The Place of the Church in Society: Provider of a Moral Code?

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Introduction

The late Fr. Thomas Hopko, former Dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary (Crestwood, NY), once commented that according to the Seminary's "oral tradition," theologian Fr. Georges Florovsky would begin his lectures in Christian Ethics with the sentence: "For Orthodox Christians there is no such thing as Christian Ethics."[1] While Orthodox theology is less fragmented into sub-disciplines than Western-type theologies, the reason not to develop any specified ethical teaching is much deeper. According to the doctrine of *theosis* or deification, following God's commandments means that Orthodox Christians partake in the divine nature in their daily lives being in union with God's energies; at the same time, they remain fully human and distinct from God: "The ultimate goal is for humans to become by grace what Christ is by nature—that is, to become deified—though this oneness with God does not erase the distinction between creature and creator."[2] Moral behavior is possible for human beings not because they accept this or that ethical principle, but because these principles are commanded by God as a law "written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:15). These principles are identical with the Orthodox dogmas expressed in Scripture and Tradition and revealed by God's will. As Vladimir Lossky put it: "We must live the dogma expressing a revealed truth, which appears to us as an unfathomable mystery."[3]

Since the 2000s, however, both the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), as well as Russian political leaders have increasingly used moral discourse. The post-Soviet transition in Russia is characterized by the breakdown of the former Soviet system of moral values and the search for more reliable ones; the focus on moral issues thus becomes quite relevant. There is a long-term tradition tracing back to the Marxist-Leninist dichotomy of the matter and consciousness. Here, religion along with morality, culture, education, social service, patriotic activities, etc., is ←353 | 354→attributed to the non-material sphere—so-called *dukhovnost,* or spirituality.[4] The ROC as the most prominent and influential religious body is seen to be most notably linked to *dukhovnost* in general, and to morality, in particular. Morality is unequivocally attributed to the ROC's sphere. This is reflected, according to Sonja Luehrmann, in "a more general shift of transformational hopes toward religious institutions" in post-Soviet Russia.[5] The idea of an indissoluble connection between [traditional] religion and morality is strongly supported by Russian political powers, whose leaders tend to see the ROC as the agent naturally responsible for the moral state of people, thus endowing the Church with the respective authority. As President of Russia Vladimir Putin stressed, "it is crucial that the Russian Orthodox Church […] constantly focuses on the issues of the moral health of society."[6]

Today, the post-Soviet space is characterized by a great diversity of moral discourses expressing institutional and individual moral concepts concerning good and evil, which come into conflict with each other over almost all socially significant issues. In historically Orthodox countries (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus), Orthodox Churches are actively involved into discussions on moral issues. In Russia, the ROC has become an active promoter of a moral agenda both inside the country and on the international arena, seeking to pose as a guarantee of moral "bonds" in society, and thus claiming to play an exclusive role in the sphere of culture and morality as a ready-made tool that can foster people's moral upbringing. Nevertheless, to use Regula Zwahlen's phrase, "the term 'Orthodox morality' […] is unquestionably a neologism,"[7] which has to be analyzed from the point of

view of its content and genealogy, as well as in comparison with secular versions of morality in past and present socio-cultural contexts. It is also worthwhile to ask whether the ROC's moral standards are really meaningful for the people in their daily lives.

This chapter considers the following aspects of the ROC's engagement into sphere of morality: first, how the ROC's concept of human nature and the origins of morality are expressed in the speeches and writings of the ROC's hierarchs, as well as in official documents; second, the concept of "traditional values" in the ←354 | 355→broader context of the distinctiveness of the Russian culture and religion in comparison with European countries and the USA, which are generalized as "the West"; third, how the ROC's moral standards are presented in various spheres of social life; finally, the variety of moral discourses in post-Soviet countries, including moral controversies between believers and non-believers in the debates on the key moral issues of today's reality.

The ROC's Concept of Morality: Continuities and Disruptions

Today, the ROC has a consensual public position concerning socially significant issues, including morality, which in most cases with very few exceptions is expressed by the hierarchy on the level of the Moscow Patriarchate and eparchial administrations. The soundest voice in the public space is of that of Patriarch Kirill (Gundiaev),[8] as he seems to have a personal commitment to the elaboration of a theological concept of human nature, the core of which is formed by morality.

According to Kirill, such moral values as "faith, love, duty, responsibility and solidarity" are neither the product of historical evolution, nor depend on particular socio-cultural conditions. These values have not been created by people, but have been embedded into human nature by God; they are built into the structure of the universe and can be traced back to the first steps of humankind. Genuine moral values are eternal and universal, objective rather than subjective. Consequently, morality does not

depend on one's individual will.[9] For Kirill, morality is an inside "bond," a "column," a fundamental principle, the sole power that ensures the systemic and holistic perception of being. As an integral part of the human nature, it also belongs to the individual, but not vice versa: "If something is intrinsic to me, but is not intrinsic to another person, this something cannot be considered as a uniting principle, bond, or foundation."[10]

The same principle is expressed in a key ROC document, *Osnovy uchenia Russkoi Pravoslavnoi tserkvi o dostoinstve, svobode i pravakh cheloveka* ("The Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights," henceforth *Basic Teaching*), adopted by the Bishops' Council of the ROC in June 2008 (also discussed in this volume by Heta Hurskainen and Regina Elsner): "Moral norms [are] inherent in humanity just as moral norms set forth in ←355 | 356→the divine revelation reveal God's design for human beings and their calling. These norms are guidelines for a good life worthy of God-created humanity."[11]

Moral values are unchangeable; therefore, they form the core of tradition. For Kirill, novelty and tradition are both part of God's plan for the humankind. Tradition is understood as the filter helping to choose what is the most substantial in novelty, with morality as a divine criterion: "Everything is changeable. Views on architecture, art and political structure may differ, but there cannot be different views on morality, because morality is not from humans—it is given from above."[12] In other words, morality and tradition are inextricably linked with each other.

The ultimate condition of morality is freedom. Kirill distinguishes between two types of freedom: internal freedom from evil, and freedom of moral choice.[13] Freedom from evil as the will to goodness in consent with God's will is intrinsically valuable. Freedom of choice leads to the liberation of the dark, "Dionysian" principle, which is present in every person: "This is a dead end, a way to the destruction of our civilization. This principle, being fundamental to liberalism and telling us that 'my freedom should not restrict the freedom of another person,' is so very dangerous."[14] In Kirill's view, moral autonomy means that people are allowed to define their own norms of behavior, with the only constraint

being the autonomy of another person. Such ideology is characterized by the pluralism of opinions and the absence of the notion of sin. Kirill argues that people who choose not to follow the moral principles shared by the majority of the humankind are misled by Western secular liberalism, which proclaims the human to be the absolute and ultimate value. This philosophy, according to Kirill, supports the idea of emancipating a sinful individual who rejects everything that constrains them and prevents them from affirming their sinful self. Human freedom becomes a supreme value, but only as freedom of choice. A situation where every person is free to determine the scale of moral values on which they rely leads to a radical rejection of normative values and the exclusion of the very idea of sin: liberalism creates a favorable environment for sin.[15]

