>17</sup>

Undoubtedly, our post-secular moment is associated with the softening of boundaries between “autonomous” academic disciplines and a drive toward interdisciplinary exploration, which is often fruitful. With respect to the boundary between philosophy and theology, John Schmalzbauer and Kathleen Mahoney have argued in a similar vein to Uzlaner. “In a postmodern era,” they note, “scholars are challenging the boundaries between faith and knowledge, acknowledging the importance of religion as a human phenomenon and as a way of knowing.” Observing an increasing visibility of religion “across the humanities,” they go on to point out: “Nowhere has the return of religion been more dramatic than in philosophy.” A note of caution may be in order here, since at least two thirds of American philosophers remain non-theists (Schmalzbauer and Mahoney 2012), and, while I don’t have comparable numbers for European countries, I would certainly be surprised if the philosophical profession in any of them turned out to be more theistic than in the US.

Regarding philosophy and the emergence of post-secularism, Uzlaner insists on the primacy of a story internal to philosophy, despite observing that the question of the post-secular can be approached from political and sociological angles. I do not doubt that there is a profoundly important story about the post-secular that is internal to the discipline of philosophy. We could even go looking for Russian origins within this story beyond those that have been laid out today, particularly with respect to the development of existentialism, in which Berdyaev would feature prominently, and also among Russian phenomenologists such as Gustav Shpet, who remained in the Soviet Union, and Evsei Schor, who did not. Schor, incidentally, was not only a phenomenologist and student of Husserl, but also an active promoter of Berdyaev in the German-speaking world who translated some of Berdyaev’s works into German. A Russian Jew and a great lover of German philosophy, Schor left for Palestine when the Nazis came to power; from there, he continued to correspond with Berdyaev (RGALI, f. 1496, op. 1, d. 831 (Pis’mo Shora Evseia Davydovicha N. A. Berdiaevu); Segal 1994; Iantsen 2006).

17. At the time of this revising, the project is actually ongoing. For more information, see: <http://russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Pereosmyslenie-svetskogo-v-rossijskom-i-zapadnom-kontekste>, accessed November 19, 2013.

In any case, to return at last to the question of what the post-secular is, while I recognize the importance of the philosophical story laid out by Uzlaner, I am not ready to recognize its absolute primacy. According to Uzlaner, “the phenomenon of the post-secular has a more fundamental philosophical measure, without which any social or political discussions would not have any foundation beneath them” (Uzlaner 2011b: 3). For my own part, while I believe ideas to be crucial to the post-secular, I would prefer to take more of a neo-Weberian approach, one in which the mutual interactions between ideas, institutions, economic conditions, and other social forces must be considered. Yet if I would not go so far as Uzlaner in recognizing the primacy of philosophy in the emergence of the post-secular (with the concomitant emphasis on the blurring of the border between philosophy and theology), I would go further than Habermas in recognizing the pervasive influence of religious ideas in the post-secular academy and post-secular society.

Habermas’s interpretation of post-secular society seems to rest, in the description of Michael Reder and Josef Schmidt, on “the fact that modern societies should (...) expect that religions will continue to exist and should seek to engage them in a constructive dialogue” (Reder and Schmidt 2010: 7). This formulation makes religion distinct from modern society, which is, on an empirical basis, manifestly inaccurate. Religion remains rather a part of modern societies, a part of the inherently dialectical phenomenon that we refer to as modernity (Pippin 1991). In times like the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and times like the present, discomfort with the modern project comes to the fore. An ideal-typical interpretation of the post-secular would have to take into account both the persistence of anti-secular religion and, to borrow Habermas’s phrase, the “awareness of what is missing” among non-believers (Habermas 2010). We see this awareness in thinkers like Camus in the interwar period and mid-century, and today we see it in thinkers like Alain de Botton, a leading representative of the so-called “new, new atheists” who are interested in exploring what religion might be able to offer non-believers (Derbyshire, et al. 2013).<sup>18</sup> If I had to take a stab at coming up with such an ideal type, I would describe the post-secular as fundamentally consisting in an intense confrontation with the problem of nihilism. When it comes to nihilism, of course, Russian history has given us a lot to think about.

18. I thank Erich Lippman for this reference.

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DMITRY ROGOZIN

## **From Outsider to Parishioner: Religious Identity Among the Older Generation in the Ivanovo Archdiocese**

*Translation by Charles Arndt III*

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*This article deals with religious identity among the older generation in the recently formed Ivanovo Archdiocese through the analysis of two criteria: self-identification (Do you consider yourself a believer?) and regularity of church attendance (Do you attend church, and if yes, then how often?). Data gathered through a phone survey is analyzed through a mixed research methodology, in which the insights gleaned through statistical data are supplemented with those gained through detailed conversation analysis applied to the exchanges between questioners and respondents. This analysis is used to develop a typology of religious identity along with indices of religious indifference and religious mobility. One striking conclusion is that religious identity among the older generation in the Ivanovo Archdiocese seems to be largely independent of external social factors.*

**Keywords:** interview analysis, attachment to the Church, Ivanovo Archdiocese, index of religious mobility, index of religious indifference, elderly people, religious identity, sociology of religion, phone surveys.

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I remember how, the first morning after reading the Gospel, I went out and looked around in amazement at all the people walking down the street, running for the train, rushing to work, and I thought: What a miracle! They may not know that they are all loved by God indiscriminately, but I know, and they can no longer be my enemies...

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, *Conversations about Faith and the Church*

ON June 7, 2012, by decision of the Holy Synod, the Ivanovo Archdiocese was formed. It consists of three dioceses: in the western part of the Ivanovo Oblast there is the Shuya and Teikovo Diocese; in the center of the oblast there is the Ivanovo-Voznesenskaya and Vichuga Diocese; and finally, in the East, the Kineshema and Palekh Diocese (Figure 1).

The main reasons for the allocation of three new dioceses from within the Ivanovo-Voznesenskaya Diocese (which, according to territorial boundaries, corresponds with the Ivanovo Oblast) are the large size of the territory, the remoteness of several population centers, and the expansion of parish life. All of these create difficulties if there is only one center. The proportions of population density and territorial integrity were taken into account in the formation of these three dioceses. Along with this, it is interesting to pose the question of just how homogeneous the contingent of believers actually is. Do their socio-demographic characteristics vary drastically? Can one discern any distinguishing features in the parishes of the three newly formed dioceses?

Traditionally, the older generational cohort is more active in church parish life (Argyle 1958: 48–49; Davie 1998: 101–02), especially in rural, economically deprived regions. Regardless of religious confession, religiosity appears most often among people experiencing some kind of social deprivation. In addition to the elderly, Lynda Powell, Leila Shahabi and Carl Thoresen single out minorities, women, the less-educated population, the handicapped and people with poor health as those who are more inclined to religious service (Powell et al. 2003: 38). John Vincent considers that the main problem of old age is in its social construction as a period of sickness and want, which in the modern world leads to the stigmatization and the deprivation of the elderly, (Vincent 2003: 131, 138, 167) and also leads, according to studies done on non-Russian populations, to their involvement



with any specific geographic location (mobile phones). The quantity of selected numbers in a range was directly proportional to the share of that range in the general quantity of numbers assigned to the corresponding oblast (the volume of the range). The selection of numbers in a given range occurred randomly with the help of systematic selection with the interval equal to the relationship of the volume of the range to the quantity of selected numbers in the range. With this selection method, each telephone number from all of the DEF or ABC ranges has an equal probability of being included in the sample.

Selection within a given household was not carried out, that is, the survey was taken from the first member of the family over fifty years old to come to the phone who was willing to take part in a conversation about education. If a respondent who answered the phone was under fifty years old, he or she was asked if there was anyone living in the house over fifty and was requested to pass the phone to that person. If there was a person in a given family who fulfilled all the criteria for the sample, but it was not possible to speak with him or her at that moment, the interviewer found out a convenient time for the conversation to take place and, if necessary, called the elderly person at a different phone number.

### **Data Processing Methods**

The data analysis was built on mixed research methods. On the one hand, we relied on the results of a quantitative survey. The strictness of the formulas and the unambiguous wording of the closed questions allow us to construct aggregate indicators, scale the data and perform a quantitative analysis. On the other hand, any standardized interview merely represents a particular conversation format (Baker 2002: 779). People are not robots, and an interview is not a formal transfer of information. Respondents make judgments, wait for reinforcement of their answer from the interviewer, justify their judgments, and make arguments for as well as against statements they had just uttered. In other words, behind all the classifications of answers and aggregate indicators lies a first-hand, living moment of communication in which the wealth of meanings and experiences is at times no less than that found in the most heartfelt discussion. Therefore, to ignore the situation of the conversation entirely, to act as if it is not a significant factor for the interpretation of the data, would represent, it seems, if not complete methodological folly, then at least the crudest of methodological errors.

Analyzing telephone dialogues, we relied on a particular phonetically oriented method of transcribing audio recordings. For example, laughter is codified as a row of x's in parentheses, and their quantity refers to the length of the laugh: "(xxxxx)" or "(xx)"; with upper-case or lower-case indicating volume: "(xxx)" or "(XXX)" for soft or loud, respectively; arrows pointing up (↑) or down (↓) refer to rising or falling intonation, respectively. Pauses are codified as are overlapping speech, interrupting one's conversation partner, stress and elevation of the intonation (for more details see appendix). Developed in the tradition of conversation analysis, these codes allow us to capture not only semantic constructions but also non-verbal methods of communication: laughter, sighs, pauses, overlapping statements, interruption of speech, etc. In countless publications, the interlocutors' remarks, commonly sterilized under the pressure of the rules of punctuation and orthography, lose not only the uniqueness of conversational speech, but also the accentuation of meanings. When the conversation turns to a subject close to the respondent's heart, invariably there is a loss of meaningful elements of his or her speech if the researcher ignores the non-verbal side of communication. Because the interview is built upon a standardized questionnaire, the interviewer relies on receiving quick, laconic answers. For this reason, the respondents' justifications and comments to closed questions are all the more important to us. Detailed replies not only allow us to test the meaningfulness and importance of the questions posed, but also to assign valid boundaries to subsequent interpretations.

It is interesting to note that a more comprehensive interpretation of the questions is generally more helpful when dealing with members of the older generation. They approach the formulation of their answers more responsibly, often attempting to demonstrate to the interviewer the possible range of personal understanding. This creates a certain tension in communication. The interviewer cannot always choose a simple, unambiguous answer that corresponds to the proposed scale. However, we get calculated indicators saturated with meaning by using our system of codes for conversation analysis.

## Data Analysis

The respondents were asked three questions related to religious topics: Do you consider yourself a believer? Do you go to church? If yes, how often? (Table 1). In international public opinion surveys,<sup>1</sup> certain

1. See for example Gallup 1996.



variations of these questions about religious self-identification and the frequency of church attendance are the most widely used questions for evaluating religious identity and for measuring the range of religious practices.

**Table 1: The Distribution of Answers to Questions about Faith,\*  
% per column.**

Questions	Dioceses of the Ivanovo Archdiocese				Average
	The city of Ivanovo	Ivanovo-Voznesenskaya and Vichuga (w/o the city of Ivanovo)	Shuya and Teikovo	Kineshema and Palekh	
DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A BELIEVER?					
Yes	70	78	81	82	76
No	30	22	19	18	24
DO YOU GO TO CHURCH?					
Regularly to services	6	4	7	7	6
Mainly on holidays	53	54	56	51	53
I do not go to church	42	42	37	42	41

\* The portion of the population that is not Orthodox within the region does not exceed 2–3%. Therefore, within the framework of this study, we are not examining the differences between Orthodoxy and other confessions.

The overwhelming majority (76%) of the residents of the Ivanovo Oblast over fifty years old consider themselves believers; however just under half (41%) claim that they do not go to church. From the distribution across the three dioceses, it is evident that one cannot trace any relationship between place of residence and church attendance. In addition, when the question of faith was posed to people in the capital of the Oblast, Ivanovo,

the number of people claiming a lack of personal faith was a little higher (30%) than the average (24%) for the Ivanovo Oblast.

From the general features of the findings from the three questions, one can build a typology of religious identity in which the question of whether one has faith forms the axis of religious identification, and church attendance indicates the mobility (Figure 2). The extreme negative position in this religious typology is occupied by people who answered negatively to both questions (18%): they do not consider themselves believers and do not attend church. Independent of their personal views and convictions, at the present moment they remain outsiders with respect to church life. However, their position is more likely determined by a lack of knowledge and by their apartness from the church rather than stemming from a deep-seated atheism. For the majority of Ivanovo Oblast residents declaring a lack of faith, this reflects searching and doubt, and not a materialistic view of life that rejects any spiritual element. For example, a former teacher of Russian language and literature who was interviewed avoided providing a straight answer to the question about faith for a long time, and then, at one point, proposed her own interpretation of faith: “I speak with God in civil language, when I need to” (Fragment 1, line 5).

