

University of Alberta

**Building Orthodox Communities outside Mother Russia: Church and
Colonization in Omsk Diocese, 1885-1917**

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the social, cultural, and institutional interaction of Russian Orthodox settlers, clergymen, bishops, Orthodox leaders, and state officials, both local and national, during the colonization of Siberia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The arrival of millions of peasant-settlers to the region constituted one of the Russian state's most ambitious imperial undertakings. Omsk diocese, created in 1895, and encompassing part of the Kazakh Steppe and the territory surrounding Omsk, comprised one of the destinations chosen by settlers to establish new communities. This dissertation explores Omsk diocese as a frontier, or a site of interaction, where these groups collaborated, and at times struggled, with each other as they attempted to rebuild Orthodox religious institutions and life in Siberia. While the church, state, and settlers agreed that building parishes complete with churches, priests, and schools constituted a fundamental need that must be fulfilled in order to establish a functioning community capable of perpetuating "Russian" cultural values, the process of building these parishes and engaging in Orthodox practices highlighted the tensions that existed between and among these groups. Religious pluralism, changing social identities, competing authorities, the breakdown of traditional authority in the villages, debates over the professionalization of the clerical ranks, and the bureaucratization and standardization of religious life – conditions associated with the creation of the modern world – appeared in Siberia during colonization. While many of these tensions reflected the social and cultural changes afoot in the empire, on the frontier, they took on a life of their own. This dissertation argues that the frontier created a space which forced the state, the

church, and settlers to discuss and explore local and national expectations, aspirations, and fears assigned to the process of creating communities in an expanding and modernizing imperial Russia.

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Although I haven't always wanted to admit it, my Mennonite heritage has been a driving force in my curiosity about the Russian empire. I could tell people that my grandmother was born near the Caspian Sea before I could ever locate it on a map, let alone understand what that really meant. While Siberia has little to do with her story, or that of my grandfather who was born in Ukraine, as staunch Mennonites, they would have been pleased at the support I've received from many people in the community. Ken Reddig's strength and wisdom has been a source of inspiration. A Mennonite conference in Omsk introduced me to Marlene Epp, who has become a much-appreciated mentor. Peter Letkemann has been the source of stimulating conversations and Royden Loewen, Hans Werner, and Lawrence Klippenstein have provided opportunities and encouragement along the way. Paul Toews and Olga Shmakina proved lively company outside the archives and admirable tour guides in Zaporizhzhia and St. Petersburg.

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Introduction

The colonization of Siberia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was one of the most ambitious projects pursued by the Russian state. In 1911, Prime Minister Petr Stolypin described Siberia as a land “rich in everything except people...”¹ Resettlement, Stolypin knew, would drive the future of Siberia and transform it in a way that Russia’s previous contact with the region had failed to stimulate.² Only settlers had the capacity to truly alter this vast space. The state’s invitation to resettle was heartily accepted in many communities in European Russia. Millions of peasant-settlers trekked across the empire for the opportunity to find affordable land, a luxury that their homelands could not offer them. The building of the Trans-Siberian railway, which began in 1891, connected Russia proper to Siberia and eased the journey of settlers.

In 1896, Anatolii Kulomzin, who headed the Committee of the Siberian Railway, began a three-month trip through the region to witness the resettlement of peasant-settlers. For imperial figures like Kulomzin, the colonization of Siberia

¹ Petr Arkad’evich Stolypin and Aleksandr Vasil’evich Krivoshein, *Poezdka v sibir’ i povolzh’e: zapiska P.A. Stolypina i A.V. Krivosheina* (St. Petersburg: Tip. A.S. Suvorina, 1911), 7.

² Like Charles Steinwedel, I will use the words colonization and resettlement interchangeably in this dissertation. His practice reflects the usage in the sources, which Willard Sunderland was the first to comment on. See Charles Steinwedel, “Resettling People, Upsetting the Empire: Migration and the Challenges of Governance 1861-1917,” in *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, ed. Nicholas Breyfogle, Willard Sunderland and Abby M. Schrader (New York: Routledge, 2007), 142; Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 88, 156, 158, 194. For more on Stolypin’s land reforms, see David Macey, “Reflections on Peasant Adaptation in Rural Russia at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century: The Stolypin Agrarian Reforms,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 31 (July 2004): 400–426; Judith Pallot, *Land Reform in Russia, 1906-1917: Peasant Responses to Stolypin’s Project of Rural Transformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999). For more on the issue of land in Siberia, see Alberto Masoero, “Layers of Property in the Tsar’s Settlement Colony: Projects of Land Privatization in Siberia in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Central Asian Survey* 29, no. 1 (March 2010): 9–32; Steinwedel, 135-137.

represented the Russian empire claiming its position as one of the premier European powers. As he explored the realities of colonization and pondered the best ways to address the needs of settlers, Kulomzin expressed a concern for traditional elements of colonization such as settling pioneers on tillable land, and spent a considerable amount of time contemplating the religious consequences of this endeavour. He recognized that the institutional struggles of the Orthodox Church in responding to the religious needs of its new parishioners had social and cultural implications for Russia's imperial mission in the region. To aid the church in its work, Kulomzin used donations collected through the Emperor Alexander III fund, which was established in 1894, to organize the building of churches and schools across Siberia.

On his trip, Kulomzin passed through Omsk diocese in western Siberia, which had been established the year before. Omsk, the capital of this new diocesan see, resembled an overgrown Siberian village, with only the town's centre and the railway station indicating its administrative importance. From his episcopal residence there, Bishop Grigorii (Poletaev) oversaw the institutional growth of the Orthodox Church and worked to deepen its cultural influence on the frontier. Even with the support of religious and secular authorities in St. Petersburg, his efforts to build Orthodox communities in this new diocese proved arduous. Bishop Grigorii and his successors had to contend with the conditions of the frontier: distance, constantly changing demographics, ethnic and religious diversity, insufficient and ill-prepared staff, nearly empty diocesan coffers and hardly an onion dome in sight. His diocese also was not immune to the problems

of a typical European diocese, as modern life served the Church a platter of challenges and opportunities in its efforts to create strong parishes, engaged parishioners and effective clergymen.

Kulomzin visited countless settler villages during his tour. Siberia offered settlers plenty of land; however, other necessities of peasant life were absent. New settlers found themselves without access to what they perceived as an essential part of their lives: their ability to practise the Orthodox faith. The journey by land, water and rail to Siberia had not dampened their desire to worship in an Orthodox church. Upon their arrival in the diocese, settlers expected to have access to the same religious infrastructure that existed in European Russia. The fact that they were “outside” of Russia only strengthened their sense of entitlement. Settlers wondered, for instance, how they could be left without churches and surrounded by non-Russian and non-Orthodox populations. For settlers, the church represented continuity in their lives; resettlement for them was primarily about land, not adventure or freedom. The goal of their efforts and their sacrifices was not to leave behind their old lives, but rather to maintain their rural way of life. Settlers understood the Orthodox Church as one of the primary institutions to support and perpetuate the traditions of their communities.

This dissertation examines the social, cultural, and institutional interaction of Russian Orthodox settlers, clergymen, bishops, Orthodox leaders, and state officials, both local and national, during the colonization of Siberia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The arrival of millions of peasant-settlers to the region constituted one of the Russian state’s most ambitious imperial

undertakings. Omsk diocese, created in 1895, and encompassing part of the Kazakh Steppe and the territory surrounding Omsk, comprised one of the destinations chosen by settlers to establish new communities. This dissertation explores Omsk diocese as a frontier, or a site of interaction, where these groups collaborated, and at times struggled, with each other as they attempted to rebuild Orthodox religious institutions and life in Siberia. While the Church, state, and settlers agreed that building parishes complete with churches, priests, and schools constituted a fundamental need that must be fulfilled in order to establish a functioning community capable of perpetuating “Russian” cultural values, the process of building these parishes and engaging in Orthodox practices highlighted the tensions that existed between and among these groups. Religious pluralism, changing social identities, competing authorities, the breakdown of traditional authority in the villages, debates over the professionalization of the clerical ranks, and the bureaucratization and standardization of religious life – conditions associated with the creation of the modern world – appeared in Siberia during colonization. While many of these tensions reflected social and cultural changes afoot in the empire, Siberian conditions seemed to put them in sharp relief, and on the frontier these tensions took on a life of their own. This dissertation argues that the frontier created a space which forced the state, the Church, and settlers to discuss and explore local and national expectations, aspirations, and fears associated with the process of creating communities in an expanding and modernizing empire. Religion performed a critical role in this exploration, as it represented a traditional pillar of community life in rural Russia.

Russia's political engagement with Siberia began in the sixteenth century as the Stroganov family, by invitation of Tsar Ivan IV, sent Cossack mercenaries to explore the riches, particularly in furs, of Siberia. Although Russian troops established forts and settled parts of the land, Russians primarily explored and exploited Siberia, instead of subduing it through intensive colonization.³ This changed in the second half of the nineteenth century, as Siberia became an important site for the resettlement of peasants.⁴ The flow of migrants, while steady throughout this period, grew exponentially from the 1890s and onward. In 1858, the non-indigenous population (Russians and other ethnicities) of Siberia was 2,288,036; by 1897, this number stood at 4,889,633 and between 1897 and 1911, this number increased to 8,393,469.⁵ The post-1890 round of Siberian resettlement coincided with a particularly volatile period in Russian history: its development as a modern state and empire. Technological feats like the building of the Trans-Siberian railway not only advertised the scientific advancements of the state and the intrepidity of the Russian spirit, they also had tremendous political consequences by signalling to imperial competitors in Asian territories that Russia would be a strong player in the geopolitical game underway. Yet, as the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 would reveal, the Russian empire was less

³ For more on colonization and Siberia, see Eva-Maria Stolberg, *Sibirien: Russlands "Wilder Osten": Mythos und soziale Realität im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2009); Eva-Maria Stolberg, "The Siberian Frontier and Russia's Position in World History: A Reply to Aust and Nolte," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 27, no. 3 (January 2004): 243–267; Martin Aust, "Russia Siberica: Russian-Siberian History Compared to Medieval Conquest and Modern Colonialism," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 27, no. 3 (January 2004): 181–205; Eva-Maria Stolberg, "The Siberian Frontier Between 'White Mission' and 'Yellow Peril,' 1890s-1920s," *Nationalities Papers* 32, no. 1 (March 2004): 165–181; Alan Wood, *The History of Siberia: From Russian Conquest to Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 1991); W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Donald W. Treadgold, *The Great Siberian Migration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

⁴ Treadgold, 33.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 32. This number does not include Central Asia, where part of Omsk diocese was located.

prepared than expected to back up its projection of power in the region. The loss of the war and the abrupt turn to parliamentary politics with the formation of the Duma and the recognition of individual rights (albeit imperfectly) in 1905 contributed to the atmosphere of transformation which was already underway economically. The growth of Russia's economy, driven by agriculture and industrialization, combined with the rise of literacy rates in the empire created the potential for new social classes to rise and existing ones to be altered.

Siberia was not immune to or detached from these developments. In Omsk diocese, towns such as Omsk, Petropavlovsk, Semipalatinsk, Tara, and others experienced tremendous growth sparked by the development of industries and the settler movement which added to their populations and increased their profiles as centres for trade and goods. Thousands of settlers arrived annually to the Kazakh Steppe, thereby developing the region's agricultural potential. A large population of nomadic Muslim Kazakhs inhabited the steppe provinces of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk, and initially outnumbered the Russian population significantly.⁶ Upon arrival, these settlers established homes on land owned by the state or rented from the Kazakhs and the Cossacks, the latter who had settled in the region since the end of the sixteenth century.⁷ The majority of settlers in the region,

⁶ For more on the Kazakhs and the settlement of the Kazakh steppe, see Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987); Virginia Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe: The Kazakhs of the Middle Horde and Russian Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Richmond: Routledge Curzon, 2001); George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969); Ian Wylie Campbell, "Knowledge and Power on the Kazakh Steppe, 1845-1917" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2011); and Ian W. Campbell, "Settlement Promoted, Settlement Contested: The Shcherbina Expedition of 1896-1903," *Central Asian Survey* 30, no. 3/4 (December 2011): 423-436.

⁷ For more on the right of Kazakhs to rent their land, see Olcott, 88. For more on the Cossacks in Siberia, see Christoph Witzenrath, *Cossacks and the Russian Empire, 1598-1725: Manipulation, Rebellion and Expansion into Siberia* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

therefore, did not directly own the land they sowed.⁸ And Orthodox settlers were not the only ones to arrive on the steppe: Germans, Mennonites, and various other Russian sectarian and dissenter groups put down roots alongside the Kazakh population, tsarist officials, Orthodox clergymen and their flocks.

I use the term “frontier” throughout this dissertation. The concept of a frontier as a space of cultural interaction between settlers, indigenous peoples and nature which influences the development of institutions and national character was proposed by historian Frederick Jackson Turner in the late nineteenth century and has subsequently sparked a massive body of scholarship. As Mark Bassin points out, Russian intellectuals in the nineteenth century also thought and wrote about the frontier and its significance for Russia’s national development, which shows that many of the issues raised by Turner were also on the minds of Russian scholars as they witnessed the expansion of their empire.⁹ In current-day scholarship, our definition of the term frontier has expanded to acknowledge the ambiguities and complexities of cultural contact. Instead of lines, scholars describe frontiers as “zones” and have added temporal and locational limitations. Thus David Weber defines frontiers as “zones where the cultures of the invader and of the invaded contend with one another and with their physical environment to produce a dynamic that is unique to time and place.”¹⁰ I borrow this definition to analyze Siberia as a frontier, but with one important change. Instead of

⁸ Masoero, “Layers of Property in the Tsar’s Settlement Colony”; Alberto Masoero, “Territorial Colonization in Late Imperial Russia,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian & Eurasian History* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 59–91.

⁹ Mark Bassin, “Turner, Solov’ev, and the ‘Frontier Hypothesis’: The Nationalist Signification of Open Spaces,” *Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 3 (1993): 473–511.

¹⁰ David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 9. Russianists have also emphasized the importance of time and space for understanding the development of the Russian empire. See Breyfogle, Schrader and Sunderland, 7.

emphasizing contact between the colonizer and colonized, my dissertation illuminates how the context of the frontier created new opportunities for contact between Russians themselves and, by extension, compelled them to ponder the boundaries of their community and the significance of religious faith for their identity.

As Siberia constitutes such a large, formidable landmass, focusing on one diocese creates a more manageable territory to explore in detail. Omsk diocese consisted of over a million square kilometres of territory, or almost twice the size of France, and encompassed parts of Tobol'sk and Tomsk provinces and the Kazakh Steppe provinces of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk (in current-day Kazakhstan). Indeed, in contemporary literature Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk tend to be assigned to the geographical category of Central Asia.¹¹ Yet, church and state officials referred to Omsk diocese as being a part of Siberia, which highlights the ambiguity of where this territory belongs.

In reality, all the dioceses of Siberia would have something to offer for the study of the role of religion on the frontier. However, a number of factors make Omsk diocese an attractive case study. First, as a site of intensive settlement during the period under investigation, Omsk appears as an obvious candidate. After 1889, the state allowed peasants from any province to petition for permission to resettle; prior to that year, only peasants from overpopulated regions

¹¹ See Richard A. Pierce, *Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960); S.N. Abashin, D.Iu Arapov, and N.E Bektakhanova, eds., *Tsentrāl'naia Aziia v sostave rossiiskoi imperii* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2008); and L. Dameshek and A. Remnev, *Sibir' v sostave rossiiskoi imperii* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007).

in European Russia could request to migrate.¹² In Asiatic Russia, these migrants would be allotted 40.5 acres (15 desiatinas) per person and the new legislation included the provinces of Akmolinsk, Semirechye and Semipalatinsk.¹³ This caused a massive influx of population to these territories. In the diocese, the Orthodox population almost tripled in less than twenty-years from 528, 414 in 1896 to 1,477,067 souls by 1914.¹⁴ Also, Omsk offered an opportunity to study the development of a diocese forged in the complicated environment of colonization. Established dioceses like Tomsk and Tobol'sk had time in which to develop the cohesion of their institutional culture, whereas Omsk diocese had to be built from scratch. In such a young diocese, the strains of colonization were on full display. And particular features of Omsk exacerbated issues experienced by all dioceses. For example, the absence of a theological seminary made clerical shortages, an issue that existed across the region, more acute in Omsk diocese. Therefore, although certain features of Omsk diocese might be considered exceptional, we can still extrapolate from the example of Omsk to draw conclusions about the entire region.

Russian engagement in Siberia must be understood in the broader context of the European settler movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The movement of people, facilitated by advances in transportation technologies and a desire for land and opportunity, spread European culture across the globe.¹⁵

¹² Pierce, *Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule*, 120.

¹³ Treadgold, 79.

¹⁴ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviatishhego sinoda za 1896-1897gody, vedomosti za 1896-97* (St. Petersburg, 1899), 14 and *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviatishhego sinoda za 1914, vedomosti za 1914 god* (St. Petersburg, 1916), 26.

¹⁵ On the settler movement as a global process, see Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); James Belich,

Settlers flocked to places like North America, South America, Australia, but also Siberia.¹⁶ The Russian state studied the policies and organizational structure of states accepting new immigrants, just as other states watched the colonization of Siberia and Russia's foothold in Asia with awe and trepidation. Recently, scholars have attempted to integrate these stories by examining the commonalities between environment, state policies, experience of settlers, and the articulation of a nationalist project between the Russian and North American cases.¹⁷

Much remains unknown about the role of religion and the institutional church in settler communities in a global context. Faith and membership in a confessional community, both locally and globally, influenced the way in which European settlers experienced their new homelands. Religion not only tied settlers culturally to the metropole, but also institutionally. Omsk diocese offers an important example of how a state church functioned in this era of European migration. Historians studying the British and Canadian cases have shed light on the religious implications of the European settler movement. Hilary Carey offers an in-depth analysis of the development of a Christian empire emanating from Great Britain. She argues that churches planted in settler communities were not left to their own devices, but rather viewed as part of the calling of Protestant and

Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-world, 1783-1939 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

¹⁶ Return migration was an important element of this story that has been under-emphasized in the past. Many settlers around the world, including those to Siberia, returned to their original homelands.

¹⁷ For example, Steven Sabol, "Comparing American and Russian Internal Colonization: The 'Touch of Civilisation' on the Sioux and Kazakhs," *Western Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 29-51; and Kate Brown, "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place," *American Historical Review* 106, no.1 (2001): 14-48.

Catholic churches in the homeland.¹⁸ Pamela Welch offers a case study of an Anglican settler diocese in colonial Zimbabwe. She addresses key issues that similarly affected the Russian church in Siberia, such as the financial and clerical support from the metropole for local churches and the religious practices of settlers. From this study, she concludes that a “distinct, local, religious identity... emerged, which could be seen, for example, in the architecture and decoration of both settler and mission churches.”¹⁹ Howard Le Couteur explores the role of Anglican High Churchmen in maintaining institutional control over the Church of England in empire and the close involvement of England’s colonial office in helping in the creation of new bishoprics in the colonies.²⁰ Frances Swyripa explores how the local environment, both physical and cultural, influenced the development of these settler societies and how bonds with their homelands and diaspora communities also performed an important role in how these groups interacted with and understood their new homelands.²¹

The Siberian story reflects many of these themes. For instance, like their Anglican counterparts, Russian Orthodox leaders also understood their work in Siberia as fulfilling the church’s destiny of creating a Christian empire which would transform the world. By involving the Orthodox faithful in the process

¹⁸ Hilary Carey, *God’s Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c.1801-1908* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁹ Pamela Welch, *Church and Settler in Colonial Zimbabwe: A Study in the History of the Anglican Diocese of Mashonaland/Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1925* (Boston: Brill 2008), 232. Welch also published another treatment of settler churches in this case in Australia: Pamela Welch, “Constructing Colonial Christianities: With Particular Reference to Anglicanism in Australia ca 1850-1940,” *Journal of Religious History* 32, no.2 (June 2008): 234-255.

²⁰ Howard Le Couteur, “Anglican High Churchmen and the Expansion of Empire,” *Journal of Religious History* 32, no.2 (June 2008): 213.

²¹ Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010).

through yearly collections to fund the religious development of Asiatic Russia, the church encouraged parishioners to think beyond their local identities and to envision their faith in an imperial context. State officials and church representatives also developed close ties as they supported the expansion of the institutional church into Russian imperial space. Welsh's argument that a new religious culture emerged in Zimbabwe among settlers seems too strong for the Siberian case, where state and church officials often helped in (and monitored) the building process. Nonetheless, the frontier shaped the priorities of the settlers, who focused on developing the religious infrastructure necessary to engaged in religious practices associated with life-cycle events: funerals, baptisms, and marriages.²² As in the case of migrants to the Canadian prairies, the strong bond of Russian settlers to their homeland was manifested in religious practice. These similarities existed in spite of two fundamental differences: the Russian empire was contiguous and until the end of the Romanov empire, the Russian Orthodox Church was the official church of the Russian state and therefore had privileges not legally extended to other recognized faiths in the empire.

In the case of Siberia, the contiguous nature of the empire has raised the question of whether Siberia should be considered a frontier or a colony or both simultaneously. How the lands integrated into the empire through imperial expansion related to those lands considered historically Russian is a source of debate. In the case of Omsk diocese, settlers to Siberia consistently referred to the territory they had left as "Russia," thereby demonstrating that they saw their settlement in Siberia as being outside their concept of the motherland. This

²² Thanks to John-Paul Himka for pointing this out.

supports Alexei Miller's argument that despite being a contiguous empire, Russians distinguished between the nation-state and the empire.²³ Yet, state officials, religious leaders and settlers did not question the right of Russians to establish a permanent presence on the land. The expectation that this land would become an indivisible part of Russia underlay this engagement. As Mark Bassin has argued, Russians viewed Siberia as being simultaneously foreign and an extension of the "Russian heartland."²⁴

The nature of the relationship between the state and the Orthodox Church remains a highly contested issue in Russian history. Although the Orthodox Church was privileged in the empire, its relationship to the state was in transition. Jennifer Hedda has labeled the decade between revolutions as the "the decade of despair" in terms of church-state relationships. She characterizes the state as pursuing policies that "undermined the church's influence, contradicted the church's values, or compromised the church's agenda."²⁵ While that might describe the feeling of the priests in St. Petersburg whom Hedda studies, such a characterization does not fit the Siberian story. The case of Siberia illustrates how the agendas of church and state united in the imperial borderland; the Orthodox Church performed duties and undertook initiatives that the state viewed as essential to resettlement. This relationship allowed both sides to achieve a level of success that would not have been possible without the other.

²³ Alexei Miller, "The Empire and the Nation in the Imagination of Russian Nationalism," in *Imperial Rule*, ed. Alexei Miller and Alfred Rieber (New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 9-26.

²⁴ See "Siberia: Colony and Frontier," *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, no.1 (Winter 2013): 1.

²⁵ Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 176.

As this dissertation will illuminate, the Orthodox Church actively participated in colonization policy and thereby maintained its relevance in a modernizing empire. The Orthodox Church represented the strongest institution – besides the state – in Siberia. The sheer number of clergy working in Asiatic Russia provides evidence of the Orthodox Church's institutional significance: in 1914, over ten thousand clergymen worked in the region.²⁶ Unlike state officials, who tended to be concentrated in administrative centres, these clergymen were spread out over rural and urban areas.²⁷ As a result, Siberian clergymen, like their counterparts in European Russia, had an intimate understanding of daily life in the villages. Instead of being pushed to the sidelines, faith was incorporated into the bureaucratic structure administering resettlement. The Church and state both recognized the importance of supporting Orthodox life in settler communities, and they collaborated with each other to help settlers establish the building blocks of the parish: churches, schools and homes for the clergy. Secular and religious officials viewed this activity as essential to the resettlement process. Yet, tensions still existed. These tensions arose less from competing agendas and more from different ideas about how best to fulfil such a mandate. Cooperation created multiple centres of authority, which posed difficulties for church officials, who attempted to follow the rule of the consistory and fulfil their mandate to foster religious life in Omsk diocese. Settlers, keen to have their community's needs

²⁶ This number was calculated from *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviatishhego sinoda za 1914 god, vedomosti za 1914 god* (St. Petersburg, 1916), 24-25. It includes the dioceses of Blagoveshchensk, Vladivostok, Ekaterinburg, Enisei, Transbaikal, Irkusk, Omsk, Orenburg, Tobolsk, Tomsk, Turkestan and Yakutsk.

²⁷ For a sample of the many administrative tasks of state officials in the region, see *Pamiatnaia knizhka Akmolinskoi oblasti na 1913 god* (Omsk: Akmolinskaia Oblastnaia Tipografiia, 1913).

addressed, frequently attempted to exploit this diffusion of power, particularly through petitioning state officials when diocesan officials responded negatively to their requests. In this way, settlers showed initiative and engagement in their relationship with the state and the Church.

While the Church did not have to justify its importance to the state during colonization, it did have competition. By the early twentieth century, the Church imagined enemies of the Russian Orthodox faith to be hiding in every parish in the empire, and irreligion or religious rationalism to be lurking in the hearts of the formerly faithful Russians. Siberia was no exception. Orthodox settlers were not the only migrants to arrive; dissenters and sectarians of all stripes settled the land, in addition to the large Old Believer population already living in the region. These alternatives to the Orthodox faith caused great anxiety for religious and secular officials, as well as for settlers. The Russian state dreamed that colonization would be a coordinated and well-organized endeavour that would showcase the power and control of the Russian empire and contribute to its future strength. These groups interfered with the dream of Russian Orthodox settlers planting Russian culture and thereby binding Siberia to the empire.

Although a large body of academic literature exists on the political, economic, and social components of Russia's colonization of Siberia in the late nineteenth century, few studies focus on the role of religion in this process, particularly in shaping the establishment of new settlement communities.²⁸ Even

²⁸ For example, Steven G. Marks, *Road to Power: The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia, 1850-1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); James Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia: Russia's North Asian Colony, 1581-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Abashin et al., *Tsentral'naia Aziia v sostave rossiiskoi imperii*;

less understood is the contribution of Orthodox peasant-settlers to the expansion of the empire.²⁹ Russian peasants themselves engaged church and state officials, demanding that their religious needs be recognized. Peasant-settlers had little concern about Europeanness and Russia's Great Power status. For them, everyday life as defined by work, land, community, family, and faith preoccupied their thoughts more than claims to imperial greatness. Letters written by settlers to their relatives in European Russia illustrate the depth of these concerns.³⁰ This, however, does not diminish the cultural impact of their presence on the frontier. In particular, scholarship on the contribution of the peasantry to colonizing Russia's territorial acquisitions and establishing outposts of Russian culture has illuminated the process by which the empire expanded, was consolidated and eventually collapsed.³¹

Wood, *The History of Siberia*; M. K. Churkin, *Pereseleniia krest'ian chernozemnogo tsentra Evropeiskoi Rossii v Zapadnuu Sibir' vo vtoroi polovine XIX-nachale XX vv.: determiniruiushchie faktory migratsionnoi mobil'nosti i adaptatsii: monografiia* (Omsk: Omskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet, 2006).

²⁹ Willard Sunderland and David Moon have explored this issue in most detail. See David Moon, "Peasant Migration and the Settlement of Russia's Frontiers, 1550-1897," *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1997): 859; Willard Sunderland, "Peasants on the Move: State Peasant Resettlement in Imperial Russia, 1805-1830s," *Russian Review* 52, no. 4 (October 1993): 472; Willard Sunderland, "Peasant Pioneering: Russian Peasant Settlers Describe Colonization and the Eastern Frontier, 1880s-1910s," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 895. A recent article by Lewis Siegelbaum explores the role of scouts on the frontier: see "Those Elusive Scouts: Pioneering Peasants and the Russian State, 1870-1950," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, no.1 (Winter 2013): 31-58.

³⁰ Sunderland's research also supports this position. See Sunderland, "Peasant Pioneering," 909. In general, collections of letters peasants describing Siberian life are difficult to find. A few document collections exist which shed light on the lives of peasants in the region as they described it to each other. Olga Yokoyama, *Russian Peasant Letters: Life and Times of a 19th-century Family* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010). For a general treatment of biases in letters from peasants, see Sunderland, "Peasant Pioneers," 902-903.

³¹ A number of studies offer new approaches to understanding the development of the empire, especially by integrating formerly unappreciated actors such as local administrators, religious sectarians, missionaries from various faiths, and peasants. See, for example, Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009); Jeff

The experience of settlers in Siberia illustrates how localized Orthodox practice still remained at the end of the nineteenth century and how such differences negatively influenced the formation of new Orthodox communities on the frontier. Conflicts frequently occurred among settlers and between settlers and priests over religious practices. These conflicts, however, should not be interpreted as a weakness of Orthodoxy, but rather as emphatically underlining the strength of the Orthodox Church, the significance of faith to the lives of the common people, and their knowledge of their own Orthodox practices. The depth of such knowledge in Siberia dovetails with the position of Vera Shevzov, Robert Greene, Chris Chulos, and others, who argue that Orthodox parishioners in late imperial Russia, the majority of whom were peasants, understood their faith. As these authors have shown, Orthodoxy bound communities together in a multiplicity of ways, through church-building, processions, or canonization campaigns, among many other acts of piety.³² While such unity did exist, as my research shows, their shared Orthodox faith did not automatically establish strong ties between Russian settlers; instead, a common identity had to be built slowly, through interaction.

Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent: 1865-1923* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making Of A Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Paul Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky, eds., *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

³¹ Bassin, *Imperial Visions*, 263.

³² Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Valerie Kivelson and Robert H. Greene, eds., *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice Under the Tsars* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Robert H. Greene, *Bodies Like Bright Stars: Saints and Relics in Orthodox Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); Chris J. Chulos, *Converging Worlds: Religion and Community in Peasant Russia, 1861-1917* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003).

Over the last decade, Russian scholarship on the Orthodox Church in Siberia – in particular its development and missions – has developed rapidly. These works tend to be organized by territory, focusing on particular dioceses or regions of the eastern part of the Russian empire. Many explore the institutional development of the church in the region. In the case of Western Siberia, many studies take that regional designation as their starting point, combining research on Tobol'sk, Omsk and Tomsk dioceses.³³ In some ways, such an approach makes sense, offering an overview of several dioceses that shared a number of characteristics: unmanageable distances, underdeveloped parishes, and eventually, waves of settlers overrunning the land. Also, since Omsk diocese was only carved out of Tobol'sk and Tomsk in 1895, meshing the three territories together allows researchers to investigate a larger swath of time. Yet, such an approach hides the differences that existed between the dioceses. Tobol'sk and Tomsk were both historic entities that had greater institutional experience and stability than Omsk, the new kid on the block.

Another trend in Russian historiography is to focus on specific dioceses in Siberia. This new work has contributed much to our understanding of the influence of the Orthodox Church on the cultural development of the region.

Unfortunately, few monographs or dissertations exist on Omsk diocese

³³ A. Adamenko, *Prikhody Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi na iuge Zapadnoi Sibiri v XVII-nachale XX veka* (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 2004). T. N. Kogol', *Vzaimootnosheniia Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi i gosudarstva v pervoe desiatiletie sovetskoi vlasti: istoricheskii analiz na materialakh Zapadnoi Sibiri monografiia* (Tomsk: Tomskii gos. pedagogicheskii universitet, 2005). G. Mavliutova, *Missionerskaia deiatel'nost' Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi v Severo-Zapadnoi Sibiri, XIX - nachalo XX veka* (Tiumen': Izd-vo Tiimenskogo gos. universiteta, 2001); V.A. Lipinskaia, "Konfessional'nye gruppy pravoslavnogo naseleniia Zapadnoi Sibiri (vtoraia polovina XIX-nachalo XX v.)," *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* 2 (1995): 113–127; T. N. Guseinova, *Missionerskaia deiatel'nost' Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi sredi staroobriadtsev v Zabaikal'e: XVIII-nachalo XX vv.* (Ulan-Ude: Izdatel'sko-poligr. kompleks FGOU VPO VSGAKI, 2006).

specifically.³⁴ Instead scholars focus their attention on the historically more important dioceses of Tobol'sk and Tomsk.³⁵ One partial exception has been the work of Iuliia Lysenko, who analyzes the development of the church on the Kazakh steppe, which extended beyond the parameters of Omsk diocese. According to Lysenko, church-building on the steppe served not only the purpose of addressing religious need, but also supported Russia's projection of power and prestige to its Muslim population.³⁶ Lysenko offers a provocative argument that highlights the motivation of certain participants in church-building. Yet, sources from the state and the Holy Synod repeatedly stressed the needs of settlers as the motivating factor for church-building and the significance of their role cannot be overlooked.

Such a flurry of activity analyzing the Orthodox Church in Siberia has not occurred in Western scholarship. The limited, though nonetheless strong, research

³⁴ The work that does exist tends to be church publications. For example, S. V. Golubtsov, *Istoriia Omskoi eparkhii: Obrazovanie Omskoi eparkhii. Predstoiatel'stvo Preosviashchennogo Grigoriia na Omskoi Kafedre, 1895-1900 gg* (Omsk: Poligraf, 2008); *V vere li vy?: Zhitie i trudy sviashchennomuchenika Sil'vestra, archiepiskopa Omskogo*, ed. Feodosii Protsiuk (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 2006).

³⁵ Iu. Gizei, *Tserkovno-prikhodskaiia shkola Tomskoi eparkhii, 1884-1917* (Candidate diss., Kemerovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2004); Valeriia Anatol'evna Esipova, "Prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo Zapadnoi Sibiri v period reform i kontrreform vtoroi poloviny XIX veka na materialakh Tomskoi eparkhii" (Candidate diss., Tomskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1996); Elena Makarcheva, "Soslovnye problemy dukhovenstva Sibiri i tserkovnoe obrazovanie v kontse XVIII-pervoi poloviny XIX: po materialam Tobol'skoi eparkhii" (Candidate diss., Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk, Novosibirsk, 2001). Nonetheless, shorter articles do exist on Omsk diocese, drawing our attention to the important ways in which Omsk diocesan officials contributed to the cultural development of the region. These articles focus, for instance, on the creation of parish libraries, the temperance movement in the diocese and the educational levels of the clergy. For example, O.V. Ushakova, "Dukhovenstvo Omskoi eparkhii i trezvennoe dvizhenie v 1907-1914 gg: po materialam Omskikh eparkhial'nykh vedomostei," *Tezisy dokladov i soobshchenii tret'ei regional'noi nauchno-metodicheskoi konferentsii* (Omsk, 1994).

³⁶ Iuliia Lysenko, "Tserkovnoe stroitel'stvo v stepnom krae v nachale XX veka kak faktor formirovaniia polozhitel'nogo obraza Rossii v regione," <http://image-of-russia.livejournal.com/19208.html> (accessed 04/07/2012).

focuses primarily on the Orthodox Church's missions to indigenous populations.³⁷

For hundreds of years, this constituted the primary work of the Church in the region, as missionaries braved the harsh climate to spread their version of salvation among the indigenous people. This research on Siberian religious life has broadened our knowledge of the interaction between indigenous peoples and the Russian Orthodox Church; it has not, however, contributed to our understanding of Russian Orthodox Church's role in colonization and how the arrival of Russian settlers influenced the agenda (and significance) of church activity in the region

This study makes use of a wide variety of sources from both the imperial centre and the frontier. In the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), I searched through the records of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, the office of its Chief Procurator, the Siberian Railway Committee and the Resettlement Administration. This group of sources provides the perspectives of both the church and state in relation to the settler movement. In Moscow, the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) hold the personal papers of Ioann Vostorgov, a central figure in the resettlement story. For the local perspective, I worked with the Omsk diocesan consistory papers at the Historical Archive of Omsk Oblast' (IsAOO). In addition to these archival materials, this study draws on a wide range of printed sources. A few key journals include: *Omsk Diocesan News (Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti)*, which provides in-depth coverage of the issues deemed

³⁷ For an example of research on the religious interaction between indigenous peoples and the Russian Orthodox Church see Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Andrei A. Znamenski, *Shamanism and Christianity: Native Encounters with Russian Orthodox Missions in Siberia and Alaska, 1820-1917* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999).

significant by local clergy; *The Missionary Review* (*Missionerskoe obozrenie*); the *Orthodox Evangelist* (*Pravoslavnyi blagovestnik*), which illuminate how colonization influenced the missionary activities of the Orthodox Church in the region; *Church News* (*Tserkovnye vedomosti*), which provides the perspective of the Holy Synod that oversaw church affairs emanating from the centre; and the newspaper *The Village Herald* (*Sel'skii vestnik*) and the journal *Siberian Questions* (*Sibirskie voprosy*), which printed letters from settlers in Siberia and also provides a secular perspective. This combination of sources provides multiple perspectives on how colonization shaped the Siberian frontier.

Chapter one explores the church's engagement with Siberia beginning in 1885. This year was significant, as it saw a concerted effort by church leaders in Siberia to create a coherent vision of the church's mandate in the region and to collaborate with the state to bring this vision to fruition. Initially, Siberian bishops aspired to spread Orthodoxy among the diverse indigenous peoples of Siberia and to curtail the growth of Islam. They proposed and managed to obtain permission to open two new dioceses, Omsk and Transbaikal, to deepen the institutional presence of the Orthodox Church in the region. The implications of the state opening Siberia to widespread settlement did not even enter into the conversations of the bishops, who were conceptualizing their work according to a different set of principles. They viewed the spread of Orthodoxy as a duty of the church to help the state russify the region. Remarkably, the administrative improvements proposed by Siberian bishops for aiding in the spread of Christianity had a positive influence on colonization. Many settlers flocked to the western Siberian

provinces, settling in the territories affected by the creation of Omsk and Transbaikal dioceses, and as a result of these prior changes, the Orthodox Church had a somewhat adequate administrative foundation for addressing their religious needs.

This chapter also introduces Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov who played an important role in organizing the church-state response to settlers in the region and who trained clergy for work in Siberia. Despite his active presence within political and religious life in late imperial Russia, Vostorgov has not received much attention in scholarly literature. His controversial association with the Union of the Russian People, an extreme nationalist and monarchist political party, is perhaps one reason for the silence. In spite of his political activities and his insignificant position within the church institutional hierarchy, Vostorgov wielded unprecedented power in relation to the religious development of Siberia. The Holy Synod sent him on numerous trips throughout the region to collect information on the progress of resettlement and the future religious needs of settlers. Vostorgov articulated a compelling vision of how state and church work in Siberia dovetailed to strengthen the Russian empire.

How the enormous strain of creating a diocese in the midst of colonization will be explored in chapter two. Bishops performed an important role in providing leadership in this regard; unfortunately for Omsk diocese, eight men held this position over a span of twenty years. Despite this frequent change in leadership, Omsk bishops attempted to join the disparate spaces and population of the diocese together through travelling almost annually to villages and building a direct

relationship with parishioners. This chapter analyzes reports and recollections written by bishops and members of their entourages about these trips, exploring how the bishops worked to create a sense of community both for the faithful and the local clergy.

Chapter three examines the collaborative relationship that developed between church and state officials over the common interest of supporting the religious life of the settlers. This modern partnership saw the Holy Synod, the Resettlement Administration, diocesan officials, governors, and local tsarist officials all working together to build churches and schools in Siberia. Merchants, priests, bishops, peasants and other subjects of the empire were invited to participate in funding building projects through the Emperor Alexander III fund, which until started in 1894 and was administered by the Siberian Railway Committee until 1905. In 1908, collaboration between secular and religious officials took a giant institutional leap forward with the establishment of The Holy Synod Special Council for Satisfying the Religious Needs of Settlers. The Holy Synod and the Resettlement Administration joined forces to supply funding to parishes throughout Asiatic Russia. Omsk diocese, as one of the primary locations of resettlement, received a significant portion of funding. Not even World War I impeded the flow of money to Asiatic Russia for the purpose of building churches, parish schools and homes for the clergy.

Chapter four takes a closer look at the parish system. It examines why local church and state officials, and settlers viewed parishes as being important in the context of colonization. The education of children proved to be one of the

unifying issues identified by all three groups. Fears ran deep that without churches, the next generation would be estranged from the Orthodox faith. Despite the significance placed on developing parishes, limited funds meant that the religious needs of all settlers could not be satisfied. Religious and secular officials collided over which compromises and innovations were appropriate to employ under these desperate circumstances. Within this system, settlers negotiated and interacted with the state and church over building the foundations of their religious life. The diffusion of authority between secular and religious officials provided settlers with many different avenues to pursue in the event that they received a refusal from one of the parties, a situation which settlers exploited. Peasant engagement in the process illustrates the continued importance of religion to the lives of settlers. Communities wanted churches and they wanted priests, even if they did not always want to pay for their religious life from their own pocket.

The vision of the Orthodox faith as a unifying force in resettlement was put to the test in Siberia. Chapter five explores how despite the great efforts to accommodate and strengthen the Orthodox faith among settlers, cracks appeared from the outset. Peasants arrived in Siberia from all parts of the empire. They brought with them the traditions of their home provinces, which turned out to be different from their neighbours', despite ostensibly sharing the same faith. Religious leaders hoped that after decades of living together these differences in religious practice would cease to exist, especially under the strong leadership of the clergy. Misunderstandings and tense relations between the clergy and

parishioners illustrate the difficulty of this process of reconciliation, but also the depth of peasant faith.

This theme of tension caused by difference was repeated among the clerical population in Omsk diocese. A variegated collection of priests, both local and from different parts of the empire, served in the diocese. Without a seminary to train priests, Omsk diocese had to rely on Tobol'sk and Tomsk dioceses for educated clergymen along with whoever arrived from European Russia looking for work. From the start, Omsk diocese had difficulties in finding clergy for its parishes. The expectation in the second half of the nineteenth century among church officials that priests should be seminary-educated added to the dilemma. To address this issue, the Holy Synod gave permission to Vostorgov to establish a training program for priests in Moscow, transforming parish teachers, and lower-level clergy from European Russia into priests for Siberia. The Moscow Pastoral Courses opened in 1909 and provided hundreds of parishes with priests. In Omsk diocese, the appearance of the *Vostorgovtsy*, as the priests trained by Vostorgov were called, caused great controversy among local clergy. Spurred on by a bishop who frequently expressed hostility towards Vostorgov, Omsk clergy challenged the legitimacy of such interference in diocesan life. They contested the image presented in St. Petersburg of local priests as being incapable of ministering to the settler population because of their inexperience with the traditions of religious life in European Russia.

Dissenters and sectarians haunted the dreams of local priests, the Omsk bishop, governors, and the Holy Synod. Historically, the territory that became

Omsk diocese had a significant population of Old Believers, and colonization only served to increase that population and added thousands of sectarians. Diocesan officials argued that colonization, in conjunction with the changes to Russia's religious structure after 1905, had contributed to the spread of these faiths. Religious conversion symbolized more than simply leaving the Orthodox faith: it represented the rejection of Russian culture and nationality. In the final chapter, I show how such settlers created a potential threat in the minds of religious and secular officials – people whose loyalty could not be confirmed and who would one day sabotage the primary goal of colonization, which was to integrate Siberia through its russification.

Chapter 1: Rediscovering Russian Orthodox Destiny in the East

In 1885, Siberian bishops gathered in Irkutsk to discuss the future of their region. The task of spreading Christianity among the indigenous peoples of Siberia and strengthening local parishes dominated the bishops' agenda. During their conversations, the institutional expansion of the Orthodox Church emerged as one solution that would allow the church to manage this seemingly endless space. In the end, they proposed to establish two new dioceses: Omsk and Transbaikalia. As both of the proposed new dioceses would be created in territories with established missions to the local non-Russian population, the bishops agreed, in essence, to creating mission dioceses. For Siberian bishops, strengthening Russian culture on the frontier translated into the conversion of the local indigenous population and better serving the existing Russian Orthodox population in the region.

The flood of settlers arriving by the late nineteenth century altered this vision, inspiring members of the Orthodox Church – particularly those outside the region – to reconceptualise the role of the church in Siberia. The conversion of the local indigenous population, while still considered an admirable and noble pursuit, occupied an understudy position to the primary purpose of attending to the religious needs of the Russian settlers who made Siberia their new home. The appearance of these settlers transformed the priorities of local diocesan officials and offered activists in the Orthodox Church a new cause to trumpet. The Russian empire provided fertile ground for Russian Orthodox patriotism, and people like

Ioann Vostorgov nurtured their nationalistic vision of the Russia's destiny in Siberia. Hope filled his gaze to the east, as Vostorgov promoted the vision that like the Israelites, God intended for Russians settlers to act as his chosen people.¹ In the west, the Church encountered constant reminders, in the form of Catholic and Protestant competitors, of its struggle to establish dominance. In the east, it was possible for the Russian Orthodox Church to aspire to global significance by completing the work of the apostles. Recruited into state-church collaboration in Siberia, Vostorgov could do more than dream and he worked diligently to help Russia fulfil its destiny, publicizing his exploits along the way.

A History of Russians in Siberia

In spite of their absence from the agenda of the bishops in 1885, ethnic Russians had occupied the land since the conquest of Siberia in the sixteenth century by Ermak and his band of Cossack mercenaries. The Cossacks, a group of peasant-soldiers who provided military service for the tsarist regime in exchange for privileges, in fact, constituted some of the first settlers to the region. The state granted lands to the Cossacks, in perpetuity, to encourage their settlement.² For

¹ John Strickland explores the rise of clerical patriotism and the use of the Israel analogy to support their view that Russian Orthodox believers had been chosen by God and had a special role to play in the future: see John Strickland, "Orthodox Patriotism and the Church in Russia, 1888-1914" (PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 1999), 122-130.

² The Russian government eventually organized the Cossacks in the empire into eleven communities: Don, Kuban, Terek, Astrakhan, Ural, Orenburg, Siberia, Semirechensk, Transbaikalia, Amur, and Ussuri. In Siberia, although they were granted these large tracts of land, by the mid-nineteenth century, the state had begun to alter this arrangement. In spite of these changes, Cossacks communities existed in the steppe region and formed a significant portion of the parishioners in Omsk diocese and by 1916, the Cossack population of Akmolinsk province stood at 138 000 and 48,000 in the province of Semipalatinsk. George J Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969), 44. For an analysis of the Cossack lands see Anatoli Remnev and Natal'ia Suvorova, "Russkoe delo" na

centuries, the Russian government had been content to extract Siberia's vast resources of fur and timber and to use the region as a place of exile for political prisoners and criminals, instead of integrating it into the empire.³ By 1744, Russia stopped relying on the death penalty, thereby solidifying Siberia's position as the primary site for the banishment of criminals and those subjects of the empire that the state deemed politically suspect.⁴ Particularly in the nineteenth century, the tsarist regime relied on Siberia as a dumping ground for groups like the Decembrists, members of the Petrashevsky circle (most famously Fyodor M. Dostoyevsky) and revolutionaries of various stripes, including Bolshevik leader, Vladimir Lenin. While the state stopped shipping criminals to Siberia in 1900, religious and political offenders still received this punishment.⁵

Religious dissenters and sectarians also established communities in the region, thereby expanding the Russian population. In the eighteenth century, men and women who left the Orthodox Church could be banished to Siberia because of their religious identity. Others had previously fled to Siberia to have the opportunity to practise their faith out of the reach of the state. These circumstances created a large population of Old Believers who lived, worked, and prayed within their own communities.⁶ Many chose to live off the beaten track,

aziatskikh okrainakh: 'Russkost' pod ugrozoi ili 'somnitel'nye kul'turtregery'," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (April 2008): 157–222.

³ For more on Siberia as a place of exile, see Andrew Gentes, *Exile to Siberia, 1590-1822: Corporeal Commodification and Administrative Systematization in Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁴ James Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia: Russia's North Asian Colony, 1581-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 193.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

for instance, along the Altai Mountains and east of Lake Baikal;⁷ however, Old Believers also inhabited more populated parts, as illustrated by their involvement in the 1722 Tara revolt.⁸ In the nineteenth century, the state complicated the religious landscape of Siberia further, by exiling Skoptsy, and Dukbobors to the region. On the one hand, state officials viewed dissenter and sectarian settlers as exemplifying strong “colonizing abilities” such as “industriousness, thrift, and sobriety.”⁹ On the other hand, their presence was also viewed as inimical to the development of Orthodoxy in the region. As long as Russian Orthodox settlement in the region remained underdeveloped, this contradiction could exist without causing much concern.

Finally, Russian settlers arrived. Known in late imperial Russia by the terms old-residents (*starozhily*) or *Sibiriaki*, these migrants settled in Siberia during the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. In the early twentieth century, the celebrated Polish anthropologist Maria Czaplicka described the eclectic ancestral background of *Sibiriaki* as such: “The Sibiriaks are the descendants of such contrasting social – and racial – elements as (1) Cossacks...(2) hunters, adventurers and peasants...(3) criminal exiles...(4)

⁷ Ibid., 44. For more on the history of the Old Believer population in the Transbaikal region, see F. Bolonev and L. M. Rusakova, *Staroobriadtsy Zabaikal'ia v XVIII-XX vv.* (Novosibirsk: AOZT “Izd-vo Fevral’”, 1994).

⁸ See N. N. Pokrovskii, “The Book Registers from the 1722 Tara Revolt,” *Russian Studies in History* 49, no. 3 (Winter 2010): 8–41.

⁹ Nicholas Breyfogle analyzed the state perspective and how it changed in the Caucasus. See Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). The quotation is from Anatolii Remnev, “Colonization and ‘Russification’ in the Imperial Geography of Asiatic Russia: From the Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries,” in *Asiatic Russia: Imperial Power in Regional and International Contexts*, ed. Tomohiko Uyama (New York: Routledge, 2012), 106–107.

political exiles...”¹⁰ Some *Sibiriaki* families had lived in the region for generations, while others had only recently established villages.¹¹ Many of these original agricultural settlements of *Sibiriaki* were located in western Siberia as its fertile farmland and proximity to European Russia drew settlers; by the mid-eighteenth century, a population of approximately 196,000 Russians had established new lives in the region. This number stood in stark contrast to the eastern part of Siberia, which had only 62,000 Russian inhabitants. The construction of the Great Moscow *Trakt* (highway), which joined European Russia to Siberia, offered the primary route to the region. Although started in the eighteenth century, it took until the mid-nineteenth century to be completed and impressively stretched from the Urals to Irkutsk, clearing a path for those who wished to undertake the journey.¹² Even if they desired to establish a new life in Siberia, peasants had to overcome a formidable challenge: until 1861 serfdom tied peasants to the land and thereafter the village commune created difficulties for those who wished to leave the community.¹³

Russian settlers arrived to a land inhabited by an extraordinarily diverse population. The indigenous population of Siberia encountered by the Russians included the Buriats, Yakuts, the Altays, the Khaksay, the Tuvans, the Shors, the Karagasys, Kazakhs among many others.¹⁴ In the territory that would eventually

¹⁰ Marie Antoinette Czaplicka, *The Collected Works of M. A. Czaplicka*, Vol.3 trans. David Norman Collins (New York: Routledge, 1999), 253–254.

¹¹ Willard Sunderland, “Peasant Pioneering: Russian Peasant Settlers Describe Colonization and the Eastern Frontier, 1880s-1910s,” *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 907.

¹² Forsyth, 190.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁴ For more on the peoples of Siberia, see Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); and M.G. Levin and L.P. Potapov, eds., *The Peoples of Siberia*, trans. Stephen P. Dunn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

be transformed into Omsk diocese, the Kazaks inhabited the southern provinces of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk, while Tatars lived in the North, particularly around the town of Tara.¹⁵ The Russian state considered these populations to be *inorodtsy*. According to Russian law, the term *inorodtsy* was used in reference to non-Russians. As John Slocum argues, by the late nineteenth century, the word gained a more pejorative meaning to denote that these groups belonged to a lower culture.¹⁶

Institutionally, the Orthodox Church developed slowly from the initial establishment of a settled Russian presence in Siberia. The creation of the first diocese of Tobol'sk and Siberia in the region transformed the town of Tobol'sk into a religious and cultural centre. This transformation, albeit, was slow. In 1621, the first archbishop of Siberia, Kiprian (Starorusenkov), arrived in this new centre of Orthodoxy only to find its inhabitants engaged in sinful revelry.¹⁷ Despite his dissatisfaction with the state of religious life, the proliferation of church buildings must have warmed his heart; in 1625 approximately fifty churches existed and this number tripled to 160 by 1702.¹⁸ As Valerie Kivelson has illuminated eloquently, the Muscovite state concerned itself primarily with Christianizing the landscape of Siberia instead of Christianizing its inhabitants.¹⁹ She argues that

through the expansion of architectural forms, Muscovy's triumphant Christian destiny reached from the Kremlin in Moscow to the Pacific Ocean. Russian cities, forts, and winter shelters allowed cosmographers

¹⁵ Ibid., 423.

¹⁶ John W. Slocum, "Who, and When, Were the Inorodtsy? The Evolution of the Category of 'Aliens' in Imperial Russia," *Russian Review* 57, no. 2 (April 1998): 173–190.

¹⁷ A. J. Haywood, *Siberia: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 73.

¹⁸ Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, *Russian Traditional Culture: Religion, Gender, and Customary Law* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 88–89.

¹⁹ Valerie Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-century Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 150.

and cartographers to read the Siberian landscape as an extension of Russia's forests, fields and villages, as a Christian paradise, the home of the deserving and pious Russian people.²⁰

Muscovy, therefore, engaged in its Christian mission through building churches, while devoting less effort to converting the peoples of Siberia.

Over the next century, the interest of the state in converting the indigenous population of Siberia waxed and waned. Under Peter the Great, the state pursued the idea of Christianizing the population, even sending Ukrainian missionaries to Siberia, who helped establish churches, monasteries, and engaged in mass conversions.²¹ Tsar Peter I also encouraged the missionaries to translate the bible into local languages and to live in close proximity to their potential converts.²² Catherine the Great undid many of Peter's accomplishments in this regard, confiscating church lands in Siberia (in addition to lands in European Russia), thereby weakening missionary activities and rescinding many of the benefits offered to natives who converted.²³

The state's inconsistent attitude toward conversion in conjunction with the weak institutional presence of the church stymied the development of Orthodoxy. By the end of the eighteenth century only three dioceses existed in Asiatic Russia: Irkutsk, Orenburg, and Tobol'sk and Siberia. The expansion of the Russian empire into Alaska and Central Asia, as well as the state's growing investment in Siberia during the nineteenth century, created a renewed interest in the east on the part of

²⁰ Ibid., 159.