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The concept of morality and freedom is also elaborated in the "Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights," particularly, in Part II, "Freedom of choice and freedom from evil." This document affirms that "freedom is one of the manifestations of God in human nature" and pays special attention to the distinction between freedom of choice and freedom from evil:

> The abuse of freedom and the choice of a false, immoral, way of life will ultimately destroy the very freedom of choice as it leads the will to slavery by sin. […] While recognizing the value of freedom of choice, the Church affirms that this freedom will inevitably disappear if the choice is made in favor of evil. Evil and freedom are incompatible.[16]

The overall duty of the ROC in maintaining morality is the formation of a universal system of moral norms, a global moral consensus, which would express the essence of the moral nature of the human being through dialogue between various religions and ideologies. According to Kirill, the multiplicity of moral codes should be discarded for the sake of a universal moral code based on absolute moral norms, which should not be a compromise between different ethical concepts, but a jointly formulated basis of universal morality, rooted in the moral nature of the human being:

> With all the differences in cultures and traditions, we all have a common moral feeling which God has put into us, each of us has a voice of conscience, which we Christians call the voice of God. The doctrines of various religions can differ significantly, but as soon as we move to the level of […] moral values, most religious traditions demonstrate a coincidence of views.[17]

Finally, the fight for moral values has to be supported by the political powers and by society. Their withdrawal from controlling moral issues has resulted in the assault on religious feelings and the propagation of pseudo-religious movements, which use the public arena for strengthening their influence. Moreover, the introduction of standards that contradict traditional moral norms into national and international law systems leads to the imposition of the standards of the minority upon those of the majority. Thus, in Kirill's words, "the concern for spiritual needs, based on traditional morality, ought to return to the public realm. The upholding of moral standards must become a social cause."[18]

Paradoxically, a comparison of this concept with the Soviet understanding of morality, in spite of the apparent dissimilarity between the theistic and atheistic understanding, shows that they share much in common —if not in content, then in methods. Both interpret morality as something originating and prescribed "from above," as an act of obedience of one's will to the rules of action established by a higher authority, whether the Orthodox Church on behalf of God's will, or the Communist party. As Regula Zwahlen rightly underlines, the Soviet worldview did not have room for moral autonomy as understood in terms of Kantian philosophy.[19] Zwahlen interprets the lack of a concept of moral autonomy in Russian and Soviet thought as being the explanation for there not being a vast dichotomy between "traditional Orthodox" and "modern Soviet" worldviews.[20] It also helps explain the "surprising continuity between Soviet and present-day religious moralities."[21]

In the Soviet Union, the attitude towards ethics as a valuable philosophical concept appeared quite late, in 1961, when a new Communist Party Program was adopted by the 22nd Communist Party Congress. This

program comprised the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism, which was aimed at the moral improvement of Soviet people.[22] Because of the ideological needs of the time, Soviet ethical theory was supposed to prove the ultimate truth of communist morality as the highest form achieved throughout the history of moral development. The ←358 | 359→Marxist-Leninist concept of morality did recognize certain unchangeable, universal values (listed in the Moral Code),[23] those traced in history along with (or in spite of) "illusory" moral values of the class society. These values were supposed to manifest the "genuine human essence," and the moral image of the Soviet citizen became a subject of particular concern both for the Communist party and for the state as a whole.[24]

One can see a certain resemblance between the Soviet view on morality as a social agent aimed at the elaboration of proper moral principles in the interests of the broader society and controlled by the state, and the ROC's special responsibility (assigned by the state powers) for people's "moral health." Reflecting upon the notion of the "inherent dignity" of the human being as interpreted in *Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights*[25] (henceforth *Basic Teaching*), Heleen Zorgdrager points out that "human dignity is not conceived of as unconditional, universal and inalienable, but as a moral category. […] Everything in this view depends on what is defined as moral and who sets the norms."[26] Obviously, she continues, "the authority of the Church discerns, affirms and sanctions the law of God,"[27] thus dictating what is moral and what is not.

Interestingly, Patriarch Kirill sees the relevance of the Soviet understanding of morality for today's Russia, because even in state atheism

> the moral paradigm generally remained Christian, and this saved us: our literature, fine arts were permeated with Christian ideas, and the people's morality remained ←359 | 360→Christian. Communists were not able to encroach on it. They did something bad, for example, they allowed abortions, but they did not dare to blow up the moral foundation of life.[28]

In other words, for Kirill, the very fact that Soviet atheistic rejection of religion could not damage the moral Christian paradigm serves as the best

proof that God forever embeds moral values into the human nature. This is the reason the ROC could reconcile with the Soviet system despite its persecutions.

The battle with the "sinful" liberal West occupies a significant place in the ROC conceptualization of morality. For centuries, the role of the "other" as something different from "us", thus making "us" ourselves, was assigned to "the West." Whether in the 19th-century Russian Empire, in Soviet times, or now, it is more the imaginary "West" than the real West. Even today, "the West" remains a constructed category that includes beliefs, attitudes and stereotypes forming a conventional, undifferentiated entity with no actual location in space and time. The rejection of normative moral values by a sinful "West" is the popular slogan, which could be traced back to the Soviet times, especially to the 1960–1980s, when, as Alfons Brüning writes, "the Soviet press consistently presented this image of the West as […] a unified culture of exploitation, alienation, and constant conflicts. In turn, this made it possible to affirm the moral superiority and political exclusiveness of Soviet Russia."[29] Brüning points out that in this period the ROC was in close alliance with the Soviet power in the struggle against the "immoral West," quoting Metropolitan Nikodim's (Rotov)[30] characterization of communist atheism as "representing a system of convictions, including moral principles, that do not contradict Christian norms."[31]

As Andrii Krawchuk concludes, the concept of "the West" has become deeply embedded within Orthodox self-consciousness and modes for self-expression:

> As a constructed category, the West has proven to be of immense utility to Orthodox discourses, whether for explanatory illustrations of identity and difference, for reasoned critiques, or for outright polemical denunciations.[32]

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The main role of Western secularism and liberalism is to be a constant threat towards Orthodox genuine Christian morality. At the same time,

accusing Western secularism of denying Christianity's moral values seems to be a way of strengthening the moral superiority of the ROC, which in the Chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Hilarion's (Alfeiev) words, allows the ROC to offer itself as "an inspiring example of spiritual and moral revival also for the Western countries"[33] in the same mode as in Soviet times.