**Figure 2: Typology of Religious  
% from the number of respondents**

Do you consider yourself a believer?		Yes	No
Do you go to church? If yes, then how often?	Regularly to services	<b>Parishioners</b> 6%	
	Occasionally, on holidays	<b>Fellow Travelers</b> 49%	<b>Tourists</b> 5%
	I do not go	<b>Observers</b> 21%	<b>Outsiders</b> 18%

**Fragment 1<sup>2</sup>***Woman, 72 years old, city of Kineshma*

- 
1. I: And ↓so ↑do you consider yourself a beliEving (.) person
  2. R: (3.0) how can I say (1.0) I'm a believer and ↑ not a believer (1.0)
  3. [like when I get sick: I ask
  4. I: [well which do you lean ↑ to
  5. R: I speak with God in civilian language when I need to
  6. ↓Although to be honest then >how can I say< he probably respects me
  7. He helps [if I ever get sick I just kind of lie down he
  8. I: [well you::
  9. R: okay cAlm down Actually I drank a lot of tea with raspberry jam
  10. and That's it I got better
  11. I: so you more ↑believe=
  12. R: =No=
  13. I: =or you are having trouble answering
  14. R: you know I don't like fanatics. Well I have a whole
  15. lot of:: fri- friends (.) gIrl friends friends=
  16. I: =uh huh
  17. R: from the school ((I worked as a Russian language teacher in a high school
  18. for 40 years)) >well there at the school < so (.) Some of them
- 

2. Here and in future examples, the specific collection of coded symbols, which have been developed in order to convey particularities of emotional indicators and intonation in the speech of the respondents (see appendix), has been applied to the transcripts of interview excerpts. Failure to account for the non-verbal component in an interview can result in false interpretations of what is said, shifting the interpretation toward the interpreter's reading. In contrast, the system of codes we have developed allows us to capture the particularities of the interviewers' and interviewees' utterances and to bring the written text closer to the elusive ligature of oral communication.

- 
19. well:: completely you know ah::: in that- in that area well::
20. over GOd [(.) ↓went crazy
21. I: [(xx) well
22. R: well [this is me: I don't app-approve
23. I: [so you:
24. R: well you believe and After all believe —
25. I: -well so >you believe< ↑Yes
26. R: if you want to believe, believe, if you don't want to believe,  
don't believe=
27. I: =So what do you ↑think
28. Do you believe more or
29. >are you having trouble answering <
30. R: (2.0) I simply you know what: (.) think that If you Want  
believe
31. ↓if you want don't believe —
32. I: well: then ↑you=
33. R: =I don't believe
- 

Only after recalling her school colleagues, who, in her opinion, “went crazy over God,” and after several polite but persistent requests from the interviewer (lines 4, 8, 11, 13, 21, 23, 25, 27–29, 32) does she make a clear choice—“I don't believe” (line 33). The numerous pauses, introductory phrases, and use of supplementary examples indicate that the respondent does not have a clear negative bias against faith. She more likely belongs to the group of so-called “observers,” who in their hearts accept God, but the present conversational situation and, possibly, her recollection of episodes from her personal life, push her to respond in the negative. This “emergent,” on-the-spot formulation of a negative response about having faith is typical for the people of the older generation that we questioned.

The most positive attitude toward church is demonstrated by those who answered positively to both questions: 6% of those questioned consider themselves believers and regularly attend church (Fragment 2).

**Fragment 2***Man, 59 years old, village of Malyshevo, Rodniki District*

- 
1. I: Do you consider yourself a ↑believing person
  2. R: yes YES I am a deeply believing person
  3. I: Do you ↑go to church if yes then ↑how often=
  4. R: =absolutely
  5. I go regularly: rEgularly as much as nEcessary=
  6. I: =uh huh
  7. R: according to the ↓canons °that's how much I go°
- 

This may approximate the typical view of church parishioners, who can be categorized as the type of parishioners who make a conscious decision on the question of faith.

The most numerous group of respondents consists of “fellow travelers,” those who consider themselves believers but only rarely attend church, i.e., on holidays (49%). For them, in contrast to the “observers” and some of the “outsiders,” the question of faith does not raise any problems; however, visiting churches is associated more with curiosity (Fragment 3, lines 12–19) and with the desire to see something new than with day-to-day life or any sort of regular activity.

**Fragment 3***Man, 61 years old, city of Ivanovo*

- 
8. I: But do you ↑consider yourself a believing person
  9. R: Yes I am ↓Orthodox I ↓pay respect and:: and I wear a
  10. cross and —
  11. I: -Ah:: —
  12. R: -I believe=
  13. I: =have you gone to church If yes then ↑how often
  14. R: I've gOne to church but:: ↓not often I've been and::: in big churches and:::
  15. There are a lOt of churches nowadays and I gO frequently —
  16. I: -mostly on ↑holidays
  17. R: well:: at lEast:: let's say about twIce a year=
  18. I: =Ah I see —
  19. R: -And: so I visited °well I'm
  20. talking on average° But I visited
  21. Very many And in Kiev ↓I was
  22. And:: in sergievpOsad ↓I visited
  23. I ↓Saw Everything: I'm curious
-

- 
24. about these things Well in the Ivanovo
  25. Oblast I've been practically
  26. everywhere
  27. I: mostly on holiday —
  28. R: - YES YES when there is the opportunity ↓ of course
- 

As a rule, “fellow travelers” critically evaluate the strength of their own faith (Fragment 4, lines 2–3), reporting that they do not make any special effort in this area. But they do possess a general positive attitude, attentiveness and respect for faith. This could be connected with personal experiences and/or examples from the lives of other people (fragment 4, lines 7–11).

#### Fragment 4

*Woman, 71 years old, city of Ivanovo*

- 
1. I: Tell me please do you ↓ consider yourself a believing person
  2. (3.0) we: I am a true believer <I can't say> Well: generally I go
  3. [to church
  4. I: [well ↑ probably ↓ yes=
  5. R: = ↓ yes probably::: well I would say —
  6. I: - yes the truth, here is the truth (xxx)
  7. R: well you know (.) well we had this teacher=
  8. I: = uh huh
  9. R: if I Well (.) he was never (.) and then suddenly he became a
  10. true believer. And then he went- He knew all the holidays::
  11. and::=
  12. I: =uh huh
  13. R: we don't have that- no we don't have That and I won't talk about it—
  14. I: - well do you consider yourself a
  15. ↑ believer
  16. R: well in general
- 

Doubts in faith — this is a characteristic typical of representatives of the “fellow travelers” group. They are missing only a little of what would cause them to transfer into the “parishioners” group. Nevertheless, a generally positive attitude and, in some sense, an understanding of religious values, is present to the fullest degree. One of their most common explanations is lack of time, immersion in day-to-day cares and concerns, looking after loved ones. For example, a man who stated earlier that his main concern is his grandchildren called himself

a believer without any uncertainty (fragment 5, line 2). But he only associates attending church with time freeing up: “everything depends upon how busy things are, on work and plus chores around the house” (fragment 5, lines 7–9).

### Fragment 5

*Man, 50 years old, village of Savino, Savino District*

- 
1. I: Tell me please: Do you ↓consider yourself a believing person
  2. R: (3.0) °yes°
  3. I: and do you go to chur —
  4. R: - ↓of course Without faith one can't do anything ↑Going to church
  5. As ↓required As much as I can
  6. I: well then mostly ↑on holidays or do you regularly attend services
  7. R: (4.0) (...xx) everything depends o::n how busy things are=
  8. I: =uh huh
  9. R: on work and (2.0) plus chOres around the house
- 

“Observers” refuse to attend church but identify themselves as believers. In research on the population of Western Europe, the steady rise of this group was noted several decades ago. Grace Davie convincingly shows how elderly people living in developed countries are less and less frequently connecting their faith with the Church these days (Davie 1994; Davie and Vincent 1998: 103). Analogous results concerning the departure of the elderly from traditional religion to private spiritual practices and the radical individualization of faith in Japanese society have been noted by Neal Krause, Jersey Liang, Joan Bennett and their colleagues (Krause, et al. 2010: 671–96). In our study, by contrast, the group refusing participation in collective worship is not so large — 21%. Moreover, in examining the speech forms of this refusal, it is not difficult to uncover its completely conditional nature. For example, one grandmother emphasized three times in a strong tone that she has faith (fragment 6, lines 2, 12), leaving the interviewer no doubt of this. However, she just as decisively asserted her lack of church attendance. However, this did not represent a categorical rejection of church attendance. She very rarely goes to church and does not consider it possible to say she does, because of the irregularity of her visits. She stops by a church “only for my soul, once in a while” (Fragment 6, lines 6–7).

**Fragment 6**

*Woman, 70 old years, the old city of Navoloki, Kineshema District*

1. I: Do you ↓consider yourself a believing person
2. R: (2.0) I:: ↓believe but (.) I dOn't ↓go to church
3. I: you don't go ↓to church ↑yes
4. R: yes
5. I: -and how would you evalu—
6. R: - well from time to time from time to time:: well it's like
7. for the soul ↓for my—
8. I: -look there is an [option here
9. R: [and so in order to
10. I: [go regularly to services or on
11. holidays or you don't go at all
12. R: I don't go At All but I BELIEVE but:: I BELIEVE

“Tourists” (5%), by contrast, speak of their own lack of faith, but stop by church from time to time. We are not speaking here about curiosity or the desire to find out something new — qualities often associated with tourism — but rather about a kind of traditionalism encoded in their behavior: “I go because it's expected, you should.” To build on the metaphor of tourism, this is not individual itinerary selection but rather a group visit to places designated in advance. It is the acceptance of a number of previously assigned rules without thinking through and understanding their necessity or importance. Here we witness tourism by habit: an association with the other as a means of satisfying what is expected, often connected with an incurable disease or death, a sorrow that cannot be confined with a secular picture of the world.

**Fragment 7**

*Woman, 53 years old, village of Staraya Vichuga, Vichuga District*

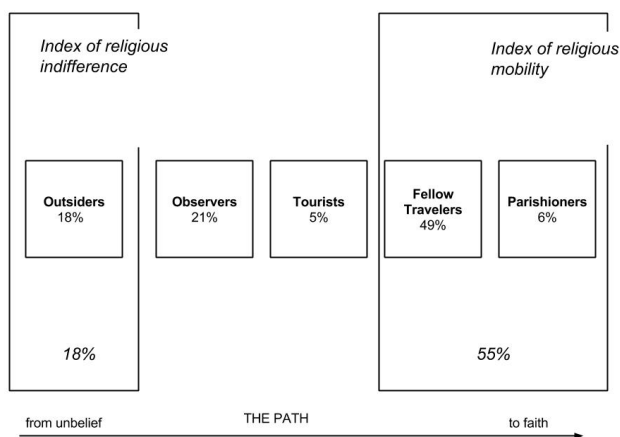
1. I: Do you consider yourself: a believing person ↓yes or no
2. R: (2.0) no
3. I: no And church do you ↑go or not
4. R: I go when it's necessary
5. I: mostly↓on holidays ↓when you need to↑ yes
6. R: well: to honor the dead you know in in obedience to the rituals (.)
7. for memorial services

The research tradition of explaining someone's coming to faith as a result of deprivation, pain and suffering has long been established.



A large proportion of faith among the elder generation is based on the nearness of death, poor health, and losses in life (Lane 1978: 225; Argyle 1958: 49). While not disputing the causes listed above, we note that these reasons arose much more often in conversation with people in the “tourist” and “observer” categories than the other categories. Among the “parishioners” and “fellow travelers” life-affirming motifs dominated, and meaning, for them, is found through an even-tempered, if not to say joyful, attitude to events. Neal Krause came to similar conclusions having found in empirical data a direct and persistent relationship between imbuing one’s path in life with meaning, the strengthening of a religious understanding of one’s personal calling, and regularity in attending church services (Krause 2003: 160–70). Because religion is perhaps the weightiest area of human existence, endowing the latter with meaning (Clark 1958: 419), the search for meaning, and not an escape from reality, becomes the dominating factor in turning to God. In other words, above all faith provides people with a chance at life; it corresponds with an understanding of and sense of meaning behind what is occurring and does not merely serve as a surrogate for worldly losses. It is practically impossible to come to such an understanding of faith in isolation. Krause shows how the church community provides the parishioner with both spiritual and emotional support. The first is based on religious doctrine, the second on universal human values — empathy, care, love and trust (Krause 2008: 397–98). It is precisely the combination of the spiritual and the emotional that explains the vivid contrast between the attitudes of believers and those who are merely curious about faith.

