To Be Continued: The Religious and Social Life of Russia's Regions

Review of: *The Religious and Social Life of Russia's Regions* (Religiozno-obshchestvennaia zhizn' rossiiskikh regionov). Vol. 3 / Ed. S. Filatov. Moscow: Letnii sad, 2018 (in Russian). — 468 pages.

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In May 2018, the third volume of the encyclopedia *The Religious and Social Life of the Russian Regions* was published. This is the twelfth volume published jointly by representatives of the Russian academic community and the Keston Institute (Great Britain) in the framework of the research project "An Encyclopedia of Contemporary Religious Life in Russia." The purpose of this ambitious project is to describe the main trends taking place in the religious and social life of the Russian regions. The editors of the encyclopedia and of the current volume are Sergey Filatov (senior researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences), Roman Lunkin (head of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society of the Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences), and Ksenia Dennen (president of the Keston Institute).

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Structure

The order of material presented in the third volume follows the strategy previously chosen by the editors — it is given by region, in alphabetical order. The first volume dealt with the religious and political situation of nineteen regions (A to I — from Adygea to

Ingushetia); the second volume included fourteen regions (I to K — from the Irkutsk region to the Krasnoyarsk Territory); and the third covers eleven regions from K to N (the Kurgan, Kursk, Lipetsk, Magadan regions, the Chukotka autonomous region, the republics of Mari El and Mordovia, and the Murmansk, Nizhny Novgorod, Novgorod and Novosibirsk regions).

The disadvantages of presenting the material in alphabetical order in each volume have already been discussed in detail (Bogachev 2017). Among the main problems it is worth noting: (1) the logistic difficulties of collecting the information; the authors, following this order, are forced to move back and forth from one end of the country to the other; (2) the readers' cognitive difficulties in absorbing the material, because alphabetical sequencing removes regions from their geographical, socioculturral and political-economic context, readers have to constantly jump from the religious and social specifics of one region of the Federation to those of another in order to appreciate the contents of the book.

In a number of cases, the author's team itself deviates from the chosen strategy of presenting the material. Thus in the first volume the Nenets Autonomous District (NAO), in violation of alphabetical sequence, is presented after the Arkhangelsk region (in fairness it should be noted that the NAO is formally part of the Arkhangelsk region, both a subject of the Russian Federation and an integral part of the region). At the same time, the Jewish Autonomous Region was not described at all, either in the first or in second volume.[1] However, the third volume holds the record for deviations from the rule originally adopted by the authors. In violation of alphabetic sequence, it does not include: the Republic of Crimea; the Leningrad Region; or Moscow (which will be the subject of the last volume of the encyclopedia); the Moscow Region; or the Nenets Autonomous Area (since the latter was presented in the first volume). But the new edition includes the Chukotka Autonomous Region (ChAO), which is presented after the Magadan region. However, the ChAO has not been part of the Magadan region for more than a quarter of a century (it left in 1992 and is currently only one of four autonomous regions in Russia that does not belong to another entity in the federation); in this regard, its location in the third volume of the encyclopedia is puzzling.

1. In Russian, the "Evreiskaia avtonomnaia oblast'," starts with "e," the sixth letter in the Cyrillic Russian alphabet (–Trans.).

A separate chapter is devoted to each region of the federation. The chapters feature informational-analytical descriptions of the religious and social life of each region in 30–40 pages. Within chapters, the material being presented is structurally divided into several blocks: the narrative begins with an introductory section on "Characteristics of the Historical Development of Religion," which lists key historical events in the region and gives a brief retelling of mythologized traditions concerning the local saints who founded important churches and monasteries there. After that comes information about the organizational structure and special nature of religious life in the region; covered are: the Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, Old Belief, Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Islam, Paganism.

A large part of each chapter is devoted to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), and this section includes several components: Organizational Structure, Features of Diocesean Life, State Religious Policy and the ROC; Number [of Adherents]; Educational Institutions; Monasticism. The section with the promising title "Organizational Structure" includes information on the number of dioceses (*eparkhii*) that make up the archdiocese (*mitropoliia*) and condensed biographies of current metropolitans and bishops. This section does not offer analytical information but may be useful for getting a sense of the main channels of social mobility in church circles. For the general reader, the sections of greatest interest concern the features of diocesan life and the authorities' religious policy, sections that paint a not necessarily bleak but generally severe picture of the religious and social life of the Russian regions.