Finally, as mentioned above, the ROC strives for universality of the moral norms system as the way of saving humankind. The self-presentation of the ROC as an "advance guard" in the transcendent battle between good and evil, as well as the accusing of the West for legitimizing human sinfulness, proves that the ROC considers the defense of morality as a world-historical mission.[34] As Maria Engström put it, Russia is the *Katechon*, "the world's 'shield' against the apocalyptic forces of chaos."[35] Similar to the Marxist-Leninist universal project of the communist future of humankind, which seemed to redeem all sins of previous history, the ROC offers a narrative of morality that has universal value. Because of its universality, it could be accepted in other contexts, thus contributing to the moral perfection of other nations. Nevertheless, the fulfillment of the global mission in the fight for good against evil is not an easy task because of its substantial ambiguity. It combines the universal significance of morality embedded into human nature by God with the particularism of the ROC, which is closely linked to the idea of a unique Russian civilization[36] with its special moral merits. In Vladimir Putin's words, "the best qualities of our people have always, throughout the entire history of the country, ensured Russia's moral and ethical leadership."[37] Thus, as Alexander Agadjanian and Kathy Rousselet show in their analysis of ROC ideology,

> The discourse of the universal definitely yields to the discourse of particularism: the idea of uniqueness stands behind both the principle of autocephaly and the principle ←361 | 362→of national identity, thus creating a double and interconnected particularism of a Church and a nation.[38]

Summing up, the ROC concept of morality comprises the following interrelated aspects. First, unchangeable moral values, which form the core

of tradition, are not created by people; rather, they are embedded into the human nature by God. Consequently, freedom from evil means the subordination of human will to God's will. This excludes the freedom of moral choice, which in practice means the choice of a false and immoral way of life. Second, the freedom of choice supported by Western liberalism is the proclamation of the human being as an absolute and ultimate value, which leads to a radical rejection of normative moral values. Third, the formation of a universal system of moral norms as a way of saving humankind from the power of sin should be supported by all religions and ideologies, as well as by political powers and societies.

Traditional Values as a Tool in the Battle for Moral Upbringing

The concept of so-called "traditional values" as the substance of morality promoted by the ROC recently has become the subject of a thorough critical analysis.[39] As Kristina Stoeckl argues, in the sphere of "traditional values" the top management of the ROC plays the role of the "moral norms entrepreneurs," specifically in the international arena.[40]

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Still, the meaning of traditional values remains quite vague. What do the ROC authorities imply by "traditional values", and what are their origins? Which factors add the quality of being "traditional"? At the XIX Christmas Readings in 2011, a draft document under the title "Eternal values—the foundation of Russian identity" elaborated by the Department for Church-Society Relations was presented. The document listed such values as justice, freedom, solidarity, *sobornost* (conciliarity), self-restraint and self-sacrifice, patriotism, spiritual and material well-being, and family traditions.[41] In the same year, the World Council of Russian People" published the longest and the most substantial inventory of traditional values entitled "The Basic Values – The Fundaments of the National Identity." The document defined the following values as traditional: faith, justice, peace, freedom, unity, morality, dignity, honesty, patriotism,

solidarity, mercy, family, culture and national tradition, prosperity, diligence, self-limitation and devotion.[42]

In a 2013 statement on the opening of the XXI International Christmas Educational Readings entitled "Traditional Values and Contemporary World," Patriarch Kirill clarified what the ROC means by traditional values. Values become "traditional" not because they are preserved by tradition in general sense, but because they are revealed by God. Human values are relative and changeable depending on the particular socio-cultural context; their purpose is material well-being. God's values, however, are eternal and unchangeable; they are aimed at the highest ideals and perception of God's presence in history. In Kirill words, Christians are "especially responsible for preserving and transmitting spiritual moral values to future generations so that human society does not collapse, and the harmonious beauty of human existence and the entire cosmos does not disappear."[43] Consequently, "for the Orthodox Christian, tradition is a set of creedal and moral truths that the Church has accepted from the testimony of the Apostles and which it has guarded and developed as a function of historical circumstances."[44]

According to Kirill, the transcendent and universalist character of traditional values make them applicable not only to Russia but to the rest of the world as well: "We [Russians] share these values with many morally healthy people who do not consider themselves as adherents of any religion and live according to the ←363 | 364→law of conscience."[45] Nevertheless, in spite of their "universality," traditional values are surprisingly fragile, being subject to constant threat from the West. Consequently, the duty of Orthodox (genuine Christian) civilization is to be the world's last bastion of their defense. This is an integral part of the idea of the ongoing conflict between two opposite civilizations: Western (secular) standing for liberalism, secularism, and individualism, and Russian Orthodox representing traditionalism, moralism, religion and community.[46] According to Kirill,

> We cannot say that we live in a completely peaceful environment. Today there are battles without the roar of guns, and the enemy who threatens us does not visibly cross our borders. However, we are all involved into what the Orthodox tradition calls 'invisible warfare.' Everyone today is involved in this battle. We are offered chaos, but we should not be bought by these recommendations and should not take part in the creation of chaos […] We are offered sin, a destruction of the moral foundations.[47]

For the ROC, the scale of traditional values is much wider than the opposition to same-sex marriages, LGBTQ+ rights,[48] and the issue of the traditional family. Nevertheless, the traditional family agenda is a significant part of the traditional values discourse. Today, Russia is not alone in defending the traditional family. To resist the new trends toward gender culture, same-sex marriage, gestational surrogacy, In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), abortion, etc.[49], the ROC has created alliances with other conservative actors in the world including the Roman Catholic Church. The joint Communiqué for the 2013 Conference "Orthodox and Catholics in Defense of the Family" states that traditional family meets the requirements of human existence; it is Good News for today's world, in particular, for a de-Christianized society.[50]

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A telling example is the International Forum *Mnogodetnaia semia i budushchee chelovechestva* ("Multiple-Child Families and the Future of Humanity"), which was held in Moscow in September 2014 under the auspices of the ROC. The Forum adopted a resolution addressed to national leaders around the world, as well as to the United Nations General Assembly, the UN Secretary General, and the UN Supreme Commissioner for Human Rights. The Resolution affirms that the ruling elites in the developed countries promote a "society of obsessive consumerism," which in its essence "is called upon to destroy faith in God as faith in Good, to destroy what is human in the human being (as created by God), to wreck the spiritual dimension in Man as his distinguishing feature in Living Nature."[51]

One more ally of the ROC in the battle for traditional family are conservative evangelical Christians in the USA, who see traditional gender norms as crucial in cultivating morality, and family values as central to the faith.[52] After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has been intensively involved in the activity of the American pro-family NGO Focus on the Family and in the World Congress of Families (WCF)—a transnational nongovernmental organization that promotes a traditional, heterosexual family model and conservative gender roles. The WCF was co-convener of the abovementioned Family Congress of 2014 in Moscow, as well as in ROC activities like the annual Christmas readings. The Russian chapter of the WCF has close ties to business, politics, and the ROC, thus representing a new type of religious actor—the Russian Christian Right that is modelled on the strategies and manners of the American Christian Right.[53] In general, the ROC's defense of traditional family is caused by the dramatic shift in family structure, multiplication of gender roles, sex relations, new reproductive technologies, and so on. It is a global phenomenon, which initiates sharp discussions and clashes almost everywhere. At the same time, the defense of traditional family is a much more practical task compared to the world-historical mission of preserving traditional values interpreted as God's revelation about human nature.