²¹ Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 48-50.

²² Sergei Kan, "Russian Orthodox Missionaries at Home and Abroad: The Case of Siberian and Alaskan Indigenous Peoples," in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, ed. Robert Geraci and Michael Khordarkovsky (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 177.

²³ Ibid., 178.

the Church. In 1840, the Holy Synod established the diocese of Kamchatka, the Kurile Islands and the Aleutian Islands. The Church followed the annexation of Central Asia and the creation of the Governor-General position in Tashkent in 1867 quickly with the establishment of the Turkestan and Tashkent diocese in 1871. And by the beginning of the twentieth century, twelve dioceses existed, eight of which had been formed after 1867.²⁴

These lands were not empty before the arrival of the Russians. In the territory that would eventually form Omsk diocese, Kazakh tribes constituted the majority of the local indigenous population. They closely interacted with Cossack population, both as neighbours and as economic partners.²⁵ In part because of Catherine the Great's policy of allowing Muslim clergy to spread Islam among the nomadic Kazakhs, the population of the steppe was largely Muslim. Yet, symbols of the Muslim faith, like mosques, were scarce in the provinces of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk.²⁶ In the eyes of the Russians, the absence of such a paramount sign of faithfulness indicated that the Kazakhs held their religion in little regard. Many Tatar mullahs also criticised the faith of Muslim Kazakhs, especially their lax

²⁴ Tobol'sk and Siberia–1640, Irkutsk–1707, Orenburg–1799, Tomsk–1834, Kamchatka and Aleutian Islands – 1840, Enisei–1861, Yakutsk–1870, Turkestan–1871, Yekaterinburg–1885, Blagoveshchensk–1899, Vladivostok–1899, Transbaikaliya–1894, and Omsk–1895. For a short history on the opening of Yakutsk diocese, see Vladislav Soldatenko, "The Formation of the Yakutsk Eparchy," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 44, no. 1 (January 1999): 661–665. I did not include the diocese opened in Alaska. For more information on the creation of this diocese, see Ilya Vinkovetsky, "Building a Diocese Overseas: The Orthodox Church in Partnership with the Russian-American Company in Alaska," *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (July 2010): 152–194.

²⁵ Iu. A. Lysenko, "Pravoslavie i Islam: Praktiki etnokofessional'noi kommunikatsii na primere Russkikh i Kazakhov verkhnego priirtysh'ia (XIX-nachalo XX v)," *Vestnik arkhelologii, antropologii i etnografii* 15, no.2 (2011), 197; Yuriy Anatolyevich Malikov, "Formation of a Borderland Culture: Myths and Realities of Cossack-Kazakh Relations in Northern Kazakhstan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2006).

²⁶ Lysenko, 196. Larger town like Semipalatinsk and Akmolinsk had Mosques. See George Kennan, *Siberia and the exile system*, Vol.1 (New York: Century, 1891), 158. As the Kazakhs were a nomadic people, the absence of mosques in the rural areas is not surprising.

attitude towards the sharia.²⁷ Such shallowness of belief, argued many Orthodox church officials, created a fertile field for conversion. In 1880s, a mission to the Kazakh population was established in Tomsk diocese; in the 1890s, Tobol'sk diocese followed suit. In 1895, stations from both missions would be joined to form the basis of the Kazakh mission in Omsk diocese.²⁸ The mission had an enormous mission field: the province of Akmolinsk alone had a Kazakh population of 366,879.²⁹

In addition to the Kazakh population, the substantial population of Old Believers who lived in the region also presented potential targets for conversion. Yet, for local diocesan officials, missionary activity directed towards Old Believers was low on their list of priorities. Before the 1880s, directives would arrive from central authorities to undertake missionary activity; however, local bishops and clergymen viewed engagement with Old Believers to be a waste of their energy and resources. The Kazan congress in 1885 refocused the church's efforts to address the issue of dissenters in the region. In 1886, the Bishop of Tobol'sk established three anti-dissenter missionary positions, which would release local priests from addressing the Old Believer issue in their parishes. The consistory assigned each man to a geographical territory, where he was

²⁷ Robert Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 196.

²⁸ O.V. Ignatenko, "Kirghiz dukhovnaia missiia," *Sovremennoe obshchestvo*, Vyp.1 (Omsk, 1999), 118. For more on the mission and its role in the region, see Robert Geraci, "Going Abroad or Going to Russia? Orthodox Missionaries in the Kazakh Steppe, 1881-1917," in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, ed. Robert Geraci and Michael Khordarkovsky (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 274-310.

²⁹ Iu. Laskov, *Statisticheskii i istoricheskii material po sel'skoi meditsine v Akmolinskoi oblasti* (Omsk, 1911), 38-39. The Russian population at the time was 30, 544. According to the same source, the population disparity changed dramatically by 1910, as the peasant population grew to 454, 166 and the Kazakh population increased to 525,092.

responsible for holding conversations with dissenters. These men were rewarded with a salary, a travelling budget and a handful of converts; during the first five years of their existence, anti-dissenter missionaries in western Siberia managed to convince a total of 453 Old Believers to return to the fold, out of a population of approximately 45,422.³⁰

Modest religious provisions served the Orthodox Russian population living in the region. Throughout the nineteenth century, religious and secular officials in the region lamented the state of Orthodox practice among *Sibiriaki*. The Governor-General of Western Siberia praised the opening of Tomsk diocese in 1834, as it offered the opportunity to address the absence of clergymen in the region. The Orthodox Church had for a long time fretted that the isolation of the Russian population from church life had made them coarse in their attitudes and Orthodox only in name and not in practice.³¹ Despite this concern, the Orthodox Church had been expanding its physical presence in western Siberia. Towns and forts had churches and the system of parishes spread throughout the nineteenth century. During the 1880s, fifty-six new parish churches were built in Tomsk diocese, which demonstrates the engagement of the Church in the region.³²

The Church's Vision for Siberia

During the mid-1880s, the bishops in the empire revitalized the ancient

³⁰ Viacheslav Sofronov, *Missionerskaia i dukhovno-prosvetitel'skaia deiatel'nost' Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi v Zapadnoi Sibiri: konets XVII- nachalo XX vv.* (Tobol'sk: GOU VPO Tobol'skii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii institut imeni "D.I. Mendeleeva", 2005), 127.

³¹ Alla Vladimirovna Litiagina, "Deiatel'nost' Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi v gorodakh Zapadnoi Sibiri vo vtoroi polovine XIX - nachale XX v.," *Voprosy Istorii* 9 (2008): 93.

³² O.N. Ust'iانتseva, *Tomskaia eparkhiia v kontse XIX-nachale XX veka* (Candidate diss., Kemerovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2003), 229-230.

Orthodox tradition of gathering to discuss issues pertaining to faith, church life and church administration.³³ From the 1850s, the bishops supported the idea of holding episcopal councils (*pomestnye sobory*); however, at the beginning of his tenure as Chief Procurator in 1880, Konstantin Pobedonostsev expressed apprehension at such a proposal, in part because his relationship with the bishops was quite strained.³⁴ Difficult questions, formulated in part through the growing complexities of church administration, led Pobedonostsev to change his mind and by the mid-1880s, he had approved the holding of meetings in four cities: Kiev, Kazan, Irkutsk and St. Petersburg. These events represented an acknowledgement among Orthodox leaders that they must share information and coordinate action to address the internal divisions and external developments threatening the Orthodox Church's position of dominance in the empire. In 1884, a gathering of the bishops from the southwestern dioceses occurred in Kiev, where discussions on how to protect Orthodox believers from the influence of *inorodtsy* and *shtundists* dominated the agenda.³⁵ The following year, the bishops held two separate meetings in Kazan and Irkutsk. The meeting in Kazan lasted a little over two weeks and brought together bishops from Kazan, Astrakhan, Saratov, Simbirsk (current-day Ulyanovsk), Orenburg, Ufa, Perm, Yekaterinburg, and Sarapul (vicar bishopric of Vyatka diocese). The main topics on their agenda included the religious needs of these dioceses and methods to address the religious life of the

³³ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1885 god* (St. Petersburg, 1887), 17-18.

³⁴ Gregory L. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 443-444.

³⁵ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1885 god* (St. Petersburg, 1887), 28.

inorodtsy, Russian sectarians and dissenters.

In 1885, bishops from the Siberian dioceses of Irkutsk, Kamchatka, Tomsk, and Enisei, along with two vicar bishops met in Irkutsk to discuss ways to promote the spread of Christianity among the *inorodtsy* population in Siberia and to strengthen existing Orthodox congregations. The bishops gathered from 23 July to 8 August.³⁶ At the centre of the 1885 Irkutsk council was the Archbishop Veniamin (Blagonravov), who served as the bishop of the Irkutsk and Nerchinsk diocese from 1873 until 1892. He held the honour of being the chairman of the meeting. Well-acquainted with the external mission in Siberia, Veniamin worked for three decades in the Transbaikal region.³⁷ In the broader church debate on missions, Veniamin stated his disagreement with those who argued that conversion should be the concern solely of the church. Veniamin and others presented the argument that conversion transformed the nationality (*natsional'nost'*) of foreign groups and therefore, the conversion of *inoversty* (people of different faiths) to Orthodoxy also served the interests of the state by turning these people into Russians.³⁸ Converts should think of themselves as Russians and shed their previous identity. As Archbishop Veniamin wrote,

Orthodoxy should struggle not only against an alien faith, but also against an alien nationality – against the mores, customs, and the whole of the domestic arrangement of alien life; it should convince the aliens of the superiority of the Russian way of life, so that they will become Russian

³⁶ Dittmar Schorkowitz also mentions the importance of the church's mission to the Buriats to the agenda of this meeting. See "The Orthodox Church, Lamaism, and Shamanism among the Buriats and Kalmyks 1825-1925," in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, eds. Robert Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 213.

³⁷ Anna Peck, "The Image of Heathens: Archbishop Veniamin Blagonravov's Perception of Religion and Nationality in the Transbaikal," *Sibirica* 10, no. 2 (2011): 50–72.

³⁸ For more on the Bishop Veniamin's idea on conversion in comparison to Il'minskii, see Geraci, 73–74.

not only in faith, but also in nationality.”³⁹

Thus, assigning this work solely to the Orthodox Church made little sense; the church and state needed to collaborate closely to achieve the full transformation of the *inorodtsy* into Russians. Veniamin contended that the *inorodtsy* viewed religious conversion as adopting both a new religious and secular identity.⁴⁰

According to Veniamin, those who argued that this task should be left solely in the hands of the church failed to recognize how Orthodoxy contributed to the strength of the state. Veniamin stated that only Orthodoxy could have gathered together the various tribes of *Rus* ' into “one powerful Slavic-Russian people.”⁴¹ If Grand Prince Vladimir had followed contemporary thinking about separating church and state activities, the greatness of Russia never would have been achieved. If the state now allowed for division to fester in the empire, such an act would contribute to the weakening of the state and the power of the monarchy. The welfare, not of Orthodoxy, but of the state, depended on collaboration between the state and the Orthodox Church to promote the Russianness through conversion. In this environment, the state must support missions materially.⁴² In many ways, this image of harmonious collaboration did not provide an autonomous role for the church within the framework of the growing empire. Instead, the church presented itself as a helpmate to the state in Siberia.

³⁹ Slezkine, 121. Quoted from Veniamin, *Zhiznennye voprosy Pravoslavnoi missii v Sibiri* (St. Petersburg, 1885), 7.

⁴⁰ Veniamin, 7. Debate existed in the church over the relationship between conversion and Russification as exemplified through the figures of Nikolai Il'minskii and Veniamin, see Geraci, *Window on the East*, 73- 85.

⁴¹ Veniamin, 12.

⁴² Ibid.

In addition to opening a line of dialogue on important issues facing the church, the Irkutsk council proposed to strengthen the foundation of religious administration in Siberia through the creation of two new dioceses. Two locations, Omsk and Chita, were suggested as diocesan capitals. Veniamin had expressed excitement at the prospects of a diocese in Chita before the meeting.⁴³ Both territories had a long history of missions to non-Christian groups. On the Kazakh steppe, the Russian Orthodox Church established the Kazakh mission and expressed its concern about the spread of Islam in the region. In the Transbaikalian region, a mission to the Buriats had been established in the late seventeenth century.⁴⁴ This proposal to add two new dioceses gained support as a method to facilitate improving religious life in the parishes and the moral development of parishioners, combatting heresy and spreading the faith among the indigenous population.⁴⁵

The idea of establishing two new dioceses originated from Siberia; however, the decision on whether it could become reality lay in the hands of the Chief Procurator and the Holy Synod. Pobedonostsev responded enthusiastically to the agenda promoted by Siberian bishops. In his 1885 report, Pobedonostsev referred to this meeting as “an important event in the history of the national (*otechestvennaia*) church.”⁴⁶ The dream of converting the many peoples of Siberia enthralled Pobedonostsev and the bishops of Siberia. Pobedonostsev even informed Tsar Alexander III of this gathering, relaying that secular and religious

⁴³ RGIA, f.796, op.174, d.1047, l.35ob.

⁴⁴ See Schorkowitz, 201-202.

⁴⁵ Golubtsov, 27.

⁴⁶ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviatishhego sinoda za 1885 god* (St. Petersburg, 1887), 27.

officials had gathered to discuss questions related to church-secular matters and then the bishops continued alone to consider questions related to the church.⁴⁷ While Pobedonostsev shared this information in a straightforward manner, his simple act of conveying this information to the tsar demonstrates that he viewed this event as significant. A strong believer in the symbiotic relationship between the church and state, Pobedonostsev rallied to garner support for projects he thought would illustrate the usefulness of the church to state affairs. Despite his keenness, Pobedonostsev recognized the difficulties involved in spreading Orthodoxy through Siberia. In his report for 1890 and 1891, Pobedonostsev remarked on how the expansive distance of dioceses in Siberia created problems for missionaries working to enlighten nomadic *inorodtsy*. Adding to the problem of distance was the reality that “neighbouring” churches often existed over a hundred kilometres away from each other. Travelling these distances on rough roads and in adverse climates made missionary work a truly “selfless deed.”⁴⁸ Even with the existence of Russian settlements in the region, Pobedonostsev’s reports focused almost exclusively on the plight of Orthodox missions to non-Russians in Siberia until 1900, when settlers made their first real appearance.⁴⁹

The State Engages with Siberia

As the church reconsidered its role in Siberia, the state also started to

⁴⁷ Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev, *Pis'ma Pobedonostseva k Aleksandru III*, tom 1 (Moscow: Novaia Moskva, 1925), 82–83. Schorkowitz claims that the meeting was Pobedonostsev’s idea, Schorkowitz, 213.

⁴⁸ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1890 i 1891 gody* (St. Petersburg, 1893), 267-268.

⁴⁹ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1900 god* (St. Petersburg, 1903), 148-151.

reimagine the region. Initially, the state understood Siberia as a buffer zone between European Russia and its Asiatic neighbours; yet, during the course of the nineteenth century, Siberia was slowly transformed into a frontier region where Russia could flex her imperial muscles. As historian Eva-Maria Stolberg notes, after the humiliation of the Crimean War (1853), the Russian state “began to think in geopolitical parameters that were defined by the rivalry with the British empire in Central and East Asia.”⁵⁰ By the mid-nineteenth century, the Russian state organized the eastern half of the Kazakh Steppe into provinces, with the establishment of Semipalatinsk province and the Siberian Kirghiz (Kazakh) province in 1854.⁵¹ The latter would become the province of Akmolinsk in 1867.⁵² In the 1880s, soon after his inauguration, Tsar Alexander III expressed his desire for Siberia to be integrated into the empire and the importance of Siberia to the future development of Russia.⁵³ Alexander III chose not Europe, but Asia as the destination for his son’s introduction into state life. The epic 1890-91 trip of tsarevich Nicholas, the future Nicholas II, to Egypt, India, Japan, and through Asiatic Russia symbolized the rise of the East in the eyes of the monarchy for the future of the empire.

As a close advisor to Alexander III and the lay chairman of the Holy Synod, Pobedonostsev had a role in preparing the young tsarevich for his journey. Pobedonostsev wrote a letter to Nicholas, describing the Orthodox landscape and

⁵⁰ Eva-Maria Stolberg, “The Siberian Frontier and Russia’s Position in World History: A Reply to Aust and Nolte,” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 27, no. 3 (January 2004): 247.

⁵¹ Pierce, 21.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵³ William Husband, “Happy Birthday, Siberia!: Reform and Public Opinion in Russia’s ‘Colony,’ 1881-1882,” in *The Human Tradition in Imperial Russia*, ed. Christine Worobec (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 96.

the religious and secular personnel he would encounter during his journey through Siberia. The letter, written in February 1891, led the tsarevich through the various dioceses he would visit, starting in the East and moving westward. The subjects Pobedonostsev chose to highlight for the tsarevich offer insight into the themes he viewed as fundamental for understanding the church's activities in the region. This letter also provides a snapshot of Siberia on the brink of its great transformation; and over the next two decades, the themes identified by Pobedonostsev only grew in importance: the nature of settler religiosity, the shortage of churches, the absence of the most basic necessities for religious life, sectarianism, dissenters, the development of missions to the *inorodtsy*, relations between secular and religious leaders and Siberia's administrative structure. The letter confirmed to the future tsar the complexity of the environment he would inherit.

According to Pobedonostsev, the overlapping of secular and religious spheres caused difficulties for the religious development of Siberia. For instance, in describing relations between the Bishop of Kamchatka, Gurii (Burtasovskii),⁵⁴ and the Governor-General of the Priamur, Baron Andrei Nikolaevich Korf, Pobedonostsev acknowledged that disagreements frequently arose between them. Pobedonostsev, not surprisingly, sided with the bishop and placed most of the blame for this deterioration of relations on the Governor: "Unfortunately, Baron Korf does not always clearly understand the significance of specific church

⁵⁴ Bishop Gurii was a graduate of Kazan Theological Academy – an institution which produced many of the religious leaders in Siberia and trained missionaries for the Siberian field. See Eugene Clay, "Orthodox Missionaries and 'Orthodox Heretics'," in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, ed. Robert Geraci and Michael Khordarkovsky (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 38–69.

interests for Russia and [he] trusts sometimes more in the judgement of his bureaucrats than the judgement of religious individuals.”⁵⁵ In contrast, the governor blamed the enthusiastic, yet misguided character of the bishop, particularly in addressing issues related to sectarians and *inorodtsy*, for creating problems between them. Pobedonostsev suggested that it was better to have an active as opposed to an indifferent bishop; yet, conflicts between church and state officials caused by their different approaches to these issues took place frequently. As the working environment of these groups grew more complex with colonization, placing the blame at the feet of others proved to be too tempting for both sides.

Pobedonostsev’s letter reiterated his conservative view on the issue of religious toleration. Highly critical of the government’s legitimization of non-Orthodox faiths, Pobedonostsev offered the example of the Kazakh steppe to illustrate for the tsarevich the harmfulness of this practice. According to Pobedonostsev, the population of the steppe followed no religion “except crude shamanism;” yet instead of promoting Orthodoxy, the state allowed Islamic leaders free rein among the population. A similar scenario, argued Pobedonostsev, played out among the Buriats and Lamaists.⁵⁶ By legalizing and encouraging the development of these non-Orthodox faiths among the local population, secular officials acted in ways that were contrary to the interests of the church and state. Pobedonostsev described the former governor-general of Eastern Siberia, Dmitrii

⁵⁵ Pobedonostsev, 295. For more on Korf and his role in the province, see Kimitaka Matsuzato, “The Creation of the Priamur Governor-Generalship in 1884 and the Reconfiguration of Asiatic Russia,” *The Russian Review* 71, no. 3 (2012): 365–390. Veniamin also had issues with Korf and his alleged proclivity towards non-Orthodox faiths. See Schorkowitz, 213.

⁵⁶ Pobedonostsev, 297-298.

Anuchin (1879-1885), as a person who exemplified this harmful attitude towards Orthodoxy. Arguing that Anuchin exhibited undue interest in the Buriats, Pobedonostsev accused him of having “even admired their religious service – wild and shocking, while toward our church, [he] showed indifference.”⁵⁷ Under the leadership of such a man, non-Orthodox faiths flourished in Siberia. Not all secular leaders demonstrated such disregard for Orthodoxy; Pobedonostsev praised A. P. Ignat’ev, also a former governor-general of Eastern Siberia (1885-1889), whom he described as someone whose appointment to the region “promised Siberia a better future: a man completely Russian, Orthodox, practical...”⁵⁸ Unfortunately, Nicholas would not have the chance to meet Ignat’ev in Siberia, as he had been transferred to Kiev. For Pobedonostsev, the nationality and the religious identity of secular leaders proved to be an important factor for predicting behaviour. Nonetheless, being “Russian” was not enough to make one a reliable defender of the Orthodox faith as sometimes even Russian officials behaved abominably in their treatment of religious matters.

Already in the early 1890s, Pobedonostsev identified the presence of dissenters and sectarians as a major concern in Siberia. Yet, they appeared in Pobedonostsev’s letter as one of many problems faced in Siberian dioceses.⁵⁹ This stands in contrast to the early twentieth century, when the concern of Siberian church officials about the spread of non-Orthodox, Christian faiths reached hysterical levels.

Russian settlers in Siberia made only a brief appearance in

⁵⁷ Ibid., 298.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 297.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 301.

Pobedonostsev's letter. He mentioned in passing migrants in the Far East, who had undertaken settlement during an earlier period, commenting on their spiritual decay as a result of their isolation from the church. To Nicholas, he wrote about the need for churches, calling the settlements "wild" and "morally undisciplined" without the guiding hand of the church.⁶⁰ Churches, according to Pobedonostsev, created the necessary climate for the moral development of the population. Nonetheless, building churches cost money and such funds were not available. This dilemma would eventually spread to the rest of Siberia as the church and state came to agree that church-building was essential for the development of the region; yet, the logistics and financial costs of organizing and undertaking such work on a large scale hampered their efforts.

The bishops in 1885 imagined Siberia's future through the lens of local conversion; they did not imagine, nor prepare for the migration of millions of Russians to the region. Five years later, Pobedonostsev also appeared not to understand the implications for the Orthodox Church of the state's intense interest in developing Siberia. Conceptualizing their work under a different understanding of Siberia's future, these men of the church prepared their battle plans for a distinctly different environment. Fortunately, the administrative improvements proposed by Siberian bishops for spreading Christianity among the local population prepared the ground for settlers once colonization started. Pioneers flocked to western Siberia, settling in the territories serviced by the new staff of Omsk and Transbaikalian dioceses.

In 1895, Omsk diocese officially was born. Preparations for this historic

⁶⁰ Ibid., 295.

movement began in earnest in 1887, after Bishop Avraamii (Letnitskii) of Tobol'sk diocese received a communication from Pobedonostsev requesting information on a number of issues related to land division, the assignment of Omsk as the diocesan see, and the financial support of the new diocese.⁶¹ As Pobedonostsev's request revealed, it would be difficult to establish a new diocese in Omsk without the consent and assistance of church leaders in Tobol'sk diocese. The Tobol'sk consistory quickly held a meeting about Pobedonostsev's letter and appointed an archpriest based in the city of Omsk, Konstantin Nedosekov, as the head of the commission. Tobol'sk diocesan officials appeared sceptical of the conclusions drawn by the Siberian council in Irkutsk two years earlier. They questioned why Omsk should become its own independent diocese, arguing that if the primary purpose of the proposed new diocese was to "spread and affirmation of the Christian faith among the *inorodtsy* of the steppe region," then why would a vicar bishopric based in Omsk not suffice?⁶² The financial cost of establishing a diocese was great, much greater than a vicar bishopric, which would constitute a low-cost approach of testing the waters and establishing whether the region in fact needed another diocese. The path of prudence suggested by Tobol'sk officials revealed that they still viewed conversion as the primary undertaking of the church in Siberia and had little inkling of the momentous change on the horizon. The establishment of two vicar bishoprics under the authority of the Omsk bishop within fifteen years of the opening of diocese demonstrated – in hindsight – the absurdity of this proposal. At the time, however, such a proposal appeared

⁶¹ Golubtsov, 28-29.

⁶² N. Gorodkov, "Obrazovanie novoi Omskoi eparkhii," *Tobol'skie eparkhial'nye vedomosti* 19 (1895): 321-322.

perfectly plausible to religious officials in Tobol'sk who could not predict the complete transformation of the steppe region just a few years away.

In the end, the Holy Synod refused the recommendation emanating out of Tobol'sk and decided to support the vision proposed in the 1885 Irkutsk council. The new diocese was carved out of the pre-existing territories of Tobol'sk and Tomsk dioceses. Omsk diocese gained the territories of Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Tiukalinsk and parts of Tara and Ishim from Tobol'sk, along with parts of Kainsk, Barnaul' and Biysk districts from Tomsk. Notably, Omsk diocese did not include the lands of the far north, where indigenous groups like the Nenets, Khanty, and Mansi populations lived. That territory, along with the Obdorsk Mission which served the population, remained in Tobol'sk diocese. Within these territories Omsk received 148 churches from Tobol'sk territory and 11 churches from districts in Tomsk.⁶³

Omsk diocese inherited the sprawling steppe in the south, current-day northern Kazakhstan. Specifically, the territories of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk were added to the diocese, in which the Kazakhs constituted the largest non-Russian population. The steppe was less developed than the territories to the north, and for most of the nineteenth century, Cossacks constituted its only Slavic colonizers. This situation changed in 1889 with the government's new resettlement law. Settlers started to pour into the region, establishing homes primarily in the districts of Kokchetav, Atbasarsk and Akmolinsk.⁶⁴ The Orthodox

⁶³ Golubtsov, 33, 44. For the Holy Synod document detailing the opening, see RGIA, f.796, op.174, d.1047, ll.1-103.

⁶⁴ *Pamiatnaia knizhka Akmolinskoi oblasti na 1914 god* (Omsk: Akmolinskaia Oblastnaia Tipografiia, 1914), 29. It should be noted that Kazakhs had already been renting their land to

Church was unprepared for this influx. Prior to that point, the Orthodox Church had mainly concerned itself with proselytizing among the indigenous population in the region. With resources directed towards that endeavour, few churches existed in the region; the provinces of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk had only fifty-seven churches.⁶⁵ How to care for this religiously underdeveloped region became an important concern for the newly created diocese.

The arrival of settlers in Omsk diocese dramatically changed the demographics of the region and added to its already diverse cultural environment. From 1885 to 1914, millions of peasants relocated from Ukraine, Belarus, central Russia, the Baltics and other places in the empire to Siberia and Central Asia to take advantage of the opportunity to settle newly available lands. The majority of these settlers arrived from ten provinces: Kiev, Mogilev, Orël, Chernigov, Tambov, Voronezh, Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Poltava, and Kursk.⁶⁶ In addition to including many of the provinces of the “Black earth region,” a high percentage of provinces with Ukrainian speaking majorities were also well-represented.⁶⁷ Although men outnumbered women in many villages, gender disparity was not overly pronounced. As George Demko has shown, in the case of migration to Kazakhstan, many peasants moved as a family unit.⁶⁸ Settlement patterns turned

peasants arriving illegally. See Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1995), 88. Also see Abashin et al., 219.

⁶⁵ RGIA, f.796, op.174, d.1047, l.21.

⁶⁶ Donald Treadgold, *The Great Siberian Migration: Government and Peasant in Resettlement from Emancipation to the First World War*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 89.

⁶⁷ Even though the inhabitants of these Ukrainian speaking provinces were primarily Orthodox in faith, Ukrainian cultural traditions were quite distinct from other parts of Russia. See the entry for “Malorossy” in *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar’* (St. Petersburg: Brockhaus-Efron, 1890-1907). <http://www.vehi.net/brokgauz/index.html> (accessed 23/03/ 2011).

⁶⁸ George Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969), 91.

out to be as diverse as the population migrating to Siberia. Some settlers joined pre-existing *Sibiriaki* villages, where they faced hostility in their efforts to join the community. Other settlers established their own settlements with fellow migrants. Some villages had residents exclusively from one province (although usually from a number of districts), while others had settlers from twenty different provinces living in the same village.⁶⁹

Establishing Diocesan Institutions

On 27 May 1895, Bishop Grigorii (Poletaev) arrived in Omsk to find himself without an episcopal residence. Finding a place to live was only the first of many challenges that the sixty-four year-old, who left his former diocese of Turkestan and Tashkent, would face as the first bishop of Omsk. Travelling along the Irtysh by steamship, the sound of the ringing of church bells welcomed Grigorii to his new home. Despite the religious gesture, the city of Omsk hardly had a storied religious history. A decade before the arrival of the bishop, the American explorer George Kennan described Omsk as a place where “the largest building is a military academy and the most picturesque building a police station; in which there is neither a newspaper nor a public library...”⁷⁰ The city had begun as a frontier fort in 1716, and administrative functions had always overshadowed its spiritual role in the expanding empire. From 1838 to 1882, Omsk served as the administrative centre of the Governor-General of Western Siberia, a development

⁶⁹ For more on the diversity of Siberian villages after colonization, see Treadgold, 132-140.

⁷⁰ George Kennan, *Siberia and the exile system*, Vol.1 (New York: Century, 1891), 140.

which stemmed from Mikhail Speransky's administrative reforms of 1822.⁷¹ In 1882, another administrative change abolished the Governor-General of Western Siberia and created the position of the Governor-General of the Steppe, who controlled the provinces of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk.⁷² The Governor-General resided in Omsk, where the Governor of Akmolinsk also had his administrative headquarters.⁷³ The Trans-Siberian railway transformed the fortunes of Omsk; before the establishment of the railway, travelling to Omsk proved cumbersome as the Great Moscow *Trakt* missed Omsk, heading north toward Tomsk. In contrast, the railway bypassed the old centres of Siberian power, Tobol'sk and Tomsk, and connected Omsk to the rest of the empire. This connection contributed to the phenomenal growth of the city: the population of city stood at 37, 376 in 1897 and by 1910, the population had reached 127,865.⁷⁴

During his tenure, Grigorii worked zealously to establish the basic institutional structures of the diocese. Omsk diocese's structure resembled that of a typical Russian diocese. The bishop held the highest position and resided in the diocesan capital. He had the responsibility of approving the opening of new parishes and guiding spiritually the laity of his diocese. Administering and governing the clergy, however, constituted his principal duty. The bishop ordained clergymen, appointed them to parishes, and looked after their welfare. He also punished those who had committed offences.⁷⁵ Eight men held this position from

⁷¹ For more on Speranski's administrative changes, see Marc Raeff, *Michael Speransky, Statesman of Imperial Russia, 1772-1839*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

⁷² In addition, he also administered the province of Semirechensk.

⁷³ The position of Governor of Semipalatinsk resided in the town of Semipalatinsk.

⁷⁴ L. Dameshek and A. Remnev, *Sibir' v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007), 348.

⁷⁵ Freeze, 28-29.

the founding of Omsk until the revolution: Grigorii (Poletaev), in 1895-1900; Sergii (Petrov), in 1900-1903; Mikhail (Ermakov) in 1903-1905; Gavriil (Golosov), in 1905-1911; Vladimir (Putiata), in 1911-1913; Andronik (Nikol'skii) in 1913-1914; Arsenii (Timofeev) in 1914-1915; and finally, Sil'vestr (Ol'shevskii) in 1915-1920.

The church consistory worked closely with the bishop, providing him with information about the functioning of the diocese and resolutions that the bishop could accept, reject, or amend. The consistory consisted of a small group of white clergy, who typically were highly educated.⁷⁶ Two main bodies helped the bishop administer the diocese: the district board (*dukhovnoe pravlenie*) and the ecclesiastical deans (*blagochinie*). The deans, in particular, performed the important function of supervising multiple parishes.⁷⁷ They submitted reports on the state of their districts to the bishop and those reports helped to shape the actions undertaken in the diocese.

The bishop of Omsk reported to the Holy Synod. Created in 1721, the Holy Synod, a body composed of bishops, ruled over Orthodox ecclesiastical matters in the empire. The state also created the position of Chief Procurator, a lay person mandated with the task of supervising the administrative side of the church's work. At meetings of state officials in the imperial capital, the Chief Procurator would speak for the Holy Synod. A lay bureaucracy helped the Holy

⁷⁶ In the Russian Orthodox tradition, priests are divided into the categories of white and black. White clergy refer to parish priests who are allowed (and expected) to marry. Black clergy are monks. Bishops are only chosen from the black clergy.

⁷⁷ Freeze, 27-28.

Synod with its tasks.⁷⁸

Missionary activity in Omsk diocese, like in other dioceses across the empire, was divided into two forms: the external mission and the internal mission. The external mission focused on converting non-Orthodox – typically non-Christian groups – to the faith. It targeted adherents to faiths such as Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and other polytheistic religions.⁷⁹ The internal mission focused on strengthening the faith of Orthodox believers and bringing those who had lapsed in their Orthodox faith – those who had joined heretical or sectarian groups like the Old Believers, Baptists, and Molokans – back into the fold.

The absence of a seminary was a notable feature of the new Omsk diocese. In Siberia, five theological seminaries existed to produce clergymen for service in local parishes.⁸⁰ Without a seminary, Omsk diocese was unable to train its own clergy, ensuring its dependence on the neighbouring dioceses of Tomsk and Tobol'sk for clerical candidates. The absence of a seminary also forced the local clergy to send their sons outside the diocese for education. This issue plagued not only Omsk, but also other dioceses in Siberia. For example, in 1894, Enisei diocese received permission to open a new seminary in Krasnoyarsk. The reasons given for the necessity of this act included providing the opportunity for priests' sons of Enisei diocese to be educated and raising the educational level of the local

⁷⁸ Freeze, 12-13. Deans struggled with this task of collecting data as they had to complete their duties as priests and travel great distances to make their visitations to parishes under their jurisdiction. See Gregory Freeze, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Periphery: Decoding the Raporty Blagochinnykh in Lithuania Diocese*, in *Problemy vsemirnoi istorii*, ed. B. V. Anan'ich (St. Petersburg: Vilanin, 2000), 129.

⁷⁹ Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 336.

⁸⁰ Tobol'sk opened in 1743, Tomsk in 1858, Irkutsk in 1788, Yakutsk in 1858 (which was transferred to Blagoveshchensk in 1871), and Enisei in 1894. It should be noted that many of the men attending these seminaries did not become part of the clergy, instead joining the ranks of the state officials. See Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 455.

clergy. Before receiving its own seminary, Enisei diocese had relied on the seminaries of Tomsk, located 555 kilometres away from Krasnoyarsk, and of Irkutsk, which was a thousand kilometres away.⁸¹ Debates over the establishment of a seminary would eventually become a significant source of tension between Omsk ecclesiastical authorities and the Holy Synod as colonization created an enormous demand for priests to serve in newly established parishes. The trickle of priests who arrived in the diocese forced the bishop of Omsk to accept candidates who in all likelihood would have struggled to find employment in European Russia.

The diocese of Omsk had a unique trait in comparison to other dioceses in European Russia. Unlike most European dioceses, where secular and religious authority coincided with geographical boundaries, the territory of Omsk diocese overlapped with four provinces and hence, four governors reigned: Tomsk, Tobol'sk, Akmolinsk, and Semipalatinsk.⁸² Ruling over the governors of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk stood the Governor-General of the steppe, who wielded ultimate authority over the steppe region. In other words, the Omsk bishop had to deal with five secular officials, all of whom had opinions on how secular and religious life should be governed.⁸³ The drawbacks of shared authority would become apparent to both sides during the early twentieth century. The difficulties of sharing administrative space intensified as the arrival of settlers

⁸¹ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1894 i 1895 gody* (St. Petersburg, 1898), 318.

⁸² Under the administrative system, Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk were military governorships. In 1906, Akmolinsk changed to a governorship.

⁸³ The following men served as Governor-General of the Steppe: G.A. Kolpakovskii (1882-1889), M.A. Taube (1890-1900), N.N. Sukhotin (1900-1906), I.P. Nadarov (1906-1908), E.O. Shmidt (1908-1915), and N.A. Sukhomlinov (1915-1917). See Abashin et al., 424.

necessitated more collaboration between these religious and secular authorities.

Transforming the region: The Trans-Siberian Railway

The building of the Trans-Siberian railway constituted one of the greatest enterprises undertaken by the imperial Russian government. The decision to build was not taken lightly; the Russian state spent a substantial amount of time discussing the possibility of building it throughout the 1880s.⁸⁴ The railway, which eventually linked Moscow to Vladivostok, allowed for the transportation of large quantities of natural resources and people to and from Siberia. Sergei Witte, one of the architects of Russian railway policy under Alexander III and an important figure in the Russian state, described the aspirations of the government in the 1890s for its Siberian colony, which could only be fulfilled through the establishment of the railway:

Up to now Siberia has not made significant progress in its economic growth, despite the abundance of its natural riches...Such an unfortunate situation has doubtless been brought about primarily by its disconnection from European Russia. Siberia, although a part of Russia, has not participated in the latter's civil, cultural, and economic progress, but somehow has hardened in its centuries old immobility. To connect Siberia by means of the railroad with the European Russian rail network, in such a way as to bring it closer to European Russia – that is to give it access to Russian life and to bring about those very conditions of existence and development that are prevalent in the other parts of Russia...⁸⁵

Witte's intent, however, was not only to give Siberians the gift of access to European Russia, but to give European Russians the gift of access to the resources

⁸⁴ For more on the debates of the state, see Steven G. Marks *Road to Power: The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia, 1850-1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁸⁵ Quoted in Marks, 143.

of Siberia. As land hunger consumed many parts of European Russia, both the government and peasants identified migration to Siberia as one viable solution to this problem.

The population increase in Siberia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was staggering. During the first half of the nineteenth century – from 1801 to 1860 – only 216,000 peasants migrated to Asiatic Russia. Settlers would primarily follow the Great Moscow *Trakt* (highway) into the territory. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the number of settlers arriving in Siberia grew. According to Forsyth, approximately 35,000 arrived annually in the 1880s. This number rose in the 1890s and turned into a flood in the early twentieth century. Over the course of thirty years – from 1891-1910 – approximately 3,335,000 peasants made their way to Siberia.⁸⁶ Omsk and Tomsk dioceses, in particular, received a disproportionately larger number of settlers.⁸⁷ In 1897, the Orthodox population of Akmolinsk province consisted of 232,401; by 1911, it had increased to 831,899. Semipalatinsk province experienced a more subdued level of growth, increasing from 67,620 to 183,490 during the same period.⁸⁸ Regions in the north of the diocese also received a steady flow of settlers, although some settlers struggled to adapt to the environmental conditions of the taiga.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Donald W. Treadgold, *Great Siberian Migration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 33. Treadgold notes that the estimates of illegal migrants is approximately 700 000. Also, see Forsyth, 191.

⁸⁷ Unfortunately, no figures exist based on the borders of the dioceses.

⁸⁸ *Aziatskaia Rossiia: Liudi i poriadki za uralom*, tom.3 (St. Petersburg: Izd. Pereselencheskago upravleniia Glavnago upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914), 241–242. Another source offers the breakdown of the population of Akmolinsk in 1910. It places the population at 1,324,000, with 505,000 Kazakhs, 131, 000 Cossacks and 544, 000 Russian peasants. See *Spravochnaia knizhka po Akmolinskomu pereselencheskomu raionu na 1912*, (1912), 22.

⁸⁹ M.K. Churkin, “Zaledel’cheskaia kolonizatsiia Tobol’skoi gubernii v kontse XIX-nachale XX vv.,” in *Problemy Izucheniia Kul’turno-istoricheskogo naslediia i perspektivy razbitiia Tarskogo*

Scholars have debated how to interpret the migration of millions of peasant-settlers to Siberia. Willard Sunderland has drawn our attention to the ambiguities of the process: state officials used the terms resettlement (*pereselenie*) and colonization (*kolonizatsiia*) interchangeably to describe the purpose of the endeavour.⁹⁰ Although agricultural considerations, particularly land-hunger in Russia proper, influenced the state's decision to promote the movement of peasants, migration had quite clear and direct overtones of imperialism. As Anatolii Remnev has argued,

In imperial policy, the prevailing stereotype held that one could only consider those lands truly Russian where the plow of the Russian plowman had passed. Peasant colonization became an important component of imperial policy and peasants the most effective conveyers of imperial policy.⁹¹

The opening of Siberia to large-scale settlement therefore provided the opportunity to bring the territory permanently under Russian authority, which, as Steven Marks argues, satisfied the desire of the Russian state to control Siberia politically and militarily. Particularly after its humiliating loss in the Russo-Japanese war, the Russian state focused greater attention on bringing settlers to Siberia "to counterbalance the influence of Japan and other foreign powers..."⁹² Therefore political, military, and economic considerations all contributed to the decision to attach Siberia to Russian proper.⁹³

Priirtysh'ia (2005), 82–86.

⁹⁰ Willard Sunderland, "Empire Without Imperialism? Ambiguities of Colonization in Tsarist Russia," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (April 2003): 104–105.

⁹¹ Anatolyi Remnev, "Siberia and the Russian Far East," in *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1930*, ed. Jane Burbank, Mark Von Hagen, and Anatolyi Remnev (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 440.

⁹² Forsyth, 192.

⁹³ Stolberg, 253.

Many elites in the Russian empire viewed colonization like their European counterparts, as a means of bringing “progress and civilization” to primitive regions.⁹⁴ Within this ideology, the settler became a symbol of European ingenuity, intrepidity, and strength of character. In the Russian case, members of the peasantry constituted the state's colonizing force. For certain observers, the peasantry formed an essential vanguard for Russia's civilizing mission, as they viewed the peasant “as [a] super colonist blessed with admirable pioneer qualities, an instinct for settling new places and a knack for interacting with and influencing native peoples.”⁹⁵ In other circles, the arrival of large waves of peasant-settlers to Siberia caused grave concerns as to whether this population could promote the integration of Siberia with the metropole. Instead of representing the superiority of Russian culture, religion, and nationality, the settlers served as a reminder of Russia's economic and social backwardness and the disputed nature of a “unified” Russian identity.⁹⁶

As the plans for establishing Omsk diocese were underway, the state began a project that would transform the region and the mandate of the church. This created a scenario where the church planned for one future, and the state pursued another. This disengagement of religious and secular agendas is not indicative of a division between church and state, but rather a reflection of the ad hoc nature of the state's plans for colonization. Once the state committed itself to the idea of consolidating its control over Siberia by settling peasants in the region, a plan for

⁹⁴ Willard Sunderland, “The ‘Colonization Question’: Visions of Colonization in Late Imperial Russia,” *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 48 (2000): 217.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁹⁶ Jeff Sahadeo makes a similar argument with regards to Russian settlers in Tashkent. See *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent: 1865-1923* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

nurturing the religious life of the settlers was not far behind. In the diocese, the appearance of waves of settlers created new challenges for the allocation of diocesan funds, and although the diocese continued to support the external mission and view converting the local Kazakh population as part of its mandate, this task became less important.

Veniamin's aspiration for the state and church to work together in converting Siberia's *inorodtsy* population gave way to a more vivid dream with the arrival of settlers. From the beginning of colonization in the late nineteenth century, state officials understood the incorporation of Siberia into the empire through peasant migration as constituting something new. Many state officials considered the population of old residents (*starozhily*) that had lived without the oversight of the government to be a lost cause. In contrast, the state viewed settlers as representing the only hope for the empire to bind Siberia to Russian proper. Through transforming the land of Siberia into "*nash*" (ours) and through their enlightening influence on the local population, settlers were destined to conquer the East by making it Russian.⁹⁷ This process created an opportunity for collaboration between the Orthodox Church and the state as equals. Ioann Vostorgov, an archpriest based in Moscow, but born and raised in the Caucasus, became one of the leading proponents of the Orthodox Church's special role in the East and also one of the key figures in the bureaucratic structure addressing the religious situation in Siberia. During his relatively short career, Fr. Vostorgov explored Orthodoxy's relationship to Russianness on the imperial frontiers,

⁹⁷ For an argument focusing on the appropriation of the Siberian land imaginatively, instead of physically, see Claudia Weiss, "Nash: Appropriating Siberia for the Russian Empire," *Sibirica* 5, no. 1(Spring 2006): 141–155.

particularly in regards to the role of the peasantry in colonizing the Caucasus and Siberia. Vostorgov's involvement in Siberia began in 1905, when the Holy Synod assigned him to report on church schools in the region. The Holy Synod must have been impressed with his report, as three years later it sent him once again to Siberia to collect information on the settlement process. For the next few years, Vostorgov would travel yearly to Siberian dioceses, where he would meet with religious officials to assess the religious conditions of settlement.

From this practical work on the ground, Vostorgov began to explore ideas of Russia's calling in the East. He became convinced of the messianic destiny of Russian peasants and the marriage between Russian Orthodoxy and imperial expansion. Unlike Veniamin who did not envision an autonomous role for the church within the framework of the empire, Vostorgov managed to present the Orthodox Church less as a helpmate to the state and more as an equal partner. Vostorgov envisioned a strong church fulfilling its messianic destiny in Siberia. God had called upon Russians to form the "new Israel" and spread Christianity throughout the pagan East.⁹⁸ The settlement of Russians in this region was part of God's plan for the salvation of the East; Asia had spent too long in darkness. According to Vostorgov, Russians were chosen by God to be like the apostles and bring the Gospel to this untapped region. Only through the arrival of settlers in Siberia and the Far East could God's holy mission be fulfilled.⁹⁹

Settlers simply had to arrive in the region in order to fulfil this destiny. Untrained in the vocation of preaching God's word, they would not engage in

⁹⁸ I.I. Vostorgov, "Rossiia i Vostok," *Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam* 25 (1909):1145.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1148; Ioann Vostorgov, *Dobroe Slovo Pereselentsy* (Moscow, 1909), 9.

active ministry, but rather settlers would fulfil this duty by living among nonbelievers. Vostorgov believed that even though settlers arrived in Siberia for their own private reasons – escaping poverty and crowded lands – “...God [still] created his holy will through them...”¹⁰⁰ In other words, Vostorgov’s vision attached to settlers an essential, yet passive role in spreading salvation throughout the lands of Asia. Such a role had significance not only for the Russian empire, but for the world as well. The conversion of the East to Christianity would change the dynamic of the world, just as the conversion of the Roman Empire altered the course of history.

In addition to transforming the religious map of the world, Vostorgov also had more pragmatic reasons for encouraging the settlement of Russian Orthodox peasants in the East. Like state officials, Vostorgov viewed Russia’s neighbours suspiciously. Convinced that Russia’s Asiatic neighbours had designs on Siberia to ease the stress of their growing populations, Vostorgov emphasized the fundamental necessity for filling Siberia with Russian settlers.¹⁰¹ Land, according to Vostorgov, was the commodity that would protect Russia’s greatness. Losing Siberia and the Far East would not only hurt the empire now, but would more importantly compromise its future. With the population increasing yearly, land would provide an outlet for the Russian population. The future progress of the empire depended on its expansion into and development of Siberia. With enemies lurking around the edges of the empire ready to take the land, Russia had to

¹⁰⁰ Vostorgov, *Dobroe slovo*, 8.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

populate these territories.¹⁰² Yet, the enemies standing on the border with Russia could one day be brothers in Christ. Vostorgov argued that if Russia “stands with Christ and with the cross, then the East, accepting Christ, would meet with us as brothers, and not as mortal enemies and predators.”¹⁰³ Vostorgov, therefore, understood the Christianization of the East as securing Russia’s place politically, in addition to promoting peace in this volatile region.

Conclusion

By the early twentieth century, the East had captured the imagination of the Russian Orthodox Church and the state. Although both had been engaged with Siberia for hundreds of years, colonization reinvigorated their commitment of binding Siberia to Russia proper. Settlers came to symbolize both the hopes and anxieties attached to the process. This happened quite suddenly. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, the Orthodox Church initially prepared for a different type of future in Siberia. Still operating under the assumption that Orthodox missions to the *inorodtsy* formed their primary duty, Siberian diocesan officials focused their resources and attention on the indigenous population. Reflecting the outlook of Veniamin, the Church marshalled its resources to be useful to the state. The creation of Omsk diocese grew out of this mindset; yet this was not to be its destiny. Over the next two decades, the trials and tribulations of settlers would dominate Omsk’s story. Orthodox leaders in Siberia adapted quickly to this new reality, even though from the outset they could not keep up with the

¹⁰² Ibid., 11-12.

¹⁰³ I.I. Vostorgov, “Rossiia i Vostok,” *Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam* 25 (1909):1150.

transformation already underway. Addressing the religious needs of Russian settlers required a phenomenal amount of resources, which this new diocese simply could not muster. Despite the difficulties on the ground, the colonization of Siberia provided the church with an exciting opportunity: to promote the appetizing dream of a manifest destiny for the Russian people to save the “pagan” East, and perhaps even a modernizing Russia. Such a destiny offered the Orthodox Church a central role in colonization, not as a helpmate to the state, but as an equal partner.

Chapter 2: Omsk Bishops and the Realities of Imperial Expansion

The opening of Omsk diocese in 1895 garnered a mixed reaction among the upper echelon of tsarist officials in the region. The Governor-General of the Steppe, M.A. Taube reported, “By this mercy shown by the Emperor, the Steppe at last realizes the cherished dream of thousands of local Orthodox Christians.”¹ Echoing the excitement of Taube, in his 1895 report, the Military Governor of Akmolinsk province conveyed his confidence that the opening of this new diocese and the arrival of the bishop would have a positive influence on church construction and the moral condition of the population.² In contrast, the 1895 report of the Military Governor of Semipalatinsk made no mention of the bishop’s arrival or of Omsk diocese’s formation. He instead drew attention to the difficulties associated with the influx of European settlers into his region. According to the governor, the unfamiliarity of these settlers with soil conditions and weather patterns on the steppe caused problems with establishing functioning farms.³ This assortment of reactions illustrates the hopes associated with the act of creating the diocese and the challenges on the horizon for its successful development. The territories encompassed by this diocese were in a state of transition as the state encouraged colonization. The arrival of large numbers of pioneers created economic, social, and cultural demands on the state to help the settlers adapt to the conditions of their new homelands. The flood of settlers from

¹ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (henceforth, RGIA), f.bib-ka, op.1, d.91, l.51.

² RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.1, l.83.

³ RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.85, l.87.

European Russia also created religious demands on the Russian Orthodox Church, which could not provide adequate spiritual care to the Russian population already living in the region. According to Orthodox leaders, both local and national, new churches and parishes had to be established, new priests had to be trained, and assigned to parishes and the faith of Orthodox parishioners had to be fortified against incursion from non-Orthodox preachers seeking to challenge the practices of the church. Many individuals, groups, and organizations engaged in strengthening the religious institutions and identity of settlers on the frontier. At the heart of this campaign to nurture the spiritual engagement of the Orthodox population stood the bishop.

Dioceses all over the empire faced enormous challenges by the beginning of the twentieth century. Urbanization, social and political tensions, and religious pluralism created new barriers which interfered with the ability of religious leaders to connect with their flock.⁴ In the case of Siberia, the transitional state of daily life caused by the movement of peasant-settlers to the region created more problems. Pioneers faced the hardship of clearing land, building homes, and growing crops on the Siberian steppe. Poor harvests sometimes caused by weather conditions, and other times by the decision-making of peasants unfamiliar with local farming conditions created life-threatening scenarios. Religious leaders interpreted these environmental, economic and cultural challenges as well as the immense space that separated villages from each other and from the diocesan capital as creating barriers to the full engagement of the Orthodox Church with its

⁴ For a description of the state of religious life in late Imperial Russia see the introduction to Mark Steinberg and Heather J. Coleman. *Sacred Stories: Religion and Spirituality in Modern Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 1-21.

faithful.⁵ As settlers focused their attention and resources on survival, church officials feared they would neglect their spiritual lives. Villages existed without access to churches and clergy and without any indication that they belonged to the ancient, powerful, and holy Orthodox Church. The expansive space also caused problems for the supervision of lay piety by members of the clergy, a critical element of the Orthodox Church's strategy for fighting against laity misinterpretation of Orthodox beliefs and practices.

Creating a sense of Orthodox community and belonging and the institutions necessary to support that identity lay in the hands of the clergy and diocesan officials. While the diocesan administration involved countless individuals and numerous committees to oversee its day-to-day activities, the bishop held the top position in this structure. As the administrative head of this institution, the bishop had the duty of understanding the needs of parishioners living under his jurisdiction and managing the resources of the diocese to address those needs as best he could. The bishop also served the important function of providing a bridge from the diocese to the Holy Synod and the Chief Procurator in St. Petersburg.⁶ In theory, he represented local religious needs to St. Petersburg; however, in reality, the bishop had competition for the Holy Synod's ear from people like Ioann Vostorgov.

Administrative obligations, while both essential and time-consuming, did

⁵ Gregory Bruess describes similar challenges faced by Archbishop Nikiforos in the late eighteenth century in the under-developed diocese of Astrakhan in Gregory L. Bruess, *Religion, Identity and Empire: a Greek Archbishop in the Russia of Catherine the Great* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1997).

⁶ Gregory L. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 22.

not constitute the sole function of a bishop. As the spiritual leader of the diocese, bishops had the moral duty to provide members of the clergy and parishioners with a model of piety to emulate; he must comfort and guide them as they encountered the struggles of daily life. The bishop also represented a vision of the wider Orthodox community and by visiting villages he reminded parishioners that they were a part of something bigger than their local communities. This symbolic role was particularly important in a young diocese undergoing colonization as the hardship of settler life challenged the faith of the most fervent believers.