Features of Diocesan Life

The world of the ROC can be provisionally divided into three levels whose daily existence and consciousness differ significantly: the level of the Patriarchate; the level of dioceses and archdioceses; and the district and parish level. The Patriarchate focuses mainly on solving geopolitical problems: building relations with international parties, interacting with the federal authorities, and finding a balance among opposing forces within the church.

At the level of dioceses and archdioceses the church lives a different life. On the one hand, dioceses and archdioceses are compelled to observe the centralizing course set by the patriarchate and to formally comply with its initiatives, but on the other hand they have significant

independence in deciding their own internal issues. Often the façade of church officialdom conceals a myriad of financial, economic, ideological, personnel and personal conflicts that determine the specifics of religious and social life in the regions. According to the data presented in the publication, the diocesan and archdiocesan departments of the Russian Orthodox Church are mostly occupied by people of authoritarian character and a conservative, paternalistic worldview; many of them sympathize with monarchical and anti-ecumenical ideas. They are suspicious of all forms of community self-organization; they demand unquestioning obedience and are ruthless toward active clergymen who show initiative. In many regions described in the third volume of the encyclopedia there are cases recorded of clergymen who gained recognition among laymen but who were unacceptable to the church leadership due to their popularity or "liberal" views and who were banned from ministry (in the Kurgan, Kursk, Murmansk, Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk, and Chukotka regions).

In turn, at the district and parish level the church is in a most unenviable position. It is here that the burden of "feudal" financial support for higher-ranking churches falls and this is the place where the actual problems of serving society are encountered, difficulties that are compounded by the shortage of qualified personnel and the small number of parishioners. The many economic problems faced by members of the lower church have various consequences. On the one hand, the existing difficulties contribute to the apolitical nature and ecumenical neutrality of its clergy and parishioners, which increases their subordination, but on the other hand, it is precisely economic disorder that creates the demand for democratization and liberalization of church life, for dialogue and interaction with the non-Orthodox and people of other faiths. These demands come into conflict with the authoritarianism of the diocesan and archdiocesan leadership and frequently lay the foundation for conflicts between the flock, headed by ordinary clergymen, and regional church hierarchs.

Government Religious Policy and the ROC

The relationship between church and state in the Russian Federation has not changed significantly in recent years. To this day, there is no normative document on the federal level in Russia that would go beyond articles 13 and 14 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation and establish principles for relations between the state and

religious organizations, regulating their interaction. In the absence of an official, centralized state policy in the sphere of church-state relations, secular authorities and the ROC continue to remain the main players in the religious and social sphere. Moreover, the actions of the federal government in relation to religious organizations are in many ways utilitarian and ostentatiously loyal to the church. On the one hand, religion (in particular, Orthodoxy) is used by the authorities as a "spiritual unifier," a collective mark of identity that unites the atomized population into a single whole, a means for the cultural homogenization of Russian society, legitimizing the political regime and an instrument for influencing international politics. On the other hand, the secular authorities have been trying to distance themselves from religious and church-related scandals, and in these difficult times for the church they maintain an emphatically neutral, secular attitude, adhering to the letter of the law.

In the absence of a centralized religious policy, regional officials are forced to seek "signals" from the federal authorities, even if they do not exist, and to carry out the ruler's will as they interpret it. As one of the Protestant pastors who gave an interview to the authors of the project notes: "The authorities hold the principled position that the ROC is 'the most important church, and bureaucrats look to the president who is standing in the temple with a candle'" (p. 102). As a result, in most of the constituent units of the federation the state's religious policy has a moderately pro-Orthodox coloration. This moderate pro-Orthodox policy is manifested in the following ways. Within reasonable limits, the authorities finance and facilitate the realization of most of the ROC's requests; in particular, they help the ROC with the construction of cathedrals, allocate land and money for building churches, and they pay the church and clergy's expenses for housing and communal services or give them special rates. However, they prevent attempts by the clergy to influence regional cultural and educational policies and they block Orthodox hierarchs from attacking religious minorities (in the Kurgan and Novosibirsk regions).

