

## Introduction: Understanding Renewal Movements in Orthodox Christianity

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Over the course of the nineteenth century in most of the newly formed nation states of Eastern Europe, autocephaly transformed churches into “national” institutions. The secular elites of these countries attempted to modernize their church institutions and practices of religious life. During the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the changes religion experienced as it came into contact with modernity were also reflected in the Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe, which adapted themselves to innovations and ideas from the West. Orthodox Christianity in Eastern Europe witnessed the emergence of several renewal movements in this period. The “Evangelistic Awakening” of European society affected Eastern Europe, bringing the first groups of evangelical missionaries that were to change the existing religious picture of societies in this region to a considerable extent.

In this time of dramatic changes to the borders of states (the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Ottoman and Russian empires and the creation of new national states such as the Kingdom of

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A. Djurić Milovanović and R. Radić (eds.), *Orthodox Christian Renewal Movements in Eastern Europe*, Christianity and Renewal - Interdisciplinary Studies, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-63354-1\_2

Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes), Orthodox churches faced crisis and a number of challenges, among which were encounters with different religious influences, such as Catholicism and various neo-Protestant or evangelical traditions. Various Reformation movements, which appeared in Eastern Europe later than in other parts of the continent, had a catalytic role in changing religious practices among Orthodox believers. The emergence of these new churches had a profound social, cultural and political impact on the region. In this inter-religious encounter, the Orthodox churches responded differently. Some had more organized forms of church renewal; others formed smaller fraternities or responded with informal gatherings of believers and inspiring preachers. Common for all these movements for religious renewal among Orthodox believers was their simultaneous appearance in different areas of Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth and first years of the twentieth centuries.

The renewal movements presented in the volume were all characterized by intensity of personal religious experience, holiness, discipline, communion, Scriptural authority, the use of vernacular languages in liturgical practice, hymn chanting, prayer, and the revival of pilgrimages and monasticism. The beginning of the twentieth century was marked by the development of their organizational capacities, which allowed them to become mass phenomena in the interwar period. They were all Christian in origin, although they varied in terms of their size, influence, methods for attracting members, behaviour and attitudes towards the Church and society. Established churches responded differently according to the specific circumstances, but most sought to channel these movements, aware that they could provoke religious renewal but also might have devastating consequences if they developed beyond Church control. The correlation and mutual influence between renewal movements was especially visible in border areas, such as between the Romanian Lord's Army, the Bulgarian fraternities and the Serbian God Worshippers. This phenomenon has not been researched enough, especially since contemporary fieldwork suggests the need for further in-depth studies.

Increasing interest in the roles and functions of Eastern Orthodox Churches in Europe has resulted in the publication of a great many studies on this topic in the fields of history of religion, theology and the anthropology of religion.<sup>1</sup> In the recent studies published on Eastern Christianity from the perspective of the anthropology of religion, the main focus has been on how religion was lived and transformed after

communism in Eastern Europe.<sup>2</sup> This has brought new insights into the changes that became visible after communism which developed during and even before the communist era. Relying on contemporary anthropological sources, we can observe how religious practices are changeable and influenced by different cultural and socio-political situations. Nevertheless, notions of “historical continuity” and “unchanging tradition” are still dominant discourses in the Orthodox world. As Chris Hann stresses, “Eastern Christians have their own complex histories, including disputes over theology as well as ecclesiastical organization, problematic relations with secular powers, and missionary expansion”.<sup>3</sup>

This collected volume is an attempt to step beyond disciplinary boundaries and analyse the diversity and similarities in Eastern Christianity from an interdisciplinary perspective. Without relying on a pre-existing definition, the volume intends to bring together research in this area and to try to clarify the term ‘renewal’ in Eastern Orthodoxy through case studies. The concept of renewal in Christianity has been widely explored, although little focus has been placed on Eastern Europe and its diverse understandings of this term. This diversity within Orthodox Christian renewal movements was reflected in the existence of several independent movements in the Eastern Orthodox world. Building on findings related to these movements in Eastern Europe, as well as many controversies and differences in interpretation, we found it necessary to gather scholars focusing on this topic and create a new study that combines different scholarly approaches. In doing so, we hope to provide a coherent picture of the development and impact of Orthodox renewal movements. In several national contexts, these movements had complex and sometimes different histories, but shared many common features. Their role was significant not only for the Orthodox churches in a variety of national contexts but also for the long-term relationship between political ideologies and state systems.