The scholarship on the Russian Orthodox Church and faith has grown immensely in the last two decades; however, our knowledge of Russian bishops in late imperial Russia is still fragmentary. Recent years have witnessed the publication of a number of biographies on individual bishops in the Russian language and a few scholars have illuminated characteristics of the bishops as a social group.⁷ Gregory Freeze's book on the parish clergy in nineteenth-century Russia still stands as the most complete portrayal of the bishops. Yet, Freeze focused primarily on the relationship between the bishops and the clergy – an important relationship, but no means the only role of the bishops. These men performed an important role within the diocesan community. As Nadieszda Kizenko points out, unlike parish priests who interacted and worshiped with their parishioners on a regular basis, bishops did not perform such an intimate role in the lives of Orthodox believers. In fact, parishioners rarely had the opportunity to

⁷ Jan Plamper, "The Russian Orthodox Episcopate, 1721-1917: A Prosopography," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 1 (2000): 5–34; O.V. Ushakova, "Zapadnosibirskii Episkopat v 1907-1917 gg: k kharakteristike Episkopov Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi kak sotsial'noi gruppy," in *Slavianskoe Edinstvo: Mezhdunarodnaia Nauchnaia Konferentsiia* (Omsk, 2000), 126–129.

interact with their bishop.⁸ Although it is true that parish priests performed a more consistent role in nurturing religious life in their parishes through actively educating parishioners, conducting services and rituals, and visiting their parishioners, priests could also be too close to parishioners' daily lives to inspire religious fervour. Since bishops were not a part of the local community, their relationship with parishioners was not tainted by their involvement in everyday life. With the example of Father John of Kronstadt, a renowned parish priest in Imperial Russia, whose deep piety inspired people internationally, Kizenko insightfully illuminates how priests straddled both secular and religious worlds, as men who performed a religious function, but who were also married and therefore found themselves viewed as less spiritual (with Father John being an exception to this rule). For parishioners, the inaccessibility of bishops in comparison to their parish priests often made these men appear more holy.

Acting as spiritual fathers to their parishioners was not an easy task for the bishops. Education, knowledge, lifestyle, and experiences separated bishops from parishioners and from the local clergy as well. The Holy Synod selected bishops from the black clergy, or those who had taken monastic vows. While they originated from all over the empire, most men who became bishops attended one of the four theological academies of the empire, in Kiev, St. Petersburg, Moscow and Kazan. This experience provided them with a distinctive educational and cultural outlook as they formed the elite of the Orthodox Church. Also, in

⁸ Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 45.

European Russia, priests were usually locals and bishops typically were not.⁹ In the case of Omsk diocese, physical distance also prevented their engagement with Orthodox believers. Omsk bishops aspired to overcome this distance between themselves and the faithful. Religious officials writing about Omsk diocese often, and accurately, employed the term vast (*obshirnyi*) in their descriptions. In comparison to dioceses in European Russia, Siberian dioceses were decidedly massive. For example, three dioceses where a large number of settlers originated from, Riazan, Poltava, and Kiev, spanned approximately 36,992, 43,379 and 44,730 square kilometres respectively.¹⁰ Even the large diocese of Perm only stood at 291,760 square kilometres. In contrast, Omsk diocese was one million square kilometres. This difference in size was not lost on the bishops of Omsk, as the majority of them had worked in dioceses in European Russia. Distance, in their minds, constituted one of the most significant factors jeopardizing the fulfilment of their pastoral duty.

Few options existed to tie together this seemingly boundless space, especially as villages and settlements were in a constant state of transition once colonization began. Traditionally, bishops in the Russian empire relied primarily on trips through the diocese to assess the spiritual situation on the ground and interact with parishioners. These long and arduous journeys provided only brief glimpses of the domestic life of parishioners, as the large distances between villages forced bishops to hurry to their next appointment. Using descriptions of

⁹ Freeze, 25; Plamper, 12.

¹⁰ See entries for Kiev, Poltava and Riazan provinces in *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar'* (St. Petersburg: Brockhaus-Efron, 1890-1907). <http://www.vchi.net/brokgauz/index.html> (accessed 23/03/ 2011).

these trips conducted between 1897 and 1916, this chapter explores the physical and spiritual challenges of Omsk diocese and the significance of the bishop's function as spiritual father to his parishioners. To address the problem of distance, Omsk bishops eventually proposed and received permission from the Holy Synod to divide the southern half of the diocese into two vicar bishoprics. This proposed remedy could not solve the fundamental problem of distance; however, it did offer more opportunities for parishioners to meet and worship with their bishops.

Distance was not the only obstacle preventing the full engagement of bishops in Omsk diocese, as a revolving door of bishops added to the diocese's woes. In the span of twenty-two years, eight different men held this title. The appointment of bishops took place in St. Petersburg, where the tsar chose prelates from a list drawn up by the Holy Synod. The Holy Synod would indicate its top candidate to the ruler; however, the tsar did not always submit to its counsel.¹¹ According to church rules, bishops should hold their office until death; however, by the end of the nineteenth century, this practice had ceased to be the norm. Instead, the Holy Synod and Chief Procurator frequently moved bishops to reward those who performed their duties well. Some viewed this change as being positive, as it rewarded those who showed real promise, while others criticized this trend for breaking canon law and harming the relationship between bishops and clergymen, as well as between bishops and parishioners.¹² In many ways the predicament of bishops reflected similar changes that had taken place among governors in the empire. Governors also frequently were transferred and by the

¹¹ Plamper, 17.

¹² Ibid., 17-18.

end of the nineteenth century, a greater emphasis on merit, specialization and expertise existed within their ranks.¹³ This turn towards the professionalization of the top secular and religious positions in the empire produced both positive and negative consequences.

The situation in Omsk diocese illustrated both the costs and, to a much lesser extent, the benefits of such a system. On average, Omsk bishops served in their position for 2.75 years, which was short by the standards of the time. By the reign of Nicholas II, the average number of years in a diocese for Orthodox bishops was 5.50 years.¹⁴ With such a limited tenure, it would be impossible even in an established diocese for an experienced bishop to fully grasp the personalities and geographies that constituted his diocese and the local flavour of empire-wide religious problems. Within this hierarchical system, Omsk diocese occupied one of the lowest rungs. The men sent to serve as bishop of Omsk reflected the junior position of the diocese in the empire: it was a place to prove one's worth and move on. The high turnover of Omsk diocese can be attributed to a number of factors. First, the weather could hardly be worse. The biting cold of the winter, complete with dangerous blizzards, gave way to the hot and unpredictable weather of the summer. Second, being sent to a poor, underdeveloped diocese with a laundry list of problems appealed to very few bishops. The bishopric of Omsk could hardly be called a high profile job. It might be geographically close to the centre of the empire, but culturally, politically, and religiously, it was very

¹³ Thanks to Victor Taki for drawing my attention to the similarities between bishops and governors. For more information on the role of provincial governors, see Richard G. Robbins, *The Tsar's Viceroys: Russian Provincial Governors in the Last Years of the Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

¹⁴ Plamper, 18.

far removed from the powerful political capital of St. Petersburg and the spiritual capital of Moscow. Yet, the very dioceses exhibiting the most undesirable traits also tended to be those in desperate need of outstanding leadership. A few of the men appointed to Omsk demonstrated such exceptional personal characteristics; however, nearly every bishop was unproven when he arrived. Only two of the bishops had ever held a full bishop position before Omsk. This is not to say that they completely lacked experience. All had served as vicar bishops, which meant that they were bishops responsible for particular cities without the powers and responsibilities of a full bishop. Despite their novice status as bishops when they started the job, biographical details from the lives of the eight men who occupied the top position in Omsk diocese reveals that before their appointment they had achieved a high level of education and a long record of religious service across the empire. Many had extensive experience with missionary work, a characteristic held in high esteem for leaders in the region. The similarities in these biographies illustrate how the Holy Synod chose men with limited credentials in leading the diocese, but with ample experience administering religious life.

By the time he became the first bishop of Omsk, Grigorii (Poletaev) had already completed a full life in the Russian heartland and in the imperial borderlands. Born in 1826 to a clerical family, Grigorii graduated from the Nizhegorod seminary. In 1854, he received a master's degree in theology from the Kazan Theological Academy, which was well-known for training missionaries to

Muslim populations.¹⁵ Grigorii began his career in Kazan, teaching at the Academy, before becoming the rector of the nearby Ufa seminary in 1867. Five years later, Grigorii transferred to central Russia, where he joined the staff of Vladimir seminary; five years after that, he journeyed back east, this time into the heart of Siberia to become the rector of Irkutsk seminary. After spending ten years in Irkutsk, Grigorii served as a member of the St. Petersburg theological censorship committee in 1888. His sojourn in the capital was short, as in 1891, the Holy Synod ordained him as the bishop of Kaunas, a vicar bishopric in Lithuania. A year later, Grigorii moved to the other side of the empire, as the Holy Synod appointed him the Bishop of Turkestan and Tashkent. Even though he had only four years of experience as a bishop, the Holy Synod chose Grigorii as Omsk's first bishop and entrusted him with the tremendous task of building the institutional framework of this new diocese.¹⁶

Grigorii's successor, Sergii (Petrov), also had a detailed resume from working in the borderlands. Sergii was the only Omsk bishop who did not graduate from a theological academy; instead, following the completion of his seminary degree, Sergii decided to study history at Moscow University.¹⁷ After graduating, he joined the Altai mission to the Kazakhs in 1892, eventually becoming the head of the mission after it was transferred to the control of Omsk diocese. Sergii spent four years in this position, living in the town of

¹⁵ A. Zhuk, *Predstoiateli Omskoi eparkhii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi: Biograficheskii spravochnik* (Omsk, 2006), 12–13. For more information on Kazan Theological Academy, see Paul Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

¹⁶ After performing this duty for five years, Grigorii retired and served in monasteries in the Moscow area.

¹⁷ Zhuk, 18.

Semipalatinsk and engaging in his archaeological hobby. He also learned the Kazakh language, a skill he demonstrated while travelling through the region as the bishop.¹⁸ In 1899, Sergii received a promotion to the position of vicar bishop in Tomsk; two years later, he became the bishop of Omsk. His term as bishop proved to be short, as the Holy Synod transferred Sergii to Grigorii's old position as the Bishop of Kaunas in Lithuania in 1903. It appears that despite his long tenure in Siberia and intimate knowledge of the region, Bishop Sergii desired a warmer climate and requested to be transferred back to European Russia.¹⁹

Training and experience in the western borderlands characterized the background of the next bishop. Mikhail (Ermakov) held the position of Omsk bishop from September 1903 until December 1905. A graduate of the Kiev Theological Academy, he relocated to Mogilev in eastern Belarus in 1893, eventually moving to the northwestern Ukrainian province of Volynia. In both locations, he served as rector of the local seminaries. Before his appointment to Omsk, the Holy Synod ordained Mikhail the bishop of Kaunas in Lithuania. After two years in Omsk, the Holy Synod transferred Mikhail to the vicar bishopric of Grodno in Belarus.²⁰

Gavriil (Golosoov) has the distinction of being the longest serving Omsk bishop during the imperial period, from December 1905 until February 1911. Born in Iaroslavl, Gavriil completed his seminary education in his home province before entering the St. Petersburg Theological Academy in 1863. Four years later,

¹⁸ "Poseshchenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom Sergiem, Episkopom" *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti* (OEV), no.20 (1901):11.

¹⁹ Bor Ger-mov, "Poseshchenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom, Preosviashchenneishim Sergiem," *OEV*, no.19 (1903), 24.

²⁰ Ioann Goloshubin, *Spravochnaia kniga Omskoi eparkhii* (Omsk: Tipografiia Irtysh, 1914), 901.

Gavriil finished his degree and became a teacher at the seminary in Ufa and then in Tver. In 1882, he moved to the position of abbot of a newly established monastery. As abbot, he received recognition from Father John of Kronstadt for two teaching books he wrote.²¹ At the age of forty-seven, Gavriil received his first appointment as a vicar bishop in the diocese of Tver in 1886. Ten years later, he moved to the diocese of Vologda, where Gavriil served as the vicar bishop before being transferred to Poltava diocese. His time in Poltava was short-lived, as within the year, the Holy Synod had assigned Gavriil to Omsk diocese as the bishop.

The chosen replacement of Gavriil, Vladimir (Putiata), demonstrated a significantly different background and career path than the other bishops. An aristocrat by birth, Prince Putiata had a keen intellect, excelling in the study of French, English, German, Italian, Greek, and Latin, and a reverence for female company.²² Putiata's elite status was confirmed and enhanced by joining the Preobrazhenskii regiment at the age of twenty-two. Despite keeping company with the highest of society, Putiata renounced the secular world in 1899 and entered the Kazan Theological Academy.²³

Putiata's intellectual capabilities distinguished him during his studies. After graduating from Kazan and taking his monastic vows, Vladimir received a position in the Russian Orthodox Church serving the Russian embassy in Rome. The vast scholarly resources available in Rome, in addition to his language skills,

²¹ Zhuk, 27.

²² Metropolitan Manuil (Lemesevskij), *Die Russischen Orthodoxen Bischöfe von 1893 bis 1965*, Teil II (Erlangen: Erlangen Lehrstuhl für Geschichte u. Theologie d. Christl. Ostens, 1981), 234.

²³ Zhuk, 31.

allowed him to complete a master's dissertation about the Church in Italy. His strong intellect, however, could not hide Vladimir's weak moral compass. His womanizing among high society helped to cut short his tenure in Italy. After engaging in similar behaviour in the Russian embassy in Paris, Vladimir returned (or was returned) to Russia. In 1907, he was ordained the bishop of Kronstadt, a vicar bishopric under the authority of the bishop of St. Petersburg.²⁴ Vladimir remained in this position until he became the bishop of Omsk in 1911. His career in Omsk was lively, but short-lived – two years later, the Holy Synod transferred him to Polotsk in Belarus as a vicar bishop. In 1915, he received the more prestigious bishopric of Penza, only to be removed from the position two years later after complaints from local clergy and believers.

After bishops of questionable character, Putiata and Golosov, the Holy Synod sent to Omsk an upstanding and outstanding bishop in terms of ability and moral character. In March 1913, Bishop Andronik (Nikol'skii) became the head of Omsk diocese. He held this position only briefly – until 30 July 1914. Born in Iaroslavl diocese in 1870, Andronik was a graduate of Iaroslavl seminary and of Moscow Theological Academy.²⁵ In 1895, he was appointed as an aid to the inspector of the Kutaiskii seminary. The following year, he became a homiletics teacher at the Aleksandrovsk Missionary seminary in the Northern Caucasus and

²⁴ D. Pospelovsky, "The Renovationist Movement in the Orthodox Church in the Light of Archival Documents," *Journal of Church & State* 39, no. 1 (1997): 85. Pospelovsky also touches on Putiata's role in post-revolutionary church conflicts. See Edward Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

²⁵ Sergii Shirokov, *Biograficheskii slovar' missionerov Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi* (Moscow: Izd-vo Belyi Gorod, 2004), 216–218.

later, an inspector there.²⁶ In 1897, the Holy Synod appointed Andronik to the position of missionary in Japan. The trip to Japan took several months and exposed the young monk to places almost unimaginable to the son of a sacristan. During his travels through Italy, Greece, and North America, he saw first-hand the state of Christianity outside of Russia and participated in pilgrimages to important sites in Christian history.

While his work among the Japanese congregation elicited great joy from Andronik, his stay in Japan was short. In 1899, Andronik was reassigned to the Aleksandrovskaia Missionary seminary to serve as the rector. A few years later, the Bishop of Ufa requested the transfer of Andronik to the position of rector in his seminary. Andronik stayed in Ufa until the Holy Synod ordained him, at the age of thirty-six, the bishop of Kyoto. This time, Andronik journeyed through Siberia for his return to Japan. The congregation in Osaka was small, providing Andronik with an intimate setting to become acquainted with local families. Frustrated by the slow progress of his missionary work and with his health jeopardized by the weather, Andronik requested to return to Russia. The Holy Synod granted his appeal and appointed Andronik as vicar bishop in the diocese of Novgorod. Andronik dedicated himself to this new position, visiting local villages and conducting conversations with parishioners. In 1913, the Holy Synod once again transferred the now 43-year-old to Omsk diocese as the new bishop. Almost a year after his appointment, Andronik once again moved dioceses, becoming the bishop of Perm, a position where he remained until his execution by the Cheka in

²⁶ Andronik, *Pishu ot izbytkha skorbiashchego serdtsa* (Moscow: Sretenskii monastyr', 2007), 6.

1918.²⁷

Arsenii (Timofeev) held the position of bishop until 4 June 1915. A serious illness forced Arsenii to take an extended holiday²⁸ and eventually caused the Holy Synod to transfer him out of the position in Omsk diocese to allow him to rest.²⁹ The Holy Synod appointed Sil'vestr (Ol'shevskii) as Arsenii's replacement in the summer of 1915. The son of a deacon, Sil'vestr was born in the village of Kosovka in Kiev province on 31 May 1860. In the 1880s, he attended Kiev seminary and upon graduating, entered the Kiev Theological Academy. With a degree from the Theological Academy in 1889 he became a diocesan missionary in Kiev province. The following year, Sil'vestr switched diocese (to Poltava), but not jobs as he had developed a strong reputation for his work combatting the Shtundist movement.³⁰

Unlike the other bishops of Omsk, Sil'vestr's career developed primarily in one diocese, Poltava, where he served in different capacities for twenty-four years, giving him an intimate knowledge of the functioning of diocesan life. In addition to his role as diocesan missionary, Sil'vestr served as a teacher in the seminary, an inspector of parish schools, president of the diocesan council, the diocesan supervisor of parish schools, and finally, as a vicar bishop in 1911. Before the Holy Synod appointed him as bishop of Omsk, he also held a vicar position in the diocese of Orenburg.

²⁷ On 17 January 1999, the Russian Orthodox Church canonized Andronik as a new martyr.

²⁸ *OEV*, no.13 (1915): 1-2.

²⁹ "Arsenii," *OEV*, no.10 (1917): 23-24; Zhuk, 46.

³⁰ *V vere li vy?: Zhitie i trudy sviashchennomuchenika Sil'vestra, archiepiskopa Omskogo*, ed. Feodosii Protsiuk (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 2006), 29. For more information on the development of the Baptist faith in the Russian empire see Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

For most bishops, Omsk turned out to be the pinnacle of their personal careers, rather than a stepping stone. Only Andronik, who went on to receive a more desirable position as the bishop of Perm, used his work in Omsk to further his career; all of the other bishops either retired from their episcopal duties or received vicar positions in other dioceses as their next appointment. Their short tenure of service made it difficult for bishops to accomplish any substantial changes. Other dioceses in Siberia had similar difficulties, although not to the same extent as Omsk. To offer a comparison, the Siberian diocese of Transbaikal, which was formed at approximately the same time as Omsk, had five bishops during this period, each serving at least four years, except for one who left because of illness.³¹

The Realities of Building a Diocese

Descriptions of the new diocese were steeped in references to the transformative power of Russia's gaze toward the east. Local clergy promoted an image of the steppe as a land without meaning until the creation of the diocese.³² Despite this belief in the transformative power of Orthodoxy, the realities of establishing a functioning diocese on the steppe soon became apparent. Bishop Mikhail concluded his 1904 report to the Holy Synod by emphasizing how the vast space of the diocese (over a million square kilometres), its ethnic diversity, and its youthfulness (just under 10 years of existence) caused difficulties for

³¹ Igor Smolich, *Istoriia Russkoi Tserkvi*, Vol. 1 (Moscow: Izd-vo Spaso-Preobrazhenskogo Valaamskogo monastyria, 1996), 693–694.

³² "Gospodi Blagoslovi," *OEV*, no.1 (1898): 1-2.

managing the diocese. As he summarized:

The vastness of the diocese, the absence of convenient transportation routes besides the Great Siberian road and the Irtysh [river] makes supervision over churches, clergy, and congregations quite difficult and sometimes due to climate conditions (bitter frost and snowstorms) completely impossible.³³

Distance, population, accessibility, and weather posed problems for bishops in European Russian dioceses as well; however, the conditions in Siberia amplified them. Bishops struggled to understand where they should start in the daunting task of responding to the needs of parishioners and creating a vibrant Orthodox community. To gather information about the state of churches and parishes and to interact with their parishioners, Omsk bishops embarked on annual trips through their territory. Omsk bishops were not unique in this endeavour, as bishops across the empire had historically engaged in visitations in their dioceses. Although such trips were part of Orthodox religious culture, by the late nineteenth century, they happened with less regularity in many dioceses.³⁴ In fact, since the early nineteenth century, Orthodox bishops in Russia had questioned the usefulness of such excursions in terms of assessing and addressing the needs of their dioceses.³⁵ Despite this trend among their European brethren, Omsk bishops regularly performed this duty. In their reports to the Holy Synod, the bishops described these trips using the term surveying (*obozrenie*). In the unofficial section of *Omsk Diocesan News*, priests described these trips using a variety of terms such as

³³ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2041, l.26ob.

³⁴ Freeze, 33-34. For a description of the role of visitations in Orthodox culture, see John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 332.

³⁵ Freeze, 34.

surveying, trip (*poezdka*), and visitation (*poseshchenie*). This buffet of descriptive terms perhaps indicates the multi-faceted functions among Orthodox officials.

While these trips served multiple purposes, bishops devoted much of their time to spiritual interaction with parishioners, which illustrates the importance of this duty in their eyes. The bishop and his entourage used these trips to experience firsthand the state of religious life in local villages. As the bishop was entrusted to nurture Orthodox life, he had a duty to support the creation of new settler communities, and by observing the resettlement process he could determine the work that still needed to be done. In a sense, these trips were an information gathering excursions to provide the bishop with an understanding of the state of Orthodoxy in his diocese, which he would share with the Holy Synod. Such information, theoretically, could help both the Holy Synod and the bishop respond to the needs of local parishioners.

In addition to educating the bishop on the conditions of his parishes, these trips also introduced him to local conditions of travelling and the physical landscape of the diocese. The distances were vast and the quality of transportation routes was inconsistent. The sheer logistics of travel posed problems and illustrated the types of difficulties faced by parishioners in their everyday lives. Bishop Sergii's trip through Semipalatinsk province in 1901 took forty-six days, during which he covered 2985 kilometres, visiting fifty-four villages, two cathedrals and forty-six parish churches.³⁶ Two weeks after returning home to Omsk from this trip, Bishop Sergii set off again to survey the southwestern part of the diocese. This trip lasted a month as he covered over two thousand kilometres

³⁶ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.1965, l.10ob.

by carriage, visiting one cathedral, eight city churches and eleven village churches. During that year, Bishop Sergii travelled a total of ninety-two days, covering over six thousand kilometres by steamship, on foot, on a raft, by carriage (4500km) and finally, by the railway (500km).³⁷ In 1904, Bishop Mikhail spent two and a half months travelling through Semipalatinsk and Akmolinsk provinces. Over the course of two trips, he visited forty-five village churches, eleven prayer houses, and five mission stations belonging to the Kazakh mission. Bishop Gavriil's journey to the northern and northwestern portion of the diocese in 1907 took twenty days of travel, during which time he covered over nine hundred kilometres.³⁸ During the summer of 1913, over the span of forty-seven days, Bishop Andronik visited 112 villages.³⁹ In 1916, Bishop Sil'vestr travelled several thousand kilometres over the course of two trips which totalled approximately sixty days.⁴⁰ For the majority of the trip, Sil'vestr travelled by the usually modes of transportation: carriage, steamship, and railway. For the approximately nine hundred kilometres, Bishop Sil'vestr benefited from the technological advancements of the late nineteenth century and rode in an automobile belonging to local state officials.⁴¹

Even with technological advancements, weather patterns shaped the travel schedules of bishops and their entourage. Weather concerns forced Omsk

³⁷ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.1965, l.10ob.

³⁸ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2225, l.1.

³⁹ Vasilii Vinogradov, *Poezdka Ego Preosviashchenstva, Preosviashchenneishago Andronika* (Omsk, 1913), 1. Vinogradov also published some thoughts on the trip in *OEV*: See V. Vinogradov, "Vo otvete blagovestvovaniia poezdka Ego Preosviashchenstva, Preosviashchenneishago Andronika, Episkopa Omskago i Pavlodarskago, po eparkhii dlia obozreniia tserkvei Petropavloskago i Kokchetsvskago uezdov," *OEV*, no.23 (1913): 29-34; *OEV*, no.24 (1913):13-34.

⁴⁰ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d. 2791, l.2ob.

⁴¹ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.164, l.269.

bishops to travel in the spring, summer, and early fall. They typically began their travel itineraries at the end of April and had settled back into the diocesan capital by the end of September. While each area of the diocese had its own particular weather trends, one can generalize that summers were very hot and winters extremely cold with heavy snow in certain regions. In addition to being painfully cold, winter travel posed countless hazards; abrupt snowstorms and blizzards could snow in villagers for a week. None of the Omsk bishops risked any extensive travel in winter, with the exception of Bishop Sil'vestr, who took four trips to visit parishes between September and December in 1915. Although a summer travel schedule provided better conditions for the bishops, as most of the bishops noted in their reports, farmers in Omsk diocese attended church more often during the winter when they had free time than during the spring, summer, and fall when their crops needed attention.⁴² Despite this, large crowds still gathered during their busiest season to greet the bishops.

On these trips, the bishops and their entourages hardly travelled light. Out on the endless Kazakh steppe, they carried provisions for their physical sustenance and for the spiritual nourishment of parishioners. Many Siberian parishes were impoverished and the bishops had to bring their own supplies for performing rites and services. The clergy packed liturgical books, incense, icon lamps, a chest with holy relics, antimensia (which was a rectangular cloth necessary for celebrating the Eucharist), a baptismal chest (*krestil'nyi iashchik*), censer, compact coal, vestments, and candles. For Bishop Mikhail's trip, they packed over a thousand metal and silver crosses and six thousand religious

⁴² RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2716, l.24ob.

brochures and papers.⁴³ An entourage accompanied the bishop and one of the participants typically documented the excursion for the diocesan gazette. Descriptions of the bishop's travels could occupy several issues in a row – in the case of Bishop Mikhail gracing fourteen issues detailing every village visited – or only a short article on one event during the bishop's trip. In the case of Bishop Andronik, the travel log kept by Vasilii Vinogradov was not published in the diocesan gazette, but rather in book form. To document the churches in the region, one member of Bishop Mikhail's entourage brought a camera with him.⁴⁴

The clergy who wrote these accounts did not provide reasons for their publication or their intended audience. They also tended not to follow an obligatory storyline, one that speaks to an intention of edifying the clergy in the values of the diocese. Instead, many of these accounts read like travel-literature, introducing the clergy to parts of the diocese they would never personally see, thereby creating in their minds an imagined community of believers in the diocese. As the clergy of Siberia consisted of a large number of men who arrived in Siberia from different parts of the Russian empire, this introduction to the diversity of Omsk's landscape, population, weather, and travel conditions offered an enticing picture of the potential for this historically "unorthodox" land, while simultaneously illustrating in vivid details the religious challenges that Russian colonization had created. Following the bishop step-by-step through his journey

⁴³ "Pervaia poezdka Ego Preosviashchenstva, Preosviashchennishago Mikhaila, Episkopa Omskago i Semipalatinskago, dlia obozreniia tserkvei eparkhii," *OEV*, no.15 (1904):17-18.

⁴⁴ Ibid.,18. A book might have been published on the basis of this trip. I found a citation, but not the physical book. *Pervaia poezdka Ego Preosviashchenstva, Preosviashchennishago Mikhaila, Eliskopa Omskago i Semipalatinskago, dlia obozreniia tserkvei* (Omsk: Tip. K.I. Demidovoi, 1904).

and interactions with his parishioners exposed the clergy to a detailed picture of local religious life in the diocese: the successes and failures of other clergy in performing their pastoral duty and the techniques of the bishops for edifying and comforting the faithful. The trips represented the bishop's work on the ground, reminding priests and parishioners of their membership in the diocese and creating, in the minds of the priests, an image of the diocese.

Travelling through the Diocese

Fanfare and prayers typically accompanied the departing bishop from Omsk. On the morning of 26 May 1897, Bishop Grigorii embarked on his first tour of the diocese. Before setting out on his journey, he met with a large audience of clergymen and laity to pray for a successful and safe trip. The bishop blessed those gathered and reminded them to engage in heartfelt prayer for rain, which had been sparse all summer. After performing this ceremony, Grigorii and his entourage began the journey.⁴⁵

Travelling by four spacious carriages, the party set out over the Irtysh River accompanied by the ringing of the city's church bells. A smooth, hard road lay beneath the wheels of their carriage, which carried the group away from Omsk. Travelling by carriage provided a unique way to experience the landscape of the diocese for the bishop and his entourage. The view from the carriage

⁴⁵ "Obozrenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom, Preosviashchenneishim Grigoriem, episkopom Omskim i Semipalatinskim tserkvei i prikhod v 1897 god," *OEV*, no.10 (1898): 2. Bishop Mikhail's trip began in a similar manner, except he took the steamship. See "Pervaia poezdka Ego Preosviashchenstva, Preosviashchenneishago Mikhaila, Episkopa Omskago i Semipalatinskago, dlia obozreniia tserkvei eparkhii," *OEV*, no.15 (1904): 18-19.

allowed them to look out over, as one participant described, “the boundless Siberian steppe,” where stood “groups of wilted, frozen birch trees disfigured by the heat and the frost.” The grass, browned and scorched by the hot summer sun, also spoke to the extremity of the elements and the scarcity of rain near Omsk. The initial description of the journey offered in the pages of the *Omsk Diocesan News* continued with this forlorn tone as the carriages darted forward, into the dust kicked up by the horses, into the staggering heat of the early morning, and into the endlessness of the land that lay before them. As Grigorii’s companion wrote, “The monotony of the steppe without end and edge causes melancholy...”⁴⁶ Direct interaction with the surrounding environment not only brought out poetic musing from priests, but also confirmed the difficulty of the task that lay ahead of them.

The delegation made its way southwest through the province of Akmolinsk. This province consisted of five districts: Omsk, Petropavlovsk, Kokchetav, Akmolinsk and Atbasarsk. The total territory of the province stood at 594,673 square kilometres, with the largest district of Akmolinsk occupying a staggering 226,494 square kilometres.⁴⁷ The bishop’s carriages made their first stop twenty kilometres outside of Omsk in the village of Sosnovka, which had been founded in 1896 by German colonists primarily from Samara province.⁴⁸ After experiencing ten years of poor harvests in Samara and hearing about Siberian land in letters from their fellow-countrymen (*zemliaki*), these colonists

⁴⁶ “Obozrenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom, Preosviashchenneishim Grigoriem, episkopom Omskim i Semipalatinskim tserkvei i prikhod v 1897 god,” *OEV*, no.10 (1898): 2-3.

⁴⁷ *Spravochnaia knizhka po Akmolinskomu pereselencheskomu raionu na 1912* (1912), 3.

⁴⁸ *Materialy po pereselencheskomu khoziaistvu, Omskii uezd* (St. Petersburg, 1907), 15–16.

decided to try their luck on the frontier. At this village the bishop's entourage changed horses, which provided one reason for the stop.⁴⁹ Despite the prosaic reason for stretching their legs in this German village, the bishop readily took the opportunity to chat with this non-Orthodox population in his diocese. The article described the villagers as excited to see the bishop and noted that they asked to be blessed. The bishop obliged in this request and also toured their homes. These German settlers shared with the bishop their hardships with finding adequate water. They complained that although many lakes existed on the steppe, they were all rich in salt and therefore useless for drinking. Even the water from the well dug by the state was salty, forcing them to dig holes in the ground, let the winter snowfall fill them and drink the melted snow. The bishop advised them to pray zealously to God to send rain. According to the description in the *Omsk Diocesan News*, rain began to fall on the village as the bishop drove away in his carriage.⁵⁰ Whether or not this small sign of the bishop's holiness actually took place, the setting of the frontier created openness for interaction between different ethnic and religious groups who shared similar struggles with the environment.

A Russian Orthodox village, Borisovka, was the bishop's next stop. Located eighty-seven kilometres from Omsk and forty kilometres from the nearest railway station of Marianovka, this village consisted of settlers from Poltava, Kharkov, Penza, Saratov, Samara, Stavropol, and Kiev provinces who put down roots during multiple waves of settlement between 1893 and 1895.⁵¹ Located

⁴⁹ "Obozrenie ego Preosviashchenstvom, Preosiashchenneishim Grigoriem, episkopom Omskim i Semipalatinskim tserkvei i prikhod v 1897 god," *OEV*, no.10 (1898): 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵¹ *Materialy po pereselencheskomu khoziaistvu, Omskii uезд* (St. Petersburg, 1907), 18-19.

along the western banks of Lake Shcherbakty – a name given by the local Kazakh population – the settlers experienced many of the same hardships as their German neighbours. Drinking the saline water proved impossible from the large lake. A large group of villagers along with a local official greeted the bishop on his arrival. They stood at the entrance of their newly built, but yet-to-be consecrated church. The bishop's entourage witnessed firsthand the scarcity of churches in Omsk district, as this church was meant to serve four other surrounding villages, all more than twenty kilometres away and with approximately 950 male souls.⁵² After receiving the traditional Russian greeting – bread and salt – the bishop entered the wooden church and was greeted by the dean and a sacristan with a cross and holy water. The priest, an import from European Russia, had not yet arrived. Grigorii began his spiritual duties right away, conducting a prayer service. Later, Bishop Grigorii performed an evening service, which was attended by many of the parishioners.

The next day, peasants filled the church to witness the consecration. The church was built through the Emperor Alexander III fund and contributions of parishioners.⁵³ During the service, the bishop gave communion to all the children, and afterward he delivered an edifying sermon on the comfort offered by the church to settlers whose lives inevitably are filled with misfortune and sorrow. Bishop Grigorii acknowledged the role of the state in providing funds for the church and supporting settlers in creating their new community on the steppe. In

⁵² "Obozrenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom, Preosiashchenneishim Grigoriem, episkopom Omskim i Semipalatinskim tserkvei i prikhod v 1897 god," *OEV*, no.11 (1898): 3.

⁵³ The Emperor Alexander III fund was a state initiative to build churches across Siberia. This fund will be addressed in detail in the next chapter.

his sermon, he said,

In this faraway place, where you found a second homeland (*rodina*), the government came to your aid: it helped not only in your farm but also looked after your soul, [and] built for you and your children this beautiful church...⁵⁴

By reminding parishioners of their indebtedness to the state, the bishop emphasized the community's connection to a world beyond their local space.

Visits of the bishop offered peasants an opportunity to ask questions on religious issues that had significance for their daily lives. While leaving the church, a peasant took the opportunity that the bishop's visit afforded him and asked "Does the Holy Bible allow for work on holidays?" The bishop responded with a question, "Do you know the fourth commandment of the law of God?" The peasant read the law and Grigorii continued his explanation:

...God gave you six days in which you must work for your body: to plough, mow, harvest, and generally to engage in household work. The seventh day... God appointed that you work for God and for your soul: go to church, pray to God, engage in conversations useful for the soul, read a useful book – if you can read – visit the poor, sick or prisoners in prison, help the downtrodden...⁵⁵

The bishop engaged the parishioners in a long conversation on this topic. As the bishop would later find out from a local official, this question had apparently caused debate and consternation among the peasants. Weeks earlier they asked the same question of the Military Governor of Akmolinsk, who provided a similar answer as the bishop. Grigorii expressed his surprise that this village, filled with settlers from Ukrainian provinces who traditionally demonstrated deep piety and

⁵⁴ "Obozrenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom, Preosviashchenneishim Grigoriem, episkopom Omskim i Semipalatinskim tserkvei i prikhod v 1897 god," *OEV*, no.10 (1898): 6.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

unquestioning devotion to the laws of the Russian Orthodox Church should question this law. For Grigorii, the only plausible answer was that the Lutheran neighbours of Borisovka had tempted the parishioners with their bad habits.

Mikhailovka – one of the villages served by the Borisovka church – also found itself on the bishop's itinerary. This village, twenty-five kilometres away from Borisovka, had been established two years prior to the bishop's visit. Families from Chernigov and Khar'kov settled at that spot after exploring other parts of Siberia, including, for the peasants from Chernigov, a four-year stint in Tomsk province.⁵⁶ Dressed in their holiday costumes, these pioneers greeted the bishop with salt and bread and sang hymns with harmony for him.⁵⁷ The bishop inquired about settler life in this new place, advised them to visit the parish church at Borisovka often, and encouraged the settlers to establish a school. As one of the bishop's last stops in the southern part of his diocese, Mikhailovka was located over a hundred kilometres away from Omsk; in comparison, the town of Akmolinsk, current-day Astana, which lay south of Mikhailovka was located 880 kilometres from Omsk. On this trip, Bishop Grigorii experienced only a small fraction of the southern portion of his diocese before turning his attention to parishes north of the Trans-Siberian railway.

The carriages carried the bishop and his entourage across the Trans-Siberian tracks and headed north into Tiukalinsk district in Tobol'sk province. This region lay north of Omsk and consisted of a mixed population of old residents and new colonists. Bishop Grigorii began his exploration of the district

⁵⁶ *Materialy po pereselencheskomu khoziaistvu, Omskii uezd* (St. Petersburg, 1907), 44-45.

⁵⁷ "Obozrenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom, Preosiashchenneishim Grigoriem, episkopom Omskim i Semipalatinskim tserkvei i prikhod v 1897 god," *OEV*, no.11 (1898): 2-3.

with the settlement of Lyubino, lying picturesquely along the banks of the Irtysh, a mere thirty-six kilometres from Omsk.⁵⁸ This settlement was divided into two parishes to accommodate its large population, which consisted of early pioneers who arrived well before the influx of settlers after 1890. Lyubino's parishioners built their first church in 1854; it burnt to the ground in 1879.⁵⁹ They quickly rebuilt the church, named for St. Sofia, in 1880. The ringing of the bell in Lyubino called parishioners to church and the presence of the bishop at St. Sofia drew a large crowd. People lined the street with bouquets of flowers in their hands. At half past nine, the bishop emerged from the priest's home, dressed in his holy vestments and holding a mitre. In front of him walked the local priest, wearing his full vestments with a cross on a platter and singing; other clergy members surrounded him as this procession made its way to the church for the liturgy, which lasted two hours.⁶⁰

Bishop Grigorii's stay in the village of Bol'shemogil'skoe revealed competing ideas between parishioners and the bishop over necessary Christian practices. During matins, many of the parishioners, in particular the young people, chose to walk about outside in the rain instead of participating in the service. This irked the bishop, who interpreted their actions as neglect of their Christian duty. After matins, Grigorii reminded them that attending only the liturgy was not enough and that they should surround themselves with God's word through full participation in church life. Just as important as attending themselves, was the

⁵⁸ "Obozrenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom, Preosiashchenneishim Grigoriem, episkopom Omskim i Semipalatinskim tserkvei i prikhod v 1897 god," *OEV*, no.12 (1898): 9.

⁵⁹ Goloshubin, 596.

⁶⁰ "Obozrenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom, Preosiashchenneishim Grigoriem, episkopom Omskim i Semipalatinskim tserkvei i prikhod v 1897 god," *OEV*, no.12 (1898): 9.

attendance of their children, who also needed to be instructed and inspired by God's word.⁶¹ Despite the bishop's concern, these parishioners had shown their piety in other ways. For instance, the parishioners built, at their own expense, a wooden church in 1885, complete with a bell-tower and a home for the priest.⁶²

Bol'shemogil'skoe's inhabitants took the bishop's words to heart as the next day a full church greeted him for the liturgy. After the service, the bishop admonished parishioners for not paying their priest his allotted 140 roubles. The parishioners promised the bishop that they would comply with the agreement. Such examples of tensions between the bishop and parishioners illustrate how actions interpreted by the bishop as showing indifference on the part of parishioners, could also indicate local practices, where people attend the liturgy and not matins and where parishioners viewed the priest as having already received his fair payment.

As the route weaved to the northwest of Omsk, the bishop stopped in seven villages along the way. All of these villages were located over a hundred kilometres away from Omsk, with the furthest village lying 180 kilometres from the diocesan capital.⁶³ A mixture of old and new settlements, these parishes exemplified the transitional nature of Omsk's landscape as established communities had to contend with the integration of the newly arrived. For example, the parish of Kniazevskoe included villages with settlers from the provinces of Chernigov, Smolensk, Orlov, Tver, Poltava, Vitebsk, and three

⁶¹ "Obozrenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom, preosviashchennishim Grigoriem, episkopom Omskim i Semipalatinskim tserkvei i prikhod v 1897 god," *OEI*, no.13 (1898): 5.

⁶² Goloshubin, 602.

⁶³ Distance information collected from Goloshubin, 601, 603, 605, 607.

villages with old residents.⁶⁴ Bishop Grigorii petitioned the Holy Synod to approve the building of a church and the opening of a new parish in the region, contending that the distance between villages and the parish church was too far. The distance, the bishop feared, would prevent settlers from practising their faith.⁶⁵

Grigorii's journey illustrates both the transitional and underdeveloped state of religious life in Omsk diocese in 1897. In the district of Tiukalinsk, the bishop's entourage witnessed the poverty of the new settlers off the beaten track and their desire to build churches. The poverty of settlers shocked members of the entourage, as did the desperate desire of parishioners for financial help from the state in building their churches and supporting their clergy.⁶⁶ In certain regions along the railway and those villages on major routes, churches were continuously being built. The station of Isil'kul', which initially did not have a church, quickly received money and materials to build a quaint wooden church with a capacity for 450 people.⁶⁷

These trips provided local clergy with the opportunity to interact with the bishop, to learn from the bishop's interaction with the parishioners, and to bolster the priest's authority among his parishioners. On these trips, priests and their families regularly billeted the bishop, feeding him, and providing him not only with a place to sleep, but also a place to relax after gruelling days of travel and

⁶⁴ Goloshubin, 606.

⁶⁵ RGIA, f.796, op.176, 2ot., 2st., d.1573, l.1.

⁶⁶ "Obozrenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom, Preosiashchenneishim Grigoriem, episkopom Omskim i Semipalatinskim tserkvei i prikhod v 1897 god," *OEV*, no.13 (1898): 6.

⁶⁷ Goloshubin, 42; A. I. Dmitriev-Mamonov and A.F. Zdziarski, eds., *Guide to the Great Siberian railway Published by the Ministry of ways of communication*, trans. L. Kukoi-Yasnopolsky (St. Petersburg: Artistic printing society, 1900), 189.

ministry. Local priests would often accompany the bishop and his entourage to surrounding villages. It is important to note that the clergy were also being scrutinized on these trips as a section devoted to the clergy and their moral character appeared in the annual reports sent by the bishops to the Holy Synod.

Sixteen years after Bishop Grigorii's historic visit to the western section of his new diocese, Bishop Andronik undertook a similar journey out west, this time beyond Omsk district into parts of Petropavlovsk and Kokchetav. Over the course of fifteen days in September, Bishop Andronik visited thirty-nine churches. A number of days, he visited four churches in a row, travelling quickly by carriage between locations. His travelling companions included the diocesan supervisor (*nabliudatel'*), Vasilii Vinogradov, who recorded the interactions between the bishop and his flock during the journey.

In contrast to Grigorii, Bishop Andronik relied on the Trans-Siberian railway to carry him to parishes west of Omsk. Leaving the diocesan capital at seven in the evening, Andronik travelled by train to the station of Mamliutka, located west of the town of Petropavlovsk. Arriving the next morning at the station, the bishop moved quickly to the parish of Stanov, where he began his assessment parishes life. The route taken by the delegates stretched straight down deep into the steppe with the furthest point located over 465 kilometres away from Omsk.⁶⁸ The exploration of Petropavlovsk and Kokchetav, two of the main areas of settlement in the region, provided an opportunity to witness religious conditions at the height of the colonization movement.

⁶⁸ I only have information on Kniazevskoe, which is 465 kilometres away from Omsk. The Bishop also visited Chistopol'skoe which was further away. See Goloshubin, 299.

The places they visited demonstrated the diversity of settlement throughout Akmolinsk province and the growth of spaces for religious worship, albeit at a slow pace. A few of the Cossack settlements had existed for over a hundred years and only within the past ten years had built a prayer house or a church. Villages established by pioneers between 1890 and 1900 typically took over five and sometimes up to seventeen years to build a place of worship. In contrast, the more recent settlements had churches within two or three years.

A number of priests emphasized the sacrifices made by the local population in relocating to this part of the empire. In his welcome speech to the bishop, Simeon Petrov, the priest of Chistopol'skoe spoke of the steppe as a desolate land where only the Mongolian tribe lived and where the light of Christianity failed to shine until the arrival of Russian settlers.⁶⁹ K. Kolesnikov, the local priest ministering to Stavropol'skoe village, welcomed the bishop with the following words:

Your arrival, your eminence, revived the hearts of these poor, suffering people. For a long time, they have not seen their bishop, living in the remote Kazakh steppe. And here, now, in you, your eminence, God sent them comfort in all the sorrows, failures and misfortunes of Siberian life. Now, they do not consider themselves alone and abandoned in a remote Siberian region...⁷⁰

Andronik acknowledged the transformative power of the settlers in the region which he communicated to the Chistopol'skoe parishioners after a service. In response to Petrov's speech, he said:

Twenty years ago, this was a space inhabited by Kazakh nomads and predatory animals. Now your diligence has created a beautiful church,

⁶⁹ Vinogradov, 29.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 41.

topped by a cross. This cross, shining on the church and visible from afar, serves as a symbol – a sign that here dwells Orthodox – believing people honouring the cross of the crucified Christ – the Giver of Life.⁷¹

The bishop appeared quite impressed by the inhabitants of Chistopol'skoe.

Located approximately 480 kilometres from Omsk, this village boasted a large, beautiful, stone church built through the hard work of the parishioners. The bishop expressed his joy at this sight and his desire that other settler communities follow the example of Chistopol'skoe by dedicating their limited resources to creating a sacred space for the community.

Chistopol'skoe stood in contrast to neighbouring Kniazevskoe where the seed of sectarianism had been sown. Eighteen kilometres away, this parish of settlers included pioneers primarily from Poltava, Samara, and Voronezh.⁷² Three years after establishing the village, the inhabitants built a wooden prayer house in 1903. Ten years later, the local priest communicated to the bishop the community's unhappiness at having to host him in such a modest venue. Poverty and not religious indifference, according to the priest, explained the situation. Yet, the priest also mentioned the existence of "enemies of Orthodoxy" as a local problem and the bishop spoke on the issue of sectarianism to the people, reminding parishioners that they should not engage with sectarians and should not attend their meetings.⁷³

Parishioners demonstrated great joy in meeting the bishop. Large crowds typically met the bishop and participated in services. The accuracy of these

⁷¹ Ibid., 33.

⁷² Goloshubin, 299.

⁷³ Vinogradov, 28.

descriptions can be confirmed by the simple fact that when a smaller than expected crowd appeared, this also makes its way into the narrative. In Kazanskoe, for example, the crowd was described as “barely sufficient.”⁷⁴

The arrival of the bishop offered parishioners an opportunity to communicate their religious desires directly to the man in charge and for the bishop to gather information upon which he could plan for the future of the diocese. For example, the inhabitants of Sergievskoe asked Bishop Andronik if they could be assigned a priest. Andronik tentatively agreed on the condition that the community supply the priest with a salary of no less than four hundred roubles.⁷⁵ In the next village, Bishop Andronik discussed the possibility of opening an independent parish in Sergievskoe thereby separating the two villages. Although no decision was made, Andronik showed a willingness to listen and discuss with parishioners possible changes to their parishes.

In most villages, Andronik made the effort to interact with the local children. He questioned them about prayers, lives of saints, holy days, among other topics. Vinogradov recorded the quality of the children’s answers. In some places, these answers impressed the bishop; in other places, Vinogradov indicated the answers were simply passable. For instance, in the village of Mariinskoe, the students answered the bishop’s questions very well. In this case, the children’s performance was attributed to the influence of the priest and the great respect the people had for him.⁷⁶ In other villages the children answered poorly and the bishop informed the parishioners and the clergy of his displeasure. In

⁷⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Novopokrovskoe, a settlement established seventeen years earlier, this type of encounter took place. Although a stone church had been built within the first five years of the village's existence, the children who were educated in a state school did not impress the bishop with their answers. Andronik blamed their lackluster performance on the parents, scolding local mothers with the following words: "The children do not know their prayers, which means that you, mothers, also pray poorly. If this continues, then your children will live like the Kazakhs, not knowing the Christian prayers."⁷⁷ Andronik mentioned a number of times that parents must perform the necessary duty of teaching their children how to pray: this was not only the job of local school teachers.⁷⁸ He spoke of children as little imitators, who follow the lead of their parents, whether their actions were good or bad. In this way, Bishop Andronik allocated responsibility to parents for the actions of their children, in addition to the responsibility he also attributed to the clergy and teachers. The repetition of this scenario, with Bishop Andronik admonishing parents for not taking a leadership role in the spiritual education of their children, demonstrates the emphasis placed on this duty by the bishop.⁷⁹ Notably, the age of the settlements did not make a difference in the quality of answers the children gave. Settlements established over seventy years ago still showed a mixture of answers, some of which satisfied the bishop and many that did not. The same could be said for the new settlements established less than twenty years prior to Andronik's visit.

Perhaps because of his frequent disappointment with the religious

⁷⁷ Ibid., 51.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 22.

knowledge of the children in his diocese, Andronik spared time in his travels to direct his teachings specifically towards them. He engaged with them on their own level, speaking about the importance of praying, and of showing their love to God, their parents and people in general.⁸⁰ In his summary of the trip, Vinogradov commented on the ability of the bishop during his conversations to explain complicated ideas in everyday terms.⁸¹

On these trips, the bishops spent countless hours edifying their parishioners. The topics covered by the bishops reveal what they believed to be essential for the spiritual health of the community. Andronik adamantly insisted that celebration days and Sundays be respected and criticized those who “sit at home and give themselves up to ordinary, everyday vanity, and commotion.”⁸² He spoke to parishioners about the necessity of knowing the law of God through reading and studying the Gospels.⁸³ He also stressed the lives of saints as models for parishioners to follow, using examples of Siberian saints like St. Simeon of Verkhoturye to inspire his audience.⁸⁴ Music, Bishop Andronik argued, could perform an important role in the spiritual development of parishioners. Instead of having a church choir, Andronik recommended that the congregation sing, thereby helping them to remember church songs and prayers.⁸⁵

Left off Bishop Andronik’s itinerary was the province of Semipalatinsk, which was located adjacent to Akmolinsk. Like Akmolinsk, the entire province of

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁸¹ Ibid., 88.

⁸² Ibid., 3.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 23-24.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 12.

Semipalatinsk was a part of Omsk diocese. It consisted of five districts: Semipalatinsk, Pavlodar, Karkaralinsk, Ust'kamenogorsk and Zaisan. This province spanned 442,245 square kilometres and bordered with Tomsk province in the northeast, Akmolinsk along the west, Semirechye on the south and the Chinese empire along the eastern part of the southern border.⁸⁶ Bishops periodically undertook the 727 kilometres journey from the city of Omsk to the city of Semipalatinsk. The route taken by the bishops was only open two or three months a year, making the trip difficult to take without prior planning.⁸⁷ Steamships carried bishops and their entourage down the Irtysh River, away from the Siberian railway and towards the far reaches of the empire. Although one could take a carriage along the postal road from Omsk to Semipalatinsk, bishops always opted for the comforts of the steamship.⁸⁸ Steamships from Omsk to Semipalatinsk retained much of the same quality during this period: trips took five days in 1901 and the same amount of time in 1916.⁸⁹ Bishops joined hundreds of travellers searching for land and adventure to the south of the diocesan capital. The Irtysh River impressed the clergy; one commented on how it spanned over a thousand kilometres longer than the mighty Volga.⁹⁰

Bishop Sergii and Bishop Mikhail both journeyed to this southern region during their tenures as the bishop of Omsk.⁹¹ During his 1901 trip, Bishop Sergii

⁸⁶ Dmitriev-Mamonov, 145.

⁸⁷ RGIA, f.796, op.191, 2ot., 2st., d.841, l.20.

⁸⁸ "Pervaia poezdka Ego Preosviashchenstva, Preosviashchenneishago Mikhaila, Episkopa Omskago i Semipalatinskago, dlia obozreniia tserkvei eparkhii," *OEI*, no.4 (1905): 34.

⁸⁹ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2716, l.6ob.

⁹⁰ "Pervaia poezdka Ego Preosviashchenstva, Preosviashchenneishago Mikhaila, Episkopa Omskago i Semipalatinskago, dlia obozreniia tserkvei eparkhii," *OEI*, no.15 (1904): 22.

⁹¹ Bishop Grigorii desired to travel to Semipalatinsk in 1899; however, there is no evidence he made the trip. See S. V. Golubtsov, *Istoriia Omskoi eparkhii: Obrazovanie Omskoi eparkhii*.

encountered crowds of settlers from European Russia on the steamship, headed toward their new homes on the steppe. The narrator of Sergii's trip communicated the sheer excitement of the settlers as they learned about the presence of the bishop on their ship; the bishop conducting an evening and morning Easter service among third-class passengers must have been quite a sight. This image made a strong impression on members of his entourage who commented on the beauty of witnessing "when the unpopulated shores of the Irtysh, perhaps for the first time resounded with the melodious hymns of the festive Easter canticle..."⁹² In this unlikely place, passengers for the first and most likely the only time in their lives participated in an Easter service with the bishop, as the ship was transformed into a sacred space.

The steamship stopped at a number of villages and small towns along its way to Semipalatinsk. At these stops, the bishop sometimes departed to meet the crowds that had gathered along the banks. Pavlodar constituted the only major town along the Irtysh before Semipalatinsk. With a population of over eight thousand by 1901, Pavlodar had outgrown its original purpose as an outpost and became a thriving commercial centre. Cossacks, Kazakhs, Tatars, merchants and others lived in the city.⁹³ Over three hundred kilometres from Pavlodar stood Semipalatinsk where the bishops typically spent a number of days. As the home of the governor, Semipalatinsk served as an administrative centre in the region. Like Pavlodar, it had started as a fort, under Peter I, and grown into a major trading

Predstoiatel'stvo Preosviashchennogo Grigoriia na Omskoi kafedre, 1895-1900 gg. (Omsk: Poligraf, 2008), 62.