At the same time, there are also regions where the official religious policy can be characterized as extremely pro-Orthodox (the Lipetsk region under Oleg Korolev, Mordovia under Nikolai Merkushkin and Vladimir Volkov). The essence of this policy boils down to the full support of all of the ROC's initiatives; facilitating the Orthodox clergy's penetration into all spheres of social and political life, including the regional ministries; very active construction of reli-

gious facilities, and forcing officials and businessmen to finance the construction of churches (pp. 116, 213, 243), as well as putting pressure on religious minorities and persecuting their representatives. In such areas bishops become full-fledged political figures who, thanks to their "close business and friendly relations" (p. 93) with the main regional authorities, are able "to solve all issues directly" (p. 213) and to influence not only the religious, but also the economic and political life of the region. For example, in the Nizhny Novgorod region under the governorship of Valery Shantsev, in the Volga Federal District, or, to be more precise, during Alexander Konovalov's rule as his plenipotentiary (2005–2008), "With the tacit consent of this presiding officer the new and energetic Nizhny Novgorod Bishop George demanded [tribute] from local businessmen for the construction and restoration of churches" (p. 294).

As a main indicator of the state religious policy pursued in a region, one can use the attitude of the authorities toward religious minorities (primarily Protestants). If the life of the Protestant communities is regularly made difficult (houses of worship taken away, mass events prohibited, barriers are created to renting premises, defamation of "sectarians" occuring with impunity in the regional and municipal media, etc.), then the region is instituting overly pro-Orthodox policies. If on the other hand the authorities try "not to notice" religious minorities, accept their assistance with social services, and in some cases even intercede for them when their constitutional rights are violated, then we may call this a moderately pro-Orthodox policy. Additional indicators for determining the political course taken by regional authorities in the sphere of church-state relations include: the composition and frequency of meetings of the council for interaction with religious organizations of the regional parliament or administration (if the council only includes representatives of the authorities and the ROC it suggests that the region carries out extremely pro-Orthodox policies; if representatives of "traditional" religions are present in the council, then it more likely takes a moderately pro-Orthodox position; and if Catholics and Protestants are allowed, then a moderately pro-Orthodox policy has clearly been established); the frequency of applying the "Yarovaya law"[2] in the region; as well as the proportion

2. This refers to a pair of Russian federal laws drafted by deputy Irina Yarovaya and Senator Viktor Ozerov passed in 2016 concerning counterterrorism and public safety measures; they also placed new restrictions on "evangelism" and missionary activities (–Trans.).

of schoolchildren who chose to take the course "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture" in the ORKSE[3] program (the high "popularity" of the course in a region is often a sign of coercion on the part of the secular and religious authorities).

The nature of the state religious policy pursued in a given region depends entirely on the ideology of the people responsible for making decisions on the relevant issues, the degree of their objectivity and their resistance to pressure on the part of bishops. First of all, this concerns the governor and the specialist on religious matters who serves in his administration. In the 1990s and early 2000s a sharp change in church-state relations was frequent after a change of the governor; as a rule, politicians who were politically neutral and/or negatively inclined toward the ROC immediately halted or reduced official financing for the restoration and construction of churches (pp. 53, 286), while those who were loyal to the ROC, on the contrary, increased church subsidies and put pressure on businessmen, who were forced to make "charitable" contributions to them (pp. 116, 243–44, 294). However, in the 2010s radical changes in regional religious policies no longer occur due to the fact that all of the political players have mastered the established rules of the game concerning the pro-Orthodox consensus.

It is noteworthy that during their stay in power, even prominent Communist figures, members of the CPSU[4] and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (Alexander Mikhailov in the Kursk region, Gennady Khodyrev in Nizhny Novgorod), changed their attitude to the ROC and became its members. It is also interesting that the governors' time spent on finding a path to God and changing their attitude toward the church by a strange coincidence coincided with their political conversion and transition from the Communist Party to United Russia (Khodyrev changed his political stripes in 2002, and Mikhailov exchanged his red party card for a blue one in 2004–2005).

At the same time, it should be noted that in the context of the prolonged economic crisis, accompanied by foreign sanctions, it has become increasingly difficult for regional authorities to find means to finance the long-term results of the actively pro-Orthodox policies of their predecessors. As Alexander Evstifeev, elected in 2017 as head of the Republic of Mari El,

3. ORKSE — "The Foundations of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics" (–Trans.).

4. Communist Party of the Soviet Union (–Trans.).

noted in an interview with TASS: "Over the past ten years, many Orthodox churches have been built in Yoshkar-Ola. [. . .] and the burden of caring for churches falls on the city budget, since the parishes are not able to cope with the expenditure. In a word, this is a big headache for us" (Vandenko 2017).