The typology constructed here allows us to assign the elderly generation to a specific territory with regard to factors that are significant to confessional identification. If one were to speak of the realization of a key goal set by the 2011 Bishops’ Council, the revitalization of parish life, then approaching different categories of the population for social and marketing purposes becomes sensible. It allow for the identification of target groups and for a more efficient delegation of efforts in spreading Christian teachings. The typology of religious identity presented here (Figure 2) can be easily broken down into a linear scale showing the religious journey from complete unbelief, lexically referred to as “outsiders,” to becoming churchd, which leads to the behavior of “parishioners” (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Indices of Religious Indifference and Religious Mobility**

The portion of “outsiders” in a given territory can be interpreted as the “index of religious indifference”, or lack of faith. This is the part of the population which is, as yet, impermeable to the direct influence of religious instruction. The index defines the detachment of the community being investigated from religious practice. At the same time, the total share of “parishioners” and “fellow travelers” (the most consistent and active part of the church parish) we interpret as the “index of religious mobility,” indicating genuine movement toward faith. In the Ivanovo Oblast, the index of religious indifference for people over fifty years old is 18%, and the index of religious mobility is 55% (figure 3). Grace Davie, relying on the work of Georg Simmel, emphasizes the individualization and segmentation of modern life, the departure from collective forms of worship, and the search for personal ways of connecting with the sacred (Davie 2007: 31). In our classification, these are the groups described as “tourists” and “observers.” We will note here that these groups are quite small and thus do not compel us to speak of the disintegration of collective forms of worship. On the contrary, it is obvious that there is a significant shift in the direction of religiosity among the oblast’s older generation, which points to the strong position and productive activity of the Church. If one examines the values of the indices in the Archdiocese in cross-section, their homogeneous distribution ( $\chi^2 = 23.508$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p < 0.024$ ) becomes noticeable. In other words, the Ivanovo Archdiocese, in the religious identity of the older generation, represents a largely homogeneous socio-territorial community (Table 2).

**Table 2: Distribution of Answers on the Index of One's Religious Journey in the Dioceses of the Ivanovo Archdiocese, % by line**

Dioceses of the Ivanovo Archdiocese	Typology of the roads to faith					Indices	
	Parishioners	Fellow Travelers	Observers	Tourists	Outsiders	Religious Mobility	Religious Indifference
City of Ivanovo	6	47	<b>17</b>	6	<b>24</b>	53	24
Ivano-Vosnesenskaya and Vichuga w/o the city of Ivanovo	4	52	22	4	18	56	18
Shuya and Teikovo	8	50	22	6	14	58	14
Kineshema and Palekh	8	47	<b>27</b>	5	<b>13</b>	55	13
Average	6	49	21	5	18	55	18

Marginal differences (statistically insignificant) are noticeable only among the numbers of “observers” and “outsiders” in the city Ivanovo and in the Kineshema and Palekh Diocese, respectively. In Ivanovo a greater number of “outsiders” stands out — 24% versus 18% in the average of the sample. In the Kineshema and Palekh Diocese observers represent 27% of the population versus the overall average of 21% (Table 2). The index of religious mobility in these territories is practically indistinguishable.

Based on the hints of variation indicated above, one could surmise that the urban population differs significantly from the rural population in matters of faith. However, in our sample we did not discover any direct relationship between the type of inhabited locality and religious identity ( $\chi^2 = 8.212$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < 0.413$ ). Moreover, no correlation has been established with such a variable on any question concerning socio-demographic or behavioral characteristics.

Only in relation to gender and use of the internet are there some insignificant correlations: men take the position of observers more often than women, to the detriment of the position of fellow travelers

( $\chi^2 = 12.255$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.016$ ); among those who use the internet daily, the number of outsiders is greater than among those who never use the internet ( $\chi^2 = 35.142$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p < 0.004$ ). In conducting a quantitative content analysis on discussion topics among the elderly in online communities, Galit Nimrod discovered that questions of faith and religious practice occupy only one thirteenth of the most discussed topics, which include: enjoyment of life, rest and recreation, family, health, work and education, and financial issues (Nimrod 2010: 382–92). It is possible that the intensification of secular interaction, which is uncharacteristic for those advanced in years, leads to a disinclination toward purely religious ponderings.

In relation to the other variables we do not see even a hint of any kind of statistical dependence: whether concerning age groups ( $\chi^2 = 10.306$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p < 0.850$ ), assessment of one's financial situation ( $\chi^2 = 20.683$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p < 0.055$ ), education ( $\chi^2 = 10.571$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p < 0.835$ ), engagement in physical exercise ( $\chi^2 = 3.765$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.439$ ), assessment of one's health ( $\chi^2 = 8.806$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p < 0.719$ ), willingness to take a job involving physical labor ( $\chi^2 = 4.497$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < 0.810$ ), attitude toward local government ( $\chi^2 = 4.004$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < 0.857$ ), appraisal of the standard of living in the Oblast ( $\chi^2 = 9.087$ ,  $df = 20$ ,  $p < 0.982$ ), etc. In studies undertaken outside Russia the lack of a connection between religious precepts or practices and certain socio-demographic or behavioral variables has been regularly recorded (June, et al. 2009; Moreira-Almeida, et al. 2010). However, we have yet to see a study exhibiting thoroughly sustained and consistent independence among such characteristics.

## Conclusion

From here we can formulate a fairly radical contention, from the standpoint of secular consciousness: religious identity in the Ivanovo Archdiocese does not depend on the external characteristics and particularities of secular behavior. Within the framework of the questions touched upon in this study, the path from complete unbelief to becoming churchied in the thinking and practices of the elderly generation is conditioned exclusively by the spiritual efforts of the parishioner. It would seem that what is a banal truth to an Orthodox believer has been confirmed by statistical data, which in itself is surprising. Usually, it is not so difficult to discover manifold correlations, from the entirely plausible to the quite extravagant. In academic journals one finds literally hundreds of scholarly articles on how elderly people's health, social well-being,

physical condition, and sexual behavior depend on their involvement in religious practice (Idler, et al. 2003: 327–65; Krause 2003: 160–70; Levin, et al. 2006: 1168–69; Levin, et. al. 2011: 389–406; Levin and Chatters 2008: 153–72; Mystakidou, et al. 2008: 1779–85; Idler, et al. 2009: 528–37; Moxey, et al. 2011: 82–88; McFarland, et al. 2011: 297–308; Stang, et al. 2012: 101–08). However, the variable of religious identity we have constructed uncovers an enviable stability and immunity from all materially conditioned factors included in the questionnaire. How persistent is this “anti-sociological” conclusion concerning the path to faith’s independence from secular life? Where are the limits of such a generalization? Can one transfer it to the elderly generation of the whole of Russian society, or must one speak only of the Ivanovo Oblast? Have we discovered a characteristic unique to Orthodoxy or can we transfer such assertions, with some adjustments, to other religions? How much does the advanced age of those surveyed influence the practice of becoming churchd? How much do age-based cohorts of the population of Russia differ in the typology of religious identity, if at all? All of these questions are for subsequent research, comparisons, and scholarly articles.

## Appendix

### Key to transcription symbols for registering conversational speech\*

Symbol	Description
(o.o)	Numbers in parentheses indicate pauses between statements (in seconds)
()	The speech fragment is unclear and cannot be transcribed
(.)	Symbol for a short interval between statements (tenths of a second)
( )	A comment of the author, not part of the statement
(words)	Doubt as to the correctness of the transcribed excerpt
[]	Overlapping of statements
(xx)	Laughter, smile in the voice

Symbol	Description
.xx	Inhalation
xx.	Exhalation
Wo (xx) rd	The word is pronounced with laughter or a smile in the voice
=	There is no pause in the statement at all
word —	Interrupted word
.,?! :	Symbols representing intonation: concluding, listing, interrogative and exclamatory
:	Stretching out of the letter; the number of symbols approximately indicates the length of the stretching
<u>word</u>	An underlined letter indicates intonation stress on that letter
WORD	The word is pronounced very loudly, a shout
<u>word</u>	The word is energetically emphasized and said a little louder than usual
°word°	The statement is pronounced noticeably quieter than usual
↑↓	Rising and lowering of intonation
→	Direction toward an element of the transcription described in the text
word'	A “swallowed” word or part of a word, colloquial variation
<...>	The part of text following between the statements is omitted
<> ><	Slowing of speech; acceleration of speech

\* Composed in accordance with the basic fundamental rules of transcription for conversation analysis (Sacks, et al. 1974: 731, 734; Hutchby and Wooffitt 2001: vi-vii).

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ALEXEY BEGLOV

## The Practice of Taking Communion Among Orthodox Parishioners in the Soviet Era

*Translation by Elena Pedigo Clark*

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*This article uses the methods of historical anthropology to look at the evolution of practices associated with the Eucharist in the Russian Orthodox Church during the Soviet era. Beglov shows that during the Soviet period the frequency of individual communion increased by 5–10 times in comparison with the pre-revolutionary period, when most Orthodox Christians took communion no more than once a year. This evolution can be accounted for by exploring three processes associated with the rise of the USSR: 1) an “emancipation” of the ritual from functions related to state control; 2) the believers’ sense of existential fragility and insecurity under the new Soviet regime, which allowed for the same relaxation of pre-communion requirements that is permissible in the case of possibly imminent death; and 3) the blurring of the boundaries between the more intensive monastic practice and the ordinary lay practice that developed under the old regime.*

**Keywords:** religious practices, history of everyday life, historical anthropology, the Russian Orthodox Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, practice of Holy Communion, normative texts and practices, monasticism.

THE significance of communion is difficult to overestimate — it is the central sacrament of the Orthodox Church. But communion as a practice can display considerable variety in its historical manifestations and undergo significant changes in comparatively short

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spans of time. A key case in point is the frequency of communion considered appropriate by the laity of a particular community.<sup>1</sup> During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the practice under consideration here experienced two revolutions in this respect. Or, if it may be so expressed, two *Eucharistic transitions*: from the Synodal period to the Soviet (during the entire Soviet period the frequency with which Orthodox parishioners took communion grew by approximately five to ten times), and then to the post-Soviet period (it increased by another four to five times in the 1990s). In this article we will attempt to understand which factors brought about the first Eucharistic transition and single out several methodological points that would seem to be important for the study of the practice of communion and of religious practices in general.

Research into the practice of communion presents us with an unexpected problem with source material. Despite its significance for the Orthodox believer, taking communion is a silent practice, about which people rarely speak and which they even more rarely document in writing. Believers acquire the regularity with which they take communion from context and from custom, which is far from always substantiated and even more rarely interpreted. A custom is good because it is accepted — so it seems to its bearers — by all, and has always existed. Interestingly, believers in the 1970s, by their own admission, experienced surprise, or even shock, when they realized how much their own practice of communion differed from what was customary before the revolution (Interview with Shchipkov 2012). But for the researcher this creates additional difficulties, since the custom is rarely articulated. It leaves its traces as it were by happenstance and in passing, mostly in private sources such as diaries, letters, and memoirs. In the course of this investigation I will give paramount attention to these sources. Other major sources for this research were interviews, primarily with parishioners of well-known Moscow churches, about the situation with communion that existed in their communities in the 1970s and 1980s. These interviews comprise an important supplementary source for the research presented here. The state of the research into the available sources permits only a preliminary approach to this topic. One could speak more decisively

1. The practice of taking communion is accompanied by a whole complex of related practices. All together they can be called *Eucharistic practices* — the presence or absence of pre-communion confession; a Eucharistic fast and the practice of conjugal abstinence in connection with communion; pre- and post-communion prayers and church services that should be attended in connection with communion; the layperson's prayers during the Liturgy, and so on.

about the evolution of practice with a more thorough inventory of the material; however, I will attempt to outline the basic tendencies of this evolution.

In this I will concentrate on reviewing the practice only within the USSR. Among various groups in emigration that were genetically related to the Russian Church tradition, the practice of communion acquired its own particularities, but until the end of the Soviet period, it presumably could not influence the evolution of the practice in the USSR in any vital way. I will note some exceptions to this rule in this article.

On the other hand, the example of communion gives us the opportunity to examine a problem that is important for the study of religious practices in general, namely the problem of the relationship between a practice and the text that describes it (Panchenko 2000: 14–25). Usually the text (whether folkloric or normative) defines the practice, provides it with a rationale. But in the case of the practice of communion, we find ourselves in a more complex, more dynamic situation. Studying the practice of communion reveals the most unexpected variations in the mutual relationship between real practices and the texts that normalize them, and is therefore particularly interesting from a methodological perspective.

The fact is that in the Eastern Christian tradition (strangely enough) there is no foundational text as such that clearly and unambiguously regulates the frequency of taking communion. Well-known texts, including canonical ones, describe the practice of a particular time, or express a desire to change it, or create an ideal and then compare it with the existing practice, indicating that the real practice differed greatly even from the generally recognized ideal.

One of the most well known texts on this account is the 89<sup>th</sup> (93<sup>rd</sup>) canonical letter of Saint Basil the Great “To the Patrician Caesaria, on Taking the Sacrament.”

It is good and most wholesome every day to take the sacrament and to take the Holy Body and the Blood of Christ (...). Incidentally, [we] take the sacrament four times a sennight: on the Lord’s day, on Wednesday, on Friday, and on Saturday, also on other days, if there is the commemoration of some saint.