⁹² "Poseshchenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom Sergiem, Episkopom," *OEV*, no.15 (1901): 2.

⁹³ "Pervaia poezdka Ego Preosviashchenstva, Preosviashchenneishago Mikhaila, Episkopa Omskago i Semipalatinskago, dlia obozreniia tserkvei eparkhii," *OEV*, no.15 (1904): 25.

centre with a large Muslim population. Both Bishop Sergii and Mikhail met with the governor and other secular officials in addition to performing services in the city's magnificent churches.⁹⁴

Bishop Sergii travelled from Semipalatinsk to the city of Kokpekty: 250 kilometres away. The journey took three days by carriage on the open steppe. During the trip, the bishop witnessed the scarcity of Russian settlements, only rarely stumbling upon new villages established by settlers.⁹⁵ These villages appeared to be primarily Ukrainian with Kazakhs as their neighbours. In his report, the bishop noted that the settlers suffered from hardships associated with poor harvests and strained relations with their Kazakh neighbours. His solutions to these difficulties were simply: prayer, repentance for sins, and acting as role models for the Kazakhs by leading virtuous Christian lives. Access to the resources necessary for living a good Christian life along this endless space was limited. Over the 250 kilometres of terrain, only two Orthodox churches existed, making participation in religious rituals difficult. The bishop handed out crosses and books along the way and performed prayers and even the liturgy in the open air.

Karpovka, one of the only villages along the road to Kokpekty with a church, illustrates the difficulties settlers faced in adapting to the agricultural realities of their new homeland and how the bishop used faith to offer a solution to their problems. The inhabitants of the village of Karpovka, originally from Chernigov and other Ukrainian provinces, had experienced the calamity of a crop

⁹⁴ "Poseshchenie Ego Preosviashchestvom Sergiim, Episkopom," *OEV*, no.15 (1901): 2-5.

⁹⁵ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.1965, l.7ob.

failure the previous year. God appeared deaf to their prayers for a bountiful harvest; the scorching sun and scarcity of rain had dashed their hope for their forthcoming crop. They welcomed the bishop with great excitement and the meeting quickly transitioned to a religious service.⁹⁶ The priest met the bishop at the church in full vestments with a cross on a plate. After the service, Sergii removed his vestments and spoke to the people. Aware of their unanswered prayers and precarious predicament, Sergii used the story of Jonah to communicate how the sins of one can endanger the group and how God can use the environment to exact his punishment. He called on them to repent, reminding the gathered crowd: “Rain and harvest – all is at the mercy of God.”⁹⁷ Bishop Sergii spent very little time in Karpovka; he arrived at six-thirty in the evening and his carriage was ready to leave by six the next morning. Three years later, Bishop Mikhail visited the same village and his entourage became more familiar with the history of the village and their struggles to get access to water. Once again, the issue of why God does not always answer prayers arose during the bishop’s visit. Mikhail gave a homily on Matthew 7:7: “Ask and it shall be given to you.”⁹⁸ The response of parishioners was not recorded.

In late May, Bishop Sergii arrived in the furthest reaches of Omsk diocese, visiting the villages of Altaiskoe (Katun-Karagai), Berel’ and others, which were located over thirteen hundred kilometres from Omsk and close to Russia’s border with China. This area was extraordinarily mountainous and the

⁹⁶ D. Sadovskii, “Puteshestvie Ego Preoviashchenneishago Sergiia, episkopa Omskago i Semipalatinskago,” *OEV*, no.17 (1901): 3.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁸ “Poseshchenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom Sergiem, Episkopom,” *OEV*, no.20 (1904): 19.

bishop found it quite difficult to move by carriage, giving him a taste of the obstacles to local travel.⁹⁹ Despite the discomfort, Sergii soldiered on and eventually requested that they continue the journey by raft. In the village of Sennovskoe, this request was accommodated and Bishop Sergii, along with his entourage, sailed the Bukhtarmy River from the village of Sennovskoe to Zyrianovsk. They casted off at eleven in the morning by singing the words, “O Lord, save thy people” and the village of Sennovskoe soon faded from their sight. During their trip down the Bukhtarmy river villagers gathered on the banks with icons, to sing church hymns, clearly joyful at the sight of the bishop. Along the sixty kilometres journey the raft could only stop at limited number of place, providing the bishop with the opportunity to interact more directly with his parishioners.¹⁰⁰

A desire not only to interact with parishioners, but also to have an influence on their daily struggles motivated the bishops. In the village of Ubinskoe, Bishop Mikhail gave a sermon that directly touched upon issues within the community. His sermon communicated the importance of living in peace with each other: “I speak to you, brothers, about Christian peacefulness (*miroliubie*), that I...know from your dean about the non-peacefulness between old residents and new settlers of your village.”¹⁰¹ Tensions between the old-residents and new settlers were illustrated for the bishop when he asked them to sing a prayer (*molitva*) while he performed the blessings. Silence greeted the bishop’s request.

⁹⁹ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.1965, l.8ob.

¹⁰⁰ D. Sadovskii, “Puteshestvie Ego Preoviashchenneishago Sergiia, episkopa Omskago i Semipalatinskago,” *OEVS*, no.19 (1901):1.

¹⁰¹ “Pervaia poezdka Ego Preosviashchenstva, Preosviashchenneishago Mikhaila, Episkopa Omskago i Semipalatinskago, dlia obozreniia tserkvei eparkhii,” *OEVS*, no.3 (1905): 44.

The priest explained to the bishop that general congregational singing in the parish had yet to be established because parishioners could not agree and the process created strife between different factions. Turning to the crowd, the bishop admonished them for such in-fighting and since no one would sing, he refused to continue blessing them. The parishioners responded with lamentations as they begged the bishop to continue the blessing. Most likely mortified by this scene, the local priest invited the bishop to visit his home. The bishop declined and continued on his journey.¹⁰²

This vignette demonstrates how these trips, both in their performance and in their re-creation, served the purpose of building a sense of community in an undeveloped diocese. Parishes in Omsk diocese struggled with issues not typically experienced in European Russia. Settlers arrived from all over the empire, becoming neighbours with people from different regions. Many villages had settlers from five to ten different provinces living together. New settlers argued with each other over religious practices; new settlers living in villages with old residents acted in a similar fashion. Uniting these diverse groups would be a challenge for most priests. Untainted by local politics and disputes, the bishop provided leadership in this area by educating, admonishing and when necessary, shaming parishioners into acting like a community. Intensifying the problem, inexperienced, undereducated priests tended to lead the parishes of Omsk diocese. These descriptions in *Omsk Diocesan News* provided priests with stark examples

¹⁰² Ibid., 44-45. Priests also attempted to address community tensions through their sermons. For example, Father Nikolai Venetskii gave a sermon on forgiveness because he had heard of hostility between Little Russian (Ukrainian) and Great Russian (Russian) villages. See Nikolai Venetskii, "Po prikhdu," *OEV*, no.17 (1903): 29.

of the bishop's expectation that parishioners participate together in the spiritual life of the parish and his unpleasant reaction if this expectation was not met.

Managing Space: The Creation of Two Vicar Bishoprics

Trips through the province of Semipalatinsk were labour intensive endeavours. It is difficult to imagine that for Bishops Sergii and Mikhail, this was only one of several trips taken over the summer. The commitment of the early bishops to setting foot in territories both north and south of Omsk waned slightly under Gavriil: he tended to travel either north or south in a given year. The overwhelming religious needs of such a large territory with a growing population inspired the idea of dividing the diocese into more manageable spaces, which led to the creation of two new bishop positions. Gavriil was the first to propose the appointment of a vicar bishop of Semipalatinsk.¹⁰³ By 1917, seventy vicar bishop positions existed in the empire.¹⁰⁴ Although vicar bishoprics were clearly a widespread practice, the Holy Synod, for the most part, did not regulate the duties of a vicar bishop. Only a few dioceses had documentation dictating the responsibilities of the vicar bishop; in most cases, the duties tended to be left to the personal discretion of the bishop.¹⁰⁵

According to Gavriil, visiting Semipalatinsk simply was too difficult for Omsk bishops with such great distances and inconvenient transportation routes.¹⁰⁶ Despite problems for travel, the proposal recognized Semipalatinsk's geographical

¹⁰³ RGIA, f.796, op.191, 2ot., 2 st., d.841, l.1ob.

¹⁰⁴ Smolich, 269-270.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 270.

¹⁰⁶ RGIA, f.796, op.191 2ot., 2st., d.841, l.16.

significance and the abundance of religious need in the territory. The border between Semipalatinsk and China had served as the historical “window” through which the Mongols entered and conquered Central and Western Asia. The local Kazakh population, described by the bishop as “non-fanatical” in their Muslim faith, offered a fertile field for missionary work. The church already had a long-established mission to the Kazakhs in place: five mission stations served the Semipalatinsk region. Gavriil imagined that the Bishop of Semipalatinsk could provide leadership to the mission, a function difficult to perform from Omsk.¹⁰⁷

The growth of the settler population in Semipalatinsk constituted another reason for creating the position. Bishop Gavriil argued that the presence of Baptists and Old Believers among the settler population required keeping an eye on these populations and the establishment of a Semipalatinsk bishop would make this task easier. It was not only these “undesirables” that required supervision from diocesan authorities; the distance made it difficult for religious officials to supervise the religious practices of the settlers themselves.¹⁰⁸

The Military Governor of Semipalatinsk, Aleksandr Nikolaevich Troinitskii, agreed with Gavriil that his province experienced pastoral neglect. In his 1910 report to the Governor-General of the Steppe, Troinitskii identified the size of the diocese as problematic for the development of spiritual life in his territory. He complained that parishes in Semipalatinsk province existed with hardly any personal oversight from the bishop.¹⁰⁹ The population rarely had the opportunity to participate in a service with the bishop. In those instances, when

¹⁰⁷ RGIA, f.796, op.191, 2ot., 2st., d.841, l.2.

¹⁰⁸ RGIA, f.796, op.191, 2ot., 2st., d.841, l.2.

¹⁰⁹ RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.85, l.13.

the bishop journeyed through the region, Troinitskii contented that the bishop travelled down the Irtysh in a steamship and bypassed the villagers who needed their faith strengthened. Troinitskii supported the creation of a vicar bishopric based in Semipalatinsk because the bishop would be able to travel extensively and inspire Orthodox settlers to remain steadfast in the face of sectarianism. Troinitskii's emphasis on the role of the bishop, and not the clergy, in binding the laity to the Orthodox faith shows that he regarded the bishop to be an important symbol. Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov also called for a vicar bishopric to be opened in Semipalatinsk, claiming that the distance from Omsk, along with the missionary significance of the region necessitated the creation of this position.¹¹⁰

Despite support from Bishop Gavriil and Governor Troinitskii, Omsk diocese still did not received approval from the Holy Synod. The new bishop of Omsk, Vladimir, once again reiterated to the Holy Synod in 1911 that Semipalatinsk needed its own bishop. He provided many of the same reasons as Gavriil.¹¹¹ The Holy Synod granted the position and in 1911, the head of the Kazakh mission, Kiprian (Komarovskii) became the bishop of Semipalatinsk. The expectation that he would be a visible presence in Semipalatinsk province was clearly communicated to Bishop Kiprian, as he undertook his first trip despite the winter weather soon after his appointment. *Omsk Diocesan News* described this trip to Semipalatinsk villages during winter as "unprecedented" (*nebyvalyi*).¹¹² The author praised Bishop Kiprian's engagement with the faithful as making a strong impression and helping to raise the religious morals of these communities.

¹¹⁰ Ioann Vostorgov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, tom. 4 (Moscow: [s.n.], 1914), 492.

¹¹¹ RGIA, f.796, op.191, 2ot., 2st., d.841, l.20.

¹¹² "Sluzhenii Preosviashchennago Kipriana v Semipalatinsk," *OEV* no.5 (1912): 43.

Throughout his trip, Bishop Kiprian celebrated the liturgy with his parishioners. One village he visited, Lapteva-Loga, was established by starving peasants fleeing the 1891-1892 famine in European Russia. They travelled first to Omsk, then down the Irtysh to Semipalatinsk, before finally settling in the Zmeinogorsk district, eighty kilometres northeast of Semipalatinsk.¹¹³ It had been seven years since the villagers shared Bishop Mikhail's company, an event which had left "a lasting impression" on the village inhabitants and their neighbours.¹¹⁴ The prospect of Bishop Kiprian performing a service inspired excitement among parishioners, and according to the local priest I. Nikiforov, approximately two thousand people arrived at the church, including those whom he had not seen for a number of years. Curiosity and enthusiasm drew people to the church; whether or not they were inspired by the bishop and his message to return to the Orthodox Church cannot be determined. Nonetheless, the appearance of the bishop breathed new life, even if only briefly, into the parish.

While promoting the idea of a bishopric in Semipalatinsk, Bishop Vladimir pitched the idea to the Holy Synod of establishing a bishop of Akmolinsk, who would be based in the city of Omsk.¹¹⁵ Although the Holy Synod did not agree to this position initially, Bishop Vladimir continued to petition both the Holy Synod and Chief Procurator V. Sabler, highlighting his fears over the spread of sectarianism in the diocese and the important role a new vicar bishop

¹¹³ "Iz Belagachskoi steppe," *OEV*, no.1 (1901): 10-11.

¹¹⁴ I. Nikiforov, "Pervoe poseshchenie sela Lapteva-Loga, Zmeinogorskago i, Preosviashchennym Kiprianom, episkopom Semipalatinskim," *OEV*, no.5 (1912): 44.

¹¹⁵ RGIA, f.796, op.191, 2ot., 2st., d.841, l.20.

could perform in strengthening the Orthodox faith in the region.¹¹⁶ This argument must have resonated with the Holy Synod as it agreed to the establishment of a second vicar bishopric in 1913.¹¹⁷ The bishop of Akmolinsk was assigned the tasks of providing leadership and of inspiring missionary work in the diocese, specifically in relation to the internal mission, which focused on sectarians and schismatics.¹¹⁸ Mefodii (Krasnoperov) travelled from Ufa, where he served as rector of the local seminary, to the chambers of the Holy Synod in St. Petersburg for his new mission. Bishop Vladimir witnessed the event in the capital. Ten days after Mefodii's ordination at the Alexander Nevsky Lavra, he arrived in Omsk, which initially served as the base of his bishopric.

In 1914, the Akmolinsk bishopric moved from Omsk to Petropavlovsk. The Petropavlovsk Duma supported the transfer of the bishop to their city. Despite the growth of the city – culturally, economically, and demographically – local officials argued that the spiritual life of Petropavlovsk's inhabitants still need to be strengthened. As they described: “it is necessary to have the lamp of Christ's teachings pouring out a constant, unfading light in the dark corners of our souls and in the dark corners of our vast region.”¹¹⁹

The bishop sought to shine God's light on all those dark corners by organizing an icon procession. On 17 May 1915, an icon of St. Nicholas the miracle-worker began the 500 kilometres journey from Petropavlovsk to

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ RGIA, f. 796, op.191, 2ot., 2st., d.841, l.82. In 1914, the position was renamed the Petropavlovsk bishop, although Mefodii (Krasnoperov) continued to be bishop.

¹¹⁸ “Novoe vikariatstvo v Omskoi eparkhii i perviy vikarnyi episkop Akmolinskii,” *OEV*, no.5 (1913): 36-37.

¹¹⁹ RGIA, f.796, op.191, 2ot., 2 st., d.841, l.86ob.

Akmolinsk with the Bishop of Akmolinsk. The purpose of this month-long procession was multi-faceted. According to the *Omsk Diocesan News*, this icon provided great comfort to inhabitants of the town of Akmolinsk and during these difficult wartime years, it was decided to share this comfort with the rest of the region. Tsar Nicholas II had given to the Alexander Nevsky church in Akmolinsk, thereby adding an element of imperial grandeur to the entire proceeding.¹²⁰ Informed about the trip, Nicholas sent a telegram to Akmolinsk asking for their devotion and prayers for his family.¹²¹ While travelling in this area with the icon, Bishop Mefodii took the opportunity to survey the churches and become acquainted with his congregations and their spiritual needs. The distance involved was significant, especially as the bishop and his entourage had to travel south where the railway did not exist. To undertake such a journey through the Kazakh steppe, a land without trees to shelter the travellers from the oppressive summer heat, showed the commitment of the bishop to his work.

The trip, as described in *Omsk Diocesan News*, summarized the compromises of colonization for the Orthodox Church as Russia stood on the brink of revolution. The image of the bishop with an icon of St Nicholas in a yurt, a traditional Kazakh home, hiding from the tyrannical sun on his way to the Russian village of Stolypinskii, named after assassinated Prime Minister Stolypin, illustrated the contradictory character of this imperial space. On the one hand, Russia ostensibly had possessed the region through colonization; yet, not everything appeared befitting for an imperial power. Such an interpretation was

¹²⁰ "Krestnyi khod," *OEV*, no.18 (1915): 27.

¹²¹ "Krestnyi khod," *OEV*, no.21 (1915): 7.

confirmed over the long trek, as the bishop met many Orthodox believers, but also Baptists, Khlysty, Mormons and other sectarians. Even the Russian settlers did not impress the bishop, as he criticized the indifferent care they showed their religious buildings. In one village, the bishop even performed the service under the open sky instead of in the shabby (*ubogii*) prayer house.¹²² In fact, little of a triumphant nature took place during such an epic journey, which shows the honesty with which diocesan authorities shared their experiences. This honesty illustrates that the purpose of publicizing these trips was not to present a sterilized version of religious life on the frontier, but rather to highlight the problems encountered by the bishops.

Conclusion

Scholars have emphasized the administrative role of Orthodox bishops in the empire without exploring their spiritual role as the head of the diocese. In part, this emphasis is warranted as the position of bishop became increasingly professionalized during the second half of the nineteenth century. As part of this professionalization, bishops, like their secular counterparts, served for shorter periods of time in their dioceses before being transferred to a more or less desirable location on the basis of their performance. As Omsk diocese illustrates, most bishops did not desire to perform their duties in frontier locations with an abundance of problems. Although the Holy Synod attempted to find men with skills in missions and experience working in the complex environment of the imperial borderlands, it could hardly appoint a senior, well-established bishop to

¹²² “Krestnyi khod,” *OEI*, no.19 (1915): 30.

such an undesirable job. Instead, Omsk diocese received enthusiastic, yet unproven men as its leaders; some of whom, once they arrived, quickly planned for their escape. Without question, the high turnover rate of bishops in the diocese stifled its development, as it took years for bishops to learn the ropes in the relative calm of a European diocese. The short terms of Omsk's bishops meant they had no chance to tackle the complex problems of a newly formed, constantly changing settler diocese.

In spite of the problems plaguing the diocese from an administrative standpoint, Omsk bishops succeeded in fulfilling their spiritual role as head of the diocese. Instead of ruling from their diocesan capital, most of bishops of Omsk interacted directly with their parishioners through annual trips. Such trips, although traditionally part of the duties of a bishop, had become more sporadic in the late imperial Russia, as bishops questioned their usefulness in terms of identifying the needs of the diocese. In Omsk diocese, bishops refrained from such questions and instead emphasized the significance of these trips by having accounts of their journeys published in *Omsk Diocesan News*. These trips served multiple functions: they allowed the bishop to become familiar with his diocese and any general or specific problems that might exist; the bishop could gather information on the needs of the clergy and parishioners; and such trips offered the bishop an opportunity to worship with his faithful, thereby offering leadership, guidance, and comfort to settlers living in unfamiliar surroundings. Such interaction reminded parishioners and clergymen who met the bishop and those who read about such meetings in *Omsk Diocesan News* that they were part of a

larger Orthodox family, a fact that was easily forgotten on the seemingly endless Kazakh steppe.

Chapter 3: The Church and State Build Parishes in Siberia

In 1914, with war raging on the western front, officials from the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state continued to engage in a most remarkable collaborative effort to build churches, schools, and establish parishes for settlers on Russia's eastern frontier. In light of the close relationship between the Church and state in the Russian empire, on one level, this collaboration does not appear surprising; yet, taking into account the growing tensions between these institutions in the early twentieth century, as the state proved willing to renegotiate aspects of the privileged position of the Orthodox Church in the empire, such enthusiasm to share authority in Siberia is noteworthy. Collaboration on this scale demonstrates that imperial policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not shuffle Orthodoxy to the sidelines. Instead of being compartmentalized, marginalized or dismissed by the state, the Orthodox Church was offered ample space to participate in the broader agenda of empire-building. In fact, the state continued to view Orthodoxy as a key factor in strengthening its empire. In the case of Siberia, a partnership developed between the bureaucratic structures of both entities, as they collaborated to recreate the religious conditions of European Russia for settlers. By laying out how this relationship developed over time, this chapter explore the ideas and institutions that facilitated collaboration by religious and secular officials to nourishing Orthodox belief and practice on the Eastern frontier.

By the late nineteenth century, Russian state officials believed, like many

of their European counterparts, that it could harness the power of technology and bureaucracy to achieve monumental feats. In Siberia, demonstrating the advancement of the Russian state and culture included providing the vanguard of colonization, the peasant-settler, with churches. Church figures like Ioann Vostorgov assigned a messianic role to the Orthodox settlers, while state officials, such as Anatolii Kulomzin, understood the settlers as being a key component in civilizing Siberia. Resettlement Administration officials like G. Glinka and others placed their faith in the power of the state to provide for all the needs of its subjects. People arrived at the table with various ideological impulses; yet, they worked together to promote collaboration between the Orthodox Church and the Russian state. Thus, participation in the same act could be initiated for different reasons.

A number of scholars have used church-building as an entry point to understand the ideological foundations of the Russian empire. Valerie Kivelson and Mara Kozelsky have commented on the ideological origins of the Russian state's drive to conquer territories symbolically by building Russian Orthodox churches. Kivelson illuminates how during the Muscovite period, the state and church viewed the conversion of space to Orthodoxy as more important than converting people.¹ Kozelsky focuses on a different geographic area of the empire – the Crimea – and a later time period – the early nineteenth-century, but draws a similar conclusion about the interaction between imperial and religious policy.²

¹ Valerie Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-century Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 150.

² Mara Kozelsky, *Christianizing Crimea: Shaping Sacred Space in the Russian Empire and Beyond* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

Using examples of church architecture, Richard Wortman has argued that during the late nineteenth century, the state used a national style of church-building to display “a reaffirmation of the pre-eminence of state and empire.”³ These studies illustrate how focusing on religion can help to illuminate the ideological basis of empire-building; but they reveal very little about the people who actually used these churches and how the state and church understood their role in relation to these congregations.

Officials in charge of Siberia conceived of religious identity as being an important component of colonization in the late nineteenth century. While Siberian officials desired to populate the territory with Orthodox settlers, many did not trust these men and women to remain Orthodox without the intervention of the state and the Church. Left to their own devices in a foreign territory, these officials believed that the naivete of Russian settlers made them the perfect prey for sectarians. Such traditional interpretations of the “simple narod” justified the paternalism that informed imperial policy. In government documents, state officials supported the building of churches to provide comfort (*uteshenie*) to the weary souls of settlers. In the midst of adapting to new weather patterns, new neighbours and new ways of farming, only spiritual engagement could offer settlers any solace; yet most remained without access to the church.⁴ State officials regarded the comfort offered by the church not necessarily as a tool of

³ Richard Wortman, “The ‘Russian Style’ in Church Architecture as Imperial Symbol after 1881,” in *Architectures of Russian Identity: 1500 to the Present*, ed. James Cracraft and Daniel B Rowland (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 113.

⁴ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1197, ll.1-1ob. For other examples, see RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.2ob; A. N. Kulomzin, *Nuzhdy tserkovnago diela na Sibirskoi dorogie i v Zabaikal’ie* (n. p., 1898), 1; RGIA, f.796, op.191, 2ot., 2st., d.841, l.86ob.

social control, but rather as a key element of empire-building through paternalism.

Church-building was not an unorganized endeavour; instead, it became a bureaucratically managed process complete with agreed upon criteria, budgets, supporting documentation, specialized experts, and committees. To fund this project, state and church officials reached out to Russians for contributions, using the image of impoverished settlers longing to be cradled in the holy mysteries of God's church to melt their hearts and open their wallets. This image held strong sway particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century, as priests, merchants, bureaucrats, aristocrats, peasants, and others contributed funds to the building of churches and schools in Siberia. Reaching communities where the greatest need existed was the primary goal of institutionalizing collaboration between state and church officials during colonization.

Russian Society Engages with Siberia: Establishing Parish Life pre-1905

In European Russia, the building of parish churches and schools constituted primarily a local and regional affair. For church-building, as Vera Shevzov has illuminated, villages decided on their own accord to petition the church consistory for permission to build. Diocesan officials considered whether a need existed for a new church and the resources necessary to support it. Need was decided based on the criteria of "distance, size and disrepair" of the parish church.⁵ If the petition met the consistory's definition of these criteria, then it

⁵ Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 59.

would grant permission for building to begin. Typically, the only state involvement occurred in the form of providing wood from state lands or a salary for the clergy in cases where the “benefits package” offered by parishioners was too low.⁶ Church-building in European Russia, therefore, was a community undertaking and a community commitment. If at some point the community could not fulfil its obligation, then it could lose its parish status.

Even in the far reaches of Siberia, the same procedures applied. To build a parish church, peasants had to petition the consistory for permission, showing community support and financial means for completing the project. Yet, by the 1880s, the relatively small number of churches began to concern officials in St. Petersburg. The Chief Procurator raised the issue of church shortages in Siberia in his 1885 report. Tsar Alexander III responded to him with the following suggestion: “Need to turn the attention of donors (*zhertvovateli*) to this: here one can really donate with benefit.”⁷ Despite these words, nothing was done. It would be his son, Nicholas II, who began to consider the religious implications of the Russian state’s aspirations in Siberia. Unlike his father, Nicholas II could draw from his personal experience in Siberia to formulate imperial policy. The tsarevich’s 1890-1891 eastern journey introduced him to Egypt, India, Singapore, and Japan.⁸ It also exposed him to the far reaches of his own empire, as Nicholas

⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁷ *Polozhenie tserkovnago i shkol'nago stroitel'stva v raionie sibirskoi zhelieznoi dorogi na sredstva fonda imeni Imperatora Aleksandra III: k ianvariu 1898 goda* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tip., 1898), 3. For more on charity in the empire, see Adele Lindenmeyr, *Voluntary Associations and the Russian Autocracy: The Case of Private Charity* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Center for Russian and East European Studies, 1990).

⁸ For a description of this trip see E. Ukhtomskii, *Puteshestvie na vostok ego imperatorskago vysochestva gosudaria nasliednika tsesarevicha, 1890-1891* (Moscow: Zhurnal “Beregina,” 1993).

II concluded his epic trip by travelling from Vladivostok to the Urals by boat and carriage. Along the way, he stopped in a number of major centres and villages, including Khabarovsk, Blagoveshchensk, Irkutsk, Nerchinsk, Chita, Tomsk, Surgut, Omsk, Tara, Tobol'sk, and Orenburg.

Churches performed a significant role in the tsarevich's trip as they were often sites of interaction between Nicholas and the population. In Omsk, the ringing of church bells announced the arrival of the tsarevich along the river Om. After being greeted by crowds of well-wishers and the Governor-General of the Steppe, Nicholas quickly was whisked to the Church of the Prophet Elijah, where all the city priests awaited him.⁹ Such a scene happened throughout Siberia; Nicholas II inevitably visited churches, participated in a short service, and interacted with priests. The central role of churches and religious figures in the pageantry of Nicholas's trip supports Richard Wortman's assessment of the ideology Nicholas built around himself as having a direct spiritual bond with the people.¹⁰ The tsarevich found elements of this interaction troubling, particularly the insufficient number of churches for local worshippers and the state of their decor. At a small parish church outside of Omsk, he made a donation to help in this regard: an act he repeated at other churches along the way.¹¹

Nicholas II carried these memories of Siberia back to St. Petersburg, allowing them to shape how he approached his duties as the chairman of the Siberian Railway Committee. At a meeting of the committee in 1893, Nicholas

⁹ M. Lebedev, *Puteshestvie naslednika tsarevicha po Tobol'skoi eparkhii v 1891* (1892), 8–10.

¹⁰ Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 347.

¹¹ Lebedev, 13.

raised the issue of building churches along the new railway, which illustrates how he placed this issue at the top of his list of priorities.¹² Initially, it was proposed to use leftover funds from building the railway to fund this endeavour; however, in April 1894, with the approval of his father, the tsarevich began a fund to collect donations for this cause under the control of the Siberian Railway Committee. With the death of Alexander III, the fund was named the Emperor Alexander III fund, which gave people the opportunity to contribute to the building of churches and schools in Siberia in honour of the late tsar.

By creating a charitable fund under state control the tsar provided a space for his subjects to support empire-building. This policy shows a Russian state open to employing techniques utilized by other imperial powers to find alternative sources of revenue, which lowered the exposure of an already overburdened state budget. This provided an opportunity for people to channel their feelings of patriotism or spiritual belief, thereby building national awareness of the expansion of the empire. And the public responded enthusiastically to this outlet: by 1904, the fund stood at 1,873,453 roubles and had built over 200 churches and over 180 schools.¹³ Despite creating a space for the active engagement of society, the state still demonstrated its deep suspicion of independent societal initiatives by controlling the administration of the fund.

The institutional structure of the Orthodox Church was not directly involved in the organization and implementation of the Emperor Alexander III fund. Important members of this institution did participate, but as individuals

¹² *Polozhenie tserkovnago* (1898), 3.

¹³ *Aziatskaia Rossiia: Liudi i poriadki za uralom*, tom.3 (St. Petersburg: Izd. Pereselencheskago upravleniia Glavnago upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914), 238.

rather than representatives of their offices. Nonetheless, the involvement of these religious figures provided significant publicity to the cause. Father John of Kronstadt, a deeply pious and beloved archpriest in a parish near St. Petersburg, who received visitors from all over the empire, supported the building of churches in Siberia. His church was one of first to donate money in 1894.¹⁴ Over the next ten years, Fr. John continued to collect money and draw attention to the state of religious life in Siberia. In 1904, Fr. John collected six thousand roubles to build a church in the name of Saint Simeon the Receiver of God (Simeon Bogopriimets). Describing the village as a place "...where Orthodox peasants, encircled by dissenter hermitages do not have the opportunity to satisfy their spiritual needs for want of a church," the newspaper, *the Village Herald* applauded Fr. John for this act.¹⁵ He was not the only religious figure to make donations: clergy from all over the empire collected money for building churches¹⁶ and the ecclesiastical council of the Solovetskii monastery gave three thousand roubles.¹⁷ Some of these donations were given to mark special occasions in the royal family. For example, the Bishop of Arkhangelsk gave the fund five thousand roubles to build a church in Siberia in honour of the tsarevich Alexei's birth.¹⁸

The Romanov family personally supported efforts to strengthen religious life in Siberia both within and outside the fund. Nicholas II described the

¹⁴ *Polozhenie tserkovnago* (1898), 4.

¹⁵ "Raznyia izvestiia," *Sel'skii Vestnik*, no.9 (1904): 155.

¹⁶ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (henceforth, RGIA), f.1273, op1, d.451, l.34ob.

¹⁷ *Polozhenie tserkovnago i shkol'nago stroitel'stva v raionie sibirskoi zhelieznoi dorogi na sredstva fonda imeni Imperatora Aleksandra III* (1900), 4; In 1899, the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius in Moscow contributed 10 000 roubles to church building in Siberia through the Siberian Railway Committee see "Znamenatel'nyia sobytiia v zhizni monastyrei," *Tserkovnyie vedomosti* (TV), 4 (1903): 27.

¹⁸ "Vysochaishee povelenie," *TV*, no.39 (1904): 417.

endeavour as being of personal importance to him: “The question of building churches in Siberia, particularly in new settlements is very close to my heart.”¹⁹

The tsar donated bells, vestments for the clergy, and complete silver sets of church equipment; he also gave financial support to help in the building of the Cathedral of the Assumption in Omsk.²⁰ Other Romanovs also felt charitable toward Siberia. His mother, Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, helped to decorate churches in towns transformed by settlement, like Petropavlovsk in Omsk diocese.²¹ Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich also gave repeatedly to the fund in honour of his father, helping to provide vestments to priests.²²

The Village Herald kept its readers abreast of the development of Siberian church-and-school building efforts and the donations that made construction possible.²³ Short write-ups on the work of the Emperor Alexander III fund confirmed the involvement of Russian subjects in supporting the efforts of this state charity. Merchants, state officials, bureaucrats, and even their wives made donations; most likely they enjoyed having their names and the amount they donated published in *the Village Herald* and other publications. For example, governors from Akhangel'sk, Perm, Kazan, Smolensk, Simbirsk and Riazan provinces, among others in the upper echelon of the provincial administration

¹⁹ *Polozhenie tserkovnago* (1898), 5.

²⁰ N.I. Lebedeva, *Khramy i molitvennye doma Omskogo priirtysh'ia* (Omsk: Izd-vo OmGPU, 2003), 27.

²¹ *Sibirskiiia tserkvi i shkoly [statisticheskie svedeniia]. K desiatiletiiu fonda imeni imperatora Aleksandra III* (1904), 5.

²² For more on the Royal Family's involvement in support church-building in Siberia, see Sviatoslav Vladimirovich Sabler, Ivan Vasil'evich Sosnovskii, and A. N. Kulomzin, *Sibirskaiia zheleznaiia doroga v eia proshlom i nastoiashchem: istoricheskii ocherk* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1903), 345–346.

²³ For more information on the contents of the newspaper *Village Herald*, see James H. Krukones, “To the People: The Russian Government and the Newspaper ‘sel'skii Vestnik’ (‘village Herald’), 1881-1917” (PhD diss., The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1983).

donated money. A merchant from Tula, D.Ia. Vanykin, left 5,533 roubles to the cause in his will; St. Petersburg merchants donated fifteen thousand roubles in 1901.²⁴ Not everyone wanted their generosity to be known: one year, an anonymous philanthropist donated ten thousand roubles. The fund also became a way to honour the dead, as the relatives of N.M. Sakharov gave the fund two thousand roubles in his memory.²⁵ Major-General I. F. Tereshchenko left a whopping 1,300,000 roubles.²⁶ Undoubtedly, the participation of the royal family raised awareness for this cause and made charitable giving to Siberia fashionable. Women also became involved in donating funds: the wife of General-Major E.I. Kukel gave ten thousand roubles to help build churches in the Transbaikal region.²⁷ Churches, of course, could not be named after their benefactors; nonetheless, benefactors could choose a traditional church name, which meant the local community had no input in the naming of their own church. A.N. Kulomzin informed a state official with the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the churches built in three different villages must be consecrated in honour of the Resurrection of Christ, as that was the wish of the donor.²⁸

To commemorate donations to the fund, the Railway Committee introduced a medallion (*zheton*). Depending on the amount of the donation, one received either a gold or silver medallion that attached to a watch chain. For

²⁴ *Sibirskiiia tserkvi i shkoly fonda imeni imperatora Aleksandra III* (1902), 6.

²⁵ Leaving money in wills to help settlers in Siberia occurred until the end of the empire. For example, the daughter of a deacon left 17 502 roubles to build a church called "All Saints" with an alms house for elderly settlers along the Trans-Siberian railway in 1916. The Chief Procurator consulted with the Bishop of Omsk to find a suitable location. They decided to build in Novo-Omsk. See RGIA, f.391, op.6, d.542, l.81.

²⁶ V. Vvedenskii, "Tserkovnoe delo sredi pereselentsev Sibiri," *Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam*, no.13 (1913): 607.

²⁷ *Sel'skii Vestnik*, no. 4 (1898), 43.

²⁸ RGIA, f.1273, op.1, d.465, l.1.

donations higher than ten roubles, one received the silver – for those more generous souls who gave over fifty roubles, the gold. The oval-shaped medallions featured a silver cross, bordered by the inscription “For churches and schools in Siberia.” The Committee also produced a lapel pin to acknowledge the work of those who aided in building churches and schools in Siberia.²⁹ The badge recognized both service and fundraising, as those who had provided either materials or money over three thousand roubles qualified, in addition to those who had actively engaged in helping in the building process. The list of those receiving this honour illustrates the commitment of secular and religious officials to the cause. The pre-eminent of both worlds received acknowledgement on this substantial list of which highlights included the Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomensk, the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, two archbishops, five bishops, archpriest John of Kronstadt, Chief Procurator K.P. Pobedonostsev, Sergei Witte, as well as a number of governors.³⁰

While Nicholas’s involvement in the enterprise helped to raise money, the task of managing the funds fell to Anatolii Kulomzin.³¹ Kulomzin, whom Steven

²⁹ *Sibirskiiia tserkvi i shkoly fonda imeni imperatora Aleksandra III k 1 ianvaria 1904 goda.* (St. Petersburg: Gos. tip, 1904), 19-20.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20-23. The cachet of “settlers in Siberia” was not lost on a few enterprising priests in Siberia. In 1899, a sermon published pleading the cause of the village of Mogil’no-Posel’skii in Tara district, which was collecting money to help build a new church. Although the parishioners had been living in the region for over thirty years, appeals for support referred to them as settlers (*pereselentsy*) from European Russia, playing up both their poverty and the foreignness of their surroundings. Even though these people had been living in Siberia for a long time, the sermon portrayed the pain of their separation from their homeland and struggle to build a new life as being fresh. The sermon, printed in Moscow, appealed to readers to send help to a postal station in Tobol’sk province to the committee for building churches in the village of Mogil’no-Posel’skii. See *Pouchenie po sluchaiu sbora pozhertvovaniia na postroenie khrama v sele Mogil’no-Posel’skom Tarskago uezda, Omskoi eparkhii* (Moscow, 1899).

³¹ Kulomzin was an important government figure throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. For more on his background, see D. C. B. Lieven, “Bureaucratic Liberalism in Late

Marks referred to as “among the greatest of colonizers,” served as the administrative secretary of the Committee of Ministers from 1883 to 1902 and ran the Committee of the Siberian Railway.³² The scope of Kulomzin’s work in the region was astonishing. His responsibilities included the resettlement of peasants in the Siberian lands and the development of Siberia’s economy particularly through the expansion of the Trans-Siberian railway. His guiding hand touched most of the policies created to facilitate the colonization of Siberia, a task understood by many in the upper echelons of the Russian state as the key to providing the foundation for the future greatness of the empire. Kulomzin, and other enlightened bureaucrats like him, understood building churches and schools as integral to the success of colonization. Such institutions formed the pillars of civilized society, creating a population with a basic level of education and a firm set of moral values. As such, the state expressed its interest in building the necessary infrastructure for functioning parishes and in addition to funding the building of churches and schools, the Emperor Alexander III fund also provided money and materials for constructing homes for priests and sacristans. Kulomzin administered the fund with a commitment to establishing fully functional communities, not simply building churches as a vanity project for an imperial power.

To become better acquainted with the settler question, Kulomzin took a three-month trip through Siberia in 1896. During this trip, Kulomzin witnessed for himself the great distance between churches and how this condition affected the

Imperial Russia: The Personality, Career and Opinions of A. N. Kulomzin,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 60, no. 3 (July 1982): 413–432.

³² Marks, 24–25.

population. He commented on how living away from the church created an “estrangement from all of the civilized world...”³³ and presented the building of churches in Siberia as having both state (*obshegosudarstvennyi*) and cultural (*kul'turnyi*) significance.³⁴ Culturally, access to churches helped to ground settlers in their traditions despite being separated from their homelands and engaged in a struggle with nature and the elements.

Kulomzin's approach to the theme of religion reflected European notions of the civilizing force of Christianity. As such, he interpreted the inaccessibility of church life and education along the Trans-Siberian as a serious issue that had to be addressed by the full power of the state. In Kulomzin's eyes, building a vast system of churches and schools in Siberia would strengthen Orthodoxy and Russian power in the region.³⁵ He considered the absence of Orthodox churches even more sorrowful in light of the prosperity of other faiths in the region: primarily Islam and Buddhism. He expressed joy at the planting of churches in places like Petropavlovsk, where the surrounding population was predominantly Muslim.³⁶ These churches would serve both the new settler population and help spread Orthodoxy (and hence, civilization) among the indigenous peoples of the region.

Kulomzin used funds given by benefactors to the Emperor Alexander III fund to build churches at stations along the Trans-Siberian railway. Starting at the

³³ A. N. Kulomzin, *Nuzhdy tserkovnago diela na Sibirskoi dorogie i v Zabaikal'ie* (1898), 2.

³⁴ Sabler, Sosnovskii, and Kulomzin, *Sibirskaiia zhelieznaia doroga v eia proshlom i nastoiashchem: istoricheskii ocherk*, 343.

³⁵ *Sibirskiiia tserkvi i shkoly fonda imeni imperatora Aleksandra III: k 1 ianvaria 1904 goda* (St. Petersburg: Gos. tip, 1904), 8.

³⁶ Kulomzin, *Nuzhdy tserkovnago*, 3.

beginning of the line in Chelyabinsk, ending in Khabarovsk and with twenty-seven churches in-between, these locations served the local population, workers and those passing through. The railway transformed places like Petropavlovsk, Isil'kul', and Tatarsk from outlying villages into centres of trade and commerce. These new centres of social and economic activities required churches. Churches along the railway tended to receive higher amounts from donations to help with the building process and new churches were built at all of these stations in Omsk diocese.³⁷ As settlements expanded to areas north and south of the railway, the Committee followed the new settlement patterns, continuing to build churches and schools. In the first round of building in Akmolinsk province in the early twentieth century, the villages chosen were over fifty kilometres away from a church.³⁸ These new parishes tended to be large: sometimes up to four thousand people.³⁹ Not all ballooned to that size and some remained around a thousand parishioners. The churches built could not accommodate every soul in the parish; most churches could hold upwards of three hundred people and were made from wood. Western Siberia received greater attention than the eastern portion, with 131 churches being built as compared to fifty-three. Akmolinsk, Tobol'sk and Tomsk provinces received the majority of these churches, with Semipalatinsk receiving none. In the east, Eniseiskaia and Primorskaia provinces were allotted a higher portion of churches, in comparison to Irkutsk and Transbaikal.⁴⁰

³⁷ *Sibirskiiia tserkvi i shkoly*, (1904), 9. Kulomzin expressed great happiness at attending the Liturgy at the new church in Tatarsk. See Kulomzin, *Nuzhdy tserkovnago*, 2.

³⁸ Shilkin, *Otchet inzhenera*, 4.

³⁹ In comparison to Catholic parishes in France, Russian parishes were quite large and growing throughout the nineteenth century. Although the average size of the parishes is difficult to determine, the parishioner-clergy ratio in Russia was 1,844:1. See Freeze, 459- 460.

⁴⁰ *Sibirskiiia tserkvi i shkoly*, (1904), 10.

The unique conditions of church-building in Siberia generated a wealth of sources on the topic not available in other contexts. The Emperor Alexander III fund did not simply provide money to Siberian parishes without oversight. Numerous books appeared in the early twentieth century which provided a detailed account of the involvement of Russian state officials in local parish building projects. The publication of these accounts of the building process, complete with detailed maps, speaks to the ambition of the state's vision and effort in building churches and schools, but also to the difficulty of the task. These officials offered technical expertise for the building process and inspected the work of settlers to ensure that the structures met official standards. Two books by engineer S. Shilkin, in particular, on the building of churches in Tobol'sk and Akmolinsk provinces demonstrate the integration of church-building into a broader framework of organized empire-building, where churches served to communicate the technical prowess and organizational skills of the Russian imperial effort. The collection of such information by the state hardly could be considered surprising; yet, the choice to make this information public is significant. Perhaps, the contributions of the population to the fund created a desire on the part of the Russian government for transparency in relation to the work undertaken in Siberia. Or maybe the state aspired to share the information so that future projects could take into account past experiences. The reason for this decision is not clear; nonetheless, the desire to make this information part of the public record is clear.

Institutionalizing Official Collaboration

After the closing of the Railway Committee in 1905, the Holy Synod received control over the fund. In light of the suspension of settlement during the Russo-Japanese war, the work of the fund slowed. Nonetheless, Siberia still occupied a prominent place on the agenda of the Orthodox Church and state, inspired in part by the shock of the 1905 revolution and the humiliation of the Russo-Japanese war. These events lent a great sense of urgency to addressing land hunger and filling empty spaces in Siberia with able and loyal colonists through colonization.

In the aftermath of the 1905 revolution, the church struggled to find its bearings in a changing political and social environment. The acknowledgement of freedom of conscience in October 1905 opened the door for non-Orthodox denominations to grow legally. The contours and details of this new confessional order were not clear; nonetheless, the Holy Synod took seriously this alteration to its legal and cultural position in the empire. The proclamation stunned the Orthodox Church, which saw this act as a breach in the relationship between the church and state, which had historically been close. Paradoxically, although the church felt betrayed by the state, as the Siberian case demonstrates, this sensation did not interfere with its willingness to collaborate.

In 1907, the Holy Synod took the lead role in reinvigorating the Emperor Alexander III fund. The Holy Synod emphasized the tremendous hardships pioneers faced in Siberia and the consequences on the horizon for colonization if accessibility to churches and schools for settlers was not improved. For the

church, education sustained and perpetuated the faith. Since religious education was mandatory in the school curriculum, schools helped to teach the faith to the next generation through prayers and readings. For many settlers, the opportunity to send their children to school was simply not provided. The Holy Synod recognized the significance of this loss, which it argued would contribute to the next generation growing up without “instruction in the law of Christ and without the light of knowledge.”⁴¹ This theme of peasants growing spiritually wild without the intervention of the church appeared frequently in religious publications, in part as an image that would inspire Orthodox clergymen and believers to support the church’s efforts in the region.

The Holy Synod emphasized that despite the fund’s stellar performance in the past, more work needed to be done. With the end of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, settlers resumed their trek across the Urals. As the coffers of the fund could not handle the depth of local need, in 1907, the Holy Synod appealed to believers to support this endeavor:

We come to the aid of our brethren by blood and faith, not leaving them without support in satisfying the most sacred and primary need of a Christian... We come to help them in raising their children in the spirit of Christian faith and in learning the rudiments of necessary worldly knowledge. What could be more sacred than this field of charity: an opportunity to deliver religious comfort and enlightenment to the toilers – settlers!⁴²

This appeal illustrates the great commitment of the Church to support the spiritual life of settlers; however, it also shows the Church without a plan for how to provide these essential services to peasants. With the closure of the Railway

⁴¹ “Ot khoziaistvennago upravleniia pri Sviateishim Sinode,” *OEVS*, no.7 (1907): 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.

Committee, the state infrastructure previously used to build on the ground was no longer available. A new system had to be created.

It is difficult to establish who initiated the idea to create a collaborative bureaucratic structure between the Holy Synod and the Main Administration of Land Management and Agriculture (*Glavnoe upravlenie zemleustroistva i zemledeliia*, henceforth, *GUZZ*) to address the spiritual needs of settlers. Some articles attributed the idea to *GUZZ* and others to the Chief Procurator. No matter where the idea originated, its purpose was clear: the coordination of action between secular and spiritual officials. By pooling together the resources and expertise of both offices, they aspired to build churches, schools, and support the clergy in settler communities. This act recognized the necessity of developing a plan to address the enormous religious challenges created by the settler movement to Siberia.⁴³ Its eventual implementation, more importantly, sought to create and strengthen parishes, an institution which was still recognized as an essential element in successfully building Orthodox communities. *GUZZ* gave the Resettlement Administration, which after 1905 was under its authority, the mandate to collaborate with the Holy Synod in this endeavour.

To help coordinate this joint action, the Chief Procurator established a new council: The Holy Synod Special Council on Satisfying the Religious Needs of Settlers (henceforth, known as the Holy Synod Special Council).⁴⁴ The first meeting took place on 8 February 1908 under the chairmanship of Senator A.P.

⁴³ V. Vvedenskii, "Tserkovnoe delo sredi pereselentsev Sibiri," *Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam*, no.13, (1913): 606-607.

⁴⁴ Ibid. The Russian title for the committee was: *Osoboe Soveshchanie pri Sviateishem Sinode o religioznykh nuzhdakh pereselentsev*. Variations on this name appeared in documents related to the work of the Council.

Rogovich. Participants included key religious and secular figures in Russia: the Archbishop of Tomsk, Makarii (Nevskii), the governor of Tomsk, Nicholas L. Gondatti, Father Ioann Vostorgov, and representatives from the Resettlement Administration and from the bureaucracy of the Holy Synod. At the meeting, participants discussed how to achieve the following mandate: to create a general plan to build churches, assign priests, and establish schools in new settlements, and to collect information about the conditions of Siberian religious needs.⁴⁵

The Holy Synod's new partner, the Resettlement Administration, deserves an introduction. In 1897, the state established the Resettlement Administration to organize and manage resettlement. In Siberia, the state aspired to make the resettlement process orderly, recognizing how overwhelming the process was on migrants as they left their home and relatives.⁴⁶ The desire to control not only the movement of people, but also to influence the establishment of their lives once they arrived demonstrates the contours of the Russian state's imperialist agenda. State agents studied the settler movement and sought to develop the necessary infrastructure to aid settlers in building functioning farms and strong communities. Railway subsidies, surveyors to divide the land, road construction, access to doctors, and instructions to aid in agriculture and irrigation were a few examples of areas where the state worked to ease the transition of settlers to their new lives.⁴⁷ Eventually the building of churches and schools would be added to the long list of its activities. Fulfilling the agreed upon plans required the

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ V. Vvedenskii, "Tserkovnoe delo sredi peresekentsev Sibiri," *Pribavlenie k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam*, no.12, (1913): 536.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

collaboration of Resettlement Administration officials with the Governor-General, various governors, the Holy Synod, the Chief Procurator, bishops, church bureaucrats and priests.

The internal culture of state bureaucracies like GUZZ and the Resettlement Administration was distinctively “statist” in nature. According to Peter Holquist, these officials “championed technocratic knowledge, [and] advocated forms of scientized state intervention...”⁴⁸ As Holquist notes, officials of GUZZ understood colonization as combining ideas of state interest with concerns for solving the “peasant question.” In other words, settling peasants in Siberia not only served to provide the state with a bulwark against the incursions of an aggrandizing neighbour and a labour force to exploit the resource rich lands of Siberia and the Far East, it was also a solution to the land crisis in Central Russia and provided the prospect of a better life for settlers. Resettlement Administration officials recognized supporting religious institutions as part of its work for bettering the life of settlers.

The statist culture of the Resettlement Administration manifested itself in a number of laws and protocols related to this endeavour. A 1915 publication of the laws and regulations governing resettlement and land management speaks to the formal nature of the relationship between the Holy Synod and the Resettlement Administration. This book, composed by V. Voshchinin, and edited by G. Chirkin, allocated a section to “church work,” laying out the structure of church/state collaboration. Such a document illuminates how the architects of this

⁴⁸ Peter Holquist, “‘In Accord with State Interests and the People’s Wishes’: The Technocratic Ideology of Imperial Russia’s Resettlement Administration,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 157.

collaboration thought authority should be divided and how resource allocation would take place. It also presents in a succinct manner the structure that would be created to support the work of the Holy Synod and the Resettlement Administration. In each diocese, a “Diocesan Committee for satisfying the religious needs of settlers” was formed.⁴⁹ This committee included both religious and secular representatives: the Governor, the chief of Land and State Property, the head of the Resettlement district and the provincial architect. The bishop of the diocese served as the chairperson. Others could be added by agreement of the bishop and the governor. This committee was charged with addressing the religious needs of settlers in the diocese. Local committees were established in communities where building was to take place. Once again, the committee had a chairman from the religious sphere: the priest. A resettlement bureaucrat, peasant chief, and a person elected from the peasantry joined the priest in organizing local efforts to build.⁵⁰

These committees allowed the Resettlement Administration and the Holy Synod to by-pass the consistory structure. All funds related to this endeavour were transferred from St. Petersburg to the diocesan committee and then to the local committee.⁵¹ While the bishop occupied an important role in this system, the addition of state voices provided secular officials with a significant role in church and school building in the region. On the one hand, such a system freed the consistory from having to allocate resources and personnel to organizing such

⁴⁹ Eparkhial'nye Komitety po udovletvoreniuu dukhovnykh potrebnostei pereselentsev

⁵⁰ V. P. Voshchinin, *Pereselenie i zemleustroistvo v Aziatskoi Rossii sbornik zakonov i rasporiazhenii* (Petrograd: [s.n.], 1915), 8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

large-scale projects; on the other, it weakened diocesan structures by adding more voices to the decision-making process.

The Holy Synod and the Resettlement Administration recognized the limited resources available to manage religious needs in settler communities. It was not feasible for them to undertake all the associated building costs and therefore, it was decided to institute a system of assistance and loans to aid local communities in their building endeavours. An article in a 1912 issue of *the Village Herald* described how the state envisioned this system to work. The article, entitled “How Siberian settlers receive money for building churches and schools” was written in the form of a story about a village of settlers from Pskov, Smolensk, and Mogilev provinces. The story’s didactic tone shows an effort by officials to educate Siberian settlers in the bureaucratic process for obtaining a loan or support from the treasury. Undoubtedly, this had become a problem for the Resettlement Administration, which would have been inundated by requests from peasants who did not understand the new system as it differed from the traditional way of church-building.