The Position of Regional Authorities

The logic that guides the regional authorities in conducting a moderately pro-Orthodox policy can be explained not only by their attempts to anticipate the officially undeclared wishes of the federal government, but also by the peculiarities of the bureaucratic worldview. Regional authorities often view religious institutions as an aid in solving social problems (p. 152, 292). Thus, "The position of Governor Oleg Korolev is that the Church is a stronghold and support of the authorities, without which it is impossible to raise the younger generation or to struggle against various social vices. Independently the state cannot provide this kind of social activity. Therefore, the Church and the state maintain a mutual symbiosis. From the point of view of power, this way is easier to prevent any kind of conflict, therefore it is precisely the Orthodox who conduct the education of the younger generation, everything from childhood on, as early as in Sunday school" (p. 95). In this respect, the case of the Lipetsk region is curious. There the secular authority was the most active lobbyist for the separation of the Voronezh diocese from the independent Lipetsk diocese, and later for the formation of a Lipetsk archdiocese, since as part of the Voronezh diocese Lipetsk churches and church social services were largely deprived of the support of their main sponsor — the Lipetsk Metallurgical Plant (NLMK).

At the same time, bureaucrats adhere to the principle of "little blood," which consists in minimizing costs and maximizing their own usefulness, and the principle "as long as we don't get in trouble,"[5] which amounts to preventing civil initiatives in their domain. Minimizing costs incurred by the authorities is often manifested in the desire to interact only with large bureaucratized organizations that have an impact on a broad public. It is easier for officials to work with similar rigidly hierarchical structures than with religious minorities that are numerous in organizational terms but relatively small in terms of followers. "According to an employee of the adminis-

5. A rough translation of the colloquial phrase spoken by the pusillanimous title character in Chekhov's well-known story "The Man in a Case" (–Trans.).

tration, the number of Orthodox parishes in the region is stable, and the other faiths can't play the same role as the ROC ('The question arises: is there a need for any other organizations? In comparison with Orthodoxy, they are a drop in the bucket')" (p. 94).

In turn, fear of the possible consequences of processes that are not under official control has prevented civil initiatives on the part of religious minorities, as has the "stink" that the ROC has raised concerning this issue. "Indulgence" toward minorities causes dissatisfaction among Orthodox hierarchs who claim a priority, if not a monopoly, of rights over religious and public space. "They sought to establish [church-state] relations strictly within the framework of the law and of equal treatment for all faiths. This position of the regional authorities aroused strong criticism from Archbishop Simon who accused officials 'of indifference to the needs of Orthodoxy and connivance with the religious aggression of Western missionaries. [. . .] The absence of zeal in aiding the diocese and permitting the existence of many religious minorities in the city also prompted Archbishop Simon to criticize city officials'" (p. 244). The ROC's dissatisfaction often results in complaints and slander that escalate the problem and attract the attention of the federal authorities and public opinion (in the Murmansk, Nizhny Novgorod, Novgorod and Novosibirsk regions), which is also an undesirable consequence for regional authorities.

Nevertheless, in a number of cases the pragmatism of the authorities has benefited both religious minorities and society. The authorities are ready to interact with organizations that provide free assistance to people and that "do not pursue proselyting goals" (p. 54). "As officials note, the Orthodox have long criticized Protestants' initiatives, but they themselves have not previously engaged in this kind of social service," according to Lymar', head of the Department for Relations with Religious Organizations of the Novosibirsk Region's Committee on Relations with Religious, National and Charitable Organizations. "The parents of a drug addict do not care what kind of a church he belongs to — the main thing is that he stays alive" (p. 408).

The Position of the Church Hierarchs

One can also trace a certain logic in the actions of the ROC leadership. For the last quarter century the ROC has adhered to a strategy of large-scale development whose main goal is to "stake out" its place, to signal its presence, in all spheres; hence the clergy's active presence in the media and in

the country's socio-political and cultural-symbolic space. Priests energetically work to create images of the faith and of the majority church and to buttress support for Orthodoxy and the ROC; they sponsor the construction of cathedrals all over the country, the restoration of destroyed and abandoned churches (even if there is no one to conduct services and no one to conduct them for), the erection of crosses, and they try to have a presence at all secular events. It is understood that in the future, after secularized Russian society gets used to the proximity of religious institutions, and when the church, weakened by Soviet Union's atheistic policy, will become strong and increase its financial, economic and theological power, an active stage of preaching the Gospel and God's Word will begin. However, at the moment the church is still in the stage of "the initial accumulation of capital," whose main support comes from the state. "His Grace Arkady, who became the first Magadan bishop, was not distinguished by piety or a special gift for preaching, but he was able to establish good relations with local authorities in order to obtain the means necessary to build churches and a monastery" (p. 110).