We note the structure of this pronouncement: St. Basil the Great initially speaks about an ideal, norm (“it is good to take communion every day”), and then speaks about the accepted practice of Caesaria’s

church, which differs from this ideal (“four times a week”). We should remember the structure of this pronouncement on taking communion. We will also encounter it in Russian material, in particular with Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov). It turns out that readers were allowed to decide for themselves whether they would bring their practice to correspond with the ideal that was put down in these pronouncements. Other well-known texts formulate a necessary minimum for the regular taking of communion: at least once every three weeks; at least four times a year; at least once a year (*Prava i obiazannosti blagochinnogo prikhodskikh tserkvei* 1900: 1). However, the practice could deviate significantly from these injunctions and even their very appearance most likely testifies to the fact that the “lower limit” prescribed by these texts was regularly violated.

Thus, communion and the frequency with which it is taken — notwithstanding all its significance — is a surprisingly “free” practice, regulated by the canonical injunctions of the Eastern Christian Church to the smallest degree. Furthermore, communion can by no means be regarded as a monolithic practice in all historical periods. If in the canonical decrees of the ecumenical and significant local councils of the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries the various Church groups — the bishops, the clergy, and the laity — were charged with the same requirements regarding their participation in the Sacrament,<sup>2</sup> by the time there was a Russian state, both in the medieval and the Synodal periods, no one would have even contemplated applying the same requirements and criteria to a priest, a layperson, and a monk. What could be called *different variants* of the practice of communion were formed, which could differ from each other significantly. First of all, the regular practice of taking communion and the practice of taking communion before death diverged greatly. Secondly, the practices of communion differed between the clergy, monastics and the laity. Thirdly, the practices of communion differed between the higher and lower social strata. The Synodal period provides us with examples of appreciable differentiation between these variants of communion practice. People might not take communion for years, but during an illness would take communion every six weeks; priests could take communion once a week, monks once a month, but laypeople only once a year;

2. See the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> canons of the holy apostles; the 66<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> canons of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council; the 11<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Sardica; the 2nd canon of the Council of Antioch.

townspeople and members of the nobility could take communion twice a year, but peasants only once every few years.

Moreover, the believers of the Russian Empire were well-informed of the existence of different variants of communion practice: laypeople knew very well how often their parish priests took communion, and pilgrims were acquainted with the practice of taking communion in monasteries. Attitudes toward such differentiation within a single communion practice fell into two broad patterns. On the one hand, this differentiation could be understood as the norm, as what separates and what should separate a priest and a monk from a layperson (Makarova 2001). It seems that such a perception testifies to the presence of a deep consciousness of social position, in which more or less intimate contact with the sacred is perceived as a sort of social marker. On the other hand, all groups or some particular group could strive to overcome this divergence by taking the rhythm of priestly or monastic communion as an example. It seems that it is precisely this that we encounter with the example of Fr. John of Kronstadt, whose priestly communion practice was perceived as an example toward which everyone should strive precisely in its frequency. In any case, the existence of such different variants within a single practice was already creating tension between them and, consequently, the conditions for the practice's evolution.

### **Synodal Texts and Practices**

In order to understand the changes that took place in the Soviet era, we must pause on the situation of the Synodal period, inasmuch as it is the jumping-off point for the evolution of communion practices in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A feature of the Synodal period is the rather substantial attention afforded to the question of the frequency of communion in government legislation. The standard given by the Spiritual Regulation (of 1721), prescribing to laypeople mandatory yearly confession and communion, is well-known:

Every Christian must frequently, at least once a year, take the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. (...) Therefore, if that Christian shows that he has withdrawn from the Holy Communion, he thereby shows that he is not in the body of Christ, that is, he is not a member of the Church, but a schismatic. And this will be the best sign for recognizing him as a schismatic. Therefore, it befits bishops to watch assiduously and to command that the parish priests report (*donosili*) every year, who from

among their parishioners has not taken communion in the past year, who has not in the past two years, and who never has (PSZ (1), Vol. 6 1830: No. 3718).

The legislation of Peter I repeated the injunctions of Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich on the obligations of at least yearly communion (PSZ (1), Vol. 1 1830: No. 47; AAE Vol. 4 1836: No. 115; PSZ (1) Vol. 1 1830: No. 570),<sup>3</sup> but beyond that (and that was its important distinction), it burdened church practice with the functions of state control, inasmuch as participation in the sacraments was supposed to separate the Orthodox from the Old Believers. Taking communion became a kind of yearly repeated investigatory experiment in the exposure of supposedly undercover Old Believers.

The Statutes (*ustav*) on the Ecclesiastical Consistories of 1841 and 1883 (articles 15 and 17) reiterated the standard of the Spiritual Regulation and laid upon the diocesan authorities the obligation to keep track of the yearly execution by the laity of their “Christian duty” of confession and communion. Not taking communion over the course of two to three years was classified by the Statutes as grounds for reporting such a case to a church hierarch, and then to the “civil authorities” (PSZ (2), Vol. 16, Division 1, March 27, 1841, No. 14 409; PSZ (3), Vol. 3, April 9, 1883, No. 1495). Yearly communion was therefore considered here as important evidence of the trustworthiness of the subjects of the Russian Empire.

The Church legislation of the time looked on the matter somewhat differently. Metropolitan Platon (Levshin), in his instructions to his archpriests from 1775 (reprinted with corrections in 1858), ordered the latter to see that the families of the clergy were taking communion at every fast, that is, four times a year; moreover, the archpriest should call the parishioners to the same standard.

The archpriest should take care that all the clergymen and church servitors, and their wives and children, along with the junior servitors and their families, and all the supernumeraries, yearly, and not only during Lent, but also as possible during all the other fasts, confess and take the Holy Sacrament (*Prava i obiazannosti blagochinnogo prikhodskikh tserkvei*: 9).

3. The laws are from October 25, 1650, March 10, 1660, and March 1, 1674, respectively (dates according to the Old Style calendar). I thank E. V. Beliakova for the third reference.

An archpriest visiting his churches should exhort the parishioners to confess and take of the Holy Sacrament during all four fasts, in accordance with their Christian duty, and to come to God's temple, especially on Sundays and feast days, leaving behind their labors, and to live honestly, in accordance with the Gospel commandments (*Prava i obiazannosti blagochinnogo prikhodskikh tserkvei*: 46).

Thus taking communion four times a year was formulated as an ideal not only for the family members of the clergy, that is, not only for the ecclesiastical order, but also for all laypeople. Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) raised the bar still higher in his famous Catechism:

The ancient Christians took communion every Sunday;<sup>4</sup> but among current Christians, few have such purity of life that they are always prepared to take part in so great a sacrament. With a maternal voice, the Church calls those who are zealous for a devout life to confess before their spiritual fathers and partake of the Body and Blood of Christ four times a year or every month, and calls all to take communion once a year without fail (*Prostrannyi pravoslavnyi katekhizis Pravoslavnoi Kafolicheskoi Vostochnoi Tserkvi* 2006. Ch. 1, § 340).

Was the Moscow Metropolitan calling Orthodox laypeople to take communion frequently or rarely (in comparison with the practices of the time)? As we will see below, in this respect he was 100 years ahead of his time. The recommendation to take communion during every fast and even more often in the context of the Synodal period was a recommendation to increase the frequency of taking communion, that is, it did not reflect the tendency of the period toward yearly communion. We can arrive at this understanding by juxtaposing this text with contemporary practice.

In fact, the legislation of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries prescribed more frequent communion than was apparently accepted in the Russian Church practice of the previous period. Prior to Peter I, the laity — as can be inferred from the edicts of Aleksey Mikhailovich — took communion very rarely, possibly only once during their lifetimes, before death. The

4. This remark of Metropolitan Filaret is not in accordance with the text by Basil the Great, cited above. In all likelihood, the idea that the ancient Christians took communion every Sunday is an interpretation of the 80<sup>th</sup> canon of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council, which prescribes the excommunication of a layperson (and the expulsion of a clergyman from the clergy) who has not come to church and has not taken communion in the course of three Sundays without a valid reason.



new prescribed practice of more frequent communion was strictly regulated in secular legislation and was subordinated to the needs of the state and placed in the service of state interests. The outcome was the *enservment of the Sacrament* by the government. Simultaneously, appeals and even injunctions from prominent hierarchs regarding the frequency of communion did not have as significant an influence on the practice of their congregations as the edicts of the civil powers.

The real practice of the Synodal era was closer to the government legislation than to the appeals of the hierarchs, and in certain classes of society, above all among the peasants, the practice of even less frequent communion that was characteristic of the pre-Petrine era continued.<sup>5</sup> “They fasted twice a year,” says Pushkin of the Larin family (*Evgenii Onegin*, ch. II, stanza XXV), underscoring their patriarchal and traditionally pious lifestyle. Sixty years later the father of another writer would set down the same tendency in his diary. In seven years of living in Melekhovo, Pavel Egorovich Chekhov took communion nine times. In three of those years he took communion once (1892, 1897, 1898). In another three of those years he took communion twice (1894-1896). And one year (1893) he apparently did not take communion at all.<sup>6</sup> His communion took place either before Christmas, usually on Christmas Eve, or during Lent — during the first week (once), on Lazarus Saturday (once), and most frequently of all on Maundy Thursday (three times) (*Melikhovskii letopisets* 1995: 42, 78, 98, 104, 128, 135, 168, 180, 225). Here we must keep in mind that Pavel Egorovich was distinguished by a particular, even if somewhat affected, piety, and that his practice of receiving communion was the practice of an emphatically pious layperson.

The peasantry (who made up the considerable majority of the Russian population) had a somewhat different attitude toward the frequency of communion. In a recent article, ethnographer Veronika Makarova has shown that yearly communion was combined with the presence among the peasantry of those who were called “*nedaroimtsy*,” that is, those who did not participate in the Sacrament due to

5. It seems that the fixation in the Spiritual Regulation on the necessity of at least yearly communion led to a certain perversion: yearly communion began to be perceived in everyday consciousness as necessary and sufficient both in the secular and in the church-liturgical sphere. Taking communion more frequently was possible, but not obligatory, and therefore in the majority of cases not necessary.
6. It is possible that he simply did not record it in his diary, since he was in Moscow for Christmas (*Melikhovskii letopisets*: 73), but that is unlikely considering the scrupulousness with which he kept his “chronicle.”



their notion of the necessity of observing a particular — one might say ritual — *purity* after communion.<sup>7</sup> At the same time within the peasant milieu a large significance was placed on communion prior to death (Makarova 2011). Beyond that, in the opinion of the peasants, communion was “good” for 40 days, or six weeks; consequently, taking communion more frequently than that was considered blasphemy.<sup>8</sup> Thus, among the peasantry the practice of very infrequent communion that existed in pre-Petrine Rus’ was partially preserved.

However, “*nedaroimstvo*” (the practice of the *nedaroimtsy*) was not only a rural phenomenon.<sup>9</sup> In 1883 the Perm-based Society of St. Stephen of Perm made the special decision to draw up and publish for dissemination among the parishioners a “short and strong article against those who have not fasted for a long time.” The chairman of the society, Archpriest Evgenii Popov, substantiated the need to write such an article, saying:

I know very well through my services as a parish priest in many parishes and by my position as an archpriest in two districts that one *meets everywhere* among the Orthodox those who have not fasted for *five or ten years* (RGIA f. 1574, op. 2, d. 263, l. 1, 3. Emphasis my own. — A. B.).

This article was in fact drawn up. Moreover, it related and criticized the motives guiding those who refrained from the Sacrament. They made their case using the traditional reasoning of the *nedaroimtsy*:

7. Although the translator has judiciously chosen not to translate a word with no English equivalent and that consists of a combination of roots that does not lend itself to translation, “*nedaroimtsy*” might be roughly rendered in English as something like “those who do not receive the gifts,” and the abstract noun form, “*nedaroimstvo*,” as something like “not-receiving-the-gifts-ism.” — The editors.
8. A wide spectrum of post-communion restrictions existed in traditional peasant culture. Thus, “people who have taken the Sacrament should avoid conjugal relations, abusive language, arguments, strong drink, cursing, overindulgence in food, oversleeping, and excessive physical labor” (Makarova 2011). Observing these prohibitions was easier during Lent; therefore, as Makarova shows, in Rus’ the practice of taking communion at the beginning of Lent was already coming into being by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. We note that Pavel Chekhov took communion not only at the beginning, but also at the end of Lent, meaning that the peasant conception of the “period of validity” of communion was already irrelevant to him.
9. Due to the absence of definite data for the earlier period it is still difficult to say whether peasant conceptions and practices had extended to the urban classes by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of migration from the village to the town, or whether the “*nedaroimtsy*” had always existed among the townspeople just as they had among the peasantry.