The story began with the initial arrival of the peasants. After having expended tremendous energy tilling the land and building homes during the spring and summer months, settlers began to contemplate the idea of having their own church in the fall. In this new environment, these settlers had no idea of how to achieve their goal. Asking around among their neighbours only enhanced their confusion. They knew that only the bishop could appoint a priest, that the treasury paid the salary of the priest, and that they must provide the priest with a house;

but they did not know how to start the process. In the midst of their confusion, the peasants approached the village elder for advice. Mitriia, the elder, did not know the answer, but he had a son in St. Petersburg, who was serving in the military as a guard, and could find out the proper procedure from the Resettlement Administration.⁵²

The son replied quickly to his father's inquiry. As told on the pages of the *Village Herald*, the settlers of this unknown village gathered together to hear the letter; a cozy image that the author, most likely a bureaucrat in the Resettlement Administration, probably envisioned taking place across Siberia with his own article. The letter described the process by which this fictitious village could achieve its dream of building a church; such a description provided real settlers in Siberia with the tools to begin the journey for themselves. The letter also captured how secular and religious officials envisioned this bureaucratic web would function. Despite the desire to pursue an orderly and streamlined resettlement, as Mitriia's son's instructions indicated, the process was anything but straightforward. To start, the peasants needed to contact their local bishop about the possibility of opening a parish and having a priest appointed whose salary would be paid by the Holy Synod. Every year the local bishop would communicate to the head of resettlement in the province where the greatest need for churches existed based on the criterion of population. Yet, the settlers could not rely solely on the bishop to act as an intercessor with secular officials; they should also contact the head of resettlement through his subordinates on the

⁵² The copy of the article I used was in an archival file. RGIA, f.391, op5, d.23, l.31ob. The citation for the article is the following: "Kak poluchit' pereselentsam den'gi na postroiku tserkvei i shkol," *Sel'skii Vestnik*, no.42 (1912):1-2.

ground to express their desire for a church. In other words, the best approach for the village was to petition both secular and religious officials. If their neighbours also lacked a church, the treasury might be able to help; however, if a church already existed in a neighbouring village, then the treasury would not provide funds for another.

Two options existed if the authorities chose to support the village's aspiration for a church. If the village was poor, the treasury would provide financial support that did not have to be paid back (*besvozvratnyi*). If the village had financial resources, the treasury would provide a loan (*ssuda*), which must be paid back in ten years. Of the two options, villages that chose to take loan would receive the funds more easily and in a timely manner. The treasury also did not charge interest on the money. Another option suggested by Mitriia's son was the purchase of a portable church. These churches cost 250 roubles and arrived complete with everything necessary for services, including an altar and a folding iconostasis (*ikonostas skladnoi*).⁵³ After careful consideration, the villagers decided, in light of the fact that a large church stood twenty kilometres away, that they would build a school and a prayer house at a cost of four thousand roubles, which included the hiring of a teacher and the periodic engagement of a priest. They requested the sum of two thousand roubles from the treasury. After the loan was delivered, this fictitious village built a prayer house and a school; a bright future lay ahead.

Although this process was rarely so straightforward, the Holy Synod and the Resettlement Administration managed to fulfil the dreams of settlers across

⁵³ RGIA, f.391, op5, d.23, l.33.

Siberia. In 1910, they spent close to 400,000 roubles, with 216,000 arriving from the Holy Synod and the remainder from the Resettlement Administration. In 1911, the money allocated to Siberia increased to 520,000, with the Holy Synod making the larger contribution of 340,000 roubles. The following year, this sum more than doubled to 1,125,000 roubles. In contrast to the previous years, the Resettlement Administration contributed more than the Holy Synod, with 670,000 roubles arriving from its coffers. By 1913, the total amount spent remained almost the same, but the percentage of money from the Holy Synod declined.⁵⁴ Both the Resettlement Administration and the Holy Synod were clearly committed to supporting settlers in their quest to establish functioning parishes.⁵⁵

The work of the Holy Synod Special Council extended far beyond the boundaries of Omsk diocese. Dioceses from Orenburg to Vladivostok and throughout the Caucasus benefited from the work of the Holy Synod Special Council. In 1909-1910, the Holy Synod Special Council helped to open 172 new parishes and provided funding for the construction of 95 churches, 28 prayer houses, and 81 clergy homes.⁵⁶ In 1911, the Holy Synod Special Council managed to open 152 parishes, building 82 churches and prayer houses, 39 homes for clergy, and 46 church-parish schools.⁵⁷ The proposed plan for 1914 promised the opening of 172 new parishes in this area and 1,694,108 roubles spent on new buildings. The plan allocated 99,400 roubles for the support of 126 new priests.

⁵⁴ *Aziatskaia Rossiia: Liudi i poriadki za uralom*, tom.3 (St. Petersburg: Izd. Pereselencheskago upravleniia Glavnago upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914), 239.

⁵⁵ For more on the budget see "Doklad po zakonoproekty," Duma 4 ses.2 v.Supp 5 (1913-1914): 10-13. Samara also received funding. As well, dioceses in the Caucasus were entitled to funding, although the Bishop of Georgia felt his diocese received less attention than Siberia.

⁵⁶ *Aziatskaia Rossiia: Liudi i poriadki za uralom*, tom.3 (St. Petersburg: Izd. Pereselencheskago upravleniia Glavnago upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914), 239.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Omsk diocese received 48 of these parishes for a total of 371,080 roubles and 33 new priests.⁵⁸

World War I did not disrupt this work, as the Holy Synod Special Council continued to create plans for addressing the religious needs of settlers. As late as 1916, a telegram was sent to Siberian dioceses asking how many parishes they wanted in the future and whether or not candidates from the Moscow Pastoral Courses, a program run by the Orthodox Church for training priests to serve in Siberian parishes, would be needed.⁵⁹ The war also did not undermine the Resettlement Administration's view of religious officials as partners in colonization. In 1914, the Resettlement Administration opened a Statistical Department for the Semipalatinsk region. It asked the bishop to bless clergymen and teachers from parish schools to provide information on the conditions of colonization.⁶⁰

Even with the abdication of the tsar, plans to establish more parishes in Siberia still moved forward. Four days after Nicholas II stepped down from the throne, the Holy Synod Special Council detailed its plan for 1917. Nonetheless, this plan was substantially less ambitious than in previous years. The Council proposed to open only thirty-seven parishes beyond the Urals and five in the Caucasus. This proposal also contained a number of temporary measures such as increasing the number of travelling priests by eight. Enisei diocese was to receive

⁵⁸ RGIA, f.799, op.14, d.179, ll.133ob-134. The amount received by settlements for building different significantly. For example, in a list of 64 settlements in Akmolinsk, some received as little as 800 roubles while others received a maximum of 11,500 to open parishes and build structures. The breakdown was under 1000 roubles–8; above 1000 and under 5000 roubles–34; over 5000–22. See RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1197, ll.46-47ob.

⁵⁹ RGIA, f.391, op.6, d.827, l.9.

⁶⁰ "Pis'mo Semipalatinskago Gubernatora na imia Andronika," *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti (OEV)*, no.13 (1914): 2.

four of these new appointments, with Turkestan gaining two and Omsk and Irkutsk receiving one each.⁶¹ That their work continued unabated demonstrates how both church and state officials viewed their collaboration not as a temporary solution, but rather as a long-term project – a project they envisioned as fundamental for the successful settlement of Siberia.

Changes in Russia's political landscape after 1905 added to new voices that influenced religious policy in Siberia. The establishment of the Duma, Russia's first elected legislative body, created another institution that the Holy Synod and Resettlement Administration had to address for budgetary activities. In 1913, a petition appeared to allocate a million roubles to the Emperor Alexander III fund from the treasury.⁶² Privy Councillor G.V. Glinka met with Duma officials to explain the importance of strengthening the Emperor Alexander III fund for the success of colonization. He supplied four primary reasons why the Duma must approve allocating these funds. First, the settlers requested that churches be built and parishes be opened. They shed tears, according to Glinka, when their requests were denied.⁶³ In the event that the tears of peasants failed to move the commission, Glinka provided an economic justification. Building these structures helped to anchor peasants in the region. Since peasants could not personally bear the costs of building churches, the state needed to assist. The class structure of Siberia, Glinka argued, provided another reason for state intervention. The nobility class, which helped to build thousands of churches in European

⁶¹ RGIA, f.796, op.204, d.149, ll.1-2. For more on plans to address settler needs in 1917 see RGIA, f.796, op.204, 2ot., 2st., d.235, ll.1-4.

⁶² "Doklad po zakonoproekty," Duma 4 ses.2 v. Supp 5 1913-1914. For a discussion on the involvement of the Duma in discussions on resettlement, see Treadgold, 192-204.

⁶³ "Doklad po zakonoproekty," Duma 4 sess.2 v.5 1913-1914, 1156.

Russia, did not exist in Siberia. Therefore, unlike European Russia where peasants could receive assistance from this class, Siberian peasants had to support the enterprise of building churches themselves.⁶⁴ Finally, Glinka presented an historical argument for such support: the state helped build churches and monasteries when the centre of Orthodoxy moved from Kiev to Moscow and then to St. Petersburg. Also, the state had funded the building of many churches in Siberia and therefore, the allocation of more funds was keeping with tradition, and not breaking it.⁶⁵

If his speech had failed to inspire the Duma representatives, Glinka welcomed them to disregard his arguments and look into their hearts for the answer.⁶⁶ A million rouble contribution, he emphasized to the Duma, was not necessary because the settlers were weak in their faith and chose to spend community resources on other projects. Rather, these funds were necessary as by the time settlers could afford to build their own churches, a generation would have grown up “in mental sorrow and darkness.”⁶⁷ He ended his speech by returning to the topic he started with: the self-defined needs of settlers. Glinka asked the Duma “to satisfy this popular need (*narodnaia nuzhda*).... of our resettled peasantry...”⁶⁸ By beginning and ending his argument with the desires of the peasantry, Glinka demonstrated the significance of peasant needs and wants to Russian imperial policy. Such an argument demonstrates the importance in late imperial Russia of

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1158.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Glinka’s heartfelt plea did not appeal to everyone. In response to Glinka’s appeal to Duma officials to search their hearts to find the favourable answer, a voice on the left responded, “We find nothing.” Ibid., 1159.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

wrapping policy in the cloak of the people. Real legitimacy lay not in the words of the tsar or the expertise of officials, but rather in the desire of the people. Who defined this need was one of the key questions of the late imperial period in political, social and religious life.⁶⁹

Despite this effort to increase the contribution of the government to the fund, Orthodox Christians continued to perform an important role in funding the establishment of parishes in Siberia. Even with the change its administrative structure, the Holy Synod Special Council did not forget to involve society. In 1910, the Holy Synod Special Council appealed once again to Orthodox communities in the empire to support financially the efforts of building religious life in settler communities. For the next five years, church collections on Holy Trinity Day (*Den' Sviatoi Troitsy*) would be used for building churches and schools in Siberia under the administration of the Holy Synod Special Council. To promote the cause and communicate how the collection should be taken, the Holy Synod Special Council included on the pages of the *Church News* directions for the collection and sermons to be used for both the evening and morning liturgies. This campaign to enlist the support of Orthodox parishioners demonstrated not only an attempt to increase the funds available for church building, but also to involve the public in thinking about and concerning themselves with Russia's work in the East. In *Church News*, the Holy Synod Special Council presented to its clerical audience three points as desirable to ensure the success of this work.

⁶⁹ The engagement of Glinka in the Duma debate shows its importance to the Resettlement Administration's efforts. Scholars have recently started to reassess the role and significance of the Duma in Russian politics. See K. I. Mogilevskii, R. A. Tsiunchuk, and V. V. Shelokhaev, "Gosudarstvennaia дума Rossii kak istoriograficheskaia problema," *Voprosy istorii* 11 (November 2007): 3-17.

First, the collection for settlers should take place separately from general church collection. The collection should not only take place during the liturgy on Holy Trinity Day, but also on the eve of the holiday at the evening service. Second, a prayer that explains the significance of the collection for supporting Orthodox believers in Siberia should be given directly before the collection. Finally, the collection should model itself after the one held for the trusteeship of Empress Maria Alexandrovna and the collection to help disabled and injured soldiers established by the Russian Red Cross in 1904-1905. The involvement of local representatives, whether they be officials or parishioners was considered an important part of this model.⁷⁰

The sermons published along with the announcement about the collection illuminate the depth of the marriage between secular and sacred interests in the region. In the first sermon, for evening service, reference to God did not appear until mid-way through the text. The first half of the sermon focused the attention of the faithful on the experience of the settlers. They needed aid, not because they were lazy, but rather because of the difficulties related to establishing a new community in an unfamiliar territory. The sermon provided listeners with the background story of why resettlement was important and appealed to parishioners' sense of political and territorial pride. After emphasizing how settlement provided landless peasants with a chance to create new lives, the sermon reminded listeners that without more people moving to these sparsely populated territories, Russia would struggle "to defend them from enemy invasion and to hold on to our

⁷⁰ "Ot Vysochaishe uchrezhdennago pri Sviateishem Sinode Osobago Soveshchaniia po udovletvoreniiu religioznykh nuzhd pereselentsev v zaural'skikh eparkhiakh," *TV*, no.22 (1910): I-II.

kingdom. This was clearly shown to us in the war with Japan.”⁷¹ Such words illustrated the dual concerns that the Orthodox Church thought would capture the attention of parishioners: land and imperial security. The sermon then moved on to the topic of religious need, emphasizing that spiritual, not physical hunger, was one of the main obstacles for settlers who ventured into the wilds of Siberia:

They arrive in this faraway place and there is no church, no liturgy and no priest.... Think of how great the grief of the settlers must be. And in that grief, many of them live for years: not knowing the ringing of the bells, not knowing of the holy holiday, not hearing the liturgy, not baptizing their children...”⁷²

Such imagery resonated with the Russian people and the collection proved to be a success. Over the course of three years, the Holy Synod raised 300,000 roubles for the cause of opening churches and schools in Siberia.⁷³ A state publication lauded these contributions as helping the government address the needs of settlers in church and school building.⁷⁴ This fund-raising technique became so crucial that despite the ongoing war, the Holy Synod extended the collection in 1915, even adding an extra day, the Intercession of the Theotokos (*Pokrova Presviatoi Bogoroditsy*), to continue funding the building process.⁷⁵ Siberia itself became involved. In 1917, the Governor of Akmolinsk produced a directive to organize a collection in the churches of Akmolinsk for this cause.⁷⁶ The priority of building churches in the region for settlers did not abate during World War I.

⁷¹ “V pomoshch’ russkim pereselentsam,” *TV*, no.22 (1910): III.

⁷² *Ibid.*, IV.

⁷³ *Aziatskaia Rossiia: Liudi i poriadki za uralom*, tom.3 (St. Petersburg: Izd. Pereselencheskago upravleniia Glavnago upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914), 239.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ See *TV*, no.17 (1915): 1-11 and “Ukaz Ego Imperaterskag,” *OEI*, no.23(1916):1-4.

⁷⁶ “Pis’mo Akmolinskago Gubernatora na imia Preosviashchennago Sil’vestra, Episkona Omskago i Pavlodarskago,” *OEI*, no.21 (1917):1-2.

The collection drive illustrates how the church participated in making the religious life of Siberian settlers into a national cause. Although the Siberian Railway Committee – through the Emperor Alexander III fund – brought attention to this issue during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, it did not have the same reach as the Holy Trinity Day collection. The collection and the accompanying sermons educated Orthodox parishioners across the empire about the plight of settlers. Such an example illustrates the reach of the Orthodox Church in spreading awareness and raising funds, as well as the participation of the church in the nationalization of the colonization cause. Through this work, it contributed to the building of Russian national identity.⁷⁷

Ioann Vostorgov – An Orthodox Colonizer

Controversy and adoration followed Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov. A journalist covering Vostorgov's 1909 trip to Japan gave the following description: "Archpriest Vostorgov would attract attention anywhere by his powerful personality...[and] his eloquence and caustic wit."⁷⁸ Ferdinand Ossendowski, of Polish descent and living in Russia at the time, described Vostorgov as "...an inspired speaker and demagogue, [who] travelled from one end of the country to the other agitating for the extermination of all who showed the slightest sympathy with revolution."⁷⁹ In contemporary scholarship, Vostorgov is frequently mentioned: from these works, it appears that Vostorgov was friends with the

⁷⁷ Mara Kozelsky also raises this point of the nationalization of religion. See Kozelsky, *Christianizing Crimea*.

⁷⁸ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.35, l.2.

⁷⁹ Ferdinand Ossendowski, *The Shadow of the Gloomy East* (Read Books, 2007), 132.

infamous mystic and advisor to the tsar, Grigori Rasputin;⁸⁰ helped shape the ecclesiastical school policy in Georgia where Stalin attended seminary;⁸¹ inflamed anti-Semitism in the empire;⁸² fought against the Baptists;⁸³ and was an effective leader of the Russian radical right.⁸⁴ The fact that he appears so often in a diverse array of scholarship shows his ubiquitous presence in the political and social landscape of late imperial Russia.⁸⁵

Vostorgov also, during the early twentieth century, collected, processed, and publicized information about the colonization of Siberia. The example of Vostorgov demonstrates how during the final years of the empire, the colonization of Siberia and Central Asia and the state's interests in its Asiatic neighbours created space for Orthodox churchmen to perform a multifaceted role in building Russia's empire. Vostorgov contributed directly to the creation and

⁸⁰ Edvard Radzinsky, *The Rasputin File* (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2000.); Joseph T. Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: a Life* (New York: Praeger, 1990).

⁸¹ Robert Service, *Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.), 34. Vostorgov is still remembered disparagingly in Georgia for his work in the region. See Tamara Grdzeldze and Martin George, *Witness Through Troubled Times: a History of the Orthodox Church of Georgia, 1811 to the Present* (London: Bennett & Bloom, 2006).

⁸² Zvi Y. Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 65.

⁸³ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929*, 118.

⁸⁴ Vostorgov was involved in number of monarchical organizations, beginning with the Russian Monarchist Party in 1905, an organization with close ties to the Union of the Russian People. Vostorgov would become vice-president of the Moscow Branch of the URP and would help spread the URP splinter group, the Russian National Union of Archangel Michael, among priests in Siberia. See Donald C. Rawson, *Russian Rightists and the Revolution of 1905* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30. For more on the structure of monarchical parties in late imperial Russia and Vostorgov's role, see Jacob Langer, "Corruption and the counterrevolution: The rise and fall of the Black Hundred" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2007), 63, 68, 116, 119, 121, 155–156, 163–164.

⁸⁵ More references to Ioann Vostorgov appear in the following places: Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy: Volume Two: From Alexander II to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 448–449; Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 248; 252; Michael Protopopov, *A Russian Presence: A History of the Russian Orthodox Church in Australia* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2006), 27; Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Rulers And Victims: The Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 24.

implementation of imperial policy in Russia's borderlands and to the development of the church's discourse on its future role in the empire. Instead of the church withdrawing from secular concerns, the expansion of the empire reinvigorated the church's understanding of its mission. The story of Vostorgov illustrates how in this environment, the empire offered a training ground and a playground for talented Orthodox clergymen to explore ideas of Russian identity and destiny. His work in Siberia through the Holy Synod Special Council showed the involvement of the Church and its representatives in building Russia's colonial presence in Siberia.

From the beginning of its existence, the Holy Synod Special Council acknowledged the importance of basing its decisions on verified information. In 1908 the Holy Synod Special Council sent Vostorgov to Siberia to assess the situation "with special attention attributed to the clarification of the condition of church schools and local missionary needs."⁸⁶ Instead of simply requesting reports from local bishops, the Holy Synod decided that Vostorgov should be its representative in Siberia on religious issues related to settlement. This choice speaks to the high regard the Holy Synod and the Chief Procurator had for Vostorgov's opinions. An article in *Church News* described the trip as urgent and indicated that Vostorgov's presence in Siberia had both the blessing of Siberian bishops and approval from local Resettlement Administration officials. The trip was to be conducted in the spring so that a report could be presented by the summer.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ RGIA, f.796, op.197, 6ot., 3st., d.30, l.10ob.

⁸⁷ "Tserkovnoe delo sredi pereselentsev Sibiri," *Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam*, no. 13

Over the next five years, Vostorgov would embark on yearly trips to Siberia in relation to duties assigned by the Holy Synod Special Council. In 1909, he added China, Korea, Japan and Manchuria to his normal Siberia itinerary. Secular officials of GUZZ and the Resettlement Administration were kept abreast of Vostorgov's itinerary in the region.⁸⁸ In fact, GUZZ helped organize the first-class transportation of Vostorgov and church items across Siberia by the Trans-Siberian railway.⁸⁹ For these trips, the Chief Procurator assigned Vostorgov the primary task of creating lists of villages that required support. On the basis of these lists, the Holy Synod Special Council would make its decisions for supporting settler parishes. Vostorgov also had the task of collecting orders for priests trained in the Moscow Pastoral Courses for the new settler parishes. For the 1912 trip, Chief Procurator Vladimir Sabler added a few more tasks to the list, including surveying the land for where to build monasteries, and becoming acquainted with the religious situation near the Amur railway.⁹⁰ The Holy Synod Special Council showed a willingness to expand Vostorgov's responsibilities as issues arose during colonization. For instance, Vostorgov began training local priests for missionary work among their parishioners, as church officials grew increasingly concerned with the strength of sectarianism in the region.

The example of Vostorgov illustrates how church figures performed a formal and informal role in building the empire. Formally, Vostorgov provided both secular and religious officials with information related to the resettlement

(1913): 607.

⁸⁸ RGIA, f.391, op.4, d.613, l.38, 40.

⁸⁹ RGIA, f.391, op.4, d.613, l.47.

⁹⁰ RGIA, f.797, op.82, 2ot., 2 st., d.75, l.4ob.

process, on the basis of which the Holy Synod Special Council formulated its decisions. In this regard, he acted as a liaison and arbitrator between the centre and the periphery. For instance, in 1908, Vostorgov arrived in Omsk to discuss the current state of religious life in the diocese and its most pressing needs. At a meeting attended by the top religious and secular officials, they discussed questions related to building churches, prayer houses and schools in settler villages; organizing itinerant ministers; preparing teachers for parish schools; preparing enough candidates to fill the clerical vacancies created through opening new churches; and finally, the internal and external missions.⁹¹ Such meetings provided an opportunity for local leaders to discuss their interpretation of the settler movement with Vostorgov and put forward the names of villages in the most need. Vostorgov also brought news of the Omsk diocese's allotment from the Holy Synod Special Council for 1908. For the building of churches and schools, Omsk would receive a mere 33,000 roubles; for salaried clergy, the Holy Synod pledged 7800 roubles. Another 6000 roubles were designated for the position of three itinerant priests.⁹² The initial expenditure was modest to say the least. For all of Siberia, the Holy Synod Special Council allotted 157,000 roubles for building churches and homes for clergy; another 58,700 roubles went to providing clergy members with salaries.⁹³

Official meetings did not occupy all of Vostorgov's time. He also interacted directly with ordinary people in order to gauge the issues that colonists

⁹¹ "Osoboe soveshchanie o tserkovnykh nuzhdakh poselivshikhsia v predelakh Omskoi eparkhii pereseletsev," *OEVS*, no.12 (1908): 38.

⁹² "Soveshchanie o tserkovnykh nuzhdakh sibirskikh pereselentsev," *OEVS*, no.12 (1908): 39.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 36.

faced. Vostorgov frequently performed services and gave sermons in small villages throughout his travels.⁹⁴ Observing places himself held importance for Vostorgov, who lamented the misinformation that plagued his duties. Opening parishes, assigning of priests and providing funding for the building of churches in places where the need was most felt required diocesan authorities to have knowledge of their territory. Such information was not easily acquired, yet it was paramount to the success of the Holy Synod Special Council's goals. Vostorgov identified a number of factors that led to misinformation becoming the basis for decisions taken in the parish. The vastness of the diocese created difficulties for bishops to have personal knowledge of how settlement was unfolding; deans passed on information collected from villages without confirming its veracity. Even the secular officials were not blameless in this regard. Vostorgov recounted an incident where a governor personally intervened to request that a settlement without a church or a priest be allowed to open a parish and build a prayer house. Upon Vostorgov's arrival in that settlement, he discovered that for the past nine years, it indeed had both a priest and a church.⁹⁵ Relaying such information to the Holy Synod only served to underscore the importance of his role in verifying information and providing an impartial assessment of religious needs.

The Holy Synod Special Council, through Vostorgov, explored a host of new measures to tackle the challenges of establishing religious life in new Siberian settlements. From the beginning of the Holy Synod Special Council's inception, there was interest in the ways in which monasteries could be used as a

⁹⁴ RGIA, f.391, op.4, d.1354, l.7.

⁹⁵ RGIA. f.391, op.4, d.1354, ll.8-9.

tool in this regard.⁹⁶ The Holy Synod Special Council sent Vostorgov on its behalf to Siberia to investigate the question of how to increase the number of monasteries in Siberia and attract outstanding people to populate these establishments. The role of monasteries in providing social care in European Russia had become well-established. In particular, women's monasteries served this function in the community by providing educational and social services to the population.⁹⁷ Monasteries were also viewed as another venue through which Christianity and Christian piety could be spread among non-Orthodox groups such as Muslims and other *inorodtsy*.⁹⁸

In addition to building and strengthening parishes, religious authorities placed great hope in the positive role of monasteries in helping settlers adapt to their new surroundings. Both church and state expressed concern that estrangement from their homelands would cause difficulties for settlers.⁹⁹ The building of new monasteries in Siberia constituted another component of the strategy to reinforce Orthodoxy in the region. Monasteries, according to this vision, would act as centres where settlers could find "spiritual comfort."¹⁰⁰ The difficulties of settler life necessitated such sanctuaries where peasants could fortify themselves spiritual. The significance of monasteries in Siberia was two-

⁹⁶ RGIA, f.391, op.4, d.629, l.1.

⁹⁷ See William Wagner, "The Transformation of Female Orthodox Monasticism in Nizhnii Novgorod Diocese, 1764-1929, in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 4 (December 2006): 793-845.

⁹⁸ Istoricheskii arkhiv Omskoi oblasti (IsA OO), f.16, op.1, d.77, l.68.

⁹⁹ "Znachenie monastyrei v Sibiri," *Pravoslavnyi Blagovestnik (PB)*, no.12 (1910): 538.

¹⁰⁰ "Ob ustroenii v Sibiri monastyrei, kak religiozno-dukhovnykh tsentrov dlia naroda," *PB*, no.10 (1910): 441.

Monasteries were also envisioned along the settler route to Siberia to provide shelter, food and hospice to those on their way to Siberia. For example, the Holy Synod wrote to the Resettlement Administration about creating such a monastery for settlers in Riazan. See RGIA, f.391, op.4, d.613, ll.116-118.

fold. In addition to creating a spiritual oasis for settlers in far-flung corners of the empire, such monasteries could have missionary significance for the *inorodtsy* populations in Siberia.¹⁰¹

Despite the significance attached to monasteries, not many existed in Siberia. The first monasteries in the region were built in the early seventeenth century. By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were only forty-five monasteries and women's communities – not nearly enough for such a vast territory.¹⁰² Vostorgov supported a proposed plan to add forty-four new monasteries in Siberia.¹⁰³ He attached this mandate to his next tour of duty, a trip through Siberia and the Far East planned for 1910. In preparation for the trip, Vostorgov wrote to Prime Minister Stolypin of the importance of developing a network of monasteries in this region to help settlers in the area of education and religious practices. Such activity, Vostorgov argued, would help attract worthy brethren to work in the region, who would establish monastic communities. Stolypin approved of Vostorgov's mission.¹⁰⁴ After his 1910 trip, Vostorgov submitted a report calling on the Holy Synod Special Council to open sixty-one monasteries in Siberia. The Holy Synod Special Council discussed the report and decided to begin with only eleven.¹⁰⁵

Even before Vostorgov promoted the idea of establishing more monasteries in Siberia, the bishop of Omsk petitioned to open a new women's

¹⁰¹ "Znachenie monastyrei v Sibiri," 538.

¹⁰² "Ob ustroenii v Sibiri monastyrei," 441. For more on monasteries in the empire, see L. I. Denisov, *Pravoslavnye monastyri Rossiiskoi imperii* (Moscow: Izdanie A.D. Stupina, 1908).

¹⁰³ "Znachenie monastyrei v Sibiri," 538.

¹⁰⁴ RGIA, f.1276, op.6, d.677, ll.2-2ob.

¹⁰⁵ V. Vvedenskii, "Tserkovnoe delo sredi pereselentsev Sibiri," *Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam*, no.13 (1913): 617.

monastery just outside of Omsk. The bishop justified the necessity of such an undertaking to the Resettlement Administration by explaining how Muslim Kazakhs and sectarians lived around the city of Omsk. A female monastery would help the consistory to reach these populations.¹⁰⁶ As in many cases, the actions allegedly initiated from the center had already been discussed within the local diocesan structure.

Conclusion

From the beginning of the movement of settlers to Siberia, the state viewed the re-establishment of traditional Orthodox religious life as a key element of its success. The pre-1905 system for supporting the building of churches, schools, and homes for clergy was created primarily by Kulomzin who understood the importance of maintaining the religious ties of the settlers to the motherland. The involvement of Nicholas II in “fundraising” for the Emperor Alexander III fund brought much needed attention to the plight of Siberian settlers, thereby heightening the interest of the general public in church-building on the frontier. In the post-1908 environment, the space for the public receded slightly, as building became more deeply incorporated into the state bureaucratic structure.

This chapter has re-evaluated the relationship between church and state at the end of the empire. Recent scholarship has emphasized growing tensions between church and state in the upper echelon of power on both sides. Yet, on the Eastern frontier, the church and state engaged in power-sharing. They created a

¹⁰⁶ IsAOO f.16, op.1, d.77, l.68.

system for sharing authority that allowed both sides to achieve more than they could on their own. Particularly for the church and its personnel, such a system created tremendous opportunities to be involved in the trenches of empire-building. The example of Ioann Vostorgov illustrates how deeply involved religious officials became and how they used these opportunities to expand the role of the church in regions undergoing resettlement.

Chapter 4: Parish-Building on the Ground

As government reports, peasant petitions, and church documents emphasized, the reconstruction of religious life in Siberia, like that in European Russia, was a priority for all groups involved. The importance attached to strengthening Orthodoxy in Siberia, however, was not only about saving souls. On the frontier, a parish delineated more than an outline of a spiritual community: it reinforced the roots of settlers in their new homeland, and initiated their children into the traditions of their ancestors. In this sense, parish life offered an accessible and familiar institutional structure to peasants to maintain their traditions in face of hardship and instability caused by the loss of their former communities and by which they could begin the process of adapting to their new environmental and social circumstances. Parish building held significance not only for pioneers, but also for state and church officials, who sought to utilize the parish to promote education and spread technical knowledge. Although parish building helped to fortify settler communities, it also served as a conduit through which traditional authority structures were destabilized. In this sense, parish-building on the frontier illustrates the contradictions of modernity as peasants, church officials, and tsarist bureaucrats used the parish both to hide from the modern world and create it.

All three groups brought their own set of expectations to the frontier, which found multiple modes of expression in the complicated maze of bureaucracy dedicated to satisfying the religious needs of settlers. Settlers displayed an amazing tenacity in pursuing secular and religious authorities to

convince them of the depth of their needs. Petitions flowed forth from settler communities, pleading, cajoling, and shaming officials to acquiesce to their demands. As a result of the institutional cooperation promoted from St. Petersburg between secular and religious authorities, on the frontier these spheres became blurred as collaboration allowed tsarist officials a seat at the table on religious matters. In many cases, governors and bureaucratic officials expressed displeasure at what they perceived as inattentiveness to peasant religious needs or abuses of authority on the part of religious officials. But the pendulum could also swing the other way, as local bishops and clergymen searched for sympathetic ears in religious and secular circles when they felt their authority had been infringed upon. Regardless of these spats, both groups needed each other to navigate this complicated and expensive environment. For example, religious officials willingly assigned certain tasks to the state, such as designing and supervising the construction of parish buildings, to keep the costs associated with those tasks off the consistory ledger.

This chapter explores the significance of building parishes from a local perspective. For peasants, church life represented a continuation of their traditions despite the change in location, environment, standard of living, and neighbours. They relied on the church to preserve and to integrate their children in the community's moral economy. In addition to the dislocation experienced through the act of leaving the familiarity and security of their home communities, these pioneers also felt the stinging sensation that they had lost control over their youth – an emotion shared by many communities in European Russia affected by

urbanization and social instability during the turbulence of late imperial Russia. For the church, the parish represented a traditional and fundamental organizing structure of church life: despite the new environment, the church's commitment to this structure did not wane. For the state, maintaining certain traditions in peasants' lives created a necessary pillar of stability in the midst of tremendous change, as peasants resettled in Siberia. Such a traditional role was a hallmark of the established church.¹

The parish structure in Omsk diocese, paradoxically, symbolized continuity with the past and hence, stability, as well as a building block for the future, which undoubtedly would transform rural life through the development of an educated rural populace. As the Orthodox Church promoted the standardization of religious practice and the engagement of priests in teaching their flock the basic tenets of Orthodox religiosity, the parish became an institutional structure that could help transform the peasantry into an educated and engaged group. Building churches in a standardized way under the supervision of engineers, for instance, taught peasants basic concepts of contemporary construction, which were based on science and not tradition. Also, the church's investment in parish schools in Siberia helped to spread education in the region. While both the church and state understood the importance of educating Siberian pioneers, too much education was also undesirable. A docile peasantry with enough education to help it understand the basics of farming techniques or religious doctrine, but not ask too many questions, was considered ideal.

¹ Le Couteur assigns a similar motivation of maintaining stability to leaders in the Anglican Church. See Howard Le Couteur, "Anglican High Churchmen and the Expansion of Empire," *Journal of Religious History* 32, no.2 (June 2008):196.

With so many groups involved in building parishes, not everyone could be satisfied. Despite the desires of the church, state, and settlers, the frontier, in essence, created an environment where compromise and disappointment necessarily reigned; not all communities could have churches or access to priests. With the region in constant fluctuation, deciding where churches should be constructed and where priests should be assigned proved controversial, as secular and religious officials clashed over whose word was final. More fundamentally, this chapter argues that settlers acted as if the state of Orthodox life should be the concern of all officials, both religious and secular. In other words, settlers made no distinction between the Orthodox Church and the state; both were deemed responsible for providing settlers with access to the religious world they had left behind in Russia proper. The church and state reinforced this view by working closely together in Siberia to provide settlers with churches, schools, and priests.

The State of Parishes in Omsk Diocese

The Chief Procurator's report for 1896-1897 provides a glimpse through statistics of the state of Omsk diocese. In that year, the diocese had 14 archpriests, 210 priests, 49 deacons, and 221 sacristans serving approximately 505,887 Orthodox parishioners.² Approximately 168 parish churches existed for these parishioners. During the initial years after the creation of Omsk diocese, the number of churches increased by small increments: fifteen churches and chapels

² *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1896 i 1897gody, prilozheniia za 1895-96 gg* (St. Petersburg, 1899), 10-11; for the population, 4.

were built in 1896 and fourteen, the following year.³ By 1914, the Orthodox population of the diocese had almost tripled, reaching 1,477,067 souls, with 519 priests, 129 deacons and 434 sacristans serving this population.⁴ In that year, the number of parish churches in the diocese also increased to 429 and the number of chapels to 302.⁵

Despite yearly growth in the number of churches and chapels in Omsk diocese, there were still not enough churches to fulfill the needs of new parishioners. For example, in the late nineteenth century, 534 churches existed in Tobol'sk province: this worked out to one church for every 2,280 square kilometres. Tomsk province had a better ratio with one church for every 1,418 square kilometres.⁶ The development of religious life in Tobol'sk and Tomsk provinces was much higher than the southern provinces of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk, which would form the bulk of Omsk diocese. The ratio of churches to space in those territories confirmed the shortage: in the early twentieth century, one church existed for every 7,729 square kilometres in the province of Akmolinsk.⁷ In his 1894 report, the Governor of Akmolinsk expressed his concern

³ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1896 i 1897 gody, prilozheniia za 1895-96 gg* (St. Petersburg, 1899), 36-37; *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1896-1897, prilozheniia za 1896-97* (St. Petersburg, 1899), 37-38.

⁴ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1914 god, vedomosti za 1914 god* (St. Petersburg, 1916), 26-29; *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1914 god, vedomosti za 1914 god* (St. Petersburg, 1916), 24-25. The numbers show a significant increase in the number of sacristans in Omsk. This trend was also seen in other parts of the empire as sacristan positions experienced significant growth in their numbers from the beginning of the century.

⁵ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1914 god, vedomosti za 1914 god* (St. Petersburg, 1916), 6-7.

⁶ S.S. Shilkin, *Otchet ob osmotre [v1899g] tserkvei i shkol, sooruzhennykh i sooruzhaemykh v Tobol'skoi i Tomskoi guberniakh na sredstva fonda imeni imperatora Aleksandra III* (1899), 1.

⁷ S.S. Shilkin, *Otchet inzhenera Shilkina ob osmotre v 1900 godu tserkvei i shkol, sooruzhennykh i sooruzhaemykh v Akmolinkoi oblasti i Eniseiskoi gubernii na sredstva fonda imeni imperatora Aleksandra III* [1900?], 4.

that without access to churches and schools Russian settlers, if left to their own devices, might engage in the imitation (*podrazhanie*) of the *inorodtsy*. He feared that the influence of local populations would lower the morals of Russian settlers, and without churches this prognosis was all but guaranteed. The idea that churches, in particular, tied settlers to their Russian heritage in spite of their foreign surroundings was a popular opinion circulating among governors whose territories were associated with Omsk diocese.⁸

Not all churches built in Omsk diocese received financial support from the Emperor Alexander III fund. In fact, the fund only provided support for ten out of twenty-eight churches built and consecrated in 1901-1902: local support and contributions from individuals built the other eighteen churches.⁹ In other words, a hybrid system existed in Omsk diocese, where some villages received full support from the fund for building churches, schools and homes for the clergy, others received partial support, and finally some villages in Siberia paid for these structures out of their own pockets.¹⁰

Building Parishes – the Local Perspective

Omsk priests frequently used the term deprived (*lishat'*) to describe the plight of settlers without access to a church: deprived of comfort, of community prayer (*obshchestvennaia molitva*), of hearing the call to prayer and of fulfilling

⁸ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (henceforth, RGIA), f. bib-ka, op.1 d.1, l.75.

⁹ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.1965, l.15.

¹⁰ Like in European Russia, members of the community would receive permission from the consistory to solicit money for their building projects. See Istoricheskii arkhiv Omskoi oblasti (henceforth, IsAOO), f.16, op.1, d.74, l.25.

their duties as Orthodox believers.¹¹ From the outset of colonization, it was difficult to provide settlers with access to the resources necessary to practise their faith. Pioneers struggled on the frontier to sustain their physical lives and this left few resources to address their spiritual ones. They struggled with poor harvests and had to rely on state loans to help with purchasing supplies and sowing. In 1893, M.A. Taube, the Governor-General of the Steppe, described these conditions as leaving peasants without the ability to build churches and financially support the clergy. Concerned, Taube petitioned the Ministry of Internal Affairs to allow the residual funds from resettlement work to be applied to church building. This approach could have only limited results with only 6757 roubles available for building in four villages.¹² In another attempt to address this issue, Taube explored the possibility of establishing schools and appointing priests as teachers, thereby allowing them to fulfill the dual role of educating settlers and performing religious rites in places without churches.¹³ These teacher-priests could offer moral guidance and act as role models to the general population and could be funded through land taxes in Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk provinces. The idea of staffing schools with priests illustrates one innovative solution inspired by the difficulties of resettlement.

During their travels, the governors of Semipalatinsk and Akmolinsk frequently encountered peasants requesting help to build a church or a prayer house and getting a priest assigned to their village. The Governor of Akmolinsk

¹¹ Mikhail Mefod'ev, "Blagochestivye zhiteli Bogospasaemyia vesi seia!" *OEV*, no.24 (1908): 34.

¹² RGIA, f. bib-ka, op.1, d.91, l.46ob.

¹³ Ibid.

described these requests as ardent,¹⁴ while Governor Troinitskii of Semipalatinsk characterized settlers as “yearn[ing] for the speedy building of churches and schools...”¹⁵ He took a personal interest in addressing the issue of access to churches and priests in Semipalatinsk. After travelling through the Pavlodar district and meeting children as old as three who had yet to be baptized, Troinitskii petitioned the state for funds to build churches and prayer houses and for more priests to be assigned to his region. During 1909, he managed to build a number of churches and have five priests from Vostorgov’s Moscow courses assigned to the region.¹⁶ Governor Troinitskii’s acts demonstrated that he understood attending to the religious needs of settlers in the region as being part of his job, just like helping them with their economic development. Not all the governors invested this level of personal involvement; nonetheless, more often than not, governors took an interest in this issue.

Many involved in the administration of the territory made efforts to draw the attention of St. Petersburg to the plight of settlers in the region. The Governor-General reported to the Chief Procurator that over 738 peasant villages existed in the space of 479,200 square kilometres in Akmolinsk province. Last year alone, 196 new villages had been settled in the province. The Governor-General argued that for every eight thousand parishioners, only one parish existed. In many cases, villagers had to travel over a hundred kilometres to visit their parish church. Despite the clear need for more parishes, Ioann Vostorgov proposed to add only

¹⁴ A.N. Neverov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet Akmolinskago gubernatora za 1910 i 1911 gody* (1912), 43.

¹⁵ RGIA, f. bib-ka, op.1, d.85, l.119ob.

¹⁶ RGIA, f. bib-ka, op.1, d.85, l.124ob.

six more after his 1908 visit. The Governor-General called this type of help “insignificant (*nichtozhno*) and will not ease the difficulty of the situation.” The extreme material poverty of the settlers, the high cost of the journey and the necessity of building their new life in a place with Muslim and sectarian posed danger for the settler population. Living without churches could lead settlers down “the destructive path of religious indifferentism.” To combat such a development, he proposed that sixty-five new parishes and churches be added to his region.¹⁷

Even state officials working on the ground recognized the importance of providing support for the religious aspirations of the settler population. S.S Shilkin, an engineer working with communities to build churches, highly praised the priests of Tobol’sk and Tomsk for their work among the settlers. According to Shilkin, the presence of priests and the building of churches had a significant influence on the moral state of the settler population. He contended that villages that received a church showed a decline in theft, drunkenness, and superstitions. Conversations held by priests with their parishioners helped to raise the moral level in the community by “increas[ing] the mental horizons of the audience.”¹⁸ Various techniques were used to accomplish this transformation; for example, in the village of Elanska in Tobol’sk province, the local priest employed a magic

¹⁷ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1197, l.45.

¹⁸ Shilkin, “Otchet ob osmotre,” 25-26. Shilkin also recognized the contribution of priests to the development of agriculture in their parishes. Through their example, priests had an influence on agricultural practices in the parishes, thereby improving the “material welfare of new settlers.” In certain areas, priests took the lead in successfully planting melons, watermelons, cultivating hops and buckwheat. The necessity of agricultural training and instructions appeared on the agenda of the government, as governors regularly raised the issue of developing agricultural institutes to aid local growers in their endeavours. Despite a few examples of priests successfully acting as mentors to their parishioners, many priests also faced agricultural difficulties in Siberia.

lantern to teach parishioners, although he had only a small number of pictures. These types of extra-liturgical practices were more common in European Russia; nonetheless, they still existed in Siberia.¹⁹

Even with the close involvement of the state in providing financial and technical support for building churches, settlers were not passive bystanders in this quest to address their religious needs. They engaged in many of the same activities as peasants in European Russia, establishing building committees, and taking up collections both within and outside the community to build churches. Yet, the question remains – what religious expectations did settlers bring to their new homes? The dearth of peasant-based primary sources makes this issue difficult to assess with authority. A few sources written by peasants, along with church sources, indicate that the expectations of peasants were based on their experiences in their former villages. In a petition sent to the Governor of Tobol'sk, the peasants of Iaroslavskoe village in Tiukalinsk district informed the governor that in their former homeland, they had developed the habit of praying to God in a church.²⁰ In his 1902 report, Pobedonostsev also commented that peasants expected that the same religious surroundings they had left behind in European Russia would greet them in Siberia.²¹ A priest travelling through a resettlement region asked peasants if they preferred European Russia to Siberia. Many preferred Siberia, although they acknowledged that Siberia had one major

¹⁹ Vera Shevzov mentions the significance of magic lanterns to extra liturgical teaching. See Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 81.

²⁰ M. Shilovskii, *Sibirskie Pereseleniia: Dokumenty i Materialy* (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskii gos. universitet, 2003), 108.

²¹ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviateishego sinoda za 1902 god* (St. Petersburg, 1905), 148. For other examples of this reasoning, see IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.74, l.4.

problem. As one man responded, “Everything is great... but here is our sorrow: we do not have our own church of God; [we] don’t have our own priest.... Here we live as non-Christians.”²² For Orthodox peasants, living as Christians meant attending church services and having access to a priest. This definition did not change on the Kazakh steppe.

Settlers organized quickly to ask state and diocesan officials for help in providing for their religious life. For example, one village established in 1896, had by 1898, sent its first petition to the bishop of Omsk to ask permission to use wood from a state-owned forest for building a church and for funds from the treasury.²³ Over the next four years, these believers sent multiple petitions providing several different justifications for why they should have a church. In the first petition, concern for the younger generation and newborns dying without baptism topped the list.²⁴ In 1901, a new petition claimed that sectarians and dissenters lived among them, and were threatening to pull away the younger generation. A spiritual leader (*dukhovnyi nastavnik*), they insisted, was necessary to protect their children and their community against such developments.²⁵

The parishioners of Rozhdestvenskoe village cited distance as one of the main reasons why they should be provided with financial support to build a church. According to the petition, the village was located twenty-three kilometres from the parish church and the priest. Such a significant distance meant that their

²² S.S.L., “Moia poezdka s treboiu k pereselentsam,” *Pravoslavnyi Blagovestnik (PB)*, no.4 (1912): 173.

²³ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.61, l.3.

²⁴ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.61, l.3.

²⁵ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.61, l.19.

elderly and sick remained without the sacrament.²⁶ Settlers frequently lodged complaints about distance; they emphasized particularly how such distance interfered with the performance of their religious duties.²⁷ Distance and poverty were the primary justifications cited in petitions to request funding for the building of a parish church.²⁸

Settlers expressed discontent when it appeared that the church or the state was withholding the resources needed to practise their faith. A petition from peasants in the village of Grafskoe in the district of Akmolinsk illustrates this point. Villagers complained that the state would not grant free use of timber from a state forest to build their church. They informed the Holy Synod that other villages in their region had received financial and material support from the state for building; they simply could not understand why the state helped other villages, but would not help them.²⁹ This petition reveals that peasants viewed church building as a right that should be supported by the state and church as opposed to a privilege. It also shows the tendency by settlers to conflate secular and religious realms; the Holy Synod had no jurisdiction over the resources on state lands, even for church-building. Nonetheless, settlers pleaded with the Holy Synod to intervene.

²⁶ RGIA, f.796, op.191, d.338, l.3; For another example of a petition which cites distance from the parish church as forcing the sick to go without religious rites, see RGIA, f.796, op.191, d.338, l.6. Distance was recognized as a valid reason for receiving permission to build a church in the official guidelines established by Peter the Great and believers in European Russia regularly used this argument in their petitions for a church. See Shevzov, 59. Church and state documents emphasize the issue of distance for building church. In documents pertaining to the work of the Emperor Alexander III fund, the distance of a settlement from a parish church was typically included. See "Tsirkuliarno," *OEI*, no.14 (1904): 4-6.

²⁷ For more references to distance in settler petitions, see RGIA, f.797, op.86, 2ot., 3 st., d.166, l.2.

²⁸ RGIA, f.796, op.191, d.338, l.6; For more examples, see IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.148a, l.127; IsAOO, f.16, op.1 d.148a, l.195.

²⁹ RGIA, f.796, op.191, d.338, l.7ob.

Settlers also presented difficulties with their neighbours as a reason justifying why they should be provided with a church. As one petition stated: "...we live in the half wild country of Siberia (*poludikaia strana Sibir* ') where every non-Orthodox (*inoverets*) seeks to blaspheme (*porugat* ') the Orthodox faith..."³⁰ Another group of settlers wrote of being surrounded by sectarians and dissenters and not wanting "to lose [their] good Orthodox faith..."³¹ Peasants also spoke of the great sorrow they felt because of their isolation from the church.³² Faith was about habit and without regular interaction with a priest, settlers worried that their faith would be in danger: "But without a pastor of the Church of Christ, we and our children will forget the Orthodox faith..." For the most part, settlers worried that their communities might succumb to sectarianism and not atheism.³³

Zeal for the Orthodox faith among settlers continued even as pioneer life conspired against it. An application from the parishioners of Aleksandrovscoe settlement in Tiukalinsk district for a retired (*zashtatnyi*) priest to serve their village until they could open an independent parish illustrates the steadfastness of faith on the frontier. Twenty years before, these settlers had arrived from Riazan province. In their new Siberian homeland, the parish church in Syropiatskoe proved to be less accessible than desired: it was located ten kilometres away with the Om River running between their village and Syropiatskoe. In their petition, villagers wrote of their great sorrow when poor road conditions and ice floats

³⁰ RGIA, f.796, op.191, d.638, l.3.

³¹ RGIA, f.797, op.86, 2ot., 3 st., d.166, l.1.

³² RGIA, f.796, op.191, d.338, l.7ob.

³³ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1220, l.199. In general, members of the community signed these petitions although in most cases the author is not provided.

prevented them from visiting the parish church for the Easter service. Trapped on the other side of the river, they missed “meeting the Risen Christ” and had to return to their homes to break their fast on “blessed bread.”³⁴ The weather, particularly in spring and in the fall, also inhibited the sick from receiving spiritual comfort from the priest. Even on those occasions when they could attend a service at the church, the atmosphere was hardly inviting. The church was small, only able to hold approximately two hundred people, and those who could not fit had to stand outside “under the open sky.” While this situation might be acceptable in the summer, during a Siberian winter such a practice placed people’s lives in danger.³⁵ Despite their long wait for a priest, these believers were unwavering in their belief that one day they would have their own church.

The fear of losing the younger generation to a mental world different from their own resonated strongly with settlers. In their petitions for churches, parishioners frequently raised the issue of their youth, lamenting the prospect of their children growing up without the influence of the church in their lives. This reflected a larger trend in the empire. During the late nineteenth century, there was a growing concern among priests and parishioners over the moral development of the youth. In central Russia, where industrial growth siphoned young adults to the cities to work as labourers, village leaders worried about the influence of city life on these young peasants.³⁶ This concern did not evaporate as Russians migrated to Siberia. According to priests in Siberia, the younger generation showed signs of

³⁴ RGIA, f.796, op.192, d.1935, ll.3ob-4.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ See Jeffrey Burds, *Peasant Dreams and Market Politics: Labor Migration and the Russian Village, 1861-1905* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 45.

being uneducated in the Christian faith and priests worried that this unfamiliarity with the church would result in their disassociation from Orthodox beliefs and practices. And without a strong foundation based in the Russian Orthodox faith, the young would be susceptible to the influence of alternative forms of belief or revolutionary sentiment without suffering any sort of crisis to their identity. As one missionary priest in Omsk diocese stated:

The younger generation do not have a conception of a true Christian upbringing. They have grown up without a strong or palpable connection with the church. This makes them completely unreliable for the Orthodox Church. This generation, as one can observe in settlements with sectarians, quickly and almost without any emotional hesitation, without the heavy torment and the kind of suffering usually linked with changing faiths, abandon the Orthodox faith. The youth do not value the Orthodox faith because they do not know it.³⁷

Even though the author was referring to youth, his interpretation illuminates the factors he identified as sustaining the older generation in their belief: their connection to the faith built through participating in church life.

Other local priests also emphasized the indifference of youth in Siberia to their faith. They argued that in areas where settlers and their children did not have access to churches, these children grew up without any spiritual and moral foundation. For example, Fr. Mikhail Mefod'ev claimed that the children born to settler families had very little understanding of their faith. They did not know how to properly make the sign of the cross, nor did they know their prayers. They failed to show deference to the clergy and acted in a disrespectful

³⁷ Panteleimon Papshev, "Usloviia, blagopriiatstvuiushchiia sektantskoi propagande," *OEI*, no.29 (1916):19.

(*nepochtitel'nyi*) manner toward their parents.³⁸ In his report on the district of Omsk, Fr Nikolai Lebedev agreed with the position that the youth of Omsk diocese showed “absolute indifference to faith” (*sovershenno ravnodushno k vere*). This stood in stark contrast with their elders, who, even though they could not visit a church often, managed to preserve a deep love for the services and rituals of the Orthodox Church.³⁹ Bishop Andronik, in particular, recognized the significance of this issue and encouraged his clergy to be mindful of the religious development of the youth. His response to Lebedev’s article was to reiterate a desire for his clergy to create an environment of engagement for parishioners: through singing, teaching about prayer, processions, organizing study groups, and teaching the youth about the Orthodox faith.⁴⁰

Strengthening the parish, therefore, had a generational component for settlers and the church. This was also the case with the state. Officials expressed concern that moral development of the population would be low in parishes without a school, library, and strong relations between the clergy and parishioners.⁴¹ Inactive parishes would breed wild youth; hooliganism greatly concerned the top officials of the region with the Governor of Akmolinsk and the Governor-General of the Steppe raising this issue in their reports.⁴² In 1912, the

³⁸ Mefod'ev, 34-35.

³⁹ “Eparkhial'naia khronika,” *OEV*, no.4 (1914): 41.

⁴⁰ “Eparkhial'naia khronika,” *OEV*, no.4 (1914): 43.

⁴¹ RGIA, f.1284, op.194, d.45, l.16.

⁴² Many officials considered hooliganism in rural Russia to be a serious issue. The Ministry of Internal Affairs released in 1913 the finding of the Lykoshin commission, which studied hooliganism in the empire. Hooliganism was difficult to define, as tsarist officials, social commentators, church officials and others placed many different actions under its heading. As Neil Weissman notes, some defined hooliganism as participating in “illegal acts”, while other spoke of the “attitude” with which the act was committed and still others referred to it as a “psychological condition.” Neil B. Weissman, “Rural Crime in Tsarist Russia: The Question of Hooliganism,

Governor-General of the Steppe, E.O. Shmidt, commented on the great anxiety that prevailed throughout his region in connection with efforts to combat the spread of hooliganism in urban and rural areas.⁴³ Shmidt described the situation as such: “Almost everywhere, there is a complete disrespect towards elders, towards immediate superiors, wholesale drunkenness, senseless knife-fighting, such wanton, groundless damage of another’s property and other mischief.”⁴⁴ Like in other regions of the empire, hooliganism was understood to be a generational issue, with the younger generation losing the values and moral compass of their elders and then acting out in incomprehensible and destructive ways.