Thematically, the volume deals with the renewal movements that appeared in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries throughout the Orthodox world. Our primary interest is in religious renewal movements in the different countries of Eastern Europe where Orthodoxy is the predominant religion. From the late nineteenth century, much has been written about the abandonment of traditional religion and the birth of “cults” or new movements in the USA and Europe (Spiritualism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, etc.). The real rise of this research came after Second World War, with researchers

like the sociologist Bryan Wilson, the historian Clark Elmer, Marcus Bach and others. It is less well known that reform movements developed among Orthodox communities as dissatisfaction with the Church and a yearning to return to the principles of early Christianity increased.

Based on similarities and mutual impact on specific ecclesiastical and geographical contexts, the chapters in the volume are structured into three parts, alongside the prologue and introduction. With four chapters, first part focuses on the Russia, the Soviet Union and Ukraine. Reform movements, apostasy from the Orthodox Church and desires for restoration had already begun in Russian Orthodoxy in the late eighteenth century and lasted until the first half of the twentieth century. They were born as a reaction to the general crisis in the Russian Orthodox Church. The causes of the crisis lay in state interference in church affairs and the transformation of the Church into a state instrument for managing subjects and ideologically justifying the current political regime. The result of the growing dissatisfaction among some believers led to an increase in the number of apostates from the Church. At the same time, sectarian movements were reinforced and new ideas both within Russia and from outside gained weight. Growing number of believers yearned to return to authentic Christianity and restore the principles of the early Christian Church as an antidote against Byzantine theocracy, dogmatism, formalism and growing unbelief. In the first four chapters, readers can find examples of these developments such as *edinoverie*, Tolstoyism, the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood or Dukhobortsy and renovationism (*obnovlentshestvo*). In addition, the evangelical movements of Stundism (*Maliiovantsy*), Pashkovism and Baptism that began to spread in nineteenth-century Imperial Russia, particularly in Ukraine, had a significant influence on Orthodox believers and others. In the second part, several chapters are dedicated to the case of the God Worshipper movement and its influence on the Serbian Orthodox Church. We have paid special attention to the God Worshipper movement because it was the only movement developed within the Serbian Orthodox Church that had a strong influence on the transformation of religious life: it also attracted thousands of believers.<sup>4</sup> Each of the five chapters dedicated to the God Worshipper movement indicates important elements for its development: contact with other Reformation movements, language, music, pilgrimages and its role in Serbian society. The last part of the book is dedicated to movements in Greece, Romania and Bulgaria: while being specific, they had many similarities and maintained connections with the

God Worshipper Movement. These movements appeared in the same nineteenth-century environment, in the process of the “nationalization of Orthodoxy” during which, as Amaryllis Logotheti points out via Roudometof’s definition, “God became in effect not a universal God, but the God of a particular nation”. In the Kingdom of Romania, the rediscovery of Scripture and Christ at the beginning of the twentieth century had two major effects on the Romanian context and the provoked the appearance of *Oastea Domnului* (the Lord’s Army), a unique movement for spiritual renewal within the Romanian Orthodox Church. *Oastea Domnului* had great influence over believers in the Romanian Orthodox Church in the Yugoslav Banat in the interwar period. The Brotherhood of Theologians Zoe evolved from a semi-monastic brotherhood as a result of a religious revival in Greece and its members’ desire for spiritual growth. The reasons for the establishment of such a religious organization lay in the unresolved relations between the Church and the State and a crisis in the Greek Orthodox Church and society. Influenced by the Protestant example, the brotherhoods had a communal, semi-monastic character and accepted the three virtues of traditional Orthodox monasticism: celibacy, poverty and obedience. The case of the Union of the Christian Orthodox Fraternities in the Kingdom of Bulgaria was to some extent different because it was founded within the framework of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The main reason for its establishment was to foster monasticism in the country and revive the influence of the Church in society. It was inspired by Catholic orders and social organizations such as the Red Cross and the Child Protection Union, and it combined the monastic life with social activities and public events. It consolidated existing organizations at parish level “into one living spiritual body”, validated charity as a meaningful relationship between the clergy and laity and supported the restoration of the traditional authority of the BPC in social and national terms.