And so you philosophize as you will—you judge that it is enough to take communion in a few years! You consider it excessive zealotry to receive Holy Communion during all four fasts of the year and even more so to do so outside of the fasts. You repeat after others like you, without any clear inner consciousness: “I am unworthy, I cannot be so strict” (...). On these pretexts some do not partake of Christ’s supper at all, as if they are more reverent toward it, as if they understand the importance of it better than all others, better even than the Church, which however allows you to partake of it after it has tested your spiritual state at confession (RGIA f. 1574, op. 2, d. 263, l. 4 ob. See also l. 5).

It is interesting that these priests from Perm considered it possible to call their parishioners not only to yearly communion, but to communion four times a year (RGIA f. 1574, op. 2, d. 263, l. 1 ob., 4 ob., 6), clearly relying on the *Instruction to Archpriests* and the *Catechism* of Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov).

Thus, the Synodal situation, which was the jumping-off point for the development of the practice in the Soviet period, was characterized by the following features:

- The enserfment of the Sacrament on the part of the government.
- The differentiation of the Sacrament among different church groups (the laity, priests and monastics) and different social groups (in particular, among peasants and non-peasants).
- For the majority of laypeople a yearly or sometimes even more infrequent communion (as among the *nedaroimtsy*) was the general rule. Yearly communion was to some extent also the norm, as we shall see below, in the early Soviet period.

### **The Early Soviet Period: The “Emancipation” of the Practice of Communion**

The year 1917 brought the practice of communion first and foremost emancipation, liberation from the control functions ascribed to it by the government. Nadieszda Kizenko speaks of an analogous process with respect to the sacrament of confession (Kizenko 2012). The sacraments once again began to be perceived for themselves, and not as an attestation of loyalty to the regime. For some this meant a refusal to partake of the Sacrament. For some this made a reexamination of its frequency possible if not essential.

*The extremity (predel’nost’) of believers’ existence during the Soviet era.* Another circumstance made more frequent communion

truly necessary. Believers in Soviet Russia found themselves facing persecution and death, from hunger or from punitive actions. This extremity of their existence became a reason for more frequent communion, and beyond that for a relaxation of the requirements of preparation for the Sacrament.

Archpriest Georgy Shavel'sky testifies to what he had to witness in the two capitals at the end of 1917 and in 1918:

The persecution, with torture and constant sudden arrests and executions of believers, intensified the religious feelings of the latter to the highest degree; special all-night church services were required, during which each of those present would strive to make a confession of their sins and to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, in order to be cleansed and strengthened when meeting the coming day, in which torture and death could be awaiting them. In view of the multitude of those desiring this there could be no talk of private confession (Shavel'skii 1996: 605).

Testimonies exist to the fact that during the famine of 1921–22 Fr. Alexy Mechev gave communion to his parishioners at every liturgy at which they could be present.<sup>10</sup> Archpriest Boris Nikolaev describes a mass communion during the Pskov “purge” of politically unreliable elements in April 1935:

[T]he people came pouring in in waves: in those days mass deportations were being carried out, and everyone rushed to prepare for communion before setting off forever for distant lands. On the Feast of the Annunciation communed 800 people, and on Palm Sunday 1100 (Komarov 2008: 179).<sup>11</sup>

As we can see, the extremity of the existence of believers in Soviet Russia was one of the main factors influencing the increase in the frequency of communion. Here, it was as if the function of the regular practice merged with that of the pre-death “valediction.” People were

10. This was mentioned in a personal conversation with the well-known spiritual writer Archimandrite Sofronii (Sakharov; 1896–1993), the brother of whom, N.S. Sakharov, was an active member of the Mechev community (Report by S.V. Chapnin, 1992). Also compare the practice of daily communion existing in this community (Mechev 1997: 342–43, 350). See especially, Mechev 1997: 389 on communion in the famine years without a special fast, since “fasting was involuntary”.
11. In 1937, in Pskov, there were 55,184 inhabitants; that is, on Palm Sunday in 1935 approximately 2% of the population received communion in a single church. See: Poliakov, Zhiromskaia et al. 2007: 68.

preparing for death, and so the question of the necessary preparation receded into the background, the regularity increased, given that someone in deadly danger could be given communion every day. But there is also another point to consider.

*The further erosion of the borders between the practices of communion of various social groups (soslovii) in the Church.* In the post-revolutionary period the borders between the practices of communion among the laity, the priesthood, and the monastic orders were intensively eroding. We can see this new tendency in communing the laity emerging already in the practice of Fr. John of Kronstadt. As Nadieszda Kizenko has shown, his understanding of participation in the Eucharist as the most important condition for salvation and the practice of infrequent lay communion associated with the Synodal period aroused in the Kronstadt pastor a sharp sense of discrepancy. He was pained by the inconsistency in the practice of communion between a priest and a layperson, and he wanted to overcome this inconsistency (Kizenko 2006). Hence the appeal to his parishioners to take communion more frequently. Thus, in the practice of the Kronstadt pastor the “erosion” of the border between the communion practices of the clergy and the common people occurred. At the foundation of his activity in this regard lay the view, revolutionary for the Synodal mentality, that all groups in the Church could and should take communion identically, and that access to communion was not a marker of social status. The common people’s acknowledgement of Fr. John’s holiness legitimized this view in the eyes of the priesthood and the believers.

But at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries such a view was more the exception than the rule, the audacity of a single charismatic pastor. After the revolution the erosion of the borders between different versions of practice started to proceed much more intensively, the more so since it had already been sanctified by the authority of Fr. John.

It seems that the *convergence of the practices of communion between the laity and monastics* took place especially intensively in the Soviet period. Let us examine one particularly eloquent example. As is known, the persecution of the monasteries on the part of the Soviet authorities led practically to their complete closure on the territory of the USSR by the end of the 1920s. But this did not mean the disappearance of monasticism, which went out into the secular world while retaining monastic vows. As a consequence of this, contact

was stimulated between monks and laypeople, who very often turned out to be united within the framework of a single religious community.

Thus, in 1923 several spiritual fathers of the then well known Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God and St. Zosima (Sviato-Smolenskaia Zosimova) Hermitage moved to Moscow, to the Vysokopetrovsky Monastery (the only open church functioning as a parish church), where a large community formed around them. In the Zosimova Hermitage the following practice of communion was the norm: the novices and the monks who had been tonsured as rassophores took communion once a month, fulfilling the call of Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) to the “zealous”; those who had been tonsured as stavrophores — two or three times a month; those who had been tonsured into the Great Schema — every day or several times a week (moreover, the Zosimovites strove to take communion in the same way in prison). With the arrival of the Zosimovites at the Moscow parish church, the practice of taking communion every month, customary in the hermitage among novices and rassophore monks, gradually also spread among the laypeople, who were the spiritual children of these elders. The monastic tradition was literally carried into the secular world (The Nun Ignatii 2001: 187, 323–24, 389; Arsenii (Zhadanovskii) 1995: 86, 91–92, 94–95).

The experience of the confessors of the former Zosimova Hermitage held particular significance both on the strength of their high authority and on the strength of the fact that their spiritual children — both those who were tonsured and those who were married — later took holy orders and became well known pastors themselves. For example, Archpriest Vladimir Smirnov, the spiritual son of schema-Archimandrite Ignaty (Lebedev), the abbot of the Vysokopetrovsky Monastery, was a priest in such a well-known center of post-war Moscow ecclesiastical life as the Church of Elijah the Prophet on Obydensky Alley (“Gore imeim serdtsa” 2004).

Thus the frequency of communion in the 1920s was marked by considerable variation. On the one hand, those who were not active parishioners were required as before to undergo at minimum yearly preparation for communion. The Pskov archpriest Boris Nikolaev recollected the recommendations the parish priest gave his mother, who had not taken communion (and perhaps had not been in church at all) in the course of seven years, during Lent of 1922: “At confession the priest prescribed her several prostrations and took her word to fast and take communion *yearly*” (Komarov 2008: 140. Emphasis

my own. — A. B.).<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, in the community of Fr. Alexy Mechev frequent, sometimes daily, communion was practiced (Mechev 1997: 342–3, 350, 389). Several enthusiasts of the Renovationist movement, such as Fr. Alexander Evert, also of Pskov, followed a similar pattern. At the end of the 1920s he gave communion to his parishioners at every service; that is, on Sundays and holidays after a general confession (Komarov 2008: 161).<sup>13</sup> However, both the pastors of the Patriarchal Church and those among the Renovationists represented only a small part of communion practice.<sup>14</sup> The practice of the majority was located somewhere in the middle. During Lent of 1926, the young Boris Nikolaev took communion *three times* in the Patriarchal Church: during the first week, during the fourth, and during Holy Week (Komarov 2008: 147). We encounter the same practice of triple communion during Lent (with a difference in the nuances) later, in the 1970s and 1980s in the circle of Fr. Dmitry Dudko (Interview with Shchipkov 2012). This was no longer the practice of a single communion at the end of a fast, as with Pavel Egorovich Chekhov, nor the peasant approach, according to which it was necessary to “keep” the communion over the course of 40 days, which meant that it made sense to take communion at the beginning of Lent. The situation had changed perceptibly.

### **The Post-War Period: Stabilization of Practice**

After the war, the period of “turbulence” in communion practice ended. The extremes were smoothed out, but in comparison with the pre-revolutionary era we observe a noticeable increase in the frequency of communion: we hear more and more often about monthly or nearly monthly communion as the normal practice.

For example, Natalia Nikolaevna Sokolova, daughter of the well-known Church samizdat author N. E. Pestov, who was a schoolgirl in the 1940s and 1950s, took communion “about five or six times a

12. A similar practice in regard to this category of parishioner was preserved in the provinces in the post-war period as well (*Pravdoliubov* 2007).

13. “Confession was by the book” is what the memoirist says about the community; i.e., sins were enumerated according to a list from a publication or handwritten collection.

14. Memoirs have brought to us voices of the Moscow clergy who harshly denounced Fr. Alexy Mechev for his practice of communion. The future archpriest Boris Nikolaev speaks of the practice of Fr. Alexander Evert as an innovation in the Pskov of the time (Mechev 1997: 342; Komarov 2008: 161). Compare the wary attitude of the Renovationist leaders to the liturgical novelties of Fr. Vasily Adamenko (Damaskin 1992: 205).

year,” i.e., about *every two months* (Sokolova 1999: 37). Her husband, Fr. Vladimir Sokolov, communed his parishioners *monthly* in the 1970s (Interview with Beliakova 2011). The parishioners who joined the circle of Fr. Dmitry Dudko (and who lived moreover in various cities, not only Moscow) would take communion up to 10 times a year during the same period, and also in the 1980s. In the words of one of them, they took communion “*not every month, but gravitating toward once a month*” (Interview with Shchipkov 2012. Emphasis my own. — A. B.). At the same time, as previously noted, it was typical in Fr. Dmitry’s circle to take communion three times during the month and a half period of Lent: during the first week, the Week of the Adoration of the Cross (third week), and Holy Week. Analogously, the parishioners of the Church of Elijah the Prophet on Obydensky Alley took communion slightly less often than once a month (Interview with Kaleda 2011).<sup>15</sup>

The practice of taking communion in the parish of Fr. Dmitry Dudko was distinguished by its peculiarities. The fact is that after the priest’s banishment from Moscow, during his service in the village of Grebnevo, a significant portion of his congregation was made up of people from out of town who would visit their mentor with varying degrees of frequency. In addition, it was the custom for them to confess and take communion during every visit. Correspondingly, the regularity of their communion could vary: those who came once a month took communion once a month, while those who came more often would also take the Sacrament more often (Interview with Shchipkov 2012).

Fr. Alexander Men prescribed the frequency of his parishioners’ communion very individually. However, he also required that communion take place *no less than once a month* (Interview with Zhurinskaia 2011).

In the town of Kasimov (located in a remote corner of Ryazan Oblast) in the 1960s through the 1980s there existed a practice which, on the one hand, noticeably differed from that of the pre-revolutionary era (here they took communion five times a year instead of once), but, on the other hand, preserved the features of the traditional peasant conception of the “period of validity” of communion over the course of six weeks:

15. It is interesting that in the opinion of the Obydensky parishioners, the majority of Orthodox believers at that time took communion four times a year. (This corresponded partly, but only partly, with reality, as we will see in the example of Kasimov.) That is, the Obydensky practice was perceived by its participants as frequent communion.



In our places diligent Christians took communion every fast, twice during Lent, in the first week and Holy Week. The elderly and ill among them took the priest's blessing "not to end up outside of the six weeks," that is, to take communion every forty days. Naturally, communion was prepared for by a week of purification, including the fast (which intensified it); attendance at all church services (according to ability, of course); the reading of the Holy Writ and the works of the holy fathers, which helped try one's conscience; and as the conclusion — confession and the rule. Leniency was given to those who had not taken communion for a long time. They were told that they needed to take communion at least once a year (*Pravdoliubov* 2007).