Paradoxically, even though the younger generation showed signs of being alienated from the church, it had many of the fundamental tools – such as literacy – which were imperative to becoming the type of parishioners that church officials aspired to create. Venetskii claimed that two-thirds of the young people he met on one of his pastoral trips were literate and had in their homes the Gospel or the Bible in the Russian language.⁴⁵ Having the capability to read allowed these young parishioners to learn and study Orthodox tradition in a way not necessarily

1905-1914,” *Slavic Review* 37, no. 2 (June 1978): 228. The diversity of acts labeled hooliganism – everything from mischief to murder – contributed to its almost indefinable character. Yet, the attitude accompanying the act – a disregard for authority, appeared to be a common thread, see Weissman, 230. Notably, the Lykoshin commission described the condition of hooliganism as absent from Siberia and Central Asia, see Weissman, 230. Local secular and religious leaders in Omsk diocese clearly did not agree with this assessment. For an analysis of hooliganism in the city, see Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁴³ RGIA, f. bib-ka, op.1, d.91, l.169ob.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Nikolai Venetskii, “Po prokhodu,” *OEV*, no.17 (1903): 31. Booksellers constituted one means by which parishioners in Siberia could purchase their own copy of the Gospel in Church Slavonic, Russian or Ukrainian languages. See G. Peeddoobny, “Ukrainsy v Sibiri,” *Ukrainskaia Zhizn’*, no.12 (1913):11. This estimation seems high considering the low rate of literacy in the empire, especially in rural areas. For more on the literacy rates in the empire, see Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2003).

available to their overwhelmingly illiterate parents.

Priests in Omsk diocese engaged in local work to improve the moral fibre of their communities and to raise the level of education. The temperance movement in Omsk was not unique in Western Siberia or in the empire; nonetheless, it illustrated a concern with the values and actions of parishioners. Many articles appeared in *Omsk Diocesan News* between 1908 and 1913, publicizing the issue of alcoholism and providing priests with information on how to address it in their own communities.⁴⁶

From the beginning of the state's initiative to provide help to settlers in rebuilding the religious infrastructure of their communities, it emphasized the building of both churches and schools. In certain cases, local officials built church-schools, which combined the structures into one. While church-building tended to gain more publicity among church publications, the commitment of the state and the church to building both of these institutions remained. Linking religion and education provided new settlements with a strong foundation for civilizing the next generation. Education, the presence of the church, and strengthening the family were viewed as the primary ways to combat hooliganism and quell the revolutionary fervour found among the youth of Russia throughout

⁴⁶ O.V. Ushakova, "Dukhovenstvo Omskoi eparkhii i trezvennoe dvizhenie v 1907-1914 gg: po materialam Omskikh eparkhial'nykh vedomostei," *Tezisy dokladov i soobshchenii tret'ei regional'noi nauchno-metodicheskoi konferentsii* (Omsk, 1994), 191. For more on the temperance movement in western Siberia, see N.V. Elizarova, "Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' protiv p'ianstva (po materialam Omskikh, Tomskikh, i Tobol'skikh eparkhial'nykh vedomostei), *Vestnik Omskogo universiteta*, Vyp.4 (2004): 95-98; N.V. Elizarova, "K voprosu o deiatel'nosti Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi po bor'be s p'ianstvom na territorii zapadnoi Sibiri v kontse XIX-nachale XX vekov," *Omskii Nauchnyi Vestnik* 27, no.2 (2004): 30-33. For more on the temperance movement in the empire, see Kate Transchel, *Under the Influence: Working-Class Drinking, Temperance, and Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1895-1932* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006); W. Arthur McKee, "Sobering up the Soul of the People: The Politics of Popular Temperance in Late Imperial Russia," *Russian Review* 58, no. 2 (April 1999): 212-233; Patricia Herlihy, *The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka & Politics in Late Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

the early twentieth century. While access to basic education spread in European Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century, Siberia lagged behind. This situation worsened as millions of settlers arrived in the region. As zemstvos did not exist in western Siberia, primary education fell to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of State Properties, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and finally, the Orthodox Church.⁴⁷ Out of these four entities, the Orthodox Church had, from 1884, more schools (although fewer students) than the other ministries.⁴⁸ In 1884, the Orthodox Church began to increase its activity in establishing primary schools in Western Siberia; that year, only forty-one parish schools existed in Tobol'sk province. By 1914, there were 556 schools in the province serving the youth.⁴⁹ In Omsk diocese, the consistory, with help from the Emperor Alexander III fund, continued to open new schools. In 1910, there existed 210 parish schools in the diocese for a population of 10,710 students.⁵⁰ Out of these schools, six were for boys, fourteen were for girls and 182 were co-ed. More boys attended school than girls, with female students constituting only a third of the student population.⁵¹

From the church's perspective, schools performed the necessary function of providing peasants with a basic education and served as a necessary means by

⁴⁷ During the Great Reforms, the tsarist regime established a form of local government called the zemstvo in many parts of the empire. In these parts, the zemstvo was active in the area of education. For more information on how this system operated, see Terence Emmons and Wayne S. Vucinich, eds., *The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁴⁸ Nicole Young, "The Arduous Road to Enlightenment: The Development of Primary Education in Tobol'sk Guberniia, 1816-1914" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1996), 9.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 301.

⁵⁰ "Otchet Omskago Eparkhial'nago nabliudatel'ia o sostoianii shkol tserkovno-prikhodskikh i gramoty Omskoi eparkhii v uchebno-vospitatel'nom otnoshenii za 1910-11 uch god," *OEV*, no.4 (1912): 7. The author mentions that peasants were tempted to open ministry schools because of funding. This was a trend across the empire.

⁵¹ Ibid., 9.

which to teach children the basic tenets of the Orthodox faith and morals.⁵² The fear of peasant children running wild in Siberia caused consternation among religious and secular officials. Fr. Dmitrii Sadovskii described the importance of instilling in these children a sense of service to the tsar and the fatherland (*otechestvo*), submission to power and deference to their elders.⁵³ Concerned over the shortage of schools in its diocese, the Omsk consistory issued a directive in 1902 encouraging parish priests to fulfil their duty of helping educate local children.⁵⁴

Like peasants in European Russia, settlers to Siberia also showed initiative in providing their children with education.⁵⁵ In a number of cases, settlers asked for permission to build a school in addition to a church.⁵⁶ In a petition to open an independent parish, parishioners indicated that their village had a school, to which they happily sent their children to learn about the Orthodox faith.⁵⁷ The fanfare that accompanied the opening of a parish school also illustrates the importance of access to education for settlers and how a school symbolized the progress of the

⁵² This theme is raised countless times in *Omsk Diocesan News*. For example, P.A.D., "Nastavlenie zakonouchitel'ia uchashchimsia ostavliaiushchim shkolu," *OEV*, no.11 (1913): 28-30.

⁵³ Dmitrii Sadovskii, "Poseshchenie Ego Preosviashchenstvom Sergiem, Episkopom," *OEV*, no.20 (1901):10.

⁵⁴ *OEV*, no.7 (1902): 1-2.

⁵⁵ For more on peasants and education, see Ben Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

⁵⁶ RGIA, f.796, op.191, d.338, l.6; RGIA, f.796, op.198, d.6, l.1ob. In a description of a number of settlements in the districts of Zaisan and Ust'-kamenogorsk (the furthest southeastern reaches of the diocese), the author reported that many of the villagers requested support for a local school. These villages primarily consisted of settlers. See *Opisanie nekotorykh pereselencheskikh poselkov Ust'-kamenogorskago i Zaisanskago uezdov Semipalatinskoi oblasti v sel'skokhoziaistvennom otnoshenii* (Spb, 1913).

⁵⁷ RGIA, f.796, op.192, d.1935, ll.4-4ob. Even though parents wanted their children to have a basic education, not all children shared that aspiration. One peasant indicated that young boys studying in his settler village did not enjoy studying and therefore learned very little. Fedor Korban, "Iz Makinskago, kokchetovskago uezda, Akmolinsk oblasti," *Sel'skii Vestnik*, no.39 (1904):780.

local community. In 1902, a new one-class parish school opened in a village in the Tara district. A procession complete with church banners and icons arrived at the school building, where villagers held a public prayer. The local priest reflected on the meaning of this event: “Who could contemplate ten years ago that in this dark corner of Siberia, remote from enlightenment...encircled by ignorance and dissenters... would be built a church of God and a school, a nursery of piety and morals?” In general, clergymen also emphasized how the work of the church and the school complemented each other. As one priest wrote, “The church teaches us to pray to God [and] the school explains to children the significance and behaviour of prayer...”⁵⁸ Through education, settlers could be moulded into God-fearing, men and women, who would respect and show deference to their parents, the priest, the state and the tsar.

Does Anyone Know How to Build a Church?

Once settlers received permission to build in their communities, the real work began. Priests were not innately born with the ability to build churches and neither were settlers. The knowledge and expertise available in European Russia could be difficult to find on the Siberian frontier. Despite the involvement of St. Petersburg in financing these buildings, the reality of creating plans, organizing labour, and purchasing materials fell to local committees – a similar set-up as found in European Russia. Consisting of the priest, secular officials, and local

⁵⁸ Feodor Abelfin, “Otkrytie odnoklassnoi tserkovno-prikhodskoi shkoly v sele Novorozhdestvennskom, Tarskago uezda,” *OEV*, no.9 (1902):11.

community members, these committees worked to bring the dream of the community to fruition. Unfortunately, many times this proved to be more difficult than expected.

Diocesan officials recognized that the necessity of spreading technical knowledge extended not only to the settlers, but to the priests as well. An article in *Omsk Diocesan News* claimed that priests did not possess the technical know-how for creating beautiful churches and instead left contractors to their own devices. For their iconostasis, priests needed to become aware of carving, gilding, and how to evaluate paintings. Only knowledgeable priests could prevent the parish from being defrauded by unscrupulous contractors.⁵⁹ From the early years of the diocese, acquiring the necessary knowledge for both peasants and priest was high on the diocese's agenda.

The issue of frontier construction emerged on the agenda soon after the establishment of Omsk diocese. Local religious officials demonstrated a desire to help settlers build the physical structures that would become the foundation for their personal and community lives. To accommodate areas without access to wood from forests, diocesan officials requested brochures from a Moscow engineer describing how to build cheap, but fireproof dwellings using bricks. The engineer fulfilled the request, adding in a note that he hoped this technique would be useful and that perhaps they would say a prayer for him. Kliment Skal'skii, the organizer of this endeavour and also the editor of *Omsk Diocesan News* at that time, requested permission from the bishop to distribute these brochures through

⁵⁹ K. Skal'skii, "Doklad," *OEI*, no.17 (1898), 8.

local churches to help the settler population.⁶⁰

The Siberian Railway Committee also recognized how church-building could help to disseminate knowledge on the frontier. The Committee viewed church building as a tool to teach settlers the technical elements of building with air-dried bricks. During the process of building churches with these materials, the settlers would learn the proper technique and witness the superior quality of this method, thereby choosing to utilize it in the building of their own homes.⁶¹ Building with bricks as opposed to wood would protect against fires, and provide a more viable approach to building in districts like Akmolinsk, Omsk, and Petropavlovsk, which had little in the way of forests.⁶²

A shortage of building experts in Omsk diocese created significant problems for the success of the church-building endeavour. Simply put, only a few people who worked in Omsk diocese had the knowledge required for designing and constructing buildings. For example, Tobol'sk and Tomsk provinces only had an engineer and an architect on staff. These men were in charge of building throughout the provinces; giving advice, and monitoring construction for the extensive amount of building taking place in conjunction with the settlement and development of the region. As the diocese did not have its own architect and the local building committee could not find people to hire for this task, the job of monitoring construction sites fell to those employed by the province. Building sites for churches often were located a hundred kilometres from each other, which

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ RGIA, f.1273, op.1, d.451, l.33.

⁶² RGIA, f.1273, op.1, d.451, ll.33-33ob.

made the duties of the engineer and the architect extremely difficult.⁶³ This problem existed in other territories assigned to Omsk diocese. The Governor of Semipalatinsk reported on several different occasions about the difficulties caused by an absence of building knowledge in the region. Semipalatinsk only had an engineer and an architect to serve the entire province. While small school buildings were simple enough in their design not to require special knowledge, churches, on the other hand, demanded supervision by people with technical skill who could guide the settlers in their work.⁶⁴ The Governor wrote that without the help of an architect the churches could not be built properly; yet, the expertise of engineers and architects were also needed to build other necessary infrastructure for the region, like hospitals, bridges, and other buildings. The expansiveness of the province caused problems for the engineer, who had to travel great distances to perform his duties. As the engineer spent more time in transit travelling to building sites than on actually facilitating building, the governor aspired to hire another engineer.⁶⁵

In light of these difficulties, the issue of whether Omsk diocese required a diocesan architect was raised at a number of diocesan congresses. In 1905, deputies at the congress contended that the diocese lacked the funds to create such a position and instead recommended that clergy purchase a book of church plans with budgets published by the Holy Synod.⁶⁶ With the appointment of Bishop

⁶³ Shilkin, *Otchet ob osmotre*, 8; For church-building in European Russia, parishes would hire local engineers and architects to help in the building process. See Shevzov, 61.

⁶⁴ RGIA, f.391, op.5, d.231, l.4.

⁶⁵ RGIA, f. bib-ka, op.1, d.85, l.137.

⁶⁶ *Zhurnaly 4-go obshcheeparkhial'nago s"ezda o.o deputatov ot dukhovenstva, Omskoi eparkhii byvshago v 1905 godu v g. Omske Akmolinskoi Oblasti* (1905), 66–67.

Gavriil, this issue received more attention. Disappointed by the unattractive churches he had surveyed on his trips through the diocese, he recommended to the 1909 congress that an architect be appointed.⁶⁷ Bishop Gavriil, however, had beauty and not technique on his mind. Churches must inspire awe, an emotion not felt when the bishop viewed the current churches. Bishop Gavriil was unsuccessful in his endeavour. By 1916, the issue of whether or not Omsk Diocese needed an architect remained controversial. Despite the congress once again voting not to create such a position, a “builder” raised the issue on the pages of *Omsk Diocesan News*. The author reminded readers that the diocese was still young and therefore, many churches, schools, and clergy homes still needed to be built. Problems occurred when no one on the local church-building committee understood the intricacies of building. This led to unfortunate incidents where churches were built improperly.⁶⁸ The author argued that an architect could provide expertise unavailable locally, which would help the building process to run smoothly. A year later, the Russian Revolution made this argument obsolete as the anti-religious Bolsheviks took power and western Siberia became a civil war zone; yet, the persistence of this issue throughout the diocese’s approximately twenty-year history shows its significance for both religious and secular officials.

Problems arose not only in conjunction with expertise, but also with access to materials. In the steppe region, forests were scarce, making it difficult for settlers to build churches and homes. Only Kokchetav district had adequate access to wood: other places like Atbasarsk and Akmolinsk were almost

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Nuzhen li nam arkhitektor?” *OEV*, no.6 (1916): 27.

completely without trees. Along the railway line in Omsk and Petropavlovsk districts birch forests grew, but not coniferous trees. Settlers made the best out of their circumstances, building homes from wattle, brick and birch. These materials, however, were inadequate for more substantial building. In these cases, settler communities had to buy pinewood from state-owned timber yards.⁶⁹ Such timber yards, like for instance the one at the station of Petukhovo, received wood from other parts of the empire. Timber from Perm, Tobol'sk, Semipalatinsk, and the Altai Mountains supplied the region.

Problems with access to materials and expertise contributed to an abundance of shoddy workmanship that plagued church-building in Siberia. Many new constructions resembled dilapidated buildings, instead of pristine symbols of the technological capabilities of the Russian empire. Such buildings caused embarrassment for local officials and consternation for settlers. In Akmolinsk province, Shilkin reported that only two out of seven parishes built acceptable homes for their priest and three of the parishes built homes that were completely “unsatisfactory” (*neudachno*).⁷⁰ Similarly with church-building, reports from overseers for the state cite countless examples of clergy's houses failing to live up to expected standards.

Poorly built churches perhaps could not serve an ideological function for promoting the greatness of the empire, but they still fulfilled their purpose of offering a place for parishioners to worship God and carry out their religious

⁶⁹ T.I. Tarasov, *Tserkvi, shkoly i prichtovye doma, sooruzhennye na fonda imeni imperatora Aleksandra III. Otchet po komandirovke 1903 chinovnika Kantseliarii Kom. Ministrov T.I. Tarasova ch.2* (1904), 8-9.

⁷⁰ Shilkin, *Otchet inzhenera*, 22.

duties as Orthodox believers. The village of Poltavskoe in the district of Omsk illustrated how a church could simultaneously represent the hope and piety of local believers and the failure of the building enterprise. This village was inhabited by settlers from Poltava and Chernigov provinces and surrounded by villages filled with other settlers from European Russia. Despite receiving funds from the Emperor Alexander III fund, church construction was beset by problems. Proper plans were used for building the church; unfortunately, proper materials were not. The builders used pine planks from a former railway bridge across the Irtysh River that had seen better days, and the building lacked a proper foundation.⁷¹ Homes for the clergymen and the local school fared no better, showing similar carelessness as the church. Local inspectors deemed that the home for the priest was unsuitable for living and the home for the sacristan should be demolished, as it was completely unsalvageable.

Despite all the drama associated with building in Poltavskoe, Bishop Sergii gave his permission for the church to be consecrated. Parishioners gathered for the liturgy, along with the local clergy. The priest chose the book of Kings for his sermon and spoke to the congregation on the kindness of God to King Solomon in his temple building efforts. According to the description published in *Omsk Diocesan News*, the peasants appeared more interested in his portrayal of a vengeful God, who would punish those that did not follow his commandments. The author noted that many of those in attendance had lived near Shtundists in European Russia and had commercial contacts with Molokans in Siberia who told

⁷¹ "Osviashchenie tserkvi v sele Poltavskom Omskago uezda," *OEI*, no.13-14 (1901):4-6; Tarasov, *Tserkvi i shkoly ch.2* (1904), 38-40.

them that attending church was unnecessary. The hope was that hearing the words of the priest, despite the less-than-attractive venue of a dilapidated church, would fortify them in their faith. This contradiction, of glorifying an Almighty God in a less than spectacular building, did not go unnoticed. As the author wrote,

During the consecration of the church of God, among parishioners prevailed the following dual feeling – on the one hand, a great joy that they finally live near a church of God and that they have the opportunity to attend services often, without having to travel over fifty versts (kilometres) to baptize their children and to perform the other Christian duties. On the other, [they experienced] a hidden grief that too much inattention and carelessness of the builders is reflected in the structure of the church of God. As [they] gradually decorate the church, the latter feeling will be eliminated – but it will continue for a long time because as recent settlers, the parishioners are poor people.⁷²

Taking into consideration the dreadful reviews of church-building published by secular officials, most likely this scenario happened frequently in Omsk diocese.

Expectations and Realities

Bishop Mikhail expressed concern over a phenomenon he noticed while travelling through the region. In places where the Emperor Alexander III fund helped to build churches, Bishop Mikhail claimed the attitude of the settlers toward the church was cold (*kholodno*). In those villages, settlers refused to show initiative in caring for their churches. Traditionally, maintaining the churches had been the prerogative of the parish community. Yet, instead of agreeing to pay for the work, parishioners of churches built through the fund would say, “We have a government church... The treasury built the church, the treasury must repair and

⁷² “Osviashchenie tserkvi v sele Potavskom,” 6.

decorate it. Why would we spend money on someone else's?"⁷³ This reaction stood in contrast to the attitude found in places where the settlers used their own funds or had support from donors to build a church. Bishop Mikhail showed such consternation at this situation that he lectured the settlers on the incorrectness of this thinking and charged local priests with the duty of enlightening their parishioners on this matter.

Tsarist official T. Tarasov also noticed and elaborated on this phenomenon. He commented that settlers differed greatly in their willingness to participate in the building process and their attitude towards caring for their churches. Their attitude appeared not to depend on the economic welfare of the village, or on the province from which the settlers arrived. Settlers originating from the same province could demonstrate enthusiasm for supporting churches, while others showed indifference. The indifference, in part, stemmed from the attitude of settlers toward the financial assistance they received from the fund. According to Tarasov, settlers understood the assistance they received as payment for their participation in colonization and therefore, something they had a right to receive.⁷⁴ Since peasants felt entitled to such support, they did not understand why they should use their money to maintain the church building, as this was the duty of the state. Like Bishop Mikhail, Tarasov identified the priest as performing an important role in communicating to the settlers their role in supporting the parish church. His criticism of priests for preferring to solicit money from other sources,

⁷³ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2041, l.18ob.

⁷⁴ T.I. Tarasov, *Tserkvi, shkoly i prichtovye doma, sooruzhennye na fonda imeni imperatora Aleksandra III. Otchet po komandirovke 1903 chinovnika Kantseliarii Kom. Ministrov T.I Tarasova ch.1* (St. Petersburg, 1904), 126.

like the Emperor Alexander III fund, instead of teaching the peasants about their “moral duty” to support their parish churches, shows that Tarasov considered the influence of the priest as the main factor in determining the attitude of settlers toward the financial support of their churches.

This situation did not improve over time. In 1914, Bishop Andronik complained bitterly about the attitude of the settlers towards churches built by the treasury. He contended that poor communities in European Russia which received help from the treasury still contributed their own funds to the building and maintenance of the church; this stood in contrast to Siberian settlers, who expected the treasury to pay for everything. He reported to the Holy Synod: “Here, settlers have complete indifference: ‘Let the treasury repair [it],’ is often shouted at gatherings of peasant-settlers.”⁷⁵ Bishop Andronik missed what Tarasov managed to comprehend about peasant attitudes toward church-building in Siberia: they understood having a church as a right owed to them by the state. Such demands did not reflect a disinterest in religion or the church in their community; on the contrary, these demands revealed the expectations that settlers brought to their new homeland.

Compromises on the Frontier

Creative solutions initiated by the Orthodox Church to respond to the shortage of religious infrastructure in new Siberian settlements caused discomfort for members of the diocesan clergy. The introduction, for example, of portable

⁷⁵ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2593, l.15.

antimensia, which allowed Orthodox priests to serve the liturgy in private homes, caused consternation among the clergy. Evgenii Krylov, the priest of village Kupino in Kainsk district reported to the bishop his displeasure with this practice.⁷⁶ In 1916, the Omsk Diocesan Settler Committee had given this village permission to receive a portable antimimension (*pokhodnyi sv. Antimins*) and a portable church. A portable antimimension allowed clergy to perform services in private homes and venues other than a church. Fr. Krylov questioned the appropriateness of serving the liturgy in the same places where drinking, carousing, and dancing had taken place. The sacredness of the Eucharist had historically demanded a sacred building:

Since ancient times, Christians of all denominations sought to build a special building for the performance of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, not like the building for dwelling...”⁷⁷

Krylov feared that with portable antimimension, the church as a sacred building would lose “all significance.” Temporary solutions in the face of urgent needs had the unfortunate consequence of permitting behaviour that the church tended to frown upon. As Krylov wrote, in seminary they learned that the liturgy could only be served in a special building, where an altar was present. Although Krylov did not mention the issue of sectarianism, it is difficult to imagine that this issue did not cross his mind. Russian Baptists and other groups deemed heretical by the Orthodox Church often used private homes as worship spaces. The Orthodox Church tended not to encourage religious gatherings in homes in European

⁷⁶ Evgenii Krulov, “Raport ego Preosviashchenstvy Preosviashchenneishemu Sil’vestru, Episkopu Omskomi i Pavlodarskomu, sviashchennika sela Kupina, Kainskago uezda, Evgeniia Krylova,” *OEV*, no.13 (1917): 4.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 5.

Russia, as religious officials viewed gatherings not led by the clergy as suspicious.

Another innovative approach to providing settlers with access to churches was the field church (*pokhodnaia tserkov*). The Resettlement Administration charged factory owner Zheverzheev, who was based in St. Petersburg, with the task of manufacturing these churches complete with collapsible altars for settler parishes.⁷⁸ These field churches, which originally were slated to cost 210 roubles each, rose in price to 540 roubles. This increase, due to materials and workmanship, forced the Resettlement Administration to lower its initial order from 100 to forty, in order to maintain the budget of 21,600 roubles. Despite this inconvenience with production, field churches offered a temporary place for rites to be performed; nonetheless, they hardly created a sacred atmosphere.

The co-operative partnership of the Holy Synod and GUZZ promised to provide at least a temporary solution to the growing crisis of an insufficient pool of priests. The position of travelling priests, it was agreed, would be funded to perform rites for settlers, thereby alleviating the most desperate needs. Twenty-two positions were created with only three priests assigned to Omsk diocese.⁷⁹ Although Gavriil appreciated the financial support emanating from the centre, he expressed concern regarding where The Holy Synod Special Council for Satisfying the Religious Needs of Settlers would find all the candidates needed to fill the new parishes it proposed to establish.

While religious officials acknowledged the difficulties of settler life, they refused to consider disrupting proper Orthodox practice because of it. Bishop

⁷⁸ RGIA, f.391, op.6, d.827, l.1.

⁷⁹ V. Vvedenskii, "Tserkovnoe delo sredi pereselentsev Sibiri," *Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam*, no.13 (1913): 613-614.

Andronik cited the distance of many parishioners from their parish church as a factor in the prevalence of carelessness in the fulfilment of their duties of confession and communion. Instead of accepting this situation as an inevitable characteristic of life on the frontier, the bishop proposed ways to solve what he viewed as an unjustifiable phenomenon. He told the Omsk clergy that the Divine Liturgy should be performed at every opportunity in villages, which meant that the clergy should travel throughout the parish to bring the word of God to parishioners. Andronik was aware that many priests in the diocese had already adopted this approach in their pastoral work. Clergy, Andronik proposed, should put together a schedule, notifying villagers to allow them to prepare for these visits.⁸⁰

Orthodox rituals also were modified because of conditions on the frontier. Particularly funerals had to be adapted as parishioners had to wait for a priest to travel through their villages. Priests identified a number of practices as disconcerting even though parishioners appeared indifferent to the changes. For example, in the Orthodox tradition, the coffin is left open during the service and people kiss the body of the deceased.⁸¹ The incorporation of the body into the funeral service posed problems for communities that lived far away from the parish church. Many settlers had no choice but to bury their dead before a priest could arrive and perform the funeral ceremony. Even though the diocesan authorities (and the Russian Orthodox faith) required that people be buried with a ceremony, this was a physically impossible feat for priests to perform. Instead, the

⁸⁰ Andronik, "Ko vsem Protoiereiam i Iereiam Omskoi Eparkhii," *OEI*, no.2 (1914): 9.

⁸¹ John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture*, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 417.

practice of having funerals in absentia (*zaochnoe otpevanie*) became the norm for settlers and *Sibiriaki* alike: a priest would perform the funeral ceremony without the body being present. Fr. Goloshubin described his discomfort with this act. First, he noted that this custom had no basis in Russian Orthodox practice. In Orthodox funeral ceremonies, the body was an integral part of the ceremony and it was almost comical to sing and perform actions requiring a body. For example, during the ceremony, the priest sings, “Come brethren, let’s give the last kiss to the dead.” Despite Goloshubin’s discomfort with this tradition, the peasants, both Ukrainian settlers and *Sibiriaki*, did not seem to mind performing the ceremony without the deceased.⁸²

The interaction between the Kazakh mission and settlers also illustrates the necessity for compromises on the frontier and the difficulties caused by such expectations. Particularly in the steppe region, little religious infrastructure existed to allow settlers to continue practising their faith. Efrem Eliseev, a missionary to the Kazakhs, described the appearance of settlers along the postal highway to Ust’kamenogorsk. Without a church in sight, settlers had to rely upon the missionaries of the Kazakh mission to fulfil their religious needs. He relayed to his *Orthodox Evangelist* (*Pravoslavnyi Blagovestnik*) audience how settlers around Semipalatinsk turned to him for performing rites.⁸³ In a letter sent to Eliseev, settlers complained of the distance they had to travel to get to a church and of being surrounded by Muslim neighbours. For Eliseev, the presence of settlers created opportunities for their interaction with new converts. He wrote of

⁸² Ioann Goloshubin, “Iz vpechatlenii sel’skago sviashchennika,” *OEI*, no.14 (1911): 28-29.

⁸³ Efrem Eliseev, “Pereselentsy v Kirgizskoi stepi,” *PB*, no.1 (1897): 30.

his joy when a marriage occurred between the two groups and how a bride who could not speak Russian now spoke beautifully and had begun to farm.⁸⁴ The arrival of settlers to the region made those small victories possible.

Sharing religious space could have other benefits for both groups. For example, a proposal to build a church near the settler village of Eleninskii in the district of Akmolinsk and establish a missionary station nearby appeared to satisfy the needs of local settlers who desired a church and those of the mission, which desired land for the newly converted. Located over a hundred kilometres from the nearest church in Akmolinsk, the villagers of Eleninskii struggled with their new environment and their isolation from an Orthodox church. Settlers desiring to fulfil their religious duties had to make the long trek – the journey to Akmolinsk was impossible to undertake during the winter when blizzards (*burany*) could arise unexpectedly.⁸⁵ The village simply could not afford to build its own church. Under these circumstances, the arrival of a missionary from the Kazakh mission must have appeared to be a sign sent from God. The missionary explained to the villagers that the mission had received a parcel of land for the newly baptized and 30,000 roubles for the construction of a stone church. To celebrate the forthcoming construction of the church, the villagers held a procession, complete with banners, a cross and an icon.⁸⁶ Such a sight communicated to the surrounding

⁸⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁸⁵ Deaths caused by blizzards were a real concern in Siberia. For example, 145 people died between mid-January until the beginning of March of 1912 in a district of Tomsk province due to blizzards. See “Zhertvy sibirskikh bur,” *Sel'skii Vestnik*, no.59 (1912): 4. During the same year, over 160 deaths occurred in Omsk diocese. See “Khertvy snezhnago burana,” *Sel'skii Vestnik*, no.36 (1912): 3.

⁸⁶ “Zakladka kamennago khrama v chest' Sviatitelia i Chudotvortsia Nikolaia i Prepodobnoi materi nashei Marii Egipetskoï v poselke Eleninskom Akmolinskago uezda,” *OEV*, no.23 (1902):12-14. Settlers also toasted the health of Bishop Sergii.

Kazakh population the culture and faith of their new Russian neighbours.

Yet not everyone shared this outlook. Bishop Kiprian, the vicar bishop of Semipalatinsk and head of the Kazakh mission, consistently emphasized what he perceived as the negative effects of the presence of settlers in the region for the missions. A number of factors, argued Bishop Kiprian, contributed to the difficulties of the mission. Specifically, the bishop highlighted the low morals of the Russian population, the spread of sectarianism in the region, the influence of Islam, the insufficient number of missionaries, and the religious ignorance of the Kazakh-Muslims as explanatory factors in the difficulties of the Kazakh mission.⁸⁷ The settler issue became one of the key hindrances to the activities of the Kazakh mission. Three mission stations in particular, Eleninskii, Aleksandrovskaia, and Bukovskaia experienced difficulties related to the settlement of peasants in their vicinity. Many settlers arrived from Ukrainian provinces – or the “holy” provinces as Kiprian mockingly referred to them – and showed a surprising ignorance in their understanding of the faith. Such ignorance, the bishop postulated, helped in the spread of sectarianism. In light of these problems, it became quite difficult for missionaries to focus their attention on the Kazakhs.⁸⁸

Sharing religious buildings, however, also could create issues with property rights between the mission and the settlers. In 1912, the Holy Synod allocated 2000 roubles for repairing the church in the village of Preobrazhenskii, which was part of the Kazakh mission. Kiprian made it that even with the

⁸⁷ Kiprian, “Kratkii obzor polozheniia i deiatel’nosti Kirgizskoi missii Omskoi eparkhii za 1913,” *OEV*, no.11 (1914): 7. Bishop Kiprian (vicar Bishop of Semipalatinsk) raised his concern about the distraction of settlers to diocesan authorities. See IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.136, l.18.

⁸⁸ Arkhimandrit Kiprian, “O deiatel’nosti i sostoianii Kirghizskoi missii za 1908,” *OEV*, no.10 (1909): 40-41.

acceptance of money for the repair, the church would remain the property of the Kazakh mission. It was decided that state money could not be used for this purpose and the funds were reallocated to a different project. Kiprian asked in 1915 for this decision to be reconsidered. Settler communities relied on the church as well for their religious life and the church desperately needed to be repaired and perhaps even expanded. In the end, the Holy Synod provided the church with the necessary funds.⁸⁹

The Collusion of Secular and Religious Power

Conflicts between religious and secular officials frequently took place at all levels of power. Tensions arose over strategies for addressing peasant needs: over the consecration of churches, where priests should be assigned, and where churches should be built. Two issues stood at the centre of these conflicts: authority and strategy. Such conflicts illustrate how the institutionalization and professionalization of church-building on the Siberian frontier by the church and state had unintended consequences. As both sides claimed expertise and authority, this invariably led to conflicts, particularly in an environment where gathering accurate information was almost impossible.

Tensions arose between secular and church officials over strategies that should be pursued to nurture the development of settlers' religious life. For

⁸⁹ RGIA, f.391, op.6, d.543, ll.12-12ob. For more on the negative influence of settlers on the goals of the Kazakh mission, see Robert Geraci, "Going Abroad or Going to Russia? Orthodox Missionaries in the Kazakh Steppe, 1881-1917," in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, ed. Robert Geraci and Michael Khordarkovsky (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 274-310.

example, the Governor-General of the Steppe petitioned the Metropolitans of St. Petersburg, Moscow and Kiev to request that a hieromonk be allowed to travel through settlements in Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk provinces with the necessary tools to perform rites and conduct the liturgy in places that were separated from the parish church. The inspiration for such a request came in part from the local settler population, who complained to religious and secular officials that their children were growing up without baptism and that adults lived without confession, and communion.⁹⁰

The Omsk church consistory questioned the reality of this picture of neglected settlers living without the satisfaction of their basic religious needs. It argued that information collected by the deans showed that priests travelled regularly through these parishes, bringing with them portable Antimensia, which allowed religious ceremonies and rites to be held outside the church. In particular, priests travelled on feast days, serving parishioners and offering those who wished the opportunity to fulfill their Orthodox duty. The consistory also questioned the accuracy of the claim that children remained without baptism. Information collected by the deans supported the position that priests responded quickly to invitations from parishioners to perform such rites and even without any invitation, the priest travelled through his parish once or twice a month. Hence, if

⁹⁰ "Tsirkuliarno," *OEV*, no.14 (1904):1-2. Although this particular document did not mention marriage, others included this concern in their laundry list of complaints about settler lives. For example, one Holy Synod document described how since priests were unable to visit all the new villages added to their parishes and parishioners were too far to travel regularly to the parish church, religious rites were neglected. This state of affairs affected baptisms, burials and even weddings. Children lived months or years without baptism, burials took place without a church ceremony and civil cohabitation (*grazhdanskoe sozhitel'stvo*) replaced religious weddings. The church feared that the influence of inorodtsy, Muslims, Buddhists, and sectarians would be strengthened in Orthodox settlement where parishioners lived without churches. IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.122, ll. 1-1ob.

children remained unbaptized and parishioners lived without confession and communion, this could be explained by the negligence of parishioners and not by the unavailability of priests. Sometimes this negligence occurred in the form of wealthy peasants refusing to help poorer peasants in the process of inviting a priest, by helping with travel costs.⁹¹

Church building also showcased tensions between secular and religious officials. In the Orthodox tradition, churches must be consecrated before the building can be used for services. Typically, a bishop performed the ceremony, although priests could consecrate a church on behalf of the bishop. With the abundance of church-building taking place in Omsk diocese, the bishop could not perform all ceremonies; hence, priests were called on to fulfill this role. This duty provided priests with significant power in relations with both secular officials engaged in facilitating the church-building process and with parishioners. Priests could simply refuse to consecrate a church if they were unhappy with the structure of the church or with its décor. Numerous references to these types of scenarios appeared in reports of secular officials, who, not surprisingly, were unimpressed with how priests, and some diocesan officials, chose to wield this power. For instance, in two villages, Omsk diocesan officials requested that the pipe for the stove be altered before consecration could take place. Engineer S.S. Shilkin called their concerns “groundless” (*neosnovatel’nye*) and noted that Tobol’sk diocesan authorities did not express such concerns over the same design.⁹²

In other cases, like that of Konovalovskoe village in Akmolinsk province,

⁹¹ “Tsirkuliarno,” 2.

⁹² Shilkin, *Otchet inzhenera*, 4.

the priest delayed consecration until parishioners had improved the interior of the church. Local officials balked at what they perceived as blackmail, as priests made excessive and unnecessary demands upon their parishioners, which caused a heavy financial burden. Instead of devising a strategy of incremental improvements, some priests wanted everything, such as funds for icons and the iconostasis upfront, before the church could be consecrated. Secular officials expressed concerns that such demands would contribute to tensions in the relationship between priests and parishioners.⁹³ Although such incidents did not take place often, they illustrate how expectations related to the building process could lead to disagreements among participants.

Despite the involvement of the state in addressing the religious needs of settlers, competition between secular and religious needs still existed. Vostorgov noted a number of cases where secular officials intervened to discourage settlers from using their resources for religious matters. Vostorgov provided one example where parishioners had collected money for a bell and a secular leader had tried to convince them to use the money for an irrigation ditch. In another case, settlers collected one thousand roubles to build a prayer house and the leader refused to support such an undertaking. He also opened a beer shop (*pivnaia lavka*) in order to add to the income of the village.⁹⁴ While Vostorgov interpreted these acts as sacrilegious, these people probably viewed their actions as representing the best interests of their communities.

Working out who had the authority to decide between the needs of an

⁹³ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁴ Ioann Vostorgov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, tom.4 (Moscow: 1914), 491-492; RGIA, f.796, op.440, d.1274, ll.7-8.

individual community and the needs of the diocese created problems between secular and religious officials. The example of a dispute between the bishop of Omsk and the Governor of Semipalatinsk illustrates how religious matters could be transformed into a battle that pitted secular and religious authorities against each other, while reaching the ear of St. Petersburg in the process. On 22 June 1913, Bishop Andronik assigned the priest Mikhail Tolmachev to the parish of Znamenskoe in the province of Semipalatinsk. Father Mikhail, a native of Siberia, had been educated at Tomsk seminary, where he had completed the fourth class.⁹⁵ On 2 September, Tolmachev arrived in Omsk, having abandoned his parish. He appeared before Bishop Andronik to tell his woeful tale of pastoring in Znamenskoe.⁹⁶ According to the priest, the village lacked the necessary religious infrastructure for him to perform his duties: no church, prayer house, church utensils, antimimension, or liturgical books. Faced with the impossibility of performing the liturgy, Tolmachev appealed to parishioners to provide him with the necessary means to purchase these items. The response he received was simple: "The treasury must give us everything." The parishioners, according to the priest, proved just as uncooperative on the issue of clergy housing. Only after a prolonged argument did they agree to allow the priest and his young family to use a stone dwelling. Tolmachev reported to Bishop Andronik that this dwelling had a dirt floor and was damp, causing his family to become ill after only two weeks of living there. His daughter passed away from living under these conditions. Fearful of the impact of this environment on his family's health and in

⁹⁵ Ioann Goloshubin, *Spravochnaia kniga Omskoi eparkhii* (Omsk: Tipografiia Irtysh, 1914), 1205.

⁹⁶ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.212.

light of the general indifference of his parishioners to their priest, Tolmachev decided to leave the parish and requested a new appointment from the bishop.⁹⁷

What appeared to be a religious matter between the bishop, a priest and a parish escalated quickly into a war between the Governor of Semipalatinsk and the bishop over the boundaries of their authority. The governor intervened in this case, demanding that Bishop Andronik punish Tolmachev and send a replacement to the village. Bishop Andronik wholeheartedly agreed that Tolmachev abandoned his parish, which was a serious offence. However, he refused to remain silent on what he perceived to be interference on the part of the governor in the sacred relationship between a bishop and his clergy. The disciplining of clergymen was the duty of the bishop, not of secular officials. As he emphatically stated to the governor, only the person who ordains the clergy has the right to pass judgement. Andronik made clear to the governor that God entrusted him with the duty of caring for his clergymen, not the state.⁹⁸

Bishop Andronik then turned the tables and began to criticize the work of secular officials in the region. He rebuked the governor for supporting the opening of parishes in places that were too small to support a priest. These places could not afford the financial burden of having a priest, which in turn subjected the priest to hardships as he tried to provide for his family.⁹⁹ Priests, according to Bishop Andronik, were not angels: one could not expect them to be completely selfless.¹⁰⁰ Bishop Andronik made similar claims in a report to the Chief

⁹⁷ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.212.

⁹⁸ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.224.

⁹⁹ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.224ob.

¹⁰⁰ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.224ob.

Procurator, where he reproached the Semipalatinsk Resettlement Department for opening parishes in under-populated settlements.¹⁰¹ By making such a claim, Andronik questioned the capability of state officials to properly gather information and make educated decisions.

The governor decided to display the ability of his subordinates to gather information and to highlight the ignorance of the bishop. On the basis of information sent to the governor by the District Administration and a report from the sacristan of Znamenskoe village, the governor challenged Tolmachev's story. According to the governor, the parishioners claimed to have no idea about Tolmachev's discontentment. His daughter died not from substandard living conditions, but rather from diphtheria, which affected other children in the village.¹⁰² The sacristan reported that conditions in the village were fine and that the parish could support a priest. He indicated that it was true that the village did not have a church and therefore the liturgy must be performed in the school. Yet, parishioners still needed a priest and were willing to pay for rites.¹⁰³ By communicating such information to the bishop, the governor implied that the bishop did not know his own parishes and that even his own sacristans disagreed on his interpretation of the situation.

Dissatisfied with Bishop Andronik's continued intransigence on the situation, the Governor decided to pursue the matter in St. Petersburg, informing the Chief Procurator of the absence of a priest in Znamenskoe. In February 1914,

¹⁰¹ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.209ob. Notably, Bishop Andronik does not provide a good ratio for opening a parish, although he does mention that parishes should have at least 800 males.

¹⁰² RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.215.

¹⁰³ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.220.

Bishop Andronik received a letter from the Chief Procurator Vladimir Sabler requesting that he remedy the situation quickly. To this request, Sabler added his recognition of ongoing tensions between religious and secular officials as they worked together in settler parishes, and he requested that Bishop Andronik exert more effort in nurturing the relationship between religious and civil officials.¹⁰⁴ However, Sabler's hope for cordial relations between the groups proved naïve, as both religious and secular officials claimed their actions were in the best interests of the religious development of the region.

Bishop Andronik's response confirms such an assessment. He informed Sabler about the governor's abusive behaviour towards the vicar bishop of Semipalatinsk, Bishop Kiprian. At a meeting of the Resettlement Department, the governor had shouted and banged his hands on the table in a threatening manner towards Bishop Kiprian over the issue of assigning priests.¹⁰⁵ He contended that in the regions of Akmolinsk and Tiukalinsk, secular and religious officials were in complete agreement; hence, the problem rested solely in the laps of secular officials in Semipalatinsk, namely the governor. Recalling other incidents, Bishop Andronik contended that in Semipalatinsk settler parishes were not being opened where the need was most felt.¹⁰⁶ Bishop Andronik's frustration with such decisions inspired him to request maps from local deans of the parishes in their regions. Armed with this information, he hoped to bring order to the activities of the Resettlement Committee. These maps, he claimed, showed the uneven

¹⁰⁴ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.125.

¹⁰⁵ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.210.

¹⁰⁶ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.210ob.

distribution of parishes in the region.¹⁰⁷ Finally, Bishop Andronik took Sabler to task for lecturing him about maintaining friendly relations with secular officials and for not asking his opinion on the matter before insinuating that he did not understand how to behave with them.

Unfortunately, how this dispute ended is unknown. Nonetheless, this incident illustrates how seemingly simple matters could escalate into full-blown conflicts between secular and religious officials in Omsk diocese. With the direct involvement of different officials in the planning of church construction, it was only a matter of time before conflict arose between participants. This dispute between Bishop Andronik and the Governor of Semipalatinsk demonstrates how secular and religious officials approached the same mandate from different perspectives. For the governor, the aspirations of the people trumped diocesan concerns. The bishop, on the other hand, had to take into account the rule of the consistory over whether or not the village could support the priest and his obligations to both parishioners and priests. His sacred relationship with the priests of Omsk diocese had to be protected.

Yet, secular authorities could also show intransigence towards bureaucratic rules. For example, the village of Pushkarevskoe in the district of Tara had a revered icon of St. Nicholas the Miracle-worker in its local chapel. Reputed to have healing powers, this icon attracted pilgrims from over two hundred kilometres away, many of whom had illnesses. The local Old Believer population also revered it, which meant the local church would serve a missionary purpose in addition to serving the settlers in the area. In light of the positive influence of the

¹⁰⁷ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.211.

icon on the local population and the surrounding area, the church requested that the current dilapidated chapel be replaced. Bishop Andronik had already given permission for a new church to be built; however, the parishioners had already depleted their funds. Chief Procurator Sabler requested that the Resettlement Administration loan the village community (*selskoe obshchestvo*) 3000 roubles to complete the church.¹⁰⁸ The file reached G. Glinka's desk and, based on the information, he approved the loan in December 1913 to build a settler church in honour of St. Nicholas the Miracle-Worker.

Despite a strong religious justification for supporting a church in Pushkarevskoe, the circumstances of the village did not fit the criteria of the Resettlement Administration. Glinka was shocked to learn upon further scrutiny that the information provided to him might not be entirely accurate. Writing to the bishop of Omsk, Glinka asked Bishop Andronik to investigate the population composition of the village. Problematically, according to Glinka, the local inhabitants had portrayed their village as consisting mainly of settlers, when in fact only seven families were settlers, and within a thirty-kilometre radius no other settler villages existed. Glinka could not release funds for a village that would be categorized as belonging to an old resident parish. Glinka asked Bishop Andronik to recheck the information provided and re-file a claim if the opposite proved to be the case.¹⁰⁹

This interaction illustrates a number of important characteristics of the system created by the Resettlement Administration and the Holy Synod. First, the

¹⁰⁸ RGIA, f.391, op.5, d.23, l.254ob.

¹⁰⁹ RGIA, f.391, op.5, d.23, l.262ob.

head of the Resettlement Administration could deny funds requested by the bishop if that request did not meet the mandate of the fund. Also, under the mandate of the Resettlement Administration, the condition of religious life for the old residents was not considered a priority. Despite a clear religious need and support from the bishop, the village simply did not meet the requirements.

The relationship between secular and church officials did not always engender conflict. At times, both sides looked out for and supported each other. Officials involved in GUZZ drew the attention of diocesan officials to regions in transition that required attention, attempting to partner with them to find funds in St. Petersburg for new initiatives. In another case, the head of resettlement activities in Tomsk district requested that the Bishop petition the Holy Synod to pay for two travelling priests to the districts of Iulinskii and Kupinskii. In pleading his case, the official provided background information to the bishop about how resettlement had shaped his region. Some of the settlers had established villages among the old residents, making it possible for them to join existing parishes. Many, particularly in Iulinskii and Kupinskii, lived too far away from the church to have the opportunity to visit. Such a situation had already influenced the lives of these settlers and “regrettably is reflected in their morale, especially in the next generation.”¹¹⁰ This official proposed providing these travelling priests with easily-to-assemble portable churches. The budget for this proposal was significant. An estimated 8000 roubles would be needed to pay the salary of the priest and sacristan, provide travelling money, build a home for the priest and purchase the portable church. As two positions were needed, the total

¹¹⁰ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.122, l.24ob.

cost would be 16,000 roubles. This was not touted as a long-term solution, but rather as a temporary band-aid fix that would sustain settlers and help to encourage them to develop their own church life.¹¹¹

At times, local GUZZ officials also lobbied their superiors for better treatment of priests. N. Fon-Shtein reported to the Resettlement Administration about the dire conditions of Father Sergei Eldashev and Father Valentin Nikulichev in the far reaches of Akmolinsk province. These priests suffered from the poverty of their circumstances and their geographical location. Fr. Eldashev and his family lived in a damp jerry-built building, and a different disease afflicted each member of the family. Staple foods, such as potatoes and cabbage, cost exorbitant amounts.¹¹² Nikulichev and his family at one point received help from the Red Cross canteen. Parishioners from both parishes had only recently arrived from European Russia and were still in the process of struggling to establish their own lives. According to Fon-Shtein, many could not provide payment for rites or could only pay the priest a small token amount. Despite this, these priests still travelled to surrounding villages to perform rites, fulfilling their priestly duties. Fon-Shtein requested from the Resettlement Administration that these men be assigned three hundred roubles in assistance. He justified this amount by arguing that Eldashev and Nikulichev faced extreme difficulty in administering these parishes because of their geographical surroundings, in the southwestern corner of the province and the fact that they performed the duties of

¹¹¹ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.122, ll.22-22ob.

¹¹² RGIA, f.391, op.4, d.613, ll.40-41.

itinerant priests.¹¹³

Settlers and Competing Authority

Peasants demonstrated a savvy understanding of the bureaucratic web attached to the settler movement. Instead of naivety, a resolute belief in the correctness of their position characterized settler interaction with the church and state.¹¹⁴ They pursued every available path to find someone to approve or support their case in both secular and religious circles. In the archives, in petitions to the bishops of Omsk, governors, the Holy Synod, the Resettlement Administration, members of the royal family and, finally, to Vostorgov, peasants pleaded their case, often citing how others had failed to be responsive to their needs. From one perspective, this is not surprising. Peasants in European Russia frequently petitioned multiple people and skipped lower level authorities in their quest to obtain the result they desired. Hence, the existence of petitions to governors, members of the royal family and the Holy Synod about church-building is significant in the sense that peasants continued this tradition despite their new Siberian environment. Petitioning people like the head of the resettlement administration and an archpriest from Moscow shows an adaptability of the

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ During World War I, Emily Pyle argues that peasants adopted different strategies as they petitioned for state assistance. See Emily E. Pyle, "Peasant Strategies for Obtaining State Aid: a Study of Petitions During World War I," *Russian History* 24, no. 1–2 (1997): 41–64. Peasants in the late imperial period still idealized higher authorities in the tsarist regime and tended to skip lower level officials in their petitioning. See Sergei N. Tutolmin, "Russian Peasant Views of the Imperial Administration, 1914-Early 1917: Paradigm Shift or Preservation of Tradition?," *Russian Studies in History* 47, no. 4 (Spring 2009): 53–93. For a treatment of the strategies employed by peasants, see Andrew M. Verner, "Discursive Strategies in the 1905 Revolution: Peasant Petitions from Vladimir Province," *Russian Review* 54 (January 1995): 65–90.

peasants to finding new sources of power within the bureaucratic structure. Although too few petitions exist to generalize about how widespread this knowledge was in reality, their existence points to an engagement with the bureaucratic structure and a belief that even secular officials cared about the religious life of settlers. This, perhaps, is one of the more important conclusions that can be drawn – that for settlers, beyond the local level, the difference between secular and religious officials did not exist in their minds. Settlers appear unaware of the difference between religious and secular spheres and instead, they understand their religious needs as a topic of concern to all.

In certain cases, settlers had through their own means built a church and homes for the clergy, but they remained without a priest. Such situations could continue for years without being resolved. For example, in 1911 the village of Pokrovskoe in the district of Tiukalinsk was still waiting for a priest nearly ten years after the consecration of its church. These settlers had arrived in Siberia in 1892 and quickly began preparing for a church. In their petition to Empress Mariia Feodorovna, the settlers emphasized that they had built the church with God's help, but without any aid from the state. Yet, the house for the priest, built lovingly by the community, stood vacant. As a result, they had to travel elsewhere to practise their faith: "We Orthodox thirsting to fulfil the duty of the Orthodox faith, because of the absence of a priest in our church...we must go to another church...located twelve kilometres away."¹¹⁵ The act of petitioning the Empress indicates that the frustration of the community had reached a breaking point with local diocesan officials. As only the consistory had the authority to assign a priest

¹¹⁵ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1220, l.63ob.

to their parish, they sought help from a benefactor who could wield power over diocesan officials.

The case of the village of Antonievskoe in Kokchetav district illustrates how readily and sincerely peasants looked toward secular officials to rectify a perceived wrong that had been committed against their community. Pavel Kirichenko, the village elder, petitioned G. Glinka of the Resettlement Administration to intervene during a dispute with the Bishop Sil'vestr. The petition in 1916 began by paying tribute to Glinka's work in the region: "We know that the head of the Administration, G. Glinka, is personally concerned about the organization of parishes and clergy..."¹¹⁶ While this comment is clearly an attempt at flattering Glinka, it in fact accurately described the hands-on approach of Glinka and showed awareness on the part of the peasants of Glinka's role in helping neighbouring villages. According to Kirichenko, a grave situation had arisen in his village of Antonievskoe, which created the necessity for this petition. Two years earlier, Bishop Andronik had given permission for their parish to be opened, on the condition that they build homes for the clergy. The parishioners fulfilled that requirement, paying for the two structures themselves. The clergymen took up their posts in August 1914, but then Bishop Sil'vestr had decided to close their parish. Further enraging parishioners, religious authorities took away the antimimension, which Kirichenko claimed had been acquired by the village almost ten years prior, when the village only had a prayer house. Without it, services could no longer be held in the church. Kirichenko noted that this act

¹¹⁶ RGIA, f.391 op.6, d.542, l.60.

had given rise to rumours through the region that all antimensia in prayer houses were being collected in the steppe region.¹¹⁷

Kirichenko attempted to convey to Glinka the sensitive atmosphere that prevailed during this time of war and how parishioners viewed the Bishop as insensitive to their needs. In a village of over one thousand people, this act had created a mood of dissatisfaction (*nedovol'stvo*) among parishioners, who could not understand why diocesan authorities would close a church during wartime. Kirichenko informed Glinka that a representative had travelled twice to Omsk attempting to rectify the situation, without any success.¹¹⁸ Kirichenko's petition displays a mixture of anger, desperation and disbelief at the actions of the bishop.