*Orthodox Christian Renewal Movements in Eastern Europe* represents a pioneering study, based as it is on the idea of bringing together particular case studies in order to identify how renewal movements developed in each national Orthodox Church and had a similar impact on changing religious practices, language, music and religious life in general. The closest comparable titles in this field are the studies of Bojan Aleksov, *Religious Dissent between the Modern and the National: Nazarenes in Hungary and Serbia 1850–1914* (2006), Lucian Leustean (ed.), *Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Nineteenth Century*

*Southeastern Europe* (2014), Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (eds.) *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and otherness: Values, Self-Reflection, Dialogue* (2014) and Ines Murzaku (ed.), *Monasticism in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Republics* (2016). Although these studies cover various aspects of both historical and contemporary developments of Eastern Orthodoxy, renewal movements were not their main research focus. Inspired by existing studies on the appearance of renewal in other Christian churches, especially within Pentecostal and charismatic groups, this volume makes a particular contribution to studying the notion of renewal in Eastern Orthodoxy.

Individual chapters examine what we understand by the term *renewal* in Orthodox traditions. More precisely, case studies in the volume include the God Worshippers in Serbia. The studies dedicated to this example look at the following aspects: the spread of the Nazarenes<sup>5</sup> among the Serbs and their influence on the God Worshippers (Bojan Aleksov); the emergence and development of the God Worshippers in the Serbian Orthodox Church (Radmila Radić and Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović); the influence of the God Worshipper movement on the language policies of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Ksenija J. Končarević); the characteristics of God Worshipper melopoetic experimentation (Dragan Ašković); and links between the movement and pilgrimages (Dragana Radisavljević Ćiparizović). Three contributions are devoted to specific cases, such as religious fraternities in Bulgaria (Galina Goncharova), the *Zoe* movement in Greece (Amaryllis Logotheti) and the “charismatic” Maliovannyi religious movement in the Ukrainian provinces of the late Russian Empire (Sergei Zhuk). The essay on the Dukhobortsy sectarians (who, like the Nazarenes in Serbia, were an eighteenth-century Protestant-esque sect that had an impact on the Russian Orthodox Church) in Russia (Svetlana Inikova) and the “Renovationists” in the Soviet state (Mikhail Vitalievich Shkarovskiy) analyse the phenomenon of renewal in Russian Orthodoxy. Corneliu Constantineanu’s contribution offers an example of church renewal in Romania and highlights the enduring power of Scripture to change lives and renew communities within an Eastern Orthodox context. Following Constantineanu’s chapter, Mircea Măran explores the spread of *Oastea Domnului* among Romanian Orthodox Christians in the part of the Banat given to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after the First World War.

Attention is paid also to key figures in renewal movements, from the individual contribution about the reformist churchman in late

imperial Russia Father Ioann Verkhovskii (James White) to the discussions in several chapters dedicated to other prominent figures like Archimandrite Efsevios Matthopoulos, Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, the Romanian Orthodox priests Dumitru Cornilescu and Dumitru Popescu and Iosif Trifa (the founder of the Lord's Army) and the Romanian Orthodox peasant poet Traian Dorz, the second leader of the Lord's Army in Romania.