According to the memoirs of the same priest, the authoritative monastic mentors, the spiritual fathers of the Glinsk Hermitage and the Pskov-Caves Monastery, recommended that laypeople take communion once a month and once every two weeks, respectively (*Pravdoliubov* 2007). It is worth noting that such a recommendation in and of itself is yet another example of the convergence of parish and monastic practices of taking communion.

During this period there were proponents of taking communion even more frequently than once a month. At the end of his life, according to the testimony of his daughter, N. E. Pestov had been taking communion every week "for a long time already" (Sokolova 1999: 364). In the 1970s there existed around Fr. Vsevolod Shpiller a tight group of his spiritual children who took communion every week or at least more frequently than once a month (Interview with Beliakova 2011).

What is likely the most vivid example of more frequent communion mentioned by many memoirists is the practice of Archimandrite Tavrion (Batozsky), the father confessor for the Transfiguration of the Savior (Spaso-Preobrazhenskaia) Women's Hermitage of the Riga Diocese in the 1970s. Fr. Tavrion suggested (and even required) that pilgrims take communion at every service during their stay at the convent. According to the recollections of one of the pilgrims, he and his companions took communion four times in the course of the five days they spent in Fr. Tavrion's hermitage. Interestingly, Fr. Tavrion based his practice on the otherness of the monastic life, saying more or less: "You're in a monastery; everything here is different, so take communion" (Interview with Kaleda 2011; interview with Beliakova 2011). Such frequent communion was perceived as an exception to the common course of things. A pilgrimage to a monastery is a departure



from everyday reality, even everyday church reality, and accordingly a departure from ordinary, “normal” practices.

The integration of communion practices and pilgrimage did not only occur in the case of visits to Archimandrite Tavriion. Among a portion of Moscow parishioners there existed the tradition of confessing and taking communion in the TrinitySt. Sergius Lavra during Lent (Interview with Beliakova 2011). The combined practices, communion during a pilgrimage and pilgrimage for the sake of communion, fulfilled their basic function — the communion of the layperson with the sacred; and a pilgrimage, a departure from the ordinary course of things, strengthened the sensation of such a communion. This would become particularly noticeable in the post-Soviet years in connection with the new surge of Orthodox pilgrimages. However, this issue, along with the *issue of the combination of practices* in general and in this specific case (that of *communion and pilgrimage*), has remained so far unexplored in scholarly research, although it appears to be exceptionally important.

*Communion and the calendar.* There is another issue that requires examination in its own right — the issue of the combination of the practice of communion and the church calendar. In the Russian ecclesiastical tradition, which continued on the whole through the Soviet period, the practice of communion was separate from church holidays. People took communion during fasts and on their name days, but typically not on another feast day.<sup>16</sup> And even during fasts, for example, during Lent, people took communion not on Sundays, but rather on Saturdays or on Wednesdays or Fridays. Thus in the mid-1920s 12-year-old Boris Nikolaev took communion during Lent on weekdays (i.e., during one of the Liturgies of the Presanctified Gifts) or on the Saturdays of the first and fourth weeks and, most likely, on Maundy Thursday (Komarov 2008: 147).<sup>17</sup>

By the second half of the 1950s the picture had changed somewhat. A unique document — the church service journal of the Moscow Church of the Icon of the Mother of God “The Sign”

16. It is possible that this practice arose as a consequence of the idea that during a holiday it was impossible to “observe” or “keep” communion, that is, the ritual cleanliness that the traditional (peasant) consciousness required to be observed after taking the sacrament.

17. Such a conclusion suggests itself, inasmuch as in the context of his utterances “nedelia” does not mean “Sunday,” but rather “week.”

(Znameniia) in the Pereiaslavskaia neighborhood, which was kept by the church's prior Archpriest Kleonik Vakulovich (1891-1972) from 1954 to 1962, allows us to track the combination of tradition and new tendencies. This church, one of the few that was never closed, is located not far from Rizhsky Train Station, and therefore it was accessible not only to the inhabitants of Moscow, but also to the inhabitants of the greater Moscow area. In connection with this, the peculiarities of the practice of communion that were recorded by Fr. Kleonik can be considered to be characteristic as a whole for the Moscow Region.

The journal of the Church of the Sign (see Table 1) shows that believers, as before, rarely took communion on the day of a feast that did not correlate with a fast period. For example, on the days of the Great Feasts of Ascension and Pentecost in the Church of the Sign in 1957 there were only 100 communicants on each holiday. This was less than the average number of communicants on an ordinary Sunday (one not coinciding with the commemoration of a venerated saint or with another holiday), and also below the average number of communicants on the great feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul (230), which is less significant from the perspective of church regulations than the above-mentioned Great Feasts, but which completes the Peter and Paul fast period.

**Table 1. The Daily Distribution of Communicants during the Ecclesiastical Year in the Church of the Icon of the Mother of God “The Sign” in the Pereiaslavskaia Neighborhood (Moscow) in 1956 and 1957** (Calculated according to Vakulovich 2011a: 208–244).

Types of Days in the Ecclesiastical Year	Number of Communicants	
	min/max (number of instances)	Average
Weekday	6/60 (16)	30
Weekday + Commemoration of a venerated saint	15/210 (11)	81
Sunday	50/170 (17)	122
Sunday + Commemoration of a venerated saint	150/600 (3)	316

Types of Days in the Ecclesiastical Year	Number of Communicants	
	min/max (number of instances)	Average
Lent + Weekday (Wednesday, Friday; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday of Holy Week)	60/410 (24)	230
Lent + Weekday + Commemoration of a venerated saint	115/350 (3)	241
Lent + Sunday, Saturday	380/1500 (19)	880
Maundy Thursday	600/1500 (2)	1050

Orthodox parishioners strove as before to take communion on their name days. On the day of the commemoration of any venerated saint, and particularly that of a female saint whose name was a common female name, the number of communicants (they were more often female than male) outside of Lent grew by approximately 2.5 times in comparison with the average number of communicants on a weekday or a Sunday that did not coincide with the day of the commemoration of such a saint. Moreover, all the evidence suggests that on such days the vast majority of those taking communion were women celebrating their name days. Fr. Kleonik makes special mention of the fact that on the days commemorating saints Tatiana, Anastasia, Xenophon and Maria, Simeon and Anna, Evdokiia, Vera, Nadezhda, Liubov and Sofia there were in the church such-and-such a number of “lady-communicants” or “lady-communicants/name day celebrants” (Vakulovich 2011a: 297, 301, 304–06, 311, 319, 321, 325; Vakulovich 2011b: 228).

Alongside this, believers were now taking communion ever more frequently on Sundays. It is possible that they were pushed toward this by the fact that Sunday was a day off. During Lent, the number of communicants on Saturdays and Sundays frequently coincided now, and sometimes Sundays would outstrip Saturdays in the number of communicants (this happened, for example, during Lent of 1957). At the same time, Lent remained the chief time of year when Orthodox believers took communion. During this season the number of communicants outnumbered the scale of analogous days by 3–7 times. During Lent parishioners strove to take part in the Sacrament on the Saturday and Sunday of the first week and on Thursday and

Saturday of Holy Week more frequently than on other days. Moreover, in 1956 the number of communicants in the first week was more than double the number of communicants in Holy Week (1500 each day as opposed to 600). But in 1957 the first week and Holy Week were practically even in this respect (1250 communicants on the Saturday of the first week and 1500 on the Saturday of Holy Week). Two traditions of taking communion — at the beginning versus at the end of Lent — coexisted, and, apparently, were competing with each other during this period.

However, the apex of the ecclesiastical year, the feast of Easter, was still not associated with the laity taking communion. As a whole the Russian ecclesiastical tradition, apparently, was already a stranger to communion by the laity on this feast day during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup> This situation remained throughout the Soviet period. But in the 1960s-70s there was a priest serving in Moscow who threw down a challenge to this fixed tradition. This was Fr. Vsevolod Shpillar, who began communing his regular parishioners on Easter and in this way stood out markedly from other Moscow rectors of that time (Interview with Beliakova 2011).<sup>19</sup> It is likely that Fr. Vsevolod's practice can be explained by his service in emigration and his familiarity with the Eucharistic traditions of other Orthodox Churches. In the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia the battle for communion during Easter had begun considerably earlier.

Let us compare the appeal of Archbishop Ioann (Maksimovich) of San Francisco relative to the 1940s-50s:

We pray beginning with our preparations for Lent and then many times during Lent: that the Lord may allow us to receive the Sacrament on the night of Holy Easter. (...) Of course it is necessary to fast ahead of time and, having already taken communion during Lent, to receive the Sacrament anew. Before the Paschal Liturgy there is no time for a detailed confession; this must be done earlier. And on this luminiferous night, we have received general permission to approach the Lamb of

18. Compare the description of communion during Easter in Jerusalem by Arseny Sukhanov, in which one can sense the shock felt by the Russian traveler (Sukhanov 1870: 93–94; reference suggested E. V. Beliakova).

19. Incidentally, other Moscow pastors, for example, Archpriest Vladimir Smirnov, were in agreement with Fr. Vsevolod regarding the possibility of communing the laity on Easter; however, the practice of the Church of Elijah on Obydensky Alley remained more conservative during that period (Smirnov 2004: 125).

God, the pledge of our Resurrection. May no one leave the Church prematurely, hurrying to taste the flesh of animals, instead of tasting the Most Pure Body and Blood of Christ (Archbishop Ioann (Maksimovich) 1991: 222–23).

This being said, it seems likely that the Russian practice abroad itself was influenced by the corresponding practice of other Orthodox Churches — the Serbian and Greek Churches, in which communion on Easter had never disappeared.

*The prayers of laypeople during the Liturgy.* Another aspect of the practice of communion that must be mentioned is connected with the ways in which a layperson may participate in liturgical prayer. Sources from the Soviet period give three different answers to this question: a layperson could 1) listen to or sing along with what the choir was singing, 2) read for themselves special prayers that were not related to the text of the Liturgy or were only indirectly connected with it, or 3) follow along with the prayers of the priest.

The practice corresponding with the first option was naturally the most widespread. The second and third options were encountered more rarely. Fr. Sergy Zheludkov testifies to the existence of the second option, which he regarded critically: “There were in the popular edifying literature publications that offered in this instance foul prayers of their own invention” (Zheludkov 2003: 134–5).<sup>20</sup> The hieromonk Fr. Sampson (Sivers) recommended that his followers use prayers that diverged from the text of the Liturgy (*Starets ieroskhimomonakh Sampson* 2004: 145–47).

But a third option also existed. It is known that Fr. Alexander Men recommended that his parishioners prepare small booklets — the Eucharistic Canon, printed on a typewriter. The size of the booklet was such that it would fit in the palm of one’s hand. This was necessary in order not to attract the attention of others nearby. The booklet was supposed to be used to follow along with the Liturgy, in order to understand the meaning of the intonements of the priest and the contents of the entire service. At the same time it was not intended for laypersons themselves to pronounce the priest’s secret prayers; the goal was to understand them and

20. It has not yet been possible to establish which publications specifically Fr. Sergy had in mind.

participate consciously in the priest's prayer (Interview with Zhurinskaia 2011).

This idea certainly came to Fr. Alexander through the reflections of Fr. Sergy Zheludkov, formulated in his 44<sup>th</sup> "Notes on Serving the Liturgy":

But what can we do today, what advice can we give to the conscious Christian today — how should he pray during the completion of the Eucharist? (...) They [the true prayers of the Eucharist] are printed in the Service Book. They should be copied out and read at a whisper or silently along with the priest. With such a practice they will quickly be memorized (Zheludkov 2003: 134–35).

Here we can see how samizdat texts had a direct influence on the Eucharistic practices of Orthodox parishioners. And although they did not change the frequency of communion, they introduced into Eucharistic practice a new, hitherto unknown element. This was not so much a question of more frequent communion as it was an attempt to achieve a more conscious attitude on the part of the parishioners toward the celebration of the Sacrament.

It appears that this practice should be examined in the context of the reflections, found among various church groups at the time, about the "universal priesthood" of Orthodox believers (compare 1 Peter 2:5, 9); about the equal participation of the laity in the Liturgy; about the fact that "Christ is among us not only in the altar, but in the whole church" (Personal Communication from Shchipkov 2012). Such discussions took place among Fr. Dmitry Dudko's parishioners in the 1970s (Personal Communication from Shchipkov 2012). It seems that this intuition was also not alien to the circle of Fr. Alexander Men.

## Conclusion

Thus, we observe three important tendencies relevant to the Soviet period. Firstly, the Sacrament was "liberated" from the governmental control functions of the previous period, which created conditions for change in the practice of communion. Secondly, the extremism, the "on the verge of death" nature of human existence during the Soviet period became a stimulus for the practice to undergo such changes.

Thirdly and finally, the erosion of the borders between priestly and especially monastic practice of taking communion and that of the laity defined the direction of this evolution: the practices of different “versions,” which had formed during the Synodal period, gradually converged, and the common denominator of this convergence was the increase in the frequency of communion among the laity — an extremely significant increase in comparison with the previous period.