Because traditional values in the broadest sense are presented as eternal and unchangeable, and all people all over the world across all times should share these values, they are not dependent on caprices of human history. Ironically, the only way to prove their traditional character is to invent suitable traditions ("invented ←365 | 366→traditions," in Eric Hobsbawm's words).[54] Here the past serves as the source of various meanings, which are exploited by religious and political powers for pragmatic purposes. Such a usage of the past presupposes the constructing of a new one, based on real, ideal, or mythological interpretation of previous history, as well as creating and establishing new social memories by various means (holidays, ceremonies, rituals, etc.)[55]. A perfect example of a post-2008 newly invented tradition is the cult of the Saints Peter and Fevroniia as symbols of

ideal marriage, love and marital fidelity, which among other things is aimed at diminishing the growing popularity of St. Valentine's Day.[56]

As mentioned above, the ROC's criticism of Western anthropocentrism is based on its interpretation of the sinful human being as "the measure of all things." In the ROC's understanding, traditional values are predominantly collective, attributed to universal human nature. Thus, in *Basic Teaching*, individual rights like freedom and justice are tied absolutely to morality and community. As Regina Elsner notes, "from this perspective, human rights as individual rights are always secondary to collective values and 'cannot be set against the values and interests of one's homeland, community and family' (*Basic Teaching*, III.5)."[57] The ROC's major documents clearly contrapose human rights and traditional values and insist that in the West, human rights are prescribed to the individual outside from relations to God when

> the freedom of the personality is transformed into the protection of self-will (as long as it is not detrimental to individuals) and into the demand that the state should guarantee a certain material living standard for the individual and family. In the contemporary systematic understanding of civil human rights, man is treated not as the image of God, but as a self-sufficient and self-sufficing subject.[58]

Interpreting the "traditional values" discourse in light of the concept of human rights, Kristina Stoeckl asserts that "the traditional values agenda is the conservative flipside of the progressive human rights system,"[59] and stresses that ←366 | 367→"from the human rights perspective the individual comes first, whereas from a religious perspective the community comes first,"[60] because the source of moral norms is never an individual with his/her potential to sin, but divine revelation given once and for all.

In sum, with the exception of the traditional family agenda, the strategy of the Orthodox defenders of traditional values is based on reference to ultimate abstracts like "human nature," "justice," "solidarity," and so on, which turns traditional values into pure ideas suspended in a vacuum. At best, they could be used symbolically as "everything good"[61] in the contrast to "everything bad." In short, traditional values are the ones, which are

considered to be such by the ROC headquarters. Traditional values are identified with a conservative principle of static truth; they are prescribed to be shared by everyone, which means by no one in particular. Moreover, their eternal and revealed character means that there is no need for any kind of endeavor aimed at the implementation of traditional values into practice, as they are guaranteed by God's will. In other words, the principle of traditional values does not presuppose moral choice and moral conduct of any kind. The very idea of traditional values is aimed at attaining collective security at the expense of individual freedoms and moral autonomy. In addition, contraposing traditional values with the "West" prompts the suspicion that without referring to it they would be seriously weakened. The purpose of the image of the "West" as an existential enemy is to strengthen the ROC's distinctiveness as the defender of traditional values on behalf of humankind.

Russian Orthodox Moral Teaching and Everyday Moral Dilemmas[62]

As the ROC claims to provide a moral code in the form of traditional values, what should be its role in people's moral decision-making in their everyday lives? Does the ideology of traditional values make people good, or bad, or does it have no effect at all? Does it increase one's empathy and caring, or does it increase one's prejudice and intolerance, particularly toward those who do not happen to belong to the "Russian Orthodox civilization"?

It is not easy to answer these questions as there is practically no reliable data to confirm or refute the practical impact of the promotion of traditional values. As Ivan Zabaev, Yana Mikhaylova, and Daria Oreshina argue, research on the ROC in the public sphere is based on the actions of the Church at the level of the Patriarchate and, less frequently, of the episcopate, but it does not show any ←367 | 368→results on the parish level.[63] The ROC is involved with problems of the common good, "but it does so in ways that cannot be registered by the mechanisms of the public

sphere (e.g., public opinion polls or the mass media) […] The mass media and opinion polls do not reflect the Church's activity within the spheres that are important to Russian citizens, as identified by these polls."[64]

The ROC tends to put great emphasis on everyday moral behavior in terms of its compliance with doctrinal principles and established ritual practice. However, the correlation of moral practices and individual religiosity remains unclear, at least according to quantitative sociological research methods used in polls.[65] There is in Russia a high level of inconsistency between individual religiosity and its value-normative consequences, which can be explained by the weakness of religious socialization.[66] Believers do not always behave in accordance with the doctrinal provisions of their religion; on the contrary, they often agree with what contradicts them. Otherwise, believers would never break the commandments:

> Theology doesn't determine people's actual thoughts and behaviors. In fact, the ideas that one learns in one's given culture, such as theological ideas, play only a partial role in what people actually think and do. […] The sorts of ideas we label "religious" are employed only in certain situations, not all the time.[67]

Mark Chaves calls the claim that people behave in accordance with religious faith and commandments "a religious congruence fallacy," which lies in the idea that, firstly, people's religious beliefs and values are logical and consistent; secondly, that their everyday behavior flows directly from these beliefs and values; thirdly, that these beliefs and values are invariable and independent of the socio-cultural context.[68] In fact, the relationship between individual religiosity and moral behavior is largely determined by a particular socio-cultural context, namely, religious traditions, the presence/absence of a dominant religion, the presence/absence of religion (religions) in the public space, the presence/absence of religious education at school, as well as its content, etc. Thus,

> the need to distinguish between individual and social components of religiosity is caused by the fact that for certain denominations (e.g., Orthodoxy in Russia) religiosity, measured at the

> individual level, does not reveal the effects of religion in ←368 | 369→other areas of life. More religious and less religious people behave in the same way and have the same values.[69]

Indirectly, the moral preferences of Orthodox believers could be judged on the basis of their volunteer participation in social service. According to the Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Ministry data, approximately 10% of all ROC parishes are involved in social services.[70] At the same time, according to the results of nationwide opinion polls,

> approximately 50% of the Russian population have contact with Orthodox believers who are active within their churches and almost all of these respondents indicated that they would be willing to participate in some type of support and social service activity if requested to do by these people (representatives of the Orthodox community).[71]

Research suggests that Orthodox social projects are aimed at social support, moral upbringing of the clients and participants, and strengthening social solidarity rather than at evangelization.[72] The Orthodox parishes become embedded in the wider community and connected with the secular environment at the individual level through engaging non-parishioner volunteers in church social projects. However, it is unclear to which extend social services are driven by religiously motivated moral convictions. At best, it could be concluded that in dealing with moral dilemmas, the leading role belongs to "general cultural factors, including the intuitive involvement of the Russian culture' religious component," while the degree of religiosity is not reflected directly in people's moral judgments.[73]