Primarily analysed from historical, anthropological, sociological and theological points of view, the case studies presented in this collection bring us new data on the development of Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe from the late nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth centuries as it collided with novel influences. Studying the aforementioned religious and social changes from an interdisciplinary perspective, our aim is not to create a theoretical study on renewal movements in Orthodoxy, but to indicate, on the basis of empirical data, how Orthodox Christianity was transformed by various influences such as other non-Orthodox religious traditions, charismatic leaders, women's agency, and new religious practices and rituals. In this context, the term *renewal* reveals the dynamic of change within Orthodox churches expressed in the development of these movements. By tracing various transformations in Orthodox churches, the volume also seeks to explore the influence that modern ideas had on Orthodox religious movements, as well as the methods by which traditional religions faced the challenges of modernity. Thus, it represents an important step in contextualizing the social role of church institutions, social welfare, experiences of modernity and the patterns of social developments. The volume demonstrates the correlation of movements in different Orthodox countries and the similarities and differences between them (e.g. similar responses of the Orthodox Churches to the challenges of secularization, the influx of liberal ideas from the West and the appearance of new religious traditions such as neo-Protestant communities). Some chapters indicate how different branches of Protestant Christianity had a significant influence on the development of these movements. During the Second World War and the communist era in the countries of Eastern Europe, most of these movements ended up going underground or vanishing. Even though their influence weakened in the second half of the twentieth century, it is still present today. Based on the presented case studies in the volume, future research on renewal movements in Eastern Europe could bring new insights into their development in the post-communist context, especially in terms of religious revival after years of state atheism.

The most significant innovation in modern religious culture is a growing interest in what the anthropologist of religion Paul Heelas terms “self-religions”. The Orthodox churches in Eastern Europe were not excluded from the broader changes taking place within the Christian world at the beginning of the twentieth century. This period has been characterized by believers’ growing alienation from churches, the separation of Church and State and the rise of religiosity with an emphasis on personal involvement. Religious changes and mutual influences within different Orthodox traditions are taken together in this volume with the aim to provide a deeper understanding of renewal processes in the spiritual landscape of Orthodoxy.

## NOTES

1. Ware (1991, 1993, 1997 and 2015 [first published 1964]), Fitzgerald (1998), Lossky (2001), Losch (2002), Binns (2002), Angold (2006), Jenkins (2008), Parry (2010), Casiday (2012), Louth (2013), Leustean (2014), Krawchuk, Bremer (2014), Murzaku (2015).
2. Cannell (2005), pp. 335–356. Hann, Hermann (2010), Roudometof, Agadjanian, Pankhurst (2005).
3. Hann (2011), p. 25.
4. The modern borders of Serbia contain the territories of different political entities from the past—Austria, Hungary, the Principality of Serbia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia—and different organizations of the Serbian Orthodox Church.
5. The Nazarenes in the Habsburg Monarchy and its successor states are to be distinguished from the American denomination known as the Western Holiness Church of the Nazarene, which emerged around the turn of the twentieth century in USA. The Nazarenes in this volume represent a different group from the one in the USA. In Europe, they were known as the Evangelical Baptist Church, which was founded in the early 1830s by Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich from Switzerland. The turn of the nineteenth century saw the peak of Nazarene expansion in Hungary, but it also witnessed the beginning of a wave of ongoing overseas emigration. German-speaking immigrants led the way in establishing contacts with their overseas brethren (Fröhlich’s followers from Switzerland and Germany, who had already established their communities in the USA and Canada). As soon as news about their freedoms and opportunities reached the Hungarian plain, Serbs, Slovaks, Hungarians and Rumanians followed, all joining the Apostolic Christian Church, as the Nazarenes are called in America. The ACC took root in America in 1847, when a Church was

organized in Lewis County, New York. As immigrants came from Europe (mostly from the Froehlich churches) and new converts joined in the USA, the Church flourished. By 1907, they already outnumbered the old Swiss and German congregations and started their own Church in Akron, Ohio, and elsewhere. Disagreements arose over some of the customs of the European immigrants and the use of German, which was the official language of congregations in America and Canada until the early decades of the twentieth century. The ACC split into the ACC of America (ACCA), the ACC Nazarene (ACCN), and the German Apostolic Christian Church. Almost all of the brethren descending from Austro-Hungary and its successor states later joined the ACCN, which remained the more conservative branch (the fact that only church members could witness baptisms and weddings, the practice of separate seating for men and women during church services, etc. clashed with views and practices of American members). In some churches, services are still held in Serbian, in others in Romanian, Slovak and Hungarian. Aleksov (2006), pp. 180–181.

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Orthodox Christian Renewal Movements in Eastern  
Europe

Djurić Milovanović, A.; Radić, R. (Eds.)

2017, XV, 339 p. 3 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-63353-4