This “Eucharistic transition” of the Soviet period was conditioned not so much by the influence of new texts on the practice as it was by a change from within the practice itself. This change manifests itself precisely as an erasure of the boundaries between the different “versions”: the boundaries between regular communion and communion prior to death, and between communion by monastics and by the laity, became fluid. Communion with the sacred became essential, and the fear of it, so characteristic, for example, of pre-revolutionary peasant consciousness, gradually disappeared. Alongside that, regular, or, on the contrary, episodic contact with the sacred stopped being a social marker and began to be interpreted in its own religious context.

The erosion of the boundaries between social groups (*sosloviiami*) in the Church, the departure of monasticism into the world, and the disappearance of the clerical estate — which presupposed the elevation of priests from “the people,” from yesterday’s laity (and not from a hereditary clergy) — apparently represent another factor in the changing mentality. By the end of the Soviet period, a feeling was forming among certain groups of parishioners (especially among the urban youth) that in the language of theology all Orthodox Christians were designated part of a “universal priesthood.” This resulted in a strong desire for conscious participation in the prayer of the priest and, correspondingly, more frequent participation in the Sacrament.

In the post-Soviet period there was yet another radical metamorphosis in store for communion practice. The most important impulse for this was provided by texts written by émigré authors that were read in Russia at the turn of the 1980s-90s in the context of an already active tendency toward the convergence of different versions of the practice. But this is the subject for another research project.

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**Sergei Filatov and Alexey Malashenko (Eds.) (2011).  
*The Orthodox Church under the New Patriarch.*  
(*Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' pri novom patriarkhe*). Moscow:  
Moscow Carnegie Centre (in Russian). — 416 pages.**

Published at the end of 2011, this book is sure to be of interest to religious scholars, political scientists and sociologists, as well as to inquisitive readers. It should be said that the very idea of such a book is long overdue. The three years of Patriarch Kirill's tenure have brought many new developments to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC).<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, those developments have not been fully conceptualized within academia and non-confessional religious studies. With this in mind, an attempt at such conceptualization made by recognized and well-known scholarly authorities on issues related to the Church can only be received positively. One should keep in mind that the contemporary life

of the ROC receives very little attention in Russian-language academic literature. In any case, it is covered far less than would be desirable or than might be expected. Therefore, any work that claims to provide an analysis of the political, social, and cultural scope of the Church's activity in recent years will necessarily attract attention.

The book contains quite a bit of interesting material. While some articles contain a great deal of information and food for thought, unfortunately the book as a whole is marked with a few shortcomings that will be discussed below.

The book consists of nine articles (in fact ten if we count the conclusion), some of which originated in presentations and debates in seminars hosted at the Moscow Carnegie Center. Apparently, these seminars on the recent history and contemporary state of Russian Orthodoxy served as the primary impulse for the production of the collection, since the only thing that

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1. Kirill I was enthroned as patriarch on February 1, 2009. Three years refers to the time of the writing of the book review. — The editors.

connects all these articles is this very broad theme. What we have here is a rather general sketch of the state of the ROC between 1988 and 2011. Among the questions raised are the problems of religious education (Valery Ovchinnikov), the position of the Russian Orthodox Church outside the Russian Federation (Nadezhda Belyakova and Andrei Okara), an analysis of the ROC's media image (Roman Lunkin), and finally, a description of the actual policies — a “political portrait” — of Patriarch Kirill (Sergei Filatov), and much more besides. The last article specifically mentioned is essentially the only article whose content actually reflects the title of the collection.

Such thematic inconsistency would be natural in a scholarly journal, but it is questionable for an edited volume of articles. It is not clear why these articles appear in a single volume and in this particular order. It would have been possible in any case to split the collection into several thematic sections. Given the variety of articles included here, this would not have been easy, but at least it would have made the contributions easier to comprehend.

It is, however, worth mentioning that the quality of the articles that form the overall collection is quite high. For example, Nadezhda Belyakova's study of the state of the ROC in the Baltic countries makes up for the volume's eclecti-

cism with the profound knowledge of the subject matter it exhibits. Anatoly Pchelintsev's article “The Russian Orthodox Church and the Army: Historical Experience and Contemporary Problems of Cooperation,” presents the reader with remarkable examples of collaborative efforts between the military and the Church in the Russian Empire. It also poses a number of important and timely questions in regard to the modern legal position of religion in the armed forces. Boris Knorre's overview of the forms and methods of the ROC's social services draws an exceptionally interesting picture of the activities of the church's charitable organizations — a picture little known outside of the circles of church-going believers. However, it is not entirely clear what these articles have to do with “the Church under the New Patriarch,” given the fact that these pieces, along with most of the articles in the volume, relate to a much earlier period and sometimes even to other areas of study.

This is quite natural. It is difficult and senseless to talk about Orthodoxy in the Baltic States without mentioning its circumstances in the interwar and Soviet periods. When discussing the position of religion in the army, it is no less natural to mention Protestant movements, although this does not directly relate to Patriarch Kirill's activities or even

to the general tendencies of the ROC during his tenure.

Another surprising aspect of the collection is the mixing of strictly academic articles with journalistic essays that deal with the problems of the Church. This is not meant to question the quality of these essays, however. For instance, the article by Hegumen Pyotr (Meshcherinov) entitled “Modern Church Consciousness and Aspects of Secular Ideology from the Communist Past” is well written and raises profound questions. Moreover, like any serious intellectual effort, the essay is based on the works of established sociologists and historians. However, we can hardly describe it as scholarly research, which, of course, does not diminish its value. The same can be said about Valery Ovchinnikov’s article “On Orthodox Education in Russia” and even to a certain extent about the collection’s opening and most lengthy article, Sergei Filatov’s “Patriarch Kirill: Two Years of Plans, Dreams, and Uncomfortable Reality.”

When reading *The Orthodox Church under the New Patriarch*, the combination of journalism (even if serious) with scrupulous academic work is one of the first things one notices. Again, this problem could have been avoided had the different types of essays been placed in separate parts of the collection. This would even have created a good impression: the authors and editors would have

offered us an attempt at a comprehensive understanding of the current condition of the ROC from a secular, academic standpoint, as well as from the standpoint of society and even that of the Church. Nothing of the sort, however, has been done: journalistic commentary and scholarly articles are interspersed with each other without any apparent logic.

Meanwhile, the collection clearly has pretensions to being a disinterested scholarly approach to the problematics of the Church. In his conclusion, one of its editors, Aleksei Malashenko, writes that within ROC circles, “they are sensitive to objective analysis of internal Church life and the situation around the Church, thinking that only church-goers should write about these problems, following the official line, or even better—those who work in Church institutions” (407). Malashenko sees in the attempts made by the studies undertaken for this collection not only a high level of professionalism and objectivity, but even courage. There is no question that certain members of the clergy are not always open to academic discussions about the problems the Church faces. While there is also no doubt about the high professional level of most of the collection’s authors, when it comes to objectivity certain questions arise. In addition, the different ways in which the term “objectivity” can be understood should

have been considered in the conceptualization of the book.

It is even more of an issue that a certain mixture of genres can be found within the same individual articles. Some articles, while written in a quite academic manner, with the inclusion of a large number of sources and research, clearly and consciously depart from the principles of academic impartiality. What follows are examples from the first article in the collection by Sergei Filatov. As part of a discussion about who will benefit from restitution [of Church property], Filatov writes: "In many places, our befouled and defaced urban and rural landscapes are being transformed. These places are becoming attractive to the eye. The Russian people have a strong aesthetic sensibility, and it is finding its satisfaction. Congratulations on the victory, my good aesthetes!" (51).

Later, reflecting on a well-known conflict between the Archpriest Pavel Adelgeim and Metropolitan of Pskov and Velikie Luki Evsei (Savvin), Filatov writes: "Arbitrariness and petty tyranny, which lead to a lack of responsibility and stifle initiatives, remain the norm in many eparchies. In such a setting, how can church life revive?" (56–57). In his conclusion, looking at the collaboration between the Church and the state government, he adds: "It is hard to imagine that the ROC believes that

the current political system will last for long in Russia, or that this moment will remain in the national consciousness as a period to be proud of" (65). Thus in reality this collection is so heterogeneous that it is difficult to talk about any sort of central idea or common uniting principle, except for the general subject matter—the Russian Orthodox Church.

It is possible to agree with many of Filatov's statements, the ones cited here as well as others. We can agree that it takes courage to express them openly under the given circumstances. But how can a text such as this one have any claim to "objectivity"? Can it be labeled as scholarly analysis? If so, then only with serious qualification.

The same criticism, though to a lesser extent, must be directed at the articles written by Alexander Verkhovsky and Roman Lunkin. These two articles, just like Filatov's, include discussion of quite interesting questions, with some scholarly analysis. It is therefore worth examining them in greater detail.

Verkhovsky's "Nationalism of the Russian Orthodox Church Leadership in the First Decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" broaches the subject of an expanded (or, conversely, narrowed) interpretation of the term "nationalism" in Russian scholarship in general and in religious studies in particular. The views of the leadership of the ROC are examined as one form of eth-

nic and civilizational nationalism. There is also an overview of connections between the ROC and secular, nationalistic groups and, according to the author's understanding, nationalistically oriented groups inside the government.

Roman Lunkin's article "The Image of the ROC in the Secular Mass Media: Between the Myth of a State Church and Occult Folk-Orthodoxy" presents an amply detailed and thorough analysis of the representations of the ROC in print media and television in the past two decades. The picture drawn by the author is, to a large extent, justified. Nevertheless, the relative lack of attention Lunkin affords to the ROC's web presence, above all in electronic publications, is very surprising. This would make sense in a discussion of the media image of the Church in the 1990s. But if the focus of this publication is in fact the years of Patriarch Kirill's tenure, then we have to recognize that, at least for young Russians (including religious ones), the internet has emerged as an important source of information. If it has not necessarily become the primary source, then it is in any case in second place in terms of importance, well ahead of traditional newspapers and magazines. Lunkin himself clearly confirms this: in his references list, the internet versions of well-known newspapers clearly supersede print versions. Despite this, online newspapers and news websites (not to

mention reputable blogs) were not covered in his analysis.

How relevant is this book? It has certain articles that do not introduce any new material, but still profitably synthesize information. For instance, Andrei Okara, in his article "The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate): Between Exarchate and Autocephaly" does not offer the reader any significant new information. However, Okara lays out in great detail internal UOC MP discussions that are relatively unknown to readers in Russia. This alone makes the article useful and necessary. The same can be said about many points raised in Boris Knorre's article. For example, a full enumeration of the Church's social institutions, projects, and initiatives is not news to those who follow the life of the contemporary ROC, but in the context of this article its inclusion is justified.

Overall, it must be mentioned that despite interesting generalizations, real life evolves so quickly that many of the authors' conclusions, not to mention the materials they study, quickly become outdated. This is the great conundrum for all studies of extremely timely topics. There is always the imminent risk of obsolescence in researching contemporary social processes. In defense of the authors of *The Orthodox Church under the New Patriarch*, it has to be said that it is precisely the period from the end



of 2011 to the beginning of 2012 that saw a greater concentration of noteworthy events than any other period since the election of Patriarch Kirill, and this period happened to fall outside the book's temporal bounds. Thus the book could not include the visit to Russia of the Cincture (Belt) of the Most Holy Mother of God that took place in October and November 2011.<sup>2</sup> Even more significantly absent are the initiative of the Inter-Council Presence on the reorganization of ecclesiastical life, the media scandals of spring 2012, and any analysis of the Pussy Riot performance in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior that provoked heated discussions in both Church and secular circles. The Pussy Riot protest performance alone provoked so much commentary in print, on the internet and on television as to warrant an article dedicated solely to the topic.

When it comes to the general limitations of this collection, there are two more points worth making. First, it appears that the collection has not been properly edited. This is clear from a large quantity of tell-tale minutiae. For example, in Filatov's article there is a phrase that is repeated verbatim at the beginning and at the end of the text (pages

16 and 62 respectively). The lack of general editing (and a detail of this nature would have been detected through even the most cursory editing) may be connected with the above-mentioned absence of coherence in the conceptualization of the collection. This shortcoming increases the difficulty of both reading and analyzing the book.

More importantly, upon closing the book, the reader will have a hard time determining the intended audience for *The Orthodox Church under the New Patriarch*. Is it intended for professional religious studies scholars, and also political scientists as well as sociologists who are interested in religious issues? Such collections are needed and recently there have not been many of them published. However, even in the collection's strictly scholarly articles there is hardly anything new for professional religious studies scholars.

Perhaps this book is meant for, shall we say, "a wide range of educated readers"? Such collections are also needed, and Filatov's or Hegumen Pyotr's general articles could interest people who are superficially familiar with church life but have taken an interest in it. However, these readers would hardly need the narrowly specialized studies of Knorre or Pchelintsev.