Moreover, as Boris Knorre indicates by observing social ministry, "many Church actors still interpret volunteering […] not as an individual voluntary action, but as a duty or obligation, to be fulfilled not arbitrarily, but as part of one's voluntary decision to be obedient to a priest."[74] From his perspective, this is ←369 | 370→an "authoritarian-mystical model of church volunteering," versus a "socially open (or socially inclusive) model of volunteering," which is based not on "volunteering out of obedience," but is rather the result of personal free will and choice.[75]

Knorre concludes that the defensive ethical behavioral attitudes of the authoritarian-mystical model of Russian Orthodoxy are still widespread. That is why the social impact of Orthodox volunteering in Russia is not as effective and extensive as one might expect from such an influential institution as the Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time,

> there are Orthodox activists and some members of the clergy who recognize the importance of personal choice and motivation in volunteering and in engaging with the Church's social work. In the ROC's attempts to develop a humanitarian-anthropological approach and those close to it, we can see a trend towards developing new ethical behavioral attitudes which correspond more closely to lay ethics than to monastic ethics.[76]

In their study of Orthodox parish culture and, more generally, the impact of religiosity at the moral behavior on the anthropological level, Valerii Chirkov and Boris Knorre identify two ethical-behavioral paradigms in Russian Orthodoxy. One suggests that the spiritual life must rely on *bogoobshchenie* (communication with God), which is accompanied by "lively, unceasing and joyful feeling of faith, reverence and filial dependence on God."[77] The other emphasizes human sinful "fallen nature" and the inability to accept God's grace for the sake of one's own salvation. In the second paradigm, which is influenced by the monastic ethos as a model of holiness in Russian Orthodoxy,[78] the categories of guilt and humility play a fundamental role, requiring obedience in the sense of giving up one's will. The result is low self-esteem, which allows one to avoid responsibility for one's actions and to avoid independent decisions. This second paradigm constitutes a dominant stream in the contemporary Russian Orthodox culture.[79] As Andrey Shishkov underlines, in this second paradigm "a literal, traditional asceticism replaced ethics. The problem is that in the ascetic struggle with passions, there are no moral problems. There is no category of moral choice."[80]

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Knorre stresses that one of the reasons for this is that "'edifying' literature and Church compendiums on moral theology use the categories of guilt and humility as a systemic element of Church ethics."[81] In Orthodox

teaching, the category of “obedience” constitutes a central ethical-behavioral principle by which the obscured human will can be healed. As Archpriest Vladislav Sveshnikov declares in his “Outline of Christian Ethics” - the chief moral theology textbook in Orthodox educational institutions—“a sin-distorted will is best healed through obedience. By obedience accepted from the heart, the principle ‘I want’—the main principle of sinful existence, leading to an ugly, one-sided development of the inner life—is deliberately eliminated from life.”[82] Such positioning of the “fallen nature” of a human being at the forefront, as well as cultivating of what Knorre calls a “culture of guilt,”[83] is a serious problem in modern Russian Orthodoxy. Milena Benovska, however, asserts:

> Despite their significance in a contemporary context, obedience, humility, and discipline are not always dominant, nor the most important moral values and concepts around which religious practices are organized among Russian Orthodox believers. There is a clear distinction between the ethical environment created in the monasteries, on the one hand, and the ethical environment and the moral discourse among laypeople, on the other.[84]

Despite the tension between these ethical-behavioral paradigms, the ROC constantly makes explicit moral claims about socially significant issues and formulates imperative moral codes not just for Orthodox believers, but to all Russian citizens, presupposing that the majority of them by definition belong to the ROC.[85] This, however, is not obvious, as shown by disagreements between the ROC and the wider public on issues like restitution of ROC property, construction of new church buildings, and judicial proceedings associated with so-called “insult of ←371 | 372→believers’ feelings.”[86] The cases reveal controversies between the ROC’s moral discourse and alternatives expressed by individuals (both believers and nonbelievers) in media, social networks, public discussions, etc. In arguing their positions, both sides refer to such moral categories as “freedom,” “solidarity,” “justice,” “dignity,” and “responsibility.”

The strongest case of an insult of believers’ feelings was Pussy Riot’s “Punk Prayer” performed on February 21, 2012, in Moscow’s Cathedral of Christ the Savior, after which Maria Aliokhina and Nadezhda

Tolokonnikova were sentenced to two years in a penal colony for hooliganism.[87] The case initiated an ongoing discussion in the Russian society on the nature of Christianity, the moral reputation of the ROC, and the limits of the freedom of opinion and expression. Commenting on the case, Kirill later said:

> Forgiveness cannot be formal; forgiveness is always a mutual movement. […] But it has to be done in such a way that forgiveness is not perceived as an encouragement of wrongdoing. Imagine a relationship with a loved one who has done something nasty towards you. You forgive him, although he does not repent of what he has done […] just as they [Pussy Riot – E. S.] did not need forgiveness. This is a manifestation of a certain lie, a certain untruth, because God is Love, but God is also justice, and love without justice is weakness, just like justice without love is cruelty.[88]

The discussion received a new impulse in 2017, when the blogger Ruslan Sokolovskii was convicted on incitement of hatred and "insult of believers' feelings." The blogger was eventually given a two-and-a-half-year suspended sentence. The charge stemmed from a prank video uploaded on Sokolovskii's YouTube channel, where he was playing Pokemon Go on his smartphone in the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of All Saints in Ekaterinburg and regretted "not catching the rarest of Pokemons: Jesus."[89] The official position of the ROC was declared in the statement of the Ekaterinburg Diocese Council:

> To express grief about the petrification of the heart of a young man who dared to cynically abuse the memory of thousands of martyrs of faith and truth during the ←372 | 373→repressions of the 20th century in order to attract public attention to his personality and activities; to testify deep conviction that in a law-based society […] such provocations […] should be firmly terminated in strict accordance with the state legislation, and to avoid recurring in the future; […] to express hope that Ruslan Sokolovskii would recognize his moral wrongness, and repent of the sacrilege he committed; […] to not to confuse Christian forgiveness with Stockholm syndrome, or Orthodoxy with Tolstoi's teaching.[90]

The Diocese's statement refers negatively to Tolstoi's teaching on non-resistance to evil by force, reflecting its long-term critique on the part of both Soviet ideology and the ROC. Sokolovskii's defenders included a number of ROC clerics and seminary students who stressed that, although they did not approve of his action, the basic Christian principle "love your enemies" (Mt. 5:44) and "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7) should be followed in any circumstances.

