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Ajzenkol's "Crkva pred izazovima medija [Church Facing Challenges of Media: Liturgy Symbolism, Performance and Media Translation of the Roman Catholic Service]" - Book Review

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BOOK REVIEWS

Marijana Ajzenkol, *Crkva pred izazovima medija* [Church Facing Challenges of Media: Liturgy Symbolism, Performance and Media Translation of the Roman Catholic Service]. Zemun: MOSTART, 2011. pp.114. Reviewed by Dr. Dubravka Đjurić.

The book written by Marijana Ajzenkol deals with the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church, in a modern manner. The author begins with the liturgy as a form of communication of people with God, as well as of the priest with the faithful. Every communication is based on the use of certain signs/symbols, which within the system of communication have their own explicate meanings. That is why it is possible to see the liturgy as a system of signs that serve for communication inside the institution of the Church. Marijana Ajzenkol analyzes in detail that process of communication, applying semiotic analysis. Relying on authors such as Joseph Gelineau, whose book was translated during the 1970s under the title, *Pastoral Theology of Liturgical Celebrations*, Ajzenkol examines forms of the liturgy. The liturgy is viewed as a communication system, which uses complex language made of words, gestures and objects as signs which in that system have certain meanings. This analysis demonstrates how objects from everyday life turn into signs of language of the liturgy. The author explains the meanings that the signs generate to their nominators (words, movements and objects) and to the denominators (to what the nominators refer to, what they point out). Liturgical symbolism shows itself as influencing actors of this event. And here we are in the area of performativity.

Having in mind that in the last two decades the idea of performativity has transcended disciplines of different scientific fields, it is interesting how Marijana Ajzenkol applies it while interpreting the liturgy. With this aim the author considered the theories developed in the area of performance studies, and then she implemented them in her interpretation of the liturgy. Referring to the founder of anthropological theater, Richard Schechner, as well as to other authors who were engaged in anthropological theater and performance studies, Ajzenkol indicates some similarities and differences that can be perceived in the performance of the Church and the theater ritual. The anthropological theater, founded in the 1960s, referred to spiritual rituals that hope to transform the Western theater and bring it closer to life, as spiritual rituals do, violating for the Western theater a constitutive difference between the performer as an actor and audience as passive viewers. That meant that the audience themselves became an active part of the theatrical event. So, performativity becomes an important category, because theatrical ritual as a time-space event with many actors, activates the transformative power, following the example of religious rituals.

On the other hand, the concept of performance is expanded so that other different forms of behavior and situations can be its sub-forms. In the field of religious studies, authors like Ivan Sask, to whom the author also refers, debates the idea of performance in liturgy. An essay by this author is named "Verbal speech in liturgy and its performativity". One can talk about liturgy as a performance, as a scenographical expression and a verbal performativity. The difference is in an institutional framework that gives a context to performance, as well as in a function of that performance in a certain event, that takes place in front of the audience, whereby the institutional framework determines the roles of actors in the event, as well as the entire meaning and function of the event.

Another important modern theoretical concept that Marijana Ajzenkol uses is the concept of translation. She explains that the liturgy can be seen as a 'translation' of an invisible event into visible performance. The process of communication is often defined as a translation. In order to

understand each other, we always have to translate the other one who speaks to us. Explaining the concepts of encoding (coded messages) and its decoding, the author applies them to the liturgy as a process of a specific communication.

Having in mind that we live in the age of domination of media culture, the author deals with the subject of the relationship of media and the Roman Catholic Church. The question is, to which measure the Church can use contemporary media (newspaper, radio and television) in order to promulgate its faith? Media literacy is an imperative for all of us today, and consequently, also for the people active in Church life. For this reason, the author urges that the possibilities afforded by modern media should be used in a creative way, which implies not only to educate the clergy, but also that people working with the media who are also adherents of the Church, be better educated, so that they can broadcast the liturgy with the maximum efficiency for the benefit of those who watch the TV broadcast.

The book of Marijana Ajzenkol presents in a complex way the relationship of religion and modern culture in a time when religion is becoming important for the practice of people throughout the world but especially for those living in cultural regions of post-socialism and transition, such as Serbia and the rest of Eastern Europe. She shows how we can think and speak about religion with contemporary theoretical concepts, which is an imperative of the time we live in, and in which global changes take place.

Reviewed by Dr. Dubravka Djuric, professor at the School of Media and Culture, Belgrade University, Serbia.

Andrey Puzynin, *The Tradition of the Gospel Christians. A Study of Their Identity and Theology during the Russian, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Periods*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications 2011. xiii-xl, 1-313. Price 39.00 US paperback. Reviewed by Mark McCarthy.

Ever since the mid-1980s and the development of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* the state of East European historiography has been changing quite dramatically. That change only increased with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of fifteen newly independent states and the corresponding opening of formerly restricted archival and library resources. Not only were earlier historical assumptions being reevaluated, but whole new topics of research were presenting themselves as people began to realize that paths of historical development once thought to be closed were now possible again. This led people to begin to look for the historical roots of a whole host of contemporary issues including political freedom and the democratic tradition within Slavic history prior to 1917.

It is no surprise, then, that religious history of Eastern Europe has experienced a dramatic increase in interest over the past twenty years with the resurgence of Orthodox and other religious traditions. Andrey Puzynin's new monograph, *The Tradition of the Gospel Christians*, fits in quite nicely with this reexamination of Eastern Europe's past. In his work, Puzynin attempts to trace the identity and theology of the Gospel Christians from their inception in the 1870s up until the present time. The motivation for this study was an attempt to deal with a twofold crisis of identity and theology that has developed among Ukrainian Protestants in the present day.

Puzynin carries out his study in seven easily managed chapters. His first chapter deals with the birth of the movement with the arrival of the British evangelist Lord Radstock in St. Petersburg in the early 1870s. Puzynin argues Radstock must be seen as an evangelical influenced by the Plymouth Brethren and early Keswick movements. The second chapter analyzes the main publication of the Gospel Christians, their monthly magazine, *The Russian Worker*, in which one can