Is this book also meant for religious studies students? This would be the noblest purpose, and there are successful examples in this

2. Sent from the Vatopedi Monastery on Mt. Athos, this relic, believed by the faithful to effect miracles including curing diseases and aiding with fertility, attracted millions of pilgrims during its visit to Russia. — The editors



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

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

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

*Konstantin Mikhailov (Translation by Natalya Domina)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ludmila Zhukova (*Translation by Eugenia Sokolskaya*)

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

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

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

with reserved optimism, that “in light of the almost complete absence of general descriptions of the history, theory and practice of sociology of religion in Russian scholarly literature, the work done will prove useful for the sociology of religion in modern-day Russia” (3–40). The author is quite right in his self-assessment. The main point is this: in this instance, the term “useful” is highly accurate. The significance of this book cannot be divorced from the context of a serious lag in the state of Russian knowledge in this area relative to the global state of the field, despite all the efforts made in recent decades. The efforts of the Russian sociologists in question include a fairly large number of specific empirical studies, many of which were substantive and produced good results. However, what most of them clearly lack is a concrete connection between empirical data and the dynamically developing theoretical and conceptual baggage that has accumulated to date in the sociology of religion internationally. The majority of Russian authors do not even make an effort to place their research in the general frame of reference established within the discipline internationally, preferring to interpret their data in language that is strict when possible but remains semi-

journalistic. The issue here lies in the authors’ isolation from the complex and highly developed Western tradition, the absence of regular contact with foreign scholars and unavailability of current literature, the lack of translations of key theoretically significant works, and so on. We can say that the work of the founding fathers, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, has been more or less “digested.” And while such concepts such as “charisma” or “the profane” now seem entirely organic in the Russian literature, we must concede that everything coming after the classics has been understood in a fragmentary and simplified manner, and much remains simply unknown.

There have been other attempts to create an integral, conceptual exposition of the foundations of the sociology of religion. Several textbooks on this subject were published in the 1990s and 2000s (Iablokov 2007; Garadzha 2005; Veremchuk 2004; Filatova 2000), which, in one way or another, transmit the international state of the discipline. For all their importance, these publications only selectively engage the whole complex system of ideas, concepts, and methods associated with the sociology of religion internationally, showing a clear preference for some while ignoring others. In these books, the authors’ approaches can be clearly discerned. This



is entirely natural. It is worth mentioning that in the West as well, many textbooks of this kind are based, understandably, on the preferences and experiences of the authors (Christiano, et al. 2008; Davie 2007; Cipriani 2000).

Smirnov's *Dictionary* attempts to provide as comprehensive and objective a depiction as possible, restraining the author's own biases, even though they still come through in his selection of entries and their presentation. One tremendous benefit of the *Dictionary* is indeed its broad scope. It covers a wide range of facts, concepts, and controversies that make up the century-long history of the discipline — material that far surpasses the limits of the material in Russian textbooks, including material that is largely ignored in Russian empirical sociology with its myopic tendencies. The classics do not overwhelm the *Dictionary*, which affords authors of “secondary” and “tertiary” importance to the field (relatively speaking) the recognition they deserve. Thus we find information not only on Weber and Talcott Parsons, but also on Robert Bellah, Peter Berger, Rodney Stark, as well as more contemporary authors like Eileen Barker, Grace Davie, José Casanova and others who are less well known but have contributed to the current state of the field.

Smirnov has one other clear goal in this *Dictionary*: integrating

Russian names and achievements into the global history of the discipline. Relying on his past research into this subject, Smirnov includes Russian scholars from A. Vvedensky and M. Kovalevsky to R. Lopatkin, V. Garadzha and others (Smirnov 2008). This task of integration is difficult and risky: for example, the same amount of space is devoted to Igor Iablokov as to José Casanova,<sup>1</sup> and to Dmitry Uginovich about as much as to Gaetano Mosca and David Martin. As patriotic as this approach might be, and despite the author's wholly justified desire to illuminate the little-known efforts of his compatriots, these inclusions run the risk of distorting the real balance of contributions to the discipline. Smirnov himself seems to admit that the study of religion as a social phenomenon in Russia has not led to the formation of a tangible school or established tradition. The only exception is the Marxist system of views, largely imposed by the state, whose potential advantages were more often than not cancelled out by its openly reductionist interpretations. Sociologically minded Russian scholars of religion (*religiovedy*) (using this term in the absence of the discipline of religious studies in Russia) nevertheless achieved

1. The *Dictionary* unfortunately incorrectly transliterates Casanova's first name as "Жозе" (Zhoze).

results, as Smirnov shows — of course not thanks to, but rather in spite of, simplistic Marxist models. Scholars such as Yuri Levada were nourished by the ideas of Western sociology, while others, such as Alexander Klibanov, paid directly for their research with years in Stalinist labor camps.<sup>2</sup>

I repeat, the desire to reflect the results of Russian thinking about the social functions of religion is itself perfectly justified and appropriate in a work written for a Russian readership. But the excessive scope of the list of compatriots who have made a contribution to the sociology of religion does *not* seem justified. Pyotr Lavrov, the subject of a very extensive article in the *Dictionary*, considered sociology purely instrumental despite his sensitivity for the discipline. Even Smirnov finds Lavrov's opinions about religion "biased." It is still more of a stretch to talk about the contributions to the sociology of religion from authors such as Georgy Plekhanov and Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin), to whom Smirnov also allots a fair amount of space — even if Smirnov, usually reserved in his judgments, allows himself to

reproach Ulyanov for his "limited vision" and "blatant disregard for the results achieved by the science of his time." What is the point of bringing in Ulyanov? After all, many other powerful political leaders with pretenses to knowledge of the social sciences spoke about the "social roots of religion" in the same spirit.

Some such inclusions in the *Dictionary* seem even more out of place when you consider that several important *bona fide* sociologists of religion were left out: for example, contemporary Russian scholars such as Dmitri Furman or Sergei Filatov, who wrote about religion in the West and began to actively research religion in contemporary Russia in the 1990s. (I would dare to suggest that Furman has done more for the sociology of religion than Ulyanov.) Some key Western scholars are also not included in the *Dictionary*; among those missing is Louis Dumont, a brilliant representative of the school associated with Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, whose ideas about holism and hierarchism were based on a comparison of Indian and Western societies, their religious traditions in particular. Also missing is American sociologist Nancy Ammerman along with the entire research tradition associated with Hartford Seminary. The *Dictionary* has no entry for Ronald Inglehart, the originator of the concept of "post-materialist

2. It is strange that instead of saying so outright in Klibanov's biography, Smirnov resorts to an inappropriately evasive, cautious phrasing: "Ideological circumstances from the 1930s to the mid-1950s prevented this work from being carried out."



values” and the related idea of “new spirituality.” He also inspired and conducted the World Values Survey, an attempt to “measure” values that has been ongoing for several decades and now includes nearly 80 countries (religious matters occupy an important place in these surveys). The reader will also not find Jürgen Habermas in the *Dictionary*, despite the fact that Habermas’s works from the 2000s, which conceptualize the dynamics of religious pluralism and the “post-secular,” have considerably influenced contemporary debates about religion. Talal Asad, who has written extensively about the meaning of and relationship between religion and secularity, is also unaccounted for. While it is true that Habermas and Asad are not “sociologists of religion” in the narrow disciplinary sense, it’s worth mentioning that the *Dictionary* (quite justifiably) contains articles about some other philosophers and anthropologists.

That is enough about what the *Dictionary* lacks — let us return to what it *does* include. I repeat once more: this publication contains a great wealth of information on a number of leading sociologists and their contributions. It outlines their main ideas briefly and clearly, yet with sufficient depth. All of this reveals the massive effort Smirnov expended on the pages of journals and monographs, which is all the more valuable given

that the majority of sociologists included are unavailable in Russian translation.

In addition to describing a large number of personalities who have shaped the history of the discipline, Smirnov attempts to describe the basic concepts of the sociology of religion. I would suggest that in this part of the *Dictionary*, he takes an even greater risk, potentially provoking criticism both for his interpretation and for his selection of these concepts. For example, such concepts as “charisma,” “fundamentalism,” “pluralism” and “sect” are absolutely necessary — the special language of the discipline consists precisely in them. Smirnov provides us with sober, precise definitions of them, and if you do not agree with something, it may result from a substantive dispute. But when the author tackles the scholarly description of concepts such as “faith,” “belief,” and “believer,” or lines up a series of articles about “religiousness,” “religious consciousness,” and “religion,” or tries to distinguish the concepts of “clergy” (sviashchennosluzhiteli) and “ministers” (sluzhiteli kul’ta), or define “belonging to a church” or “superstition” — in these instances he sets off on a slippery path fraught with tension, interconnections, and lack of rigor, transgressing the limits of the language of the discipline and even of scholarly language in general.

In revealing the importance of general (non-specialized) terms, it would make sense at least to connect them to the way they are used in the context of sociology. For example, let's take the word "pilgrimage." In this context its definition should not be limited to general knowledge that can be found in any other dictionary or encyclopedia (its etymology, a simple definition such as "individual and group travel to sacred religious sites (...) and so forth), but should show how and by whom this phenomenon has been studied from sociological points of view. Some articles might cause confusion — for example, the term "rite" (obriad) is quite appropriate for inclusion, but for some reason Smirnov tries to distinguish the term's meaning from that of "ritual" (ritual), which is described in a separate article. Ritual is interpreted as "an ordered sequence of rites," which, in sociological parlance, is not in the least bit necessary. Then there is an article about "ritualism" (obriadoverie) — quite a value-laden term — that already seems out of place in a sociological dictionary. In an article on "folk religion" (narodnoi religii), Smirnov correctly considers "folk religion" (also "local religion," although it would be proper also to use the currently very popular term "vernacular religion") in contrast to "popular religion." However, folk religion is defined for no clear reason as a mere aggregate of "beliefs," although, in fact, it is

inseparable from a set of *practices*. In addition, the author should probably make clear to the reader of the Russian-language *Dictionary* that the specifically Russian term for "folk religion" is particularly ideologically charged — to the point that it is almost inappropriate for use in scholarly discourse. By contrast, in the article on "non-traditional religions" Smirnov clearly and convincingly expounds on "the ambiguity of application" of the term, its ideological baggage, but does not go so far as to declare it generally unfit for scholarly language. In admitting and analyzing similar terms, Smirnov may have set himself a certain secondary goal — not only to present the language of the scholarly discipline, but also to deconstruct the politicized language environment that has developed around it in the broader public sphere. This is an extremely difficult task that could have been better accomplished by making it an explicit, self-conscious problem within the larger project.

At the end of the *Dictionary*, Smirnov includes an extensive, convenient bibliography of Russian, Soviet and Western works. Incidentally, the names whose omission from the *Dictionary* proper I regretted above do appear in the bibliography along with their works. This section offers a great deal more breadth than can be found in rest of the *Dictionary*, and

of course it would be impossible and unnecessary to include individual articles on every scholar mentioned in the bibliography.

I will conclude my review with a discussion of the beginning of the *Dictionary*. Here, we find a brief outline of the history of the sociology of religion, which is divided into Western and Russian sections to make it more convenient and comprehensible. Among the main topics treated, in my view, something important is missing: the huge, phenomenally growing literature of the past two decades on Pentecostal and charismatic movements, or the literature on the same topics treated in the context of the “post-secular.” Meanwhile, the predominant American tradition of quantitative sociology of religion, in contrast to the European tradition, is not emphasized. However, in general, the historical overview is very comprehensive and logical. It illustrates perfectly the logic of the discipline, its self-determination in the form of a series of distinctions (and the experience of the self-limiting of individual scholars), such as the distinctions between the positive and the normative, between genuinely graspable and ungraspable “religious experience,” and so on.

In my opinion, the final section of the essay, where Mikhail Smirnov makes an overall assessment of “the status and prospects” of the discipline, is superbly written, as

illustrated by the following vivid quotation about “the problem of [the discipline’s] scholarly self-determination”: “The sociology of religion can be viewed as one of the offshoots of general sociology, or as one of the approaches to religious studies, or as religious reflection on the social dimension of religion (...). Any of these positions—a hierarchical approach to the ‘hypostases’ in question, or their equality and complementarity, or the exclusivity of any one of them—has its adherents and opponents. So far, there is generally a dynamic balance of these ‘disciplinary identities.’ All of them are limited in different ways.”

Smirnov goes on to give an excellent formulation of these “limitations,” which I will not reproduce here, but I encourage everyone to read (31–32). He subsequently shows just how dynamic the scope of this discipline is—it drastically narrows or expands depending on how a particular sociologist interprets the concept of “religion.” As we can see, Mikhail Smirnov has chosen a complicated and hazardous genre, one that makes his material difficult to “tame.” However, on the whole, Smirnov’s gamble pays off. My first reaction to the *Dictionary* (it is an extremely useful book) remains my final verdict.

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(Translation by Pola Lem)

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