Instead of ignoring or passing on the complaint, secular officials within the Resettlement Administration followed up on Kirichenko's petitions. They contacted the Bishop for an explanation of the circumstance that led to the current situation. Bishop Sil'vestr responded that the priest assigned to Antonievskoe had petitioned diocesan authorities asking to be transferred to another parish. The priest complained that parishioners were too poor to sustain a parish. Bishop Sil'vestr had granted the priest's request and closed the parish, adding Antonievskoe to a neighbouring parish, eight kilometres away. The local dean supported this change, and offered the information that the clergy in Antonievskoe complained that he did not receive his proper salary.¹¹⁹ Instead of redirecting Kirichenko to Bishop Sil'vestr, the Resettlement Administration responded

¹¹⁷ RGIA, f.391, op.6, d.542, l.60ob.

¹¹⁸ RGIA, f.391, op.6, d.542, l.61. Kirichenko also petitioned Prime Minister Boris Stürmer, relating the story of the parish closure. RGIA, See RGIA, f.796, op.198, 2ot., 2st., d.21, ll.5-6ob.

¹¹⁹ RGIA, f.391, op.6, d.542, l.65; RGIA, f.796, op.198, 2ot., 2 st., d.21, ll.3-3ob.

directly itself, informing Kirichenko that the decision to close the parish had been undertaken because of the poverty of the village and that the Resettlement Administration could not challenge the decision of the bishop for this reason.¹²⁰ While Kirichenko did receive the news he desired, this exchange demonstrates the willingness of settlers to seek “justice” for religious matters from secular officials and the commitment of secular officials to investigate seriously their claims.

Conclusion

Settlers arrived in Siberia with the expectation that they would have access to the same religious life as they left in their homeland. These settlers looked to secular and religious officials to support them in these efforts. Both the church and state agreed that building parishes in Omsk diocese constituted an important element of colonization and deserved to be supported. In particular, the prospect of losing the youth stirred settlers, the church and the state to act. While building parishes was the preferable form of support for religious life, the realities of the frontier forced the discussion of alternative ways to create opportunities for religious participation. Not all, however, eagerly accepted compromises on the frontiers. Conflict frequently arose between diocesan officials, tsarist representatives and settlers over the proper way to address the religious petitions of settlers. These conflicts demonstrate how the system created in St. Petersburg worked on the ground.

¹²⁰ RGIA, f.391, op.6, d.542, l.67.

Chapter 5: The Difficulties of Living and Dying next to Strangers

On 30 August 1914 Andrei Semenovich Soltanovskii died from the strain of being a priest in Siberia. While this was not his official cause of death, Soltanovskii's obituary presented his tenure as a priest in a new settler parish as a formidable experience. Shepherding a parish in this newly colonized territory, where his seven thousand parishioners lived in scattered villages over a span of fifty kilometres, was no easy task for this son of a deacon, who was born across the empire in Bessarabia. As Soltanovskii's homeland had overlooked his talents, in 1900, he joined the 'Great Siberian Migration' and travelled to "far away and cold Siberia" where he had to adapt to "completely new conditions of life and work, with new people."¹ Such new conditions of life translated into hardships for Soltanovskii, whose new parish had no home for his family, which was a standard requirement for Russian parish priests. Soltanovskii struggled to care for this sprawling parish; he regularly rushed from village to village over rough terrain in severe weather conditions to tend to the needs of his parishioners. Soltanovskii's obituary described how at one point he even waded through water with his sacred equipment held above his head in order to bless his parishioners' food, thereby allowing them to break the fast on Easter and greet the risen Christ properly.² Difficulties related to weather, distance and inadequate roads in Siberia could hardly have surprised Soltanovskii; what might have surprised him was the

¹ Ioann Savel'ev, "Sviashchennik Andrei Soltanovskii (nekrolog)," *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti (OEV)*, no.20 (1914): 42.

² Ibid.

necessity of nurturing a spirit of religious unity among Russian Orthodox settlers. As his eulogist described, Soltanovskii's parishioners arrived "from different places in immense mother Russia (*matushka Rossiia*) with different habits, customs, and inclinations, quarrelled sharply with each other often because of difference in religious rites of North and South."³ As various versions of Orthodoxy collided in his parish, Soltanovskii faced the staggering challenge of restoring order to the religious life of his parishioners in their new Siberian homeland.

Soltanovskii's obituary unintentionally raises a variety of themes related to the role of religious belief during the expansion of a modernizing empire and the relationship between religious customs and community building on the frontier. Colonization brought people together from various backgrounds and locations; these people suddenly became neighbours, fellow villagers and fellow parishioners. Russian Orthodoxy ostensibly provided common ground to this motley crew, as the majority of migrants to Siberia identified with this faith. Yet, from the outset, divisions appeared in these settlements. Neighbours often spoke different dialects of Russian and sometimes even different languages altogether; they wore the clothing and followed the customs, both religious and secular, of their home communities in European Russia. Such outward displays of differences created implacable hostility between peasants, which even their shared Orthodox identity could not overcome.⁴

³ Ibid., 43.

⁴ States across Europe had to address local and regional differences as they attempted to modernize. See Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

Recent research into the role of faith during colonization on the frontier during the nineteenth century has illustrated the complexity and richness of Christian traditions in settler communities.⁵ These studies draw our attention from a traditional focus on the missionary activities of Christians among indigenous populations to the expectations and challenges that settlement posed for the development of Christian communities among migrants. In Siberia, unexpectedly, religious diversity within the Orthodox faith created significant challenges for settlement. By exploring the dimensions of religious diversity in rural parishes in Omsk diocese during the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, I will show how priests and parishioners struggled with being surrounded by ‘strangers’ in their own communities. While these ‘strangers’ shared many similar customs and traditions, slight differences existed, which many settlers refused to overlook. For settlers, re-establishing the life they left behind in European Russia proved to be one of their top priorities. They showed an aversion to making concessions and altering the traditions practised in their homelands. Such a commitment illustrates both the depth of their devotion to these traditions and how settlers understood their practices to constitute the right way of practising the Orthodox faith and organizing daily life. As both priests and parishioners tried to deepen their roots in their adoptive homeland, they had to negotiate their way through these conflicts. For priests, the issue of how to break down these localized identities and build a sense of community without isolating the settlers and without succumbing to all

⁵ Examples of this literature include: Hilary Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c.1801-1908* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Anne Butler, *Across God's Frontiers: Catholic Sisters in the American West, 1850-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012) and Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010).

of their demands took on great importance. For settlers defending their customs while finding a way to live in relative harmony with their neighbours and the parish priest proved essential, but difficult.

As a heavily ritualized faith, Russian Orthodoxy required a tremendous amount of religious infrastructure to be practised properly: consecrated churches and access to priests were viewed as vital for Orthodox parishioners. Clergymen performed an essential role as liturgical and many extra-liturgical rituals required their participation. The general contours of religious life and ceremony were replicated across the empire: the liturgy, the sacraments, veneration of icons, processions, feasts and the church stood at the heart of these religious traditions. Yet, as a faith practised in a predominantly rural country where the population was restricted in its mobility, Russian Orthodox rituals acquired embellishments and ornamentation in the local settings.⁶ Peasants were tied physically to the village of their ancestors because of the organizational structure of the village: the commune.⁷ This continuity created localized identities that influenced the development of religious rituals. The importation of these popular religious practices to the Siberian frontier created dilemmas for rebuilding community life; the difficulty of living and dying next to strangers who insisted on following their local customs, whether they be religious or not, intensified disagreements and tensions between villagers and between villagers and their parish priests.

Priests tending to Siberian parishes filled with settlers experienced

⁶ In her discussion of the celebration of local feasts, Vera Shevzov notes that feasts acquired a local flavour, even though commonality existed across parishes. See Vera Shevzov, *Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 144.

⁷ For more on the history of the common, see David Moon, *The Russian Peasantry, 1600-1930: The World the Peasants Made* (New York: Longman, 1999), 199–236.

firsthand the cultural diversity of the Slavic population that called the Russian empire home. Yet, Russian parishioners also experienced the diversity of Russia's clerical estate. Colonization offered priests from all over the Russian empire, like Soltanovskii, an opportunity to relocate to Siberia and find a position in one of the many newly created parishes. Although these men all chose the same calling, they brought different backgrounds and experiences to Siberia. Customs that appeared normal to a priest raised in Poltava province might seem strange, or even abhorrent, to a priest born and raised in Siberia.

The intensity of these conflicts caused great fears for priests. Many became convinced that if these conflicts over religious customs were allowed to continue, settlers would lose their faith in such a hostile environment. As one priest summarized:

Having become accustomed from their birthplace to well-known customs, they cannot get used to new ones. They consider these new customs as something less holy and less worthy of veneration than their native practices. And here begins the discord over the religious customs. Settlers from twenty to twenty-five different provinces often move to the same village in Siberia. They all have different customs and religious rites, which sometimes seem to others not only ridiculous, but also reprehensible. On the basis of these disputes begins mutual ridicule and condemnation, which results in terrible disorder. Both sides feel some sort of unpleasant, bitter aftertaste in their souls and annoyance that what earlier seemed so pure and perfect to them is now condemned and ridiculed. Hence they begin to distance themselves from their customs, to feel embarrassed and ashamed of them. And so, after living from year to year away from the church, people begin gradually to get out of the habit of their old life and little by little lose their religious customs, until finally, after 5-6 years, they grow somewhat indifferent, or "grow uncivilized" in their religious life.⁸

This disenchantment with faith was caused not by the rationalization of religious

⁸ Pantleimon Papshev, "Usloviia, blagopriiatstvuiushchiia sektantskoi propagande," *OEV*, no.29 (1916):19.

beliefs, but through the social consequences of maintaining the peculiarities of their religious practice. The communal aspect of faith bound parishioners together through a tapestry of liturgical and extra-liturgical practices. Mockery by their own community – even if it was newly formed – constituted a bitter pill for peasants to swallow. Such mockery caused feelings of shame for peasants, who rather suddenly had to face accusations that their traditional way of practising the Orthodox faith constituted the wrong way. Priests argued that they performed an essential role in saving the faith of settlers under these conditions. Only under the leadership of the parish priest could settler-peasants be reassured in their faith and joined to their neighbours as Orthodox believers.⁹

Not all settlers meekly submitted to the judgement of others. Local priests told stories of peasants stubbornly clinging to the traditions of their home community in European Russia, in spite of criticism from the clergy and other settlers. In all likelihood, the strength of factions within the community contributed to whether or not individuals could hold tenaciously to the religious customs of their homelands. Those who settled in communities with a sizable population from the same region stood a better chance of protecting their religious customs.

The study of popular religious practices and the cultural meanings attached to religious beliefs in modern Europe has developed significantly over the past twenty years. These studies have taken various approaches to the study of religion, including looking at various forms of religious beliefs and practices, the continued significance of popular belief in spite of modernization, regional

⁹ Ibid.

differences in religiosity and the ‘feminization of religion.’¹⁰ According to Caroline Ford, many of these studies have called into question the idea that “religious belief... represent[s] a unified ‘cultural system’ of coherent, mutually reinforcing symbols promoted by ecclesiastical institutions.” Instead, Ford argues, “popular beliefs and practices were multivalent and assumed conflicting and sometimes contested meanings. They were appropriated and articulated in different ways in varying social contexts.”¹¹ My work explores the heterogeneity in the performance of religious practices in the context of colonization, a topic that is understudied. Peasant-settlers assigned similar meanings to their religious practices, but performed them in different ways. Such differences in performance revealed the fault lines of newly formed communities, as Russian Orthodoxy reinforced divisions within the community instead of bridging the divide.

Despite the rich histories the study of popular religious practices has produced, the criticism remains that these types of studies tend to create an artificial dichotomy between official and popular religion. To counter this trend, David Hall proposes the study of “lived religion.” One reason to break down this boundary between official and popular religion, according to Hall, is the participation of priests in the practice of rituals and in sustaining beliefs outside the realm of formal theology. As priests had to deal directly with parishioners, a flexible approach to theology and the practice of rituals could help to strengthen or expand communities.¹² Yet, priests not only participated in negotiating the

¹⁰ Caroline Ford, “Religion and Popular Culture in Modern Europe,” *The Journal of Modern History* 65, no.1 (1993): 156.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹² David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward A History of Practice* (Princeton:

boundaries between official and unofficial rituals; they also performed an essential role in helping to create the local culture of religious practice. Priests in Omsk diocese encountered all sorts of variations or inventions of Orthodox rituals that the peasants demanded be practised. As peasants demanded the participation of priests in these practices, it is clear that priests in European Russia performed such rituals, either to placate their parishioners or because the priests themselves shared these beliefs. In Siberia, when the priest felt hesitant about performing a particular ritual, the decision about whether or not to follow the lead of the peasants depended on numerous factors, from the personalities of the priests and the relationship between parishioners and priests, to the outrageousness of the demand and competing definitions of appropriate Orthodox practice among parishioners.

The relationship between priests and parishioners was central to the spiritual life of Russian Orthodox believers and to the atmosphere of the village. As scholars like Chris Chulos have shown, tension among clergy and parishioners and factions within parishes were common in the empire.¹³ In fact, disagreements and factions were a normal part of daily life in parishes and, as Vera Shevzov and Chulos have argued, made parishes into negotiated spaces. Part of the conflict derived from the dual role of the rural priest within the parish, as he was simultaneously, to use Shevzov's characterization, "the main liturgical celebrant and bishop's representative...[and] part of a local rural community that had its

Princeton University Press, 1997), ix.

¹³ Chris Chulos, *Converging Worlds: Religion and Community in Peasant Russia, 1861-1917* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 60.

own order, customs, and rules for solving disputes and organizing activities.”¹⁴

While Siberian parishes shared some characteristics with their European Russian counterparts, the Siberian context altered how the relationship between parishioners and priests developed. Instead of dealing with a relatively cohesive set of customs, Siberian priests had to respond to multiple versions based on the local practices of settlers in their native provinces, many of which were foreign to the priest. Unlike Chulos’ example of parishes in Voronezh diocese where factions developed around support for or against the priest, factions in Siberia tended to be based on the province of origin of the settlers.¹⁵

Scholarship on Russian Orthodoxy has tended to focus on examples of popular culture where peasants acted outside of the church structure. For example, Christine Worobec’s evocative presentation of Russian and Ukrainian death rituals reveals that ritual acts associated with death in villages often took place away from the eyes of the priest. Peasants viewed these practices as Orthodox and, as Worobec argues they “believed themselves to be practitioners of Orthodoxy, drawing upon Christian symbols and magical rites to guard against the vagaries of everyday life”; yet, these rituals required the participation only of other parishioners and not the involvement of the priest.¹⁶ In contrast, this chapter will focus primarily on areas of religious life where priests and parishioners interacted and negotiated the meaning of sacredness in their villages and parishes.

Recent literature has emphasized the role of Russian Orthodoxy in

¹⁴ Shevzov, 88-89.

¹⁵ Chulos, 62.

¹⁶ Christine Worobec, “Death Ritual among Russian and Ukrainian Peasants: Linkages Between the Living and the Dead,” in *Letters from Heaven: Popular Religion in Russia and Ukraine*, eds. John-Paul Himka and Andriy Zayarnyuk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 16.

creating a sense of community in imperial Russia, which was not separated by *soslovie* or estate divisions. As Shevzov writes,

In order accurately to study community in Orthodoxy, the lines of inquiry must be drawn so as to include the voices and actions of “common folk” and “elite” alike who, as believers, often thought about and expressed their collective Orthodox identity in similar ways.¹⁷

Robert Greene also presents this picture of a faith bonding people together from different social circumstances in their veneration of saints; however, in contrast to Shevzov, he argues that local saints provided the Orthodox elite and laity with a localized identity. On the one hand, this is an accurate portrayal of the Orthodox faith. Many elements of Orthodox practice and faith transcended boundaries between the rural and urban; elite and commoners; and clergy and laity. Veneration of icons, building of churches, and petitions for the sanctification of saints were not limited to one group. Nonetheless, in addition to events where Orthodoxy transcended these boundaries, there were also moments where Orthodoxy acted as a hindrance to the development of a common identity, not only between *sosloviia*, but also within them. Therefore, the experiences of settlers during colonization raised questions about the unifying influence of Orthodoxy. Gregory Freeze was one of the first scholars to recognize the full diversity of Russian Orthodox belief and the importance of localized popular practice to the formation of Russian Orthodox identity for rural communities:

From the mid-nineteenth century, as parish clergy began to compile “historical-statistical descriptions” of their parishes and professional ethnographers began to map out this complex world of popular religious behaviour, the result was a mind-boggling kaleidoscope of what was

¹⁷ Shevzov, 10.

ostensibly a common faith and common ritual.¹⁸

While Freeze describes the reaction of the institutional church to this diversity, he does not explore what these differences actually were or how such differences shaped the contours of village life. This chapter will illuminate the religious rituals and rites that caused the most difficulties for building community solidarity among settlers and their neighbours.

A significant source for this chapter is Fr. Ioann Goloshubin's "From the Impressions of a Village Priest," which was published as a series over several issues in 1911 of the diocesan journal, *Omsk Diocesan News (Omskie Eparkhial'nye Vedomosti)*. Goloshubin was a native of Siberia, a graduate from Tobol'sk seminary and had been a priest since 1888. With the creation of Omsk diocese in 1895, Goloshubin found his parish reassigned to the new diocese from the diocese of Tobol'sk. Goloshubin belonged to a late nineteenth century trend of local historian priests in the Russian empire – men who viewed themselves as experts and keepers of local customs and knowledge.¹⁹ A frequent contributor to regional newspapers and *Omsk Diocesan News*, Goloshubin also compiled a reference book of the diocese that spanned over a thousand pages, and which offered detailed descriptions of parishes. "From the Impressions of a Village Priest," in which Goloshubin described in detail his experiences as a priest in a parish undergoing colonization, provides an intimate description of the trials and

¹⁸ Gregory Freeze, "Institutionalizing Piety: The Church and Popular Religion, 1750-1850," in *Imperial Russia New Histories for the Empire*, ed. Jane Burbank and David L Ransel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 215.

¹⁹ See V. A. Berdinskikh, "The Parish Clergy and the Development of Local History in Nineteenth-Century Russia," *Russian Studies in History* 44, no. 4 (Spring 2006): 9–18. For another example of Omsk diocesan priests engaging in writing local histories, see Boris Gerasimov, *Ssyl'nye Poliaki v Semipalatinskoi Oblasti*, (1918).

tribulations of shepherding a parish community representing the diversity of Orthodox practice in the empire. The makeup of Goloshubin's parish constitutes an important factor, which coloured his experiences. His parish had a substantial population of Ukrainian parishioners: a trait that Goloshubin found greatly interesting.

Cracks in Community Life on the Frontier

Omsk clergymen wrote of disagreements among *Sibiriaki* and settlers and between settlers from various regions across the empire. Yet, the issue of Ukrainian difference drew the most attention from clergymen in the region. Ukrainian parishioners appeared regularly in clerical recollections in *Omsk Diocesan News* as these priests contemplated the curious and many times troubling elements of religiosity witnessed among these peasants. The question of why Omsk clergy emphasized Ukrainian religious difference despite acknowledging evidence of cultural clashes among Ukrainians themselves and among settlers of Russian origin must be raised. A number of factors contributed to the frequent references to Ukrainians in the context of religious difference.²⁰ First, the large number of Ukrainian settlers in Omsk diocese ensured that many priests came into contact with peasants from Ukrainian-speaking provinces, which forced clergymen to address the difference that they had to confront on a daily basis. These clergymen understood the religious development of Ukrainian peasants as being affected by the religious context of their homeland. In the late

²⁰ The primary term used in these sources to refer to Ukrainians is 'Little Russians' (*malorossy*).

nineteenth century, the issue of the Uniate Church – also known as the Eastern Catholic Church – deeply concerned the Russian Orthodox Church. The Uniate Church, which followed Catholic doctrine while performing Orthodox rites, was created at the end of the sixteenth century. Priests in Siberia were aware of this issue and watched peasants from Ukrainian provinces extra closely for any sign of Catholicism in their religious rituals.²¹

In addition to keeping a watchful eye for Catholic influence, priests faced many challenges as they attempted to create harmony in parish life. Several factors worked against their achievement of this goal in a short period of time. Customs and language divided parishioners from each other and divided parishioners from their priest. As the priest Nikolai Venetskii observed, the settlement of Prirechnii had representatives of twelve different provinces who spoke twelve Russian dialects.²² Differences between the Ukrainian and Russian languages exacerbated this problem. Venetskii gave an example of a peasant from Poltava trying to make a request from her neighbour from Olonetsk province (in the Far North) in Ukrainian. Her strange phraseology, according to Venetskii, elicited a look from Olonetsk neighbour that would cause anyone to laugh. Even though a peasant from Olonetsk shared many traits in common with her neighbour, such as her peasant-farmer heritage and membership in the Russian Orthodox Church, these commonalities were not enough to produce basic

²¹ For a religious history of the western borderlands, see Barbara Skinner, *The Western Front of the Eastern Church: Uniate and Orthodox Conflict in 18th-century Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009). For a discussion on the concern of the Orthodox Church with the Uniate issue in the late nineteenth century, see A. Iu. Polunov, "The Religious Department and the Uniate Question, 1881-1894," *Russian Studies in History* 39, no. 4 (Spring 2001): 77-85.

²² Nikolai Venetskii, "Po prikhotu," *OEI*, no.17 (1903): 25.

understanding, let alone the bonds of friendship. Hearing unrecognizable words and strange accents did not foster, at least initially, trust between neighbours or fellow villagers. Venetskii, who travelled through a number of villages of the region, recalled how after hearing him speak Ukrainian, one peasant woman and her mother from Poltava province opened up to him about the difficulties of settlement.²³ Her reaction shows the immediate intimacy that a common language created. Language did not cause insurmountable divisions between people in Siberia; yet it played a significant role in determining the initial level of intimacy between neighbours and between parishioners and priests.

Fr. Ioann Vostorgov, the Moscow archpriest, also commented on the tension that diversity in language and customs created in the community. Local communities split into factions and then avoided each other. When interaction did occur, quarrels (*ssory*) would break out as they laughed at the other's pronunciation of Russian words and ridiculed the customs of their neighbours. Vostorgov recalled one village in Tomsk province where Russian peasants from Voronezh engaged in a battle with Belarusian peasants from Vitebsk, writing about how they "spoiled each other's lives through arguments and mockeries because of their pronunciation of Russian words and because of difference of church customs." In another example from his trip, a Mordvinian family endured the jeers of their Russian neighbours because of the clothes they wore and their accented Russian.²⁴ Such hostility could not be contained to social relations

²³ They also discovered that they had a common acquaintance in the Kiev Pechersk Lavra. Nikolai Venetskii, "Po prikhodu," *OEV*, no.16 (1903): 22.

²⁴ Ioann Vostorgov, *Dobroe slovo pereselentsy* (Moscow, 1909), 19. Vostorgov also referred to this problem in another new settler village. See RGIA, f.796, op.440, d.1274, ll.6-7.

beyond the church walls; it inevitably created the foundation for divisions which affected all aspects of life in the village.

State officials also commented on the problems caused by the diversity of Orthodox practices for settlements in Siberia. In his 1897 report, the Governor of Akmolinsk complained that the settlers showed little solidarity with each other as the differences in their customs, beliefs, and farming practices led to disagreements in local communities. Vostorgov and the governor believed that these differences would be overcome with time. The governor argued that engaging local children in formal education was crucial to developing common values among the next generation. School attendance would ensure that children would learn and grow together, thereby negating the differences of their parents.²⁵ Vostorgov cited the examples of the Caucasus and the Volga as previous examples of Russian resettlement where after ten to twenty years of living and worshipping together such differences no longer matter: settlers in these regions spoke like each other and practised the same Orthodox customs and rituals. According to Vostorgov, the priest was at the heart of this process, as he helped to establish unity in their church practices.²⁶

Such hopes for a future solution hardly offered comfort in settler communities where peasants commented on differences between themselves and their neighbours. Tikhon Bobylev, a peasant living in the Kulundinsk district of Tomsk province, wrote about his experiences as a settler in Siberia in a letter to *the Village Herald (Sel'skii Vestnik)*. He began his letter by identifying himself:

²⁵ RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.1, l.155ob.

²⁶ Vostorgov, *Dobroe*, 20.

“Although I live in Siberia, I am not a *Sibiriak*.” Bobylev journeyed to Siberia from western Russia after hearing a scout extoll the richness of the land; however, he did not find a Garden of Eden. His description of religious life speaks to Bobylev’s disappointment in his new homeland. The neglected and dilapidated churches in his region hardly invoked the glory of God, particularly his own parish church, with its faded icons and a cross which had been knocked down by the wind. Bobylev wrote of the difficulties encountered when attempts were made to raise funds from parishioners to repair these churches: settlers could not contribute out of poverty (*bednost*) and *Sibiriaki*, despite being wealthy, chose not to contribute out of unwillingness (*nezhelanie*).²⁷ Such a characterization illustrates that a firm division existed between settlers and *Sibiriaki* despite their shared “Russian” and Orthodox heritage. *Sibiriaki* viewed settlers as a nuisance and disruption to the cultural and economic state of their communities and settlers characterized *Sibiriaki* as miserly, inhospitable, and ignorant of how village life should be properly organized.

Arguments also occurred among settlers over social, economic, and cultural customs. In a letter to the *Village Herald*, a peasant from Akmolinsk province, Fedor Korban, wrote, “Our main trouble is that the population is from twenty-three provinces and we cannot ‘sing in union’ with each other; hence, disorders in community affairs”²⁸ Villages across Omsk diocese experienced similar disruptions as settlers began building homes, clearing land and establishing relations with their neighbours. Korban does not specify the areas in

²⁷ Tikhon Bobylev, “Iz Kulundinskoi volosti,” *Sel’skii Vestnik*, no. 7 (1900): 118.

²⁸ Fedor Korban, “Iz Makinskago, Kokchetovskago uezda, Akmolinskoi oblasti,” *Sel’skii Vestnik*, no.39 (1904):780.

which villagers refused to act in union. Nonetheless, other sources indicated that differences in both secular and spiritual customs caused tensions between settlers – everything from farming techniques to religious rituals ignited disputes among settlers.

Attitudes towards work and the celebration of religious holidays illustrate how religion could cause problems in settler communities. Such difference in religious practices could be interpreted as the cause of divine displeasure and punishment. A clerk from Akmolinsk province, Gerasim Tsybenko, complained how “*the Moskal*”²⁹ from Samara province in his village very often neglected to observe, during the summer, restrictions on working during holy holidays and Sundays. Tsybenko, who identified himself as part of “*the Khokhol*”³⁰ minority from the Don district, viewed this and other customs of “*the Moskal*” as impermissible and sinful behaviour, according to the laws of God. In his eyes, such transgressions angered God, who responded by punishing the villagers. He interpreted the poor harvest recently experienced in Akmolinsk province as judgement for these sins.³¹ Tragedies like poor harvests affected everyone in the community, not just those who acted in sinful ways. In a community where divisions were already strong, as illustrated by Tsybenko’s use of the terms *Moskal* and *Khokhol*, tensions between groups could only worsen under conditions of community crises. Unfortunately, crises due to bad weather and poor harvest occurred frequently in Siberia and the desire to explain these events caused villagers to blame each other’s different customs.

²⁹ *Moskal* is Ukrainian slang for a Muscovite or a Great Russian.

³⁰ *Khokhol* is Russian slang for a Ukrainian.

³¹ Gerasim Tsybenko, “Iz Kiiminskoi volost’,” *Sel’skii Vestnik*, no.47 (1900): 84-85.

Even events traditionally reaffirming community identity in European Russia could showcase divisions within the community. For example, in European Russia, village feasts with their accompanying processions (*krestnyi khod*) offered a space for local residents to explore a communal identity. In addition to celebrations for Christmas and Easter, each locality had its own schedule of processions, where the priest blessed wells or fields, particularly after droughts or bad harvests.³² During these events, parishioners would carry icons, which would be incorporated into the service. At the blessing of the fields, the clergy would visit the various fields of the village and conduct a prayer service.³³ Shevzov presents feasts and processions as times when parishioners gathered for the common purpose of worship and of commemorating events that had meaning for them as a community. The addition of these events to the local calendar ensured that the next generation would also remember historical events in the community. In Siberia, such events sometimes revealed cracks in the community, as different factions attempted to hijack the proceedings to satisfy their own religious proclivities. During a procession in the village of Mikhailovskoe, the local priest witnessed the disruption caused by different factions in the village as the procession unfolded. One group demanded that the icon be brought down a certain street, while another insisted on a different street. In the end, one group stood victorious while the other grumbled, swore, and finally simply left the event and went home.³⁴ Such a disturbance would hardly be readily forgotten – or forgiven – by both sides. In all likelihood, those involved relived the conflict in

³² Shevzov, 145.

³³ Ibid., 147.

³⁴ Ioann Goloshubin, "Iz vpechatlenii sel'skago sviashchennika," *OEV*, no.15 (1911): 31.

the subsequent days and instead of binding the community together, this procession only served to reinforce its divisions.

In addition to ceremonies associated with processions, other extra-liturgical and liturgical rituals performed an important role in nurturing the religious beliefs of the peasantry; yet they also illustrated the complexities created by peasants importing their local religious practices to Siberia. Where different approaches existed, the priest had the choice of attempting to re-educate his parishioners or following their lead in how the event should unfold. Since most priests did not grow up in the same geographical locations as their parishioners, demands made for the performance of “strange customs” by parishioners startled the clergy. Goloshubin wrote of what he labelled as the absurd and inexplicable customs that accompanied settlers to Siberia, identifying Ukrainians from Chernigov and Poltava as the worst offenders in this regard, with settlers from Riazan and Samara making startling requests less often. In this context, the clergy struggled with how to impose uniformity in Orthodox practice without offending parishioners.

Goloshubin recalled how his first visit to his parishioners for the celebration of the Theophany (Epiphany) turned into a lesson on celebrating the holiday like “they do in Russia.” Along with a sacristan, he walked from house to house singing hymns, sprinkling icons with holy water, and making the sign of the cross. At one particular house, the peasant asked him, “*Batiushka* (Father), why didn’t you draw us a sausage (*kolbasa*)?” Goloshubin, understandably confused, asked, “What sausage?” To which the peasant responded in Ukrainian, “The same

as this is drawn at home in Russia”(*Takuiu zhe, iakuiu u nas v Rossii pisuiut*). Peasants had made this request several times that day. Goloshubin, who himself was a native of Siberia and had no idea what it meant “to draw a sausage,” inquired with a fairly prominent settler from Chernigov, who had recently married the widow of a priest. The settler explained that the peasants wanted the sacristan to draw a cross on the wall and write Jesus Christ at the top of the cross, a spear and sponge on the sides and draws the shape of Calvary at the bottom. The sacristan then should turn to the peasant and say, “And this here is your sausage.” For his work, the peasant typically paid the sacristan either 2-3 kopeks or a sausage.³⁵ Goloshubin, an experienced priest, trained at Tobol’sk seminary found himself re-educated on how to celebrate the Theophany.

Even when priests decided to indulge peasants in their native customs, the result could be unexpected. One Russian priest thought that he understood the customs of Ukrainian settlers in his region. While performing the same ceremony that Goloshubin described above, this priest, along with the help of a young boy filling in for the sacristan performed the ritual of drawing a cross on the wall at the home of a wealthy Chernigov settler.³⁶ The settler, himself confused and outraged at the action of the boy, cried out while the priest was still singing, “Where are you climbing and what are you dirtying there?” The priest continued with the ritual and after it was over, he responded to the peasant. “Why didn’t you let him draw the cross? Isn’t this your native custom?” To which the peasant replied, “*Batiushka*, at home in Russia the sacristan draws a prayer on the wall,

³⁵ Ioann Goloshubin, “Iz vpechatlenii sel’skago sviashchennika,” *OEV*, no.15 (1911): 32-33.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

not a cross.” As this example shows, peasants arriving from the same area brought with them different customs, which they expected would be performed properly by their priests. It also illustrates how originating from the same province did not mean that peasants performed rituals in the same way. Even though both examples of “drawing the sausage” involved peasants from Chernigov, the actual performance of the ritual was slightly different. These differences, while seemingly small, held great importance in the eyes of the peasants. As demonstrated by the emphatic reaction by the peasant from Chernigov, the slightest change to the ritual also changed its meaning. This peasant had no reservations at interrupting what he perceived as an incorrect ceremony, which could have unknown repercussions for him and his family.

While the practice of “drawing a sausage” confused Siberian parish priests, it did not constitute a grave offense in their eyes. Yet, many practices existed which caused the local priest to pause and think of whether or not in good conscience he could perform such an act. For example, the practice of sealing the grave caused Goloshubin great discomfort. At the funeral for a young boy, a peasant handed Goloshubin an iron spade and said to him, “*Batiushka*, Seal my boy for me” (*zapechataite mne moego khloptsu*). Not knowing what to do, Goloshubin completed the service for the dead (*panikhida*) and used the shovel to sprinkle dirt on the grave, saying, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.” As the peasant informed him, this act turned out to be incorrect. Goloshubin learned how to seal the grave like they do in Russia. In the proper ceremony, which is still performed in contemporary Ukraine, the priest uses a

spade to make a cross at all four corners of the grave.³⁷ While Goloshubin expressed his apprehension with performing this ritual, he noted, however, that Russian priests appeared not to share his concern.³⁸

Expectations tended to cause problems between priests and parishioners particularly through the establishment and maintenance of sacred sites. The establishment of cemeteries, in particular, could create uncomfortable situations for priests. Settlers regularly petitioned for their village to have its own cemetery. In the petition from one village assembly, the community justified their request by adding an obvious, but telling description that they were mortal people and therefore needed a cemetery.³⁹ A petition from another village stated: “We arrived from Russia five months ago and still our settlement does not have a sanctified Christian cemetery...”⁴⁰ With death constantly at their doorstep, the comfort of an accessible cemetery was clearly important to settlers.

Goloshubin contended that Ukrainian settlers in particular seemed to want to establish village cemeteries, even if another village close by already had one. A smattering of petitions to open cemeteries seemed to indicate that not only Ukrainians wanted cemeteries, but Russian settlers as well.⁴¹ In one particular case, a village petitioned to open its own cemetery. Their parish priest, who sent a

³⁷ Ioann Goloshubin, “Iz vpechatlenii sel’skago sviashchennika,” *OEV*, no.14 (1911): 36. For more on this ritual, see Natalie Kononenko, “Folk Orthodoxy: Popular Religion in Contemporary Ukraine” in *Letters from Heaven: Popular Religion in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. John-Paul Himka and Andriy Zayarnyuk (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2006), 57-61.

³⁸ Ukrainian peasants believed the act of sealing the grave ensured that the deceased would not leave the ground. See *Ukraintsy* (Moscow: Nauka, 2000), 325. As Christine Worobec has shown, peasants were concerned about the dead walking the earth and even, from time to time, opened graves to drive a stake through the heart of deceased. See Worobec, 28.

³⁹ IsA OO, f.16, op.1, d.106, ll.14.

⁴⁰ IsA OO, f.16, op.1, d.106, ll.34.

⁴¹ IsA OO, f.16, op.1, d.106, l.14.

letter to the Bishop of Omsk supporting his parishioners' petition, identified them as mostly poor settlers who had arrived from Russia that spring. After only a few months in Siberia, having a cemetery appeared to be a high priority. Both the priest and the peasants listed distance from the parish cemetery as one of the main factors which necessitated having their own cemetery. Long distances meant that people had to be buried without a proper Christian funeral.⁴² It also meant that only certain people could afford to send for the priest when a death occurred. In many cases, poor peasants could not afford to send for the priest or take the deceased to the parish church.⁴³

Even failure through official channels did not deter settlers in pursuing their religious dreams. In the case of the village of Fominskii, the inhabitants, who were exclusively from the same district in Chernigov province, quickly petitioned the consistory for a graveyard.⁴⁴ The consistory denied this request as the village of Novosel'e – in the same parish and only two kilometres away – already had one. After the consistory rejected their petition, these settlers attempted to find alternative means by which to achieve their objective of having a consecrated cemetery. They invited Goloshubin to their village under the pretext of having him bless their homes for a community festival. Once they had him as a captive audience, different members of the community pressured him to bless the site of their proposed cemetery. Without permission from the consistory, Goloshubin

⁴² "Po Ukazu," *OEV*, no. 14 (1904): 2.

⁴³ A circular issued in 1904 claimed that wealthier villagers refused to help with these costs and the deceased would have to be buried without a religious ceremony until the next visit to the village by the priest. *Ibid.*, 3

⁴⁴ Ioann Goloshubin, "Iz Vpechatlenii sel'skago sviashchennika," *OEV* no. 14 (1911): 21-22. For confirmation that this petition was submitted, see IsAOO f.16, op.1, d.106, l.9.

could not perform this act. According to Goloshubin, the peasants confronted him with harsh words when he refused to bend to the will of the community. On a later visit to the village the following exchange occurred, which illustrates both the priest and parishioners jockeying for control:

Parishioners: "We will bury the dead in our cemetery"

Goloshubin: "You don't have the right because diocesan officials have not given permission"

Parishioners: "We want to bury [our dead] and will not ask anyone"

Goloshubin: "I will not perform the funeral service and will not give prayers and funeral headbands."⁴⁵

In addition to demonstrating animosity between priests and their parishioners, this example also shows how much parishioners and priests needed each other. This mutual dependence did not always manifest itself in supportive behaviour, but dependence nonetheless existed. The peasants needed their cemeteries to be consecrated and only the clergy could perform this ceremony. The commitment of peasants to burying their dead in consecrated land can be seen in another case, where Goloshubin blessed the land where a grain storage building was to be built and the peasants began burying their dead at that spot.⁴⁶ The priest reported this activity to the consistory and in the end, those peasants who participated had to pay a fine and spend twenty-four hours in jail.

As these two examples illustrate, peasants were willing to resort to intimidation and devious methods to coerce the priest into providing the services they deemed necessary for their community. Yet, these combative interactions between parishioners and priests should not be overemphasized. They show the

⁴⁵ Ioann Goloshubin, "Iz vpechatlenii sel'skago sviashchennika," *OEV*, no.14 (1911): 27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

priest and parishioners engaged in a power struggle over control of the spiritual life of the community.⁴⁷ Settlers were driven by a desire to recreate the spiritual amenities that they had enjoyed in their homelands. Acts like establishing their own cemetery speak to the centrality of these sacred spaces to their vision of community. After a long, strenuous journey to Siberia and the tribulations of settling the land, building a home, and sowing the fields, they wanted the familiarity of a local church and a cemetery. The importance of a church to the ritualistic cycle of the Orthodox faith requires little explanation; yet, cemeteries also were sites of significance for families to fulfill obligations to their dead relatives. Both Ukrainian and Russian peasants followed the ritual of visiting the graves of their loved ones. The harshness of Siberian settler life ensured that death touched many families from the start of their time in new communities. While priests understood the desire on the part of parishioners to recreate the religious comforts of their home village, priests were limited in their actions, like their counterparts all over the empire, by the decisions of the consistory.

Disagreements between priests and parishioners not only illuminated the tension caused by unfamiliar and competing expectations, but also the hurt feelings internalized through such encounters. Goloshubin recalled a particularly unpleasant incident with his settler-parishioners over the issue of fees for the administration of rites and the practice of “walking the parish.” Walking the parish, where the priest visited every household, took place during the Christmas

⁴⁷ For example, peasants in the settler village of Borisovka in the district of Omsk refused to attend church after the priest did not allow the villager's church elder candidate to kiss the cross. The priest had supported a different candidate for the position. L. M. Goriushkin, *Krest'ianskoe Dvizhenie v Sibiri 1907-1914 gg.: Khronika i Istoriografiia* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1986), 221.

season and on these occasions the peasants gave the priest and other clergy members compensation in the form of money or goods.⁴⁸ Some of the settlers acted in a disrespectful manner towards Goloshubin. Instead of handing him money, they obliged him with a fist of grain for his service. One even stated, “Why give him anything, he has a salary.” According to Goloshubin, only settlers engaged in this behaviour, not *Sibiriaki*. Goloshubin described how this treatment pained him:

What should I think about this crude trick, I find it difficult to say. It is difficult to express in words the heavy state of my soul which I have experienced because of this attitude towards me from my flock. There is a clear understanding that by addressing me with these words they do not respect me and feel that they do not need me.⁴⁹

Such a misunderstanding between priests and their parishioners engendered distrust on both sides. In this case, settlers begrudged the extra fees as the priest received a salary; the priest understood these fees as part of the traditional contract between the priest and his parishioners, which in addition to helping the priest financially, also represented the respect the community held for him. As Goloshubin’s words indicated, his *Sibiriaki* parishioners regarded this tradition as acceptable; settlers, on the other hand, questioned the legitimacy of the practice, which in turn, Goloshubin felt questioned the legitimacy of his position.

These disputes between priests and parishioners should not be interpreted as nascent anti-clericalism and instead indicated a process of both sides becoming

⁴⁸ Dmitrii Ivanovich Rostislavov, *Provincial Russia in the Age of Enlightenment: The Memoir of a Priest's Son* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 123–131.

⁴⁹ Ioann Goloshubin, “Iz vpechatlenii sel’skago sviashchennika,” *OEV*, no.15 (1911): 35. Priests and cantors in settler parishes received a salary of 600 roubles for the priest and 200 roubles for the cantor from the treasury. These salaries were justified because of the poverty of the settlers. “Tsirkuliarno,” *OEV*, no.14 (1904): 9.

acquainted with each other under strenuous conditions. The necessity of balancing the interests of different groups of parishioners produced hesitancy on the part of the priest when he was asked to perform certain rituals. Settlers understood this hesitancy as the opening of negotiations between both sides. For example, Ukrainian and Russian peasants shared the custom of ringing the church bells to announce a death; *Sibiriaki* did not. In the village of Syropiatskoe, Goloshubin refused to perform this custom, as he did not wish to offend the local *Sibiriaki*. In the village of Novosel'e, such a refusal would have incurred many complaints from his parishioners; therefore he allowed them to follow this "Russian custom." While ringing the bell is a Russian custom – as Chris Chulos notes, peasants in Voronezh province also rang the bell after a death – Goloshubin's Ukrainian settlers requested that the bell not only be rung at the time of death and to accompany the coffin being carried to the cemetery, but also for a few more days after that.⁵⁰

In this case, Goloshubin was not the only priest who deemed Ukrainian demands for bell-ringing to be excessive. The issue appeared on the agenda of the 1909 Omsk general diocesan congress. The congress heard descriptions of the two most offensive rituals associated with burial: the request for the bells to be rung not only when the body is carried out, but also at the moment of death and a few times during the day and the sending off of the dead with a procession. To promote unity (*edinstvo*) in the practices of Orthodox believers, members of the congress asked the bishop to restrict the ringing of the bells in association with

⁵⁰ Chulos, 39.

death rituals and prohibit procession during burial.⁵¹ Clergymen clearly raised the issue at the congress because these customs had created problems in their own parishes. By taking a collective stand, these men indicated that the unity of practice should outweigh the religious traditions of factions within the community and priests must take joint action to shine the light of truth on the grey zones of religious practice in the diocese.

Settlers did not share this longing for unity; they desired for priests to perform Orthodox rituals in the same way as the priest from their home village in European Russia. To communicate this desire, settlers frequently used the phrase “Back home in Russia” (*U nas v Rossii*) in their discussions with the priest. Peasants from all over the empire used this phrase. It indicated a separation between the priest and his parishioners and the rigidity with which peasants held certain practice. To a certain extent, this phrase implies that the priest was an outsider who was unversed in how to perform rituals and the peasants must educate him. By using this phrase, peasants communicated that their local custom was how the ritual was practised properly. The belief that their version of the ritual was authentic behaviour for Orthodox believers spurred their correction and edification of the priest.

It also shows how competing versions of rituals in the village would cause intense disagreement, as different groups attempted to teach each other how “we in Russia,” practise the Orthodox faith. The dilemma of how to sustain the devoutness of parishioners while enlightening them that their form of Orthodoxy was based in their locality of origins, proved quite difficult for parish priests. This

⁵¹ *Omskii eparkhial'nyi s"ezd dukhovenstva* (1909), 141.

was made more difficult because clearly, as the example of Chernigov peasants shows, priests in European Russia had legitimated these practices by performing them. Peasants viewed these practices as a part of the standard repertoire of Orthodox rituals.

Some priests proved to be more amenable to the idea of performing rituals ‘like they do in Russia’ than others. Conflicts arose among priests over this issue. Clergy faced the scenario of either performing the ritual or losing out on the revenue paid to them for this work. Other clergy from neighbouring parishes might be open to performing the ritual. A petition from Fr. I. Greshetsk to the Omsk consistory asking that a fellow priest, A. Miroshnichenko, be prohibited from administering rites in his parish illustrates the territorial nature of parish life. Unfortunately, details on this case are sparse. The dean investigated the accusation and found that Miroshnichenko performed a number of baptisms when the infant’s life was in danger. Despite his exoneration, the case appears, in my mind, suspicious. A priest with a Ukrainian name administering rites in a village named Novo-Kiev seems to indicate that peasants preferred his methods to those of their own priest.⁵² Peasants would seek out priests who performed rituals they enjoyed, sometimes even in cases where such rituals did not reflect their home traditions. For example, Goloshubin recalled the introduction of a death ritual by a priest from the Caucasus or the Don district which Ukrainian peasants enjoyed and began requesting. This ritual involved the priest reading from the Gospel and intermittently placing the book on the mouth of the deceased.⁵³

⁵² Istoricheskii arkhiv Omskoi oblasti (IsAOO), f.16, op.1, d.159, l.122.

⁵³ Ioann Goloshubin, “Iz vpechatlenii sel’skago sviashchennika,” *OEV*, no.14 (1911): 27.

Echoes of the Union

Ukrainian peasants brought not only puzzling religious practices to the frontier, priests also suspected the manifestations of their religiosity as demonstrating corruption by the Catholic influence ever present in the western borderlands of the empire. Icons represented one alleged indicator of this influence. In his description of a Ukrainian home in his parish, Fr. Venetskii commented on the presence of a primitively written icon of the death of Jesus, which he identified as showing signs of its Catholic theological origins.⁵⁴ Peasants also requested variations to liturgical rites that priests regarded as being influenced by Catholicism. While baptizing a child, Fr. Goloshubin noticed how people had gathered around the basin and how fearfully they reacted to the baptism. After questioning them, he found out that these spectators had come to watch “how the priest bathes (*kupat*) the child.” Goloshubin’s performance of the rite elicited great astonishment among settlers. They explained to him how back home in Russia, the priest poured (*oblivat*) the water on the child, instead of immersing (*pogruzhat*) the child in water, like Goloshubin.⁵⁵ The Orthodox Church practises infant baptism by full immersion. As the priest names each part of the Trinity, he dunks the child in water. Immersion baptism, for the Orthodox, symbolizes “a mystical burial and resurrection with Christ” and only severe illness can justify the priest pouring the water instead.⁵⁶ Initially, Goloshubin had

⁵⁴ Nikolai Venetskii, “Po prikhotu,” *OEZ*, no.16 (1903):19.

⁵⁵ Ioann Goloshubin, “Iz vpechatlenii sel'skago sviashchennika,” *OEZ*, no.14 (1911): 29.

⁵⁶ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 278.

difficulty believing this tradition of pouring this group of settlers; however, comments from other members of the clergy confirmed the veracity of their story.

Ukrainian embellishment incorporated into the marriage ceremony also startled a number of Omsk clergymen. For Goloshubin, the custom of binding the hands of the couple with a towel puzzled him.⁵⁷ He labelled this particular custom as an “absurd demand,” an assessment shared by Fr. Nikolai Kudriavtsev, who also identified this practice as an indictment of the state of piety among settlers from Ukraine. Listing a number of other transgressions, including indifference to the church and only attending confession because others attended, Kudriavtsev’s identified settlers from Ukrainian territories as being particularly susceptible to the influence of sectarianism and prone to misunderstanding Orthodox practice.⁵⁸ As Kudriavtsev wrote, “There are many other rituals (*obriady*) especially among settlers, which do not agree with church liturgical practice.”⁵⁹ In his description of the hand-tying ritual, Kudriavtsev used the term “the sacrament of marriage” to emphasize the impropriety of such an act. Kudriavtsev offered another example of settlers’ treatment of communion to illustrate how they viewed rites “not as a sacrament, but as a ritual.” He complained of how a young Ukrainian settler (Kudriavtsev used the term *khokhol*) arrived after the liturgy to ask the priest for communion before undertaking a trip back to Russia. Kudriavtsev refused the request and with irritation in his voice, the peasant responded, “Are there different laws in Siberia, *Batiushka*, we have communion at

⁵⁷ Ioann Goloshubin, “Iz vpechatlenii sel’skago sviashchennika,” *OEV*, no.15 (1911): 30.

⁵⁸ Nikolai Kudriavtsev, “K voprosu o religioznom sostoianii i nekotorykh tserkovno-obriadovykh osobennostiakh pereselentsev, poselivshikhsia v predelakh Omskoi eparkhii,” *OEV*, no.6 (1911): 54-55.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

any time.”⁶⁰ For Kudriavtsev, the flippantness of this request summarized Ukrainian religiosity.

Not all clergymen felt this way toward Ukrainian settlers. Fr. Afanasii Liasetskii took umbrage with the way in which his fellow clergymen criticized Ukrainian piety. In his article entitled, “In defence of Ukrainian settlers,” Liasetskii reminded readers of the long historical struggle of Ukrainians in the western borderland of the empire against the Catholic Church – a battle which they fought on behalf of Orthodoxy. He acknowledged that Ukrainians had been affected by this struggle, writing: “Many customs and rites of the Ukrainians have remnants and echoes of the union (*uniia*). But if they in any way harmed Orthodoxy, the holy Church would have long ago adopted proper measures to eradicate this ‘evil.’”⁶¹ As for these slight alternations in the performance of rites, Liasetskii failed to see the harm. He argued that acts like ringing the church bells during the procession to the graveyard or binding the hands of wedding couples had religious meaning for settlers. For instance, the custom of ringing the church bells proclaimed the death of a fellow believer and reminded people that one day they too would have to face the judgement of God. To dispel Kudriavtsev’s argument that Ukrainians viewed the sacraments lightly, Liasetskii wrote:

In Little Russia, when meeting a priest carrying the sacraments, everyone drops to his knees, bowing his head to the ground, without looking at what type of ground is under his feet: dry or mud or snow. He remains in that position until the priest has taken a few steps from him.⁶²

In Liasetskii’s eyes, Ukrainian settlers demonstrated a deep commitment to the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Afanasii Liasetskii, “V zashchitu pereselentsev-malorossovo,” *OEI*, no.10 (1911): 41.

⁶² Ibid., 42.

Orthodox Church and he saw little harm in allowing them to keep their religious idiosyncrasies.

Remembering the Lost Homeland

The obstinacy shown by settlers in relation to their religious practices can, in part, be explained by the tremendous sacrifice of settlers in leaving their home villages. The physical and economic sacrifices of the trek to Siberia paled in comparison to the emotional hardships caused by leaving family and friends in European Russia and the familiarity of life in their former villages. Remembrance of what they left behind coloured the interaction of settlers with their new homes, as they sought to keep their former homeland alive through their religious practices. For example, in the village of Mikhailovskoe in Petropavlovsk district, the majority of the villagers originated from Chernigov province, located in current-day northern Ukraine. To remember their homeland, they dreamed of having an icon written of the newly canonized, former bishop of Chernigov, Feodosii of Chernigov. The community raised money towards the purchase of this icon, and the villagers, particularly those from Chernigov, contributed generously. Instead of choosing to have the icon written in Siberia, the settlers placed an order in the city of Chernigov so that the icon could be blessed by the relics of Saint Feodosii. Almost the entire village met the icon in a procession upon its arrival.⁶³ The villagers now had a permanent reminder of their spiritual connection to

⁶³ Aleksandr Krivoshchekov, "Na novom meste," *OEV*, no.13 (1903): 35. In European Russia, Orthodox believers also relied on Orthodox religious rituals "reaffirm their ancestral bonds." Shevzov, 75.

Chernigov province. The desire for this connection illustrates how settlers retained one foot in their former homelands. In this particular case, the choice of an icon with a symbolic link to Chernigov did not cause tensions within the community; but a strong possibility exists that other parishioners might have preferred to use community money in a different fashion.

The celebration of religious rituals by settlers could serve as a stark and painful reminder of the community they left behind. Duma representative A. L. Tregubov, a priest from Kiev province, travelled to Omsk diocese on a fact-finding and humanitarian mission: armed with the dual goals of becoming acquainted with the needs of settlers, and performing religious services and rites for villagers who lived far away from their parish churches. In the district of Pavlodar, Tregubov travelled from village to village, performing the liturgy, consecrating graveyards, and blessing wells, crops, livestock, and homes. He also baptized children and performed funerals for those who had been buried without one.⁶⁴ For Tregubov, meeting these peasants so far away from their homelands and without spiritual care created a sorrowful picture – he emphasized how despite their joy upon meeting him, an underlying sense of sadness pervaded his interactions with settlers.⁶⁵ In sections of Pavlodar district, Tregubov claimed that villagers repeatedly requested a prayer house and a priest.⁶⁶ Particularly during holidays, the memory of religious celebrations in their homeland loomed large in these villages. In one village, parishioners described how their Easter celebration

⁶⁴ A.L. Tregubov, *Pereselencheskoe delo v Semipalatinskoi i Semirechenskoi oblastiakh* (1910), 12.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 13

turned mournful as they remembered the people and village life they had left behind in European Russia. Even the risen Christ could not alleviate their grief.