At the same time, however paradoxically, the ROC seeks to minimize its dependence on the state and to create an autonomous system of church life support independent of the secular authorities. For the clergy the memory of the fact that government support (like that of the state itself) is not constant is still fresh and they realize that this support is not disinterested and may have unsure consequences for the church. With this in mind, the calculated interaction of the ROC with the authorities focuses not so much on power structures in general, but on the specific individuals who make decisions and it builds relations with them that are "not simply warm, but very intimate" (p. 280). With the help of targeted pressure on regional leaders, church hierarchs manage to obtain all kinds of resources and privileges; thus regional and local administrations exempt the ROC from tax on property used for non-religious purposes; provide space for offices and hierarchs of the ROC for free; allocate land to them for construction; subsidize various activities; and put pressure on the ROC's competitors in the religious market. The church reallocates administrative resources obtained through lobbying to various purposes, the most important of which, apart from symbolic construction projects, are economic, cultural and educational, social and "anti-sectarian."

The church structures are vigorously working to create a fi-

nancial and economic base; they acquire agricultural land and organize private farms (p. 44, 408) because "preaching and piety in the church are secondary, the main thing is to create an economic base. Only after that is the stable development of the church possible" (p. 111). The ROC also actively promotes religious socialization in the educational system, especially in primary and secondary schools and children's camps; it publishes Orthodox literature; supplies libraries with textbooks; retrains teachers; creates theological departments and faculties; and does all it can to increase the number of parents who choose the course "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture" for their children. This course includes "the presentation of Orthodox doctrine, church history and the Orthodox understanding of Russian history, Russian literature and culture" (p. 41). The authors of the encyclopedia note that there has been a tendency in the ROC in recent years for a qualitative change in regard to social services: the Orthodox leadership (not without the influence of the secular authorities) has begun to gradually move away from symbolic activities and to become involved in real social work such as rehab centers, medical institutions, orphanages, prisons, shelters, etc.

Another area of interaction between the ROC and regional secular authorities is the fight against religious minorities. By obtaining administrative resources the ROC is trying to oust its competitors from the religious market, primarily Protestant churches, which Orthodox media activists often depict as "totalitarian and destructive sects." "Under Guria, the relationship between the government and the diocese became even stronger and discrimination against minorities became the norm" (pp. 116–17). Representatives of religious minorities are removed from councils on interaction with religious organizations; deprived of houses of worship; their requests to have old church buildings returned and to be provided with land for new ones are refused; they are prevented from renting premises for worship; they are fined for preaching; they are terrorized by constant prosecutorial inspections, etc. Representatives of the ROC perceive with hostility any activity on the part of alternative religious organizations, whether it is an attempt to build a mosque (p. 117), create a Catholic monastery (p. 273), or organize Protestant processions (p. 349). The result of such actions is not only the escalation of tension in the region, but also the suppression of the Protestants' social services, which are dramatically more vigorous and successful than the Orthodox. Protestants are not al-

lowed to work with prisoners; the alcohol and drug addiction rehabilitation centers they supervise are closed; they are not permitted to help the homeless publicly; and state and municipal organizations are prohibited from receiving help from them. "For example, in 2010, during massive fires in the region, the Adventists decided to bring supplies to an orphanage, but an announcement was posted on the building that orphanages may only accept help from the CPRF,[6] LDPR,[7] United Russia and the ROC" (p. 319).

New Challenges in Church-State Relations

The security forces have been another beneficiary of the oppression of various minorities. The coming into force of the Yarovaya-Ozerov amendment package,[8] whose religiously oriented section was lobbied for by the ROC, has led to the fact that Russian religious life has become an arena in which law enforcement agencies can earn "sticks" (indicators of fulfilled quotas for detecting crimes).

However, the use of security forces as a tool to fight competitors can be a double-edged sword and have uncertain consequences, not only for religious minorities, but also for the ROC itself. Involving organizations in the religious sphere that adhere to a hawkish strategy of behavior and that possess their own institutional logic of development (there is a law — there must be arrests) is like opening a Pandora's box. At this point in time, the ROC manages to direct the repressive machine in the required direction and to act as an apologist for "national and state security" (p. 10) and as defender of "the spiritual and political unity of the people" (p. 114). In this regard, an incident recorded by the authors of the encyclopedia that took place in the Kursk region is remarkable. A member of the Protestant community refused to "cooperate" with the FSB: "The FSB officers did not expect such a thing from a church representative and they began to argue that, after all, Russian Orthodox Church clergy cooperate with the FSB, and that Baptists 'should also cooperate and be patriotic'" (p. 72). However, at any moment the gears of the security machine may begin to turn on their own, become uncontrollable, and, having questioned the patriotism of church structures, turn against the ROC itself. Moreover, there are grounds for such a fear.