Cases associated with restitution of the former ROC property[91] include a 2017 initiative by the St. Petersburg city administration to transfer St. Isaac's Cathedral to the ROC for 49-year gratis use. This aroused mass protests in St. Petersburg and other places all over Russia, accompanied by harsh debates between supporters and opponents (both secular and religious). While explaining the reasons for the transfer, Patriarch Kirill drew public attention to the moral side of the issue:

> The transfer of St. Petersburg's St. Isaac's Cathedral in the year of the 100th anniversary of revolutionary events is called to symbolize the reconciliation of our people. The destruction of churches and mass murders of believers was the most terrible page in the history of national division. Now the space around the returned churches should become a symbol of concord and mutual forgiveness—of "Whites" and "Reds," believers and non-believers, the rich and the poor. […] The Church prays for the return of Isaac to stop the evil intentions of people who use a house of prayer as a reason for discord.[92]

In his open letter to Patriarch Kirill, Mikhail Piotrovskii, director of the State Hermitage Museum and the head of the Russian Museums Union, stressed that the transfer of St. Isaac would not add peace to the Russian society; on the contrary, it would provoke public conflicts. He pointed out that St. Petersburg is a city where people go out in the streets not only because of monuments: "People ←373 | 374→fight for the dignity of their city."[93] According to the anthropologist Jeanne Kormina, each side of the conflict has its own truth. The ROC stresses the necessity of "concord and mutual forgiveness," as well as the preservation of the "spirit of the nation."[94] Secular observers raised objections against preferential treatment of the ROC at the expense of others. St. Isaac's is a symbol of St.

Petersburg: as such, it should not belong to any particular institution, even if it is the Church. The decision was ultimately to postpone the transfer to the distant future.

Another exemplary case took place in Ekaterinburg. In 2010, the local ROC diocese, along with regional authorities, proposed the construction of a new cathedral to St. Catherine[95] as a "sanctuary of revival and new life" and a "perfect gift" to the city of Ekaterinburg for its 300th anniversary (to be celebrated in 2023). Several locations for the Cathedral were discussed, including the artificial island in the middle of a pond in the downtown area. As in the St. Petersburg case, the protesters against construction included atheists, Orthodox, and non-Orthodox believers; they stressed that their intention was mainly to preserve the historical legacy of the city. Their Committee for the City Pond initiated several actions in the form of "embracing the pond," when more than a thousand people held hands in a circle around it, symbolizing both the solidarity of the people and their personal responsibility for the action.[96] The "Temple-on-the-pond" project was ultimately rejected by the city administration. The decision to build St. Catherine's Cathedral on the waterside caused a third wave of public protests in Summer 2019. That plan was rejected as well.

The protesters' motivation was a moral protest rather than an anti-clerical one. Generally, the thousands of protestors did not express negative feelings against the ROC; instead, they insisted that their opinion should be taken into account when making decisions concerning public spaces. Those interviewed stressed the importance of the freedom of self-expression, justice, civil responsibility, etc.[97]

From the ROC side, Metropolitan Kirill (Nakonechnyi) of Ekaterinburg and Verkhoture declared that the actions of the protesters against the construction of the cathedral demonstrated hatred for the presence of God in their lives:

> There is no cathedral in stone of the Holy Great Martyr Catherine—the Bride of Christ—in this city. But the content will always find a form for itself. There is a genuine cathedral of St.

> Catherine's children who are not indifferent to the abomina-tion that has manifested itself in our city, and who with bold prayer, patience and hope overcome the devil's temptations. And we happily realize that we are one, we are together, we are with God. The true Church of the God's community with human souls is incomparably more valuable than any golden domes.[98]

The ROC's urge to impose traditional values "from above," as a "perfect gift," has sometimes caused serious controversies between the Church's officials and the broader public. In the discussions, the former usually appeal to moral values, which do not depend on individual will, while the latter defend their right to moral choice. The ROC, being oppressed in the past, pretends to possess exclusive rights in judging what good is and what evil is. Conversely, the ROC's opponents argue in terms of everyday life and human rights. Their arguments refer to having the right for moral judgments, even if it does not appear in the form of a conceptualized moral code, but rather represents "embodied" moral dispositions.[99]

Conclusion

The post-Soviet reality in Russia may be characterized as a "cacophony of moral debate, argumentation, and questioning,"[100] where religiosity is an important resource for finding "appropriate and viable moral practices,"[101] both collectively and personally.[102] The ROC seems to take for granted the status of moral authority. According to Vladimir Legoida, the Chairman of the Department for the Church's Society and Mass Media Relations, "The Church can and should give a moral assessment of the life of society and the behavior of the powers that be,"[103] simply ←375 | 376→because it is presumed that the Church has special access to divine revelation concerning morality. As Patriarch Kirill keeps saying,

> Morality has no other source—only the Divine source. All attempts to explain morality on the basis of certain social, cultural premises by people who have renounced God are easily refuted. […] Morality cannot be deduced from either social, cultural or other circumstances

> and conditions of human life. Otherwise, there would be a multiplicity of morals: as many heads, so many minds.[104]

Nonetheless, in practice, as Milena Benovska notes, “under the conditions of continued social change, the aspirations of the clergy to impose unitary Orthodox morals are confronted with the reality of multiple moralities.”[105] In such a reality it is not easy to define the role of Orthodox concepts, such as human dignity, sin, redemption and deification, on the moral upbringing of people, not least because there is no reliable data on value dispositions in the contemporary Russian society, including moral grounds for the attitude towards social practices. Also, the correlation between religious self-affiliation[106] and the acceptance of core doctrinal believes is unclear: “A disconnect between self-reported faith and social, moral and behavioral orientations that the faith entails is quite typical, and it is as yet difficult to discern the consequences of mass conversion to Orthodoxy.”[107]

Vyacheslav Karpov stresses the essential characteristic of the present religious situation in Russia: the desecularization in the form of privileging Russian Orthodoxy and other so-called “traditional” religions in last thirty years was not a natural process, but to a great extent has been imposed from above.[108] As a result, reference groups, religious ecologies and plausibility structures that support and reinforce faith, have not been formed: “Even a very assertive state with very obedient media will hardly be able to convince people that being Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish or otherwise faithful involves certain moral commitments in daily life.”[109] Another important factor, which problematizes the ROC’s role as moral

authority, is mentioned by Dmitry Uzlaner.[110] He refers to Alexander Agadjanian’s definition of religion as “working symbolic resource,”[111] which in today’s Russia has a very weak impact over people’s way of living and their everyday moral choices. Moreover, as Uzlaner stresses, Patriarch Kirill’s efforts to strengthen the role of the ROC in people’s lives has failed; the result is an increasing critique of the ROC, especially in social networks.[112] In general, the debates on the moral dimensions of socially relevant issues demonstrate the opposition of two

basic strategies: interpreting morality as a set of rigid propositions (authorized by either religious or secular powers), to which individuals have to subordinate themselves, and the right of a person for moral choice, as well as bearing responsibility for it. Thus, the distinction lies between those who feel more com-fortable sharing socially and/or institutionally accepted moral values, and those who stand for a self-sufficient position. There are believers and nonbelievers who share "traditional" moral values; those who vote for the freedom of moral choice may include Orthodox adherents, as well as atheists and agnostics. In any case, the Russian Orthodox Church today clearly assumes the mission of being a moral authority.

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2 Alexander S. Agadjanian and Scott M. Kenworthy, *Understanding World Christianity: Russia* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2021), 22.

3 Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 8.

4 Kathy Rousselet notes that *dukhovnost* has no real equivalent in English: "*Dukhovnost* is commonly understood as a sociocultural component, a quality that characterizes Russia and distinguishes it from other nations, particularly those of the West. At the same time it can be used to unite Russia with other former Slavic-majority nations such as Ukraine and Belarus." Kathy Rousselet, "Dukhovnost in Russia's politics," *Religion, State & Society*, 48, no. 1 (2020), 38–55, here 38.

5 Sonja Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 16.

6 President of Russia, Christmas Greetings, January 7, 2021, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64868.

7 Regula Zwahlen, “The Soviet Genealogy of ‘Orthodox Morality’,” https://publicorthodoxy.org/2019/06/14/the-soviet-genealogy-of-orthodox-morality/.

8 Sergei Chapnin, *Tzerkovnoe vozrozhdenie: itogi* (Moscow: EKSMO, 2018), 38.

9 See “Vystuplenie Sviateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na Rozhdestvenskikh parlamentskikh vstrechakh v Sovete Federatsii RF,” January 28, 2014. http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3544704.html.

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11 *The Russian Orthodox Church’s Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights*, 1.3. The Russian Orthodox Church: Department for External Church Relations, https://web.archive.org/web/20160420210022/http://mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights/ii/.

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13 His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, *Freedom and Responsibility: A Search for Harmony – Human Rights and Personal Dignity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd; Moscow: Publishing House of the Moscow Patriarchate, 2011), 121.

14 Ibid., 53.

15 For more on the juxtaposition of “freedom” and “morality” in Orthodox statements, where “freedom” represents the central value of “the West,” see Alfons Brüning, “‘Freedom’ vs. ‘Morality’ – On Orthodox Anti-Westernism and Human Rights,” in *Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights* ed. Alfons Brüning and Evert van der Zweerde (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 125–154.

16 *Basic Teaching* (see n. 11).

17 “Doklad Sviateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na otkrytii XXVI Mezhdunarodnykh Rozhdestvenskikh obrazovatelnykh chtenii,” January 26, 2018, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5136032.html (my translation).

18 His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, *Freedom and Responsibility* (see n. 13), 91.

19 Regula Zwahlen, “The Lack of Moral Autonomy in the Russian Concept of Personality: A Case of Continuity across the Pre-Revolutionary, Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods,” *State, Religion and Church* 2, no. 1 (2015), 19–43.

20 Ibid., 37.

21 Alexander Agadjanian, “Exploring Russian Religiosity as a Source of Morality Today,” in *Multiple Moralities and Religions in Post-Soviet Russia*, ed. Jarrett Zigon (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 16–26, here 19.

22 The Moral Code included devotion to the communist cause, love for the socialist Motherland and other socialist countries; conscientious labor for the good of society (“he who does not work shall not eat”); concern for the preservation and growth of public property; high consciousness of public duty, no tolerance towards the violation of public interests; collectivism and comradely mutual aid; one for all and all for one; humane relations and mutual respect among people; man is to man a friend, comrade, and brother; honesty and truthfulness, moral

purity, simplicity and modesty in social and personal life; mutual respect in the family, concern for the upbringing of children; no tolerance towards injustice, parasitism, dishonesty, careerism and money-grubbing; friendship and brotherhood of the peoples of the USSR; intolerance towards national and racial hatred; intolerance towards the enemies of communism, peace, and freedom of nations; fraternal solidarity with the working people of all countries and with all peoples, "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism," *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History*, http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1961–2/moral-code-of-the-builder-of-communism/moral-code-of-the-builder-of-communism-texts/moral-code-of-the-builder-of-communism/).

23 According to Vladimir Putin, communist ideology, which includes freedom, fraternity, equality, and justice, resembles Christianity, and the Moral Code is a "sublimation, a primitive extract from the Bible" ("Putin: Moral'nyi kodeks stroitelia kommunizma – primitivnaia vyderzhka iz Biblii," *Radio Business FM*, January 14, 2018, https://www.bfm.ru/news/374911 (My translation).

24 See Richard De George, *Soviet Ethics and Morality* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969); Philip Grier, *Marxist Ethical Theory in the Soviet Union* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing, 1978); Elena Stepanova, "Competing Moral Discourses in Russia: Soviet Legacy and Post-Soviet Controversies," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 20, no. 3 (2019), 340–360.

25 "A human being preserves his God-given dignity and grows in it only if he lives in accordance with moral norms because these norms express the primordial and therefore authentic nature not darkened by sin." (*Basic Teaching*, I.5).

26 Kristina Stoeckl similarly notes: "The Russian Orthodox Church thus established a direct link between human dignity and morality, to the point that critics have read the chapter as saying that the Church is making the moral behavior of the individual a condition for recognizing his or her human dignity." Kristina Stoeckl, "Moral Argument in the Human Rights Debate of the Russian Orthodox Church," in *Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine*, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 24.

27 Heleen Zorgdrager, "Homosexuality and hypermasculinity in the public discourse of the Russian Orthodox Church: an affect theoretical approach," *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 74, no. 3 (2013), 214–239, here 225.

28 "Sostoialas vstrecha Sviateishego Patriarkh Kirilla s predstaviteliami Konstantinopolskogo Patriarkhata," May 25, 2016, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/4478422.html (my translation).

29 Alfons Brüning, "Morality and Patriotism: Continuity and Change in Russian Orthodox Occidentalism since the Soviet Era," in *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and Otherness: Values, Self-Reflection, Dialogue*, ed. Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 29–46, here 29.

30 Nikodim, Metropolitan of Leningrad, was the ROC's highest-ranking hierarch in the 1960–70s after the Patriarch, and arguably the most influential.

31 Alfons Brüning, "Morality and Patriotism," (see n. 29) 31.

32 Andrii Krawchuk, "Introduction," in *Eastern Orthodox Encounters* (see n. 29), 8. See also *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

33 Hilarion, Metropolitan of Volokolamsk, "Rozhdestvo – eto prazdnik ne tolko radosti, no i nadezhdy," December 28, 2013, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3484436.html.

34 At the opening of the XXVIII International Christmas Readings, Kirill stressed the importance of "the mission that the Church of Christ accomplishes in the world today, the significance of the Orthodox faith not only for our peoples, but for the entire humanity, in preserving morality based on the eternal Divine commandments." *Vystuplenie Sviateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na otkrytii XXVIII Mezhdunarodnykh Rozhdestvenskikh obrazovatelnykh chtenii*, January 27, 2020, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5582481.html.

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36 See *Russia as Civilization: Ideological Discourses in Politics, Media and Academia* ed. Kåre Johan Mjør and Sanna Turoma (New York: Routledge, 2020).

37 Meeting with volunteers and finalists of the "Volunteer of Russia 2020" contest, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64551.