At the presentation of the third volume of the encyclopedia, Ser-

6. Communist Party of the Russian Federation. (–Trans.).
7. Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. (–Trans.).
8. See note 2.

gey Filatov, speaking of new challenges that he had recorded in the sphere of church-state relations, stated that the ROC "has taken the first step toward an independent voice." "On the most important political issue, the ROC spoke with its own voice [. . . and] did not take a position on the [war in] Donbass" (which from Roman Lunkin's point of view is also a position), and it began to "criticize the government's economic policy." The state system as a whole and the federal secular authorities in particular regard the ROC as a tool in achieving their own domestic and foreign policy goals. Frequently, actions that the authorities force on the church leadership sharply conflict with ROC positions and undermine its interests. Thus the secular authorities, taking advantage of the more or less ecclesiastical idea of the "Russian world," not only devalued a doctrine that is important to the Moscow Patriarchate but also repelled the Ukrainian Orthodox, who make up almost a third of the parishes of the ROC Moscow patriarchate, weakening the international position of the Moscow Patriarch, who had always positioned himself as the pastor of the entire post-Soviet space, not just Russia. Attempts by the secular authorities to use religious means to break out of international isolation by sending the patriarch as a negotiator and as goodwill envoy to Havana, Sofia, and Istanbul also created a whole series of problems for the Moscow patriarchate, from accusations of ecumenism within the country to accusations of hypocrisy, desire for material gain and collaboration with the KGB abroad. The Kremlin is ready to sacrifice the interests of the church for its own geopolitical goals, stifling any attempts by church leaders to resist and preventing this with the help of the mass media it controls (e.g., the cycle of investigations on "Lenta.ru" [the Moscow-based online newspaper controlled by the Kremlin]) and with the help of law enforcement agencies, increasing their control over the church's revenue (e.g., replacing the leadership of *Sofrino*). But how long the church is ready to tolerate coercion and how it will emerge from the crisis of church-state relations, so far from the "symphonic" ideal, remains a question.

Speaking about new challenges in the sphere of church-state relations, it is necessary to highlight one more issue. During his presentation of the encyclopedia Sergey Filatov noted that in modern Russia "religion has turned out to be perhaps the strongest custodian and voice of regional differences in worldview and of regional consciousness." This remark is especially relevant due to changes in the federal policy concerning the teaching of national languages. In August 2018, the president of the Russian Federation signed a law

on the study of native languages in schools that gave parents of pupils in national republics the right to choose which language their children will learn as their mother tongue. This law simplifies the life of ethnic Russians who were previously obliged to learn the language of the region's main ethnic group. At the same time, the law strikes a blow against the practice of using the national language in the process of nation-building that exists in a number of Russian republics. In this regard it is highly probable that the significance of religion as a factor ensuring the preservation and continuity of ethnic, cultural, ideological and national differences, as well as the degree of its politicization in the national regions of the Russian Federation (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Mari El, Udmurtia, the North Caucasian Republics), will increase in the near future.

Conclusion

In concluding this review of the third volume of the continuing large-scale encyclopedia *Religious and Social Life of the Russian Regions*, it should be recognized that the authors' collective has completed a work tremendous in volume and unique in content. One may, of course, criticize various aspects of the volume. For example: when describing religious associations that are alternative to the ROC, there is a clear bias toward Protestant churches; there is a lack of information (or lack of interest on the authors' part?) about the role of Islam in the Russian regions; and the questions raised above remain about the method of selecting specialists and religious leaders to interview for the encyclopedia and about the need to disclose the methods that were used in conducting research for it. However, in general the new volume deserves a positive assessment: the material it contains is characterized by high quality analysis and is presented in accessible language. This work deserves the attention of specialists of various profiles and will take a worthy place on the shelf of specialists in church-state relations, scholars of religion, sociologists and political scientists interested in religion, and it will also be useful to citizens who are curious about the religious and social-political situation in the Russian regions.

M. Bogachev (Translated by Marcus Levitt)

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