38 Alexander Agadjanian and Kathy Rousselet, "Globalization and Identity Discourse in Russian Orthodoxy," in *Eastern Orthodoxy in a Global Age: Tradition Faces the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Victor Roudometof, Alexander Agadjanian and Jerry G. Pankhurst (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005), 53–57, here 36. The controversy of universality and nationalism is also mentioned by Elena Namli, "Orthodox Theology, Politics and Power," in *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges*, ed. Kristina Stoeckl, Ingeborg Gabriel and Aristotle Papanikolaou (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 265–282.

39 See Elena Stepanova, "'The Spiritual and Moral Foundation of Civilization in Every Nation for Thousands of Years': The Traditional Values Discourse in Russia," *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 16, no. 2–3 (2015), 119–136; Kristina Stoeckl, "The Russian Orthodox Church as Moral Norm Entrepreneur," *Religion, State & Society*, 44, no. 2 (2016), 132–151; Alexander Agadjanian, "Tradition, Morality and Community: Elaborat-ing Orthodox Identity in Putin's Russia," *Religion, State & Society*, 45, no. 1 (2017), 39–60; Irina du Quenoy and Dmitry Dubrovskiy, "Violence and the Defence of 'Traditional Values' in the Russian Federation," in *Religion and Violence in Russia: Context, Manifestation, and Policy* ed. Olga Oliker (New York: CSIS/Rowman and Littlefeld, 2018), 93–116; Regina Elsner, "Secular Moral Values as a Threat to Russian Orthodox Identity – The Case of Family Values," in *Religiöse Identitäten in einer globalisierten Welt* ed. Judith Könemann and Marianne Heimbach-Steins (Münster: Aschendorff, 2019), 109–118.

40 Stoeckl, "The Russian Orthodox Church" (see n. 39), 132–151.

41 "Vechnye tsennosti – osnova rossiiskoi identichnosti," http://www.pravmir.ru/sistema-cennostej-infografika/.

42 "Bazisnye tsennosti – osnova obshchenatsional'noi identichnosti," May 26, 2011. http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1496038.html- The document was accepted by the XV World Russian National Congress.

43 *Doklad Sviateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na otkrytii XXI Mezhdunarodnykh Rozhdestvenskikh Chtenii*, January 24, 2013, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2746897.html (My translation).

44 His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia , *Freedom and Responsibility* (see n. 13), 3.

45 "Vystuplenie Sviateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na Rozhdestvenskikh parlamentskikh vstrechakh v Sovete Federatsii RF" (see n. 9).

46 See Kristina Stoeckl, “The Human Rights Debate in the External Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church,” *Religion, State & Society*, 40, no. 2 (2012), 212–232, here 216, https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2012.692246.

47 *Vystuplenie Sviateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na vstreche so studentami vysshikh uchebnykh zavedenii Smolenskoi Oblasti*, August 13, 2013, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3198884.html (My translation).

48 See Zorgdrager, “Homosexuality and hypermasculinity” (see n. 27), 214–239.

49 The ROC takes an active part in the debates about the ethical aspects of reproductive technologies. Section XII of the foundational document *Osnovy sotsialnoi kontseptsii Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi* (“The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church,” http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/141422.html) (discussed in this volume by Regina Elsner and Heta Hurskainen), “Problems of Bioethics,” expresses concern about the development of biomedical technologies, which goes too fast and thus leaves society no time to assess the ethical and social implications of this progress. See also Alexander Agadjanian, “Tradition, Morality and Community” (see n. 39).

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51 *Vozzvanie* “Sviatost materinstva,” http://sm.cnsr.ru/ru/Konferentcii/Pryamaya_translyatciya_plenarnogo_zasedaniya_Foruma/.

52 See John Anderson, *Conservative Christian Politics in Russia and the United States: Dreaming of Christian Nations* (London: Routledge, 2014); Seth Dowland, *Family Values and the Rise of the Christian Right* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Hilde Løvdal Stephens, *Family Matters: James Dobson and Focus on the Family’s Cru-sade for the Christian Home* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019).

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54 Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14, here 1.

55 Elena Zhidkova, “Sovetskaia grazhdanskaia obriadnost kak alternativa obriadnosti religioznoi,” *Gosudarstvo, religia, tserkov’ v Rossii i za rubezhom*, 30, no. 3–4 (2012), 408–442.

56 See Diana Dukhanova, “Petr and Fevronia, and the Day of Family, Love and Faithfulness. Pronatalism and Unstable Gender Order in Today’s Russia,” *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov v Rossii i za rubezhom* 36, no. 2 (2018), 194–220; Tobias Köllner, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Russia: Beyond the Binary of Power and Authority* (London: Routledge, 2020), 108–136.

57 Elsner, “Secular Moral Values” (see n. 39) 114.

58 *Osnovy socialnoi kontseptsii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi*, IV.7, http://www.mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/.

59 Stoeckl, “The Russian Orthodox Church as Moral Norm Entrepreneur” (see n. 39), 143.

60 Stoeckl, “Moral Argument in the Human Rights Debate” (see n. 26), 14.

61 “Everything good” seems to be the characteristic of the imagined national, moral and religious collectivity—the “Russian Christian civilization”, see Zorgdrager, “Homosexuality and hypermasculinity” (see n. 27).

62 The cases mentioned in this part of the chapter are taken exclusively from Russia.

63 Ivan Zabaev, Yana Mikhaylova and Daria Oreshina, "Neither public nor private religion: the Russian Orthodox Church in the public sphere of contemporary Russia," *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 33, no. 1 (2018), 17–38, here 19.

64 Ibid., 28.

65 Elena Prutskova, "Religioznost i ee sledstviia v tsennostno-normativnoi sfere," *Sociologicheskii zhurnal*, 2 (2013), 72–88, here 73.

66 Ibid., 74.

67 D. Jason Slone, *Theological Incorrectness: Why Religious People Believe What They Shouldn't* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.

68 Mark Chaves, "Rain Dances in the Dry Season: Overcoming the Religious Congruence Fallacy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no. 1 (2010), 1–14.

69 Elena Prutskova, "Social vs. Individual Centrality of Religiosity: Research in Religious and Non-Religious Settings in Russia," *Religions* 12, 15 (2021), 3.

70 There are about 40,000 RO parishes in Russia and more than 4500 social institutions, projects and initiatives run by the ROC (10 percent), including 77 shelters for pregnant women and mothers with children; 211 centers of humanitarian aid; more than 400 projects of support for the disabled; more than 600 institutions and projects for alcohol and drug abuse; and more than 90 shelters for homeless. *Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Ministry*, http://www.diaconia.ru/statistic.

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72 Olga A. Bogatova, Evgenia I. Dolgaeva and Anastasia V. Mitrofanova, "Deiatelnost sotsialno orientirovannykh organizatsii Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi: regionalnye aspekty," *Russian Journal of Regional Studies* 27, no. 3 (2019), 489–512.

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75 Ibid., 50.

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