They told Tregubov:

When midnight came, we sang “Christ has risen” but we could not finish—everyone burst into tears. We remembered our native villages, the call of the bell to vespers, the joyful sounds of voices hurrying to church, an illuminated church, the solemn liturgy and here we are abandoned, forgotten by all, and deprived of the joy of the great celebration.⁶⁷

Settlers intimately connected religious celebrations with memories of their lost homeland. These celebrations created moments where settlers remembered what they left behind and how much they had sacrificed to journey out to Siberia. The poignancy of their loss remained strong: to forget the customs and traditions of the community that they had left behind constituted for settlers a betrayal of their family, ancestors and friends.

Community Building Efforts

Priests were limited, both in training and in resources, in how they could respond to this challenge of creating religious unity. Orthodox leaders had developed (and were in the process of developing) techniques and strategies for priests to address issues like alcoholism or sectarianism in their parishes. But no handbook existed for how to create solidarity in settler communities. Instead, these priests improvised their responses as they became acquainted with their communities. Some engaged in the most basic form of establishing religious communities: building churches. The village of Pokrovskoe was truly in the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

middle of nowhere, located almost nine hundred kilometres from the diocesan capital of Omsk on the Kazakh Steppe.⁶⁸ In this settlement, Fr. Vasiliĭ Peshekhonov understood church-building as a means to create a community where none previously existed.⁶⁹ Despite the difficulties of working in a settler parish where parishioners originated from different Russian provinces and where factions based on these local identities dominated community politics, Peshekhonov persevered in his objective of building churches. Parishioners initially resisted Peshekhonov's initiatives. Mariinskii, a village in the region, refused a church on the grounds that it would be a burden. When they finally relented, the parishioners offered only minimal support. Undaunted, Peshekhonov travelled from Ust'kamenogorsk to Semipalatinsk to raise funds for church-building in his region and found experienced people who could build inexpensive churches. The four churches in his area stood as a testament to Peshekhonov's labour.

To encourage community events, priests travelled regularly in their parishes to perform religious services and meet with parishioners. In villages without churches, tents could be erected for the performance of the liturgy. Fr. Nikolai Venetskii provided a glimpse of the religious improvisation that took place under the difficult conditions in the province of Akmolinsk. Travelling through his parish, Venetskii performed services and rituals for his parishioners under makeshift tents. In the village of Sofievka, young and old villagers helped to ready the tent and old women decorated the inside with towels and carpets.

⁶⁸ Ioann Goloshubin, *Spravochnaia kniga Omskoi eparkhii* (Omsk: Tipografiia Irtysh, 1914), 430.

⁶⁹ "Osviashchenie khrama v pereselencheskom poselke Pokrovskom Ust'kamenogorskago uezda," *OEV*, no.1 (1909): 29.

During one service, Venetskii gave a sermon and witnessed the powerful singing of Ukrainian tenors. After the service, he performed baptisms, and prayed for the deceased. These events, and the socializing afterward, provided an opportunity for the priest to get to know his parishioners over tea and hear about their daily lives as settlers. In this particular village, Kazakhs and grasshoppers were the focal point of complaints, with the former stealing horses and the latter ruining crops.⁷⁰ Venetskii listened to those concerns, sympathized with parishioners, and worshiped with them, thus reminding them of their spiritual connection to the Russian Orthodox Church and to each other.

By showing sensitivity to the needs of their parishioners, priests encouraged parishioners to think of themselves as belonging to a community. Settler life involved many hardships. Poor harvests could compound an already difficult situation for the settlers and outbreaks of diseases left villages devastated. One contributor to the *Village Herald* wrote of how scurvy had ravaged his village, making death a part of daily life and leaving children orphaned. Since the village was located thirty kilometres away from the parish church, the dead were buried without a funeral service. When the priest arrived, he performed the funeral services without charging a fee, visited people in the community and offered comfort to the orphans.⁷¹ Such acts of kindness set the tone for the village, by demonstrating to parishioners the commitment of the priest to the welfare of the community.

Access to sacred spaces like churches and cemeteries remained

⁷⁰ N.Venetskii, "Po prikhotu," *OEI*, no.3 (1904): 23.

⁷¹ "O pereselenii," *Sel'skii Vestnik*, no.17 (1896): 217.

extraordinarily important to settlers in Siberia. The journey across the empire did not dampen their steadfast desire to have a sacred place near their village. In a village founded in 1900, villagers arrived from different provinces, mainly Podol'sk and Kherson and a smaller portion from Ekaterinoslav, Voronezh, Khar'kov, Poltava, Kiev provinces and the Don district. Despite the diversity of the settlers and the poverty of the village, they built their own chapel and for major holidays, they sent for a priest to perform the liturgy, which a correspondent to the *Village Herald* described as "gratifying to the soul of each peasant and making life easier."⁷² All parishioners, despite their origin, found solace in these services.

The influx of settlers radically changed the landscape of *Sibiriaki* villages and created opportunities for the reinvention of village life. The development of religious infrastructure was one form of reinvention, as many *Sibiriaki* villages lacked churches. New settlers helped with the financial burden of building a church and supporting a priest, as well as strengthening the village's application for permission to build from the Omsk diocesan consistory. Settlers also could stimulate a community's enthusiasm for the project. For instance, the arrival of Ukrainian settlers in the *Sibiriaki* village of Paletskii invigorated the efforts of the village to build a church. Despite the initial rejection of their petition for a government-funded church by the consistory, the village continued to push forward, contributing its own money to the cause. Finally, seventeen years after the arrival of the settlers, a church in Paletskii was consecrated.⁷³

⁷² I.V. Matros, "Pereselencheskaia zhizn' v Stepnom krae," *Sel'skii Vestnik*, no.77 (1909): 2-3.

⁷³ S.N.M "Osviashenie khrama v der. Paletskoi," *OEV*, no.10 (1917): 25.

Settlers changed the religious landscape even in places where churches existed. In the parish of Keizes in the district of Tara, the clergy and the church elder petitioned the consistory to approve the expansion of the local church. Originally built over twenty years earlier for a much smaller congregation, the influx of settlers had made this church “extremely crowded.” By 1912, the population of this parish had reached 5791 people.⁷⁴ With only one entrance, a fire would place the lives of parishioners in danger. In 1915, the parish decided to rectify this situation. The altar, rectory, vestibule and bell tower would remain the same; the rest would be changed to create more space. The petition included plans and a budget for building, as well as a commitment that parishioners would supply all the materials themselves. On this religious front, old residence and settlers stood united.⁷⁵

The consecration of churches illustrates one way in which parishioners could show the unity of their community. In 1901, the village of Potaninskoe in the district of Tiukalinsk celebrated the consecration of its church. This village of more than 150 households contained representatives from over fifteen Ukrainian and Russian provinces. The local priest, Pavel Kuznetzov, acknowledged that despite establishing their new home in Siberia, these settlers maintained the customs and ritual of their native homeland in both their religious and domestic lives. These differences, however, did not stop the local community from organizing quickly and effectively to build a church. When a neighbouring village, Tsaritsynskoe, which also had aspired to build a church, failed to meet its

⁷⁴ Goloshubin, *Spravochnaia kniga*, 837.

⁷⁵ IsA OO, f.16, op.1, d.159, l.18.

obligations, the inhabitants of Potaninskoe swooped in and stole the opportunity. It petitioned to receive the wood Tsaritsynskoe had collected from a state forest for the project and secured financing from the Emperor Alexander III fund.⁷⁶ In this case, differences did not matter when this shared dream, which meant so much to local parishioners, could be achieved.

The example of Potaninskoe also illustrates the unity created through the consecration ceremony, as parishioners participated in a rare moment of pageantry mixed with worship. Three priests performed the service with two choirs in a church lit with candles. The powerful and expressive sound of their voices inspired awe in the souls of parishioners. The sight also inspired reflection for *Sibiriaki* who never dreamed they would have access to a church. The thoughts of one *Sibiriak* summarized the feeling, “Who would have thought that in this place we would have a church of God!” The appearance of a church in the land of Kazakh herdsmen created a symbol of unity for its Russian inhabitants.⁷⁷

Processions of special icons to villages for veneration also helped to create inclusive events, where parishioners and priests could participate together in worship. At the station of Medviezhinskoe in the district Petropavlovsk, a church celebration occurred to commemorate the arrival of an icon of the monk Varlaam Khutynsk.⁷⁸ Ringing bells signalled the arrival of the icon and a procession of parishioners met it. This sacred event included speeches from the priests and songs from the choir. The peasants requested permission to take the icon on a

⁷⁶ P. Kuznetsov, “Osviashchenie khrama v poselke Potaninskom, Tiukalinskago uezda,” *OEV*, no.10 (1901): 2-3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*,3.

⁷⁸ “Vpechatleniia ot vstrechi sv. ikony Prepodobnago Varlaama Khutynskago,” *OEV*, no.16 (1914): 54.

procession through the cemetery, which they were granted. Afterwards, they walked with the icon to the village of Poltava, three kilometres away, at which time they handed the icon to the Poltava procession. Through events like icon processions, settlers engaged in sacralising and thereby possessing the landscape of their new homeland. Even though differences between settlers existed, such acts reaffirmed their connectedness through the Orthodox faith.

Conclusion

Parishes in Omsk diocese exemplified the diversity of Orthodox practice in the empire. Colonization brought these various versions of Orthodoxy in contact with each other, which created a crisis for parishioners and priests in Siberia. Priests expressed their concern that disputes over rites, rituals, and customs would lead to a sense of spiritual disillusionment among their peasant parishioners. As peasants held their religious practices in such high regard, some priests feared that ridicule from members of their new communities would lead to a sense of anger and of shame, thereby contributing to a cooling in their attitudes towards the Orthodox faith.⁷⁹ The scarcity of church buildings in Siberia complicated matters further as peasants could not always gain access even to the most basic church rites and rituals. Although the church, with financial help from the state, built churches, established new parishes and trained new clergy for Siberia, the process was slow and simply could not keep up with the waves of peasant migrants that flooded Siberia every year. According to priests, these

⁷⁹ Panteleimon Papshev, "Usloviia, blagopriiatstvuiushchiia sektantskoi propagande," *OEV*, no.29 (1916):19.

factors contributed to the development of indifference toward Orthodoxy and created fertile ground for the propaganda of sectarians to take root.⁸⁰

Priests also fretted about the differences in rites and rituals that they witnessed among settlers. The high rate of migration from Ukrainian-speaking provinces transposed a significantly different religious culture to Siberia and created an environment where clashes of popular rituals inevitably occurred. While many priests expressed concern over how to accommodate popular practice without alienating other groups in their parish, others interpreted the persistence of diverse popular traditions as a sign of the irreligious tendencies of the peasantry. Regardless of how individual priests interpreted the diversity in their settler parishes, they all had to work within this context and attempt to build a harmonious religious culture that satisfied all their parishioners.

The story of colonization also illustrates that peasants had their own stories about their faith and how to practise it. The quickness with which peasants attempted to rebuild their religious life demonstrates how essential the proper practice of the Orthodox faith remained in their eyes. Moving across the empire challenged their faith, particularly through the necessity of building communities with strangers. Peasant-settlers struggled to look past the differences in accents, clothing, customs and religious rituals of their neighbours. Such difference proved difficult to overcome, in part, because it was through religious rituals and customs that peasants engaged in the remembrance of their homelands in European Russia.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 20.

Chapter Six: Whom Shall I Send? The Politics of Pastoring in Omsk Diocese

In 1912, a dispute erupted between the Bishop of Omsk, Vladimir (Putiata), Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov, and members of Omsk's diocesan clergy. The fight revolved ostensibly around the graduates of the Moscow Pastoral Courses, which opened in 1909, and their alleged pernicious influence on diocesan life. These courses, organized and administered by Vostorgov, sanctioned by the Holy Synod and based in Moscow, trained men for pastoral service in Siberian settler parishes. The combatants traded barbs in official church publications, private letters and internal church correspondence, accusing one another of slander and un-Christian behaviour. Almost as quickly as it started, the spat ended. A little over a year after the conflict began, Bishop Vladimir had been moved to a new diocese, Vostorgov had lost his position as head of the Moscow Pastoral Courses, and the Omsk clergy maintained a stoic demeanour, as graduates of the Moscow Courses continued to arrive in the diocese.

This brief episode could easily be portrayed as a clash of egos initiated by a former aristocrat-turned-bishop, who encouraged and cajoled the local clergy into participating in a personal vendetta and reciprocated by a polarizing demagogue in archpriestly robes with grand imperial designs. Yet beneath the hyperbolic tone that the conflict developed in the hands of two larger-than-life figures lay real issues which rose to the surface during the bustle of colonization. Issues of diocesan independence, Siberian religious particularity, clerical competition, and the desirable traits of a parish priest all appeared in this dispute,

which essentially could be boiled down to the following questions: how should priests be trained, who had the right to train them, and how to create unity among a motley crew of clergymen from all over the empire. The urgent task of supplying properly trained men to support the imperial policy of reconstructing the religious comforts of European Russia in Siberia weighed heavily on the minds of church officials. Without clergymen to perform services in newly built churches, to consecrate graveyards, to inspire parishioners, and to protect them against the teachings of religious competitors, the cooperative work of secular and religious officials in building parishes would be rendered meaningless.

The struggle to find enough good men to serve in Siberian parishes reflected a broader problem of personnel that plagued the Russian Orthodox Church. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Church experienced a trend towards a smaller pool of clergy, with lower levels of education. The social and educational make-up of Omsk clergy illustrates how this problem manifested itself in an environment experiencing the disruption of colonization. The supply of clergymen in Siberia was not large enough to satisfy the growing demand for clergy in settler parishes and, as a group, the clergy had not attained a level of education that would satisfy the expectations of Omsk bishops. Two solutions – one produced locally, to build a seminary, the other emanating out of the imperial centre, to establish a training centre for priests based in Moscow – attempted to address this problem of supply and training. The prioritizing of the Moscow Courses over building a seminary by religious and secular leaders outside of Omsk diocese raised serious questions about local control over the

appointment of priests and the type of priest best suited for the frontier.

Parish Priests in European Russia

Parish priests performed a fundamental role in parish life through their work in education, health and hygiene, and state record-keeping, in addition to performing Orthodox services and rites. The 1840s marked the beginning of the pastoral care movement, in which Russian Orthodox publicists encouraged an augmented understanding of the duties performed by priests. According to this philosophy, a priest must engage in three tasks: “teach his flock, dispense the sacraments and perform the liturgy and engage in pastoral care.”⁸¹ As Jennifer Hedda has highlighted, church scholars in the late nineteenth century moved towards using the term *pastyr* (pastor) as opposed to *sviashchennik* (priest) as a way of emphasizing this “new way of understanding the clergyman’s role and responsibilities.”⁸² These social roles added to the expectations placed on priests for service. Instead of focusing primarily on the afterlife, priests should improve the earthly existence of their parishioners and act as model for pious living. Education, according to church leaders, was paramount in pursuing this task: priests should be well-versed in both secular and religious matters and should devote all their energy to the spiritual and material care of their flock.⁸³

⁸¹ Laurie Manchester, *Holy Fathers, Secular Sons: Clergy, Intelligentsia, and the Modern Self in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 70.

⁸² Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 65.

⁸³ This chapter says little about the important role performed by clergy wives in parish life due to limited sources on this issue. For more on the significance of these women, see Laurie Manchester, “Gender and Social Estate as National Identity: The Wives and Daughters of Orthodox Clergymen as Civilizing Agents in Imperial Russia,” *The Journal of Modern History* 83 (March 2011): 48-77.

The Orthodox Church actively engaged in raising the educational levels of its clergy and by the mid-nineteenth century, it had achieved significant success. Many dioceses could boast that over ninety percent of their priests had graduated from the seminary.⁸⁴ Before the Great Reforms, the clerical population belonged to a closed estate, which meant that only the sons and daughters of clergymen could be trained in clerical schools and only these sons could be ordained. Clerical sons and daughters married each other, thereby solidifying the perpetuation of this insular community. Reforms to seminary education transformed the clerical estate from a closed estate to one slightly more open, as the sons and daughters of clergymen could now pursue careers outside of the church and members of other social groups could attend clerical schools.⁸⁵ The intended result of this change was to improve the overall quality of the Orthodox clergy. Although clergymen's sons still dominated the ranks of the empire's clergy, representatives from other estates also found their way into the fold. Church leaders increasingly associated education with more capable, spiritually inspired, and inspiring clergy. Only seminary-educated clergymen could explain the tenets of the Orthodox faith, engage in polemical conversations with schismatic and sectarian groups, and provide an example to emulate for the woefully undereducated peasantry. This emphasis on education mirrored a trend not only in Russian society, but also in Western Europe, where Catholic and Protestant church authorities expressed greater interest in the training of priests

⁸⁴ Gregory L. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 159.

⁸⁵ For information on the social origins of seminarians for 1913-14, see A.V. Sushko, "Religious Seminaries in Russia (to 1917)," *Russian Studies in History* 44, no.4 (Spring 2006): 55.

and ministers for their vocation.⁸⁶

Despite the goal of creating an educated clergy, by 1904, the percentage of priests with a seminary education was lower than in 1890.⁸⁷ A number of reasons contributed to this development. Even with the seminaries full of students, many chose secular professions instead of ordination.⁸⁸ Candidates from outside the clerical estate (*soslovie*) also entered the seminary only to pursue secular careers after graduation. This trend greatly concerned church officials, who feared the “intellectual and moral” decline of Russia’s parish clergy, as many of the best candidates for ordination decided to apply their talents outside of the church.⁸⁹ This exodus also caused a shift from a priest surplus in the 1860s to a shortage by the early twentieth century. The problem was particularly dire in Siberia where most of the seminary graduates did not become priests. Over a ten-year period in the diocese of Blagoveshchensk, none of the seminary graduates entered the priesthood. Dioceses in Siberia and Central Asia also had very few men with a degree from one of the four theological academies working in their consistories.⁹⁰ This situation greatly worried leaders in the Orthodox Church, who desired that educated people adept at missionary work would work in the outlying areas of the

⁸⁶ Nicholas Atkin, *Priests, Prelates and People: a History of European Catholicism since 1750* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 29–30. For more on the development of the clergy as a profession in Europe, see W. M. Jacob, *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1680–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁸⁷ Freeze, 455.

⁸⁸ The number of students enrolled in seminary increased from 13,834 in 1855 to 19,845 in 1904. Freeze, 452. Bishops in European Russia expressed their unhappiness with the number of seminary graduates pursuing other careers. See Freeze, 454.

⁸⁹ The percentage of priests with a seminary education was 82.6 percent in 1860 and increased to a highpoint of 88.1 percent in 1890. Only fourteen years later, the number was 63.8 percent. Freeze, 455.

⁹⁰ V. A. Tarasova, *Vysshaia dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v kontse XIX-nachale XX veka: Istoriia imperatorskikh pravoslavnykh dukhovnykh akademii* (Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2005), 253–254.

empire.

The Composition of Omsk's clergy

What were the characteristics of the men serving in Omsk diocese? A reference book on Omsk diocese published in 1914 contained a listing of the diocese's clerical roster, detailing their ages, the highest level of education achieved, geographical, and social origins. This outstanding source provides a snapshot of the Omsk clergy on the eve of the Russian Revolution and also decades after attempts to reform the clerical estate. For the purpose of this chapter, I focused solely on archpriests and priests, who totalled 711 from the source.⁹¹ I included the category of "unknown" for those instances when the source did not provide any information for that topic.

For the most part, sons of clergymen remained dominant in the ranks of priests, although not to the same extent as in European Russia. Out of 711 priests, 52.6 percent were from clerical families. Priests from other social backgrounds including merchants, townspeople, Cossacks, bureaucrats and others stood at 14.2 percent; 0.6 percent of Omsk priests had noble heritage. Another 10.4 percent were from a peasant background; 22.2 percent of Omsk priests had an unknown social background.⁹² In other words, at least a fourth of Omsk priests came from non-clerical families. This shows that by the late nineteenth century, pursuing a

⁹¹ The author created a spreadsheet based on the source, Ioann Goloshubin, *Spravochnaia kniga Omskoi eparkhii* (Omsk: Tipografiia Irtysh, 1914), 1081-1223. For pie chart illustrating this data, see appendix 3. The total number of clergy in the reference book was 1441. In addition to priests, deacons and sacristans, the source includes monks and nuns.

⁹² See appendix 3, figure 5 for more information.

career as a clergyman appeared as a viable option for people from other social background. Their reasons for choosing this path, however, are not clear and deserve further research. Nonetheless, such data indicates that in places like Omsk, the closed ranks of the clerical estate had opened significantly.

This opening, however, cannot be explained as a function of these groups accessing the seminary. Only 20.3 percent of peasants in Omsk diocese who became priests had any seminary training and 34.3 percent of priests from non-clerical and non-peasant backgrounds had this type of education. Most priests from non-clerical social backgrounds had a variety of other educational experiences from district, city, primary or catechism school, teacher training institute or the Moscow Pastoral Courses.⁹³ In contrast, 73.8 percent of priests from clerical backgrounds had attended, although not necessarily finished, seminary. In total, approximately 53.6 percent of Omsk priests had attended seminary in 1914 and about 8.6 percent of Omsk priests had attended Vostorgov's Moscow Pastoral Courses.⁹⁴

At least half of Omsk's priests had attended school outside of Siberia. Most of these men arrived from the Volga and central Russian districts. Fewer men originated from the western borderland, the northwestern district and the southern district. The majority of priests receiving their education in Siberia

⁹³ See appendix 3, figure 2 and figure 4.

⁹⁴ See appendix 3, figure 1. In comparison, 43.8 percent of priests in Tomsk had attended (not necessarily completed) the seminary by 1914. Interestingly, this percentage is significantly lower than the 87.8 percent who had seminary education in 1855. Tomsk had a lower percentage of graduates from Vostorgov's Moscow Pastoral Courses than Omsk. In 1914, Tomsk had 31 priests from the courses (or 3.4 percent). See A. Adamenko, *Prikhody Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi na iuge Zapadnoi Sibiri v XVII-nachale XX veka* (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 2004), 64 (Table 7).

originated from Omsk, Tomsk or Tobol'sk diocese.⁹⁵ Combining social background with geographical origins tells an interesting story: at least sixty-one percent of priests with peasant social backgrounds were educated outside of Siberia and only nineteen percent received their education in Omsk, Tobol'sk and Tomsk. In contrast, at least forty percent of priests with a clerical background and forty-two percent of priests with non-peasant and non-clerical backgrounds were from these local dioceses.⁹⁶

From this data, a few general observations can be made. First, at least half of the priests in Omsk diocese by 1914 were educated in European Russia and a reasonable conclusion would be that most were educated near where they were born. Therefore, Omsk diocese had a strong presence of priests without any prior connection to Siberia. Second, men originating from the clerical estate still dominated the ranks of Omsk's priests, but peasants and other non-clerical social backgrounds were strongly represented in the diocese. These men chose to discard the path of their ancestors and enter into the priesthood. Unlike the sons of clergymen, however, they did not have a family tradition of clerical work to support them in their parish duties. Many also lacked the knowledge acquired through seminary education. Such diversity in geographical origins and social backgrounds, unheard of in European Russia, was the norm on the frontier and had implications for the development of clerical culture in the region.

This data, however, does not reveal why men from European Russia decided to move to Siberia. While the need for clergy grew exponentially after the

⁹⁵ See appendix 3, figure 6.

⁹⁶ See appendix 3, figure 8 and figure 9.

opening of Siberian lands to colonization, in reality, clergy had been venturing out to Siberia long before the opening of the railway. By the 1850s, a surplus of clergy existed in European Russia. For example, in Tver diocese, there were 321 unplaced seminary graduates in 1850. While other dioceses did not reach such high numbers, Kostroma, Novgorod, Tula, and Vladimir dioceses all had over a hundred seminary graduates without positions.⁹⁷ In the mid-nineteenth century, Siberian dioceses provided a prospect that European Russia could not –the possibility for advancement. Goloshubin’s reference book revealed the trend of men starting as sacristans and progressing through the position of deacon to become priests. Not all sacristans were fortunate to receive such promotions; they may nonetheless have been drawn to the possibilities Siberian dioceses offered. Lower clergymen from European Russia found spots as parish priests. Bishops in dioceses like Omsk were desperate to find men with any seminary education to tend their flocks and encouraged such men to move to their dioceses.

Opportunity, in a broad sense, stood out as the primary reason for clergy to relocate to Siberia. There, one could find opportunity for personal advancement, as well as the possibility to engage in the betterment of the Russian Empire. The pursuit of these types of opportunities did not have to be mutually exclusive, as illustrated by Father Shestakov, a teacher from the province of Kaluga who spent over thirty years serving as a priest in a region of Tobol’sk diocese which later became part of Omsk diocese. According to his obituary, Father Shestakov finished Kaluga seminary in 1864 at the age of 19. Taking into account his age, in

⁹⁷ Freeze, 152.

all likelihood, Shestakov did not finish the full seminary program.⁹⁸ Despite his rather humble position as a teacher, Shestakov had loftier dreams for his life. He petitioned the Bishop of Tobol'sk to be allowed to serve in the diocese. The decision to travel nearly three thousand kilometres, long before the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway, could not have been made hastily. After suffering the hardship of such a gruelling journey, on October 26, 1869, Shestakov was ordained the parish priest of Cheredovskoe village in Tara district. Father Aleksandrov, the author of the obituary, reminded readers of the atmosphere and ideals that permeated post-emancipation Russian society and how Siberia offered an outlet to fulfil these aspirations. With encouragement from state and church officials, Siberia became a place where able men could participate in the spreading Russian culture.

In the 1860s, everywhere in print and in society could be heard talk that it was time to turn serious attention to the rich region of Russia-Siberia, which needed educated people – intellectuals for connecting this region to the general cultural life of Russia. Educated representatives of the civil and church administration in Siberia zealously called for [those] from Russia, desiring to serve the church and fatherland in the work of promoting orderliness in ecclesiastical and civil life of Siberia, which suffered from the weak development of the principles of churchness (*tserkovnost'*) and civic-mindedness (*grazhdanstvennost'*). Many young people responded to this call with the fervent desire to bring their contribution of the light of knowledge and of good, in dark and severe Siberia.⁹⁹

The image of Siberia as a space where talented people, underappreciated in European Russia, could work for the benefit of themselves and their country had a

⁹⁸ Although it was common to teach before ordination, he is quite young.

⁹⁹ N. Aleksandrov, "Sviashchennik A.N. Shestakov," *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti (OEV)*, no.22 (1902): 11-12.

strong allure.¹⁰⁰

In Siberia, clergymen could find opportunities unavailable in their own provinces; Russian priests unhappy with their current parishes or with their future prospects could also try their luck there. The story of Father Ksenofont Petrovskii illustrated this motivation. Petrovskii occupied the position of parish priest in a small and poor diocese in Nizhny Novgorod province.¹⁰¹ He ambitiously attempted to improve his parish by starting a church school, and by starting evening conversations on the Divine Liturgy. His initiatives showed that if Petrovskii's primary concern was pastoral work, plenty of need existed in his parish and there was no reason to travel halfway across the empire to fulfil this desire. Something else drove Petrovskii to undertake that long journey. Although he had attended seminary, Petrovskii never finished his studies, only achieving the designation of student. His prospects for attaining a better position or undertaking leadership roles in his home diocese appeared slim. Arriving in Omsk on the eve of its formation provided Petrovskii with opportunities to work in diocesan administration. In Omsk, Petrovskii served as the priest at the Cathedral church, as district observer of church schools in Akmolinsk province, as steward of the Bishop's house, a member of the diocesan trusteeship of poor clergy, and as member of the examining board. After his wife became ill, he took a salaried

¹⁰⁰ Andrei Soltanovskii, a teacher and sacristan who could not find work in his home province of Bessarabia, and moved to Siberia in 1900 to take a position as a priest stands as another example of this spirit. "Sviashchennik Andrei Soltanovskii (nekrolog)," *OEI*, no.20 (1914): 41-42.

¹⁰¹ The case of Mikhail Petrov is quite similar. He also served as a priest – but for 34 years – in Nizhny Novgorod province before moving to Omsk diocese in 1896. See "Nekrolog," *OEI*, no.22 (1898): 7.

position in one of the parishes.¹⁰² With his limited education, attaining such influence in diocesan life would have been difficult in European Russia.

Personnel Problems and Proposed Solutions

With regard to clergymen, the problem in Siberian dioceses was simple: supply was unable to meet demand. Many Siberian dioceses had between fifteen to forty vacant priest positions. According to Vostorgov, before colonization, Siberian theological seminaries did not produce enough priests for parishes, and settlers only exacerbated this pre-existing problem.¹⁰³ The inadequate supply of clergy to fill newly established parishes plagued Omsk diocesan officials from the founding of the diocese until the Russian revolution. Desperate to find candidates, in 1896, the Omsk diocesan administration placed an advertisement in *Samara Diocesan News* inviting new graduates of the local seminary to apply for empty priest positions in its newly opened parishes.¹⁰⁴ This practice continued throughout the early twentieth century, as parishes in need of clergy continued to be advertised: for example, in 1913 several issues of *Omsk Diocesan News* advertised positions for priests and sacristans. In other years some advertisements included full descriptions of the parishes, including the clerical compensation (salary, house, and land) and distance of the village from Omsk to help interested candidates make a decision.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Ioann Savel'ev, "Nekrolog," *OEV*, no.12 (1914): 43-46.

¹⁰³ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.44, l.27ob.

¹⁰⁴ *Tobol'skie eparkhial'nye vedomosti* no.13 (1896): 311. A short article in an 1896 issue of *Tobol'sk Diocesan News* referred to an advertisement.

¹⁰⁵ "Vakantnyiia mesta," *OEV*, no.6-7 (1906): 38-39.

One of the primary causes of this shortage was the woeful number of seminaries in Siberia. Only five existed: Tobol'sk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, Blagoveshchensk and Krasnoyarsk.¹⁰⁶ Exacerbating the problem, graduates of seminaries increasingly entered secular schools or secular service instead of becoming priests. This trend arose particularly in the 1870s across Russia and intensified throughout the century. Statistics from 1911 show that seventy-three percent of graduates from Russian seminaries chose not to enter church service.¹⁰⁷ This trend appeared earlier in the case of Siberia: out of the thirty-nine graduates from Tobol'sk seminary in 1844, twenty-five applied to enter government service.¹⁰⁸ Seminary graduates had many opportunities in a region starved for educated, secular officials.

Without a seminary, the Omsk consistory could not address the issue of insufficient clerical candidates locally. As Bishop Sergii noted in his 1901-1902 report to the Holy Synod, priests from other dioceses (*inoeparkhial'nye*) had to be brought to Omsk: a process which created its own set of perils.¹⁰⁹ Gathering information about any serious wrongdoing and the moral character of applicants from their former superiors proved difficult. Bishop Sergii reported that countless times, it later emerged that the applicant was running away from sins committed in European Russia, hoping to start anew in far-off Siberia, where his indiscretions might not become known and where he would not have to bear

¹⁰⁶ Tobol'sk was opened in 1703; Tomsk in 1858; Irkutsk in 1780, Blagoveshchensk in 1871; and Krasnoyarsk in 1895.

¹⁰⁷ Freeze, 455.

¹⁰⁸ Viacheslav Sofronov, *Missionerskaia i dukhovno-prosvetitel'skaia deiatel'nost' Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi v Zapadnoi Sibiri: konets XVII- nachalo XX vv.* (Tobol'sk: GOU VPO "Tobol'skii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii institut imeni D.I. Mendeleeva", 2005), 82.

¹⁰⁹ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA), f.796, op.442, d.1965, l.18ob.

responsibility for his actions. Initially, the act of abandoning his homeland placed space between the accused and his actions. Yet, in many cases either the act was eventually revealed or the corrupt nature of the priest created new charges.¹¹⁰ For this reason, according to Bishop Sergii, despite the small clerical population, he had to dole out a high number of punishments to clerics in the diocese.

While the moral character of those arriving weighed heavily on Bishop Sergii's mind, he appeared to give little thought to the integration of these new arrivals into the culture of his diocese. In fact, most of the bishops highlighted two themes in their reports: that the clergy originated from different parts of the empire and that many were undereducated. Yet, they refrained from exploring what these characteristics might mean for creating cordial relations and a unity of spirit among the clergy. Bishop Gavriil insisted in his report to the Holy Synod in 1909 that "nearly all members of the clergy lived in peace and brotherly harmony with each other."¹¹¹ As these reports landed on the desks of their superiors, perhaps the reticence of bishops to discuss disunity among the clergy should not be considered surprising. Only Bishop Andronik (Nikol'skii), in 1913, reported that among the clergymen relations appeared strained, as they showed little sociability (*obshchitel'nost'*) and solidarity (*solidarnost'*) with each other.¹¹² The bishop cited a number of factors contributing to this phenomenon, including the difference in the educational levels between clergy members and the absence of local identification (*zemliachestvo*), since clergymen arrived in Omsk diocese from different regions in both Siberia and European Russia. The considerable

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2343, l.14ob.

¹¹² RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2593, l.11ob.

distance between parishes prevented frequent meetings between clergymen and therefore, stunted the development of close relations between them. Isolation – a longstanding problem of Siberian life – bred disengagement and distrust among clergymen, who struggled to create the social networks so imperative to the mental and spiritual well-being of their colleagues in European Russia.

All bishops shared concern at the educational level of Omsk's clergy. Out of 314 priests, only 158 had finished seminary in 1903.¹¹³ That number had declined a few years later: according to Bishop Gavriil, only forty-three percent of priests in Omsk diocese had graduated from seminary.¹¹⁴ The remaining fifty-seven percent had a variety of educational experience: from being self-taught to completing teaching college and every option in-between.¹¹⁵ Bishop Mikhail reported to the Holy Synod that even though many members of the clergy had gaps in their education, he witnessed their great efforts to improve their knowledge through using parish libraries, where they even copied out theological passages from contemporary publications.¹¹⁶ This greatly impressed him. Nearly ten years later, a report written by a vicar bishop noted a similar practice where clergy engaged in self-education through copying texts.¹¹⁷ Despite these positive comments, other bishops were quick to criticize: Gavriil lamented that many of the priests demonstrated lethargy towards bettering themselves through reading

¹¹³ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.1965, l.17ob. Although Omsk priests, and Siberian priests in general, were undereducated, the reality is that they still composed the bulk of the educated population in Siberia. For a discussion on the large role performed by Siberian priests in this regard, see "Ocherki sibirskoi zhizni," *Sibirskie Voprosy*, no.3-4 (1912): 43-52.

¹¹⁴ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2287, l.27.

¹¹⁵ This number is below the average in Russia. According to Freeze, in 1904, only 63.8 percent of priests had a seminary degree. See Freeze, 455.

¹¹⁶ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d. 2041, l.14.

¹¹⁷ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2654, l.10ob.

and studying. Of particular concern to Gavriil was their disinterest in anti-sectarian literature, which would teach them how to participate in the struggle against “enemies of Christianity.”¹¹⁸ The expectation that priests not only tend to their flock, but also actively engage in the struggle against sectarians through self-education demonstrates the increased pressure placed on priests to perform greater duties, which would be quite difficult without seminary education as a base. The idea that clergy should educate themselves in addition to their full plate of duties in settler parishes where religious life had to be created from scratch seems fanciful.

Without a local seminary, the prospect of improving the educational level of the Omsk clergy remained dim. Local priests had to be trained at either Tobol’sk or Tomsk seminaries, both of which were located over eight hundred kilometres away. Perhaps more significant than the distance was the amount this situation cost the diocese: fifteen thousand roubles a year.¹¹⁹ And what the diocese received in return was hardly worth the investment. In 1905, two graduates arrived in the diocese to work as priests; in 1906, only one; and in 1907, none. Solving this problem through the establishment of a local seminary had been on the diocesan agenda for years. At the 1899 diocesan congress, the clergy unanimously agreed that Omsk diocese required a seminary. Recognizing that the absence of a seminary placed the education of their sons in a precarious position, the members of the council asked the bishop to petition the Holy Synod for financial support to build a seminary. Bishop Grigorii responded to this request

¹¹⁸ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2287, l.21.

¹¹⁹ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2225, l.8ob. The source does not reveal how many students this amount supported.

with the words “I agree and for a long time have worried about this.”¹²⁰ Despite the concern expressed by Bishop Grigorii, little progress was made under his watch.

In 1909, Bishop Gavriil approached the Holy Synod with a proposal to build a seminary in Omsk. Even without the consent of the Holy Synod Gavriil moved ahead with planning the type of seminary. The characteristics of the seminary envisioned by the Commission on opening a theological seminary in Omsk (*Komissii po otkrytiiu v Omske dukhovnoi seminarii*) revealed the importance placed on establishing a seminary responsive to local needs. In particular, the commission stated that Omsk diocese required priests with missionary training to deal with sectarians, dissenters and Kazakh Muslims. Despite these special needs, the commission supported the position that creating a normal type (*normal'nyi tip*) of seminary, with a few tweaks, would suffice. It provided the example of Kazan seminary to demonstrate the possibility of strengthening the missionary component of seminary training, while still maintaining the traditional seminary structure.¹²¹

For missionary training among the Kazakhs, the commission contended that seminarians must be taught the Kazakh language along with enough Arabic that they could translate (with the help of a dictionary) the most important passages from the Koran. Their language training should be sufficient to create the foundation for further language improvement through self-directed study. Not only must seminarians understand the Kazakh language, they also needed to be

¹²⁰ *Omskii eparkhial'nyi s"ezd dukhovenstva, Zhurnaly s"ezda o.o deputatov ot dukhovenstva Omskoi eparkhii, proiskhodivshogo v 1899 godu v Omske Akmolinskoi oblasti* (1899), 42.

¹²¹ *Istoricheskii arkhiv Omskoi oblasti* (hereafter IsAOO), f.16, op.1, d.140, ll.11-11ob.

familiar with Kazakh social, cultural and religious life through studying the ethnography of the Kazakh people and the history and doctrine of Islam. Without a firm understanding of Islam, the seminarians would not be able to convince the Kazakhs of its fallacy. Similarly, students must be taught the doctrines of sectarian and schismatic groups to be ready to engage them in polemical debates.¹²² To make room on the schedule for these types of courses, Bishop Gavriil suggested either reducing the hours dedicated to the traditional topic of Latin language or excluding it altogether. He also advocated the inclusion of hygiene as a topic of study.¹²³

Initially, it was recommended that the proposed seminary would be able to accommodate 300- 350 students.¹²⁴ The commission, however, was sceptical that the local population of clergymen's sons would provide enough candidates for that size of a seminary. To resolve this issue, the commission proposed that graduates from the second class of church parish schools also be allowed to attend, which involved waiving the Latin classes for these students.¹²⁵ Changes to the curriculum and broadening the pool of students had the full support of the bishop and reflected an agreement in Omsk that diocesan needs and conditions had to inform the creation of the seminary. It also demonstrated the evolution of ideas on how to train clergy. Instead of emphasizing the classical training of the clergy, with its focus on ancient languages, Omsk diocese preferred to cultivate "pastoral" traits, centred on interaction with parishioners and potential converts.

¹²² IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.140, l. 12.

¹²³ O.V. Ushakova, "K voprosu ob otkrytii dukhovnoi seminarii v Omskoi eparkhii," *Stepnoi krai zona vzaimodeistviia russkogo i kazakhskogo narodov* (Omsk, 1998), 149.

¹²⁴ This number was later revised to 200 seminarians. See Ushakova, 150.

¹²⁵ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.140, l.13ob.

Ironically, Vostorgov's vision of the role of the parish priest dovetailed with this approach, even if both sides refused to acknowledge the similarities.

On 29 December 1909, the Holy Synod approved Gavriil's request to establish a seminary, but without providing a guarantee of funding for building it.¹²⁶ Despite the rhetoric emanating from the centre about its concern with the religious lives of settlers, the Holy Synod dragged its feet in procuring the necessary finances for Omsk's seminary. The proposed cost of the seminary was 300, 000 roubles. Through negotiations with the city дума, Gavriil managed to obtain a plot of land for free where the seminary could be built.¹²⁷ Yet, without financing, Gavriil was left with a plot of land and no seminary.

Bishop Gavriil attempted to overcome this stalemate by asking the clergy to discuss the possibility of funding the project. To push things along, Bishop Gavriil proposed that the clergy pay a one-time fee for the seminary building. While not rejecting the idea outright, deputies at the 1909 diocesan congress noted the impossibility of such an undertaking in the current year. The expense of building a candle factory and the diocesan women's school had exhausted the local coffers.¹²⁸ Also, the deputies did not have a mandate from the deanery councils to discuss this issue. It was agreed to postpone making a decision until the seventh general diocesan congress. In the meantime, the clergy showed their reticence with agreeing to such a financial burden by asking the bishop to petition

¹²⁶ Ushakova, 149.

¹²⁷ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.140, l.19.

¹²⁸ *Omskii eparkhial'nyi s"ezd dukhovenstva, zhurnal obshcheeparkhial'nago s"ezda v 1909* (1909), no.46. The funding of a women's school before the establishment of a seminary raises many questions about the priorities of the diocesan authorities. For more on clergymen support for educating their daughters, see Daniel Lloyd Scarborough, "The White Priest at Work: Orthodox Pastoral Activism and the Public Sphere in late Imperial Russia" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2012), 160–166.

the Holy Synod once again for money to pay for the construction of the seminary. The bishop responded to this resolution with: "I am sorry that the deputies declined my energetic wish to open a seminary in Omsk."¹²⁹ Bishop Gavriil had good reason for being upset. Conditions applied to the land allocated by the Omsk Duma stipulated that building had to commence within three years or else the consistory would lose the property. Gavriil pressured the clergy to speed up their local consultations and agree to fund the seminary locally.

The responses of the deanery councils reveal a deep support for improving the accessibility of education in the diocese and their understanding that a better educated clergy could address key problems within their diocese; yet, they still maintained the position that the Holy Synod should pay for the seminary. The chairman of one deanery council, who also served as a diocesan missionary, Mikhail Orlov, emphasized the threat of sectarianism and the inability of uneducated priests to stem this tide.¹³⁰ Only with a seminary did Omsk diocese stand a chance against the Baptist leaders who had migrated to the steppe in recent years. Without educated and capable men, the "false" propaganda of the Baptists and other sectarians groups would find fertile ground in the cities, towns and villages of Omsk diocese.

Such concerns, however, did not change the financial circumstances of the diocese. Ksenofont Petrovskii, a dean of the district of steppe churches in Akmolinsk province, described the coffers of the consistory as "becoming depleted" (*istoshchat'sia*) and emphasized the difficulty of finding a new, local

¹²⁹ *Omskii eparkhial'nyi s"ezd dukhovenstva, zhurnal obshcheeparkhial'nago s"ezda v 1909* (1909), no.46.

¹³⁰ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.140, l.66-66ob.

source of funds to pay for the seminary.¹³¹ In fact, deanery councils cited poverty and pre-existing debts of the consistory as two of the primary reasons given against supporting Gavriil's proposal.¹³² According to the deanery council of Tiukalinsk district, Omsk was young and burdened with other financial obligations. Under these circumstances, this question was best left to be discussed at the next diocesan congress.¹³³ As the clergy was still in the process of paying a tax for the Omsk diocesan women's school building and they found the prospect of being taxed for a seminary an unreasonable burden.

When the Romanov dynasty fell, Omsk diocesan officials still did not have a seminary. Countless documents were exchanged on the issue as the financial circumstances of the Holy Synod and the Russian state declined, particularly after the start of World War I. In 1915, fed up with the Holy Synod's foot-dragging and desperate to save the plot of land which the city allotted to the seminary, diocesan representatives petitioned the Holy Synod to allow the consistory to build a temporary wooden structure and open the seminary in a limited capacity. Even this request was denied from the centre, as such an act was viewed as being unproductive and a waste of money and material.¹³⁴

The Moscow Pastoral Courses

The Holy Synod Special Council for Satisfying the Religious Needs of Settlers assigned priority to the training and appointment of clergy to Siberian

¹³¹ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.140, l.62.

¹³² IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.140, l.74; l.79.

¹³³ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.140, l.31.

¹³⁴ IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.140, ll.235-240.

settler parishes. It even appealed to clergy to relocate to Siberia in an issue of the Holy Synod publication, *Church News*. Despite this appeal, the response from clergymen remained insufficient; most likely the shortage of Orthodox priests in European Russia hampered the success of this strategy.¹³⁵ The Holy Synod Special Council gave Vostorgov the mandate to devise a solution to this problem. In a 1909 report to the Chief Procurator, Vostorgov fulfilled this task by proposing a plan that would become the foundation for the Moscow Pastoral Course. Vostorgov claimed that on his 1905 trip to Siberia, he had already witnessed the problem with retaining clergy in Siberia and with populating Siberian parishes with strong, well-educated priests, who had a disposition toward pastoral work. As an individual with a strong background in church educational matters, he proposed to the Chief Procurator that the church should approach teachers from parish schools with the opportunity of serving as priests in Siberia. Teachers, Vostorgov argued, had all the right characteristics for pastoral service: they were dependable (*nadezhnye*), disciplined with daily work, not accustomed to luxury and had experience teaching the common people.¹³⁶ Vostorgov proposed to develop a short pastoral course to be held in Moscow to provide these men with the necessary religious training. The Holy Synod Special Council readily supported the Courses as a means to provide Siberian parishes with the priests they needed. The implications for diocesan independence of such an innovative, yet radically unorthodox solution to clerical shortages appeared not to have been factored into the decision-making process of Vostorgov or the Council.

¹³⁵ A.L., "Iz zhizni dukhovnoi shkoly," *Vestnik Vospitaniia* 20, no.3 (1909):120.

¹³⁶ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviatshego sinoda za 1908 i 1909 gody* (St. Petersburg, 1911), 161-162.

Vostorgov broadened the pool of candidates to groups beyond parish schoolteachers; yet, having a teaching background of 9-10 years remained a coveted trait for recruitment into the program. Deacons, sacristans, along with teachers were allowed to join provided they met the following criteria: they had evidence of their teaching ability; it was necessary that their superiors had a positive view of their service; and they had to be willing to serve as a priest in Siberia for no less than five years.¹³⁷

The reason for emphasizing a teaching background, according to Vostorgov, was two-fold. First, experienced teachers had a well-developed mind and sense of self-discipline. Second, ten years of service allowed the teacher an opportunity to observe and study “the pastoral and spiritual life among the common people (*narod*).” In fact, Vostorgov viewed work among the common people, in areas such as missionary work, preaching, both “in the church setting and outside of it,” and leading church choirs as being highly desirable experiences.¹³⁸ His elevation of practical experience over educational credentials reflected Vostorgov’s own background of building a wealth of experience through his involvement in diocesan life. He aimed to find the hidden talent available in Imperial Russia through targeting capable people who had potential, but limited opportunity for mobility.

An article published in various church publications, including *Omsk Diocesan News*, provided insight into the application process for the Moscow Courses. Applicants had to answer sixteen questions related to themselves, their

¹³⁷ Pastyrskie kursy,” *OEV*, no.17 (1909): 38 GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.18, l.19.

¹³⁸ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.18, l.19.

families, and their background. In addition to supplying their name, age, estate (*soslovie*), place of birth, family profile and education, they had to provide information on their teaching credentials. Reflecting Vostorgov's greater emphasis on interactive teaching techniques, the application asked two questions related to singing: whether or not the applicant had taught church songs and if he had conducted a church choir. To aid in adjudicating the vast pool of applicants, the question was also asked if they had received an endorsement from an educational supervisor.¹³⁹

In addition to answering questions, applicants had to agree to eight conditions for their participation in the courses. These conditions revealed what was required of the participants and what they could expect from the courses. For example, participants were expected to pay their own way to Moscow: those needing financial assistance could count on only three kopecks per kilometre to the nearest train station and the cost of a third-class ticket to Moscow. Once in the spiritual capital, participants received shelter, food, heat, light and linen for free. There was also the possibility of a stipend that could be provided to their family of up to fifteen roubles a month. In exchange for this care, participants had responsibilities to fulfill: once they had completed the courses, participants were expected, without question, to travel to a diocese of the Holy Synod's choosing to start their five-year service. To facilitate their travel beyond the Urals, graduates would receive a second-class ticket from their last place of service to the capital of their new Siberian diocese. From the treasury, they would receive a salary of between three to six hundred roubles a year and in most parishes, although not all,

¹³⁹ "Pastyrskie kursy," *OEV*, no.17 (1909): 38.

a home would be supplied for them.¹⁴⁰

The authority for appointing Moscow-trained priests to their Siberian dioceses would lie with the Holy Synod, with agreement from local Siberian bishops. Bishops would communicate to the Holy Synod how many men their diocese needed. Upon the arrival of the priest in his new Siberian home, the bishop would appoint him to a parish.¹⁴¹ Without the agreement of local bishops, Vostorgov realized that this plan would not work. Well-versed in diocesan politics and the hierarchical structure of the Russian Orthodox Church, Vostorgov understood that bishops might interpret his plan of training priests outside the seminary system as an assault on their authority. In his 1908 proposal for the courses to the Chief Procurator, Vostorgov pledged to discuss the details of the plan with Siberian bishops on his forthcoming trip to the region. Convinced that he would find sympathetic ears among the bishops, Vostorgov informed the secular head of the church, “I have no doubt of the agreement of the bishops.”¹⁴² While the exact reaction of the bishops cannot be ascertained from their own mouths, Vostorgov wrote in 1910 that Siberian bishops showed “the highest degree of sympathy and... great confidence” toward the courses, agreeing that the graduates should be ordained and sent to work in the dioceses. Yet, already from the beginning of the courses, the role of Siberian bishops was being circumvented. Instead of waiting to ordain the graduates upon their arrival in their new Siberian dioceses, Vostorgov had arranged for local bishops, some retired and living in different monasteries, to perform the ceremony in Moscow. This way, according

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴¹ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.44, l.30ob.

¹⁴² GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.44, l.31.

to Vostorgov, the priests could be sent quickly to Siberia.¹⁴³ In 1912, all the bishops agreed to allow ordination to take place in Moscow, except for Bishop Vladimir in Omsk.¹⁴⁴ The bishops of Siberian dioceses even filled out a form agreeing to take these men from Moscow.¹⁴⁵ Such a system raised canonical issues, a concern which Bishop Vladimir regularly pointed out in regards to Vostorgov's role in Siberia diocesan affairs.

At the beginning of the 1910-1911 Moscow Courses, Vostorgov received over two thousand applications. People applied from all over the empire. In the end, 177 students were admitted, originating from 54 dioceses in European Russia. Of these participants, 27 were deacons, 32 were sacristans, and 111 were teachers. The Moscow Courses admitted a number of people from unlikely backgrounds for the office of a parish priest: an officer, doctor, police officer from St. Petersburg, bureaucrat, official from a railway station and even a former Old Believer bishop. Most of the participants –159 – were Russians.¹⁴⁶ Other ethnic groups, however, also attended, with eighteen participants from various *inorodtsy* groups in the empire: five Chuvash, a Tatar, a Mordvin, a Zyrian, a Kazakh, a Cheremis, an Yakut, and a Moldavian, among others. Six of the Russian students had knowledge of languages spoken by minority groups.¹⁴⁷

The first courses lasted only four months, beginning on 15 October 1909 and ending on 15 February 1910. This time frame proved too short and it was

¹⁴³ Ioann Vostorgov, "Pastyrskie kursy v Moskve," *Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam*, no.10 (1910): 450.

¹⁴⁴ RGIA, f.796, op.194, d.2037, l.29.

¹⁴⁵ RGIA, f.796, op.194, d.2037, l.31.

¹⁴⁶ "Russian" included those of Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian backgrounds.

¹⁴⁷ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.90, l.21ob.

expanded the following year to eight months. Over the course of these months, participants in the Moscow Courses received training in theology, the bible, church sermons, church discipline, practical guidance for pastoring, the doctrines of sectarian and schismatic groups, church songs, basic hygiene and church architecture.¹⁴⁸ Although Vostorgov's name dominated the press coverage of the Moscow Courses, in reality an entire team of Orthodox clergy taught the Moscow participants, with Vostorgov's individual efforts focused on theology, church sermons, church regulations and practical leadership for pastors.¹⁴⁹

In 1911, Semen Bondar, an official of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) specializing in the study of the Baptists, filed a report on the Moscow Pastoral Courses. Bondar had indicated that he decided to study the local institutions on his trip to Moscow, possibly to analyze how they could help in the fight against sectarianism. Notably the two institutions he chose were both associated with Vostorgov: the Moscow Courses and the Women's Theological Courses. His choice of institutions and the detailed information provided on topics not related to sectarianism perhaps indicate a desire, on the part of the Ministry, to be informed about the activities of Vostorgov. As Vostorgov had left on one of his many trips abroad, Bondar was unable to witness the powerful orator in action. Despite this inconvenience, Bondar still provided a thorough account of the experiences of Vostorgov's students. For eight months, participants were subjected to a gruelling schedule. Bondar commented on the intensity of the courses, which left barely enough time to prepare for the next day's lectures. They attended six

¹⁴⁸ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.90, l.21ob.

¹⁴⁹ A course for sacristans was also started by Vostorgov. See I.I. Vostorgov, "Sluzhenie psalomshchika," *Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam*, no.48 (1911): 2046-2050.

lectures every weekday and had two lectures on Sundays and holidays. A typical day for a Moscow student involved: waking at six, attending an early morning service at Znamensky monastery, a break for tea, attending three hours of lectures, breakfast, an afternoon lecture, lunch, two hours in the evening to review and prepare sermons. Then from eight until ten in the evening, pupils gave sermons at the popular- missionary lecture halls (*narodno-missionerskaia auditoriia*), after which they had dinner, and then continued preparing for their lessons and sermons. According to Bondar, some students were not able to sleep until two in the morning.¹⁵⁰ Referring to the students as “overloaded with work,” Bondar questioned whether the intensity of the courses was not counterproductive. Students could hardly be expected after a full day of classes and an evening of preaching to spend their nights reviewing the material they had been taught. The location of the classes compounded this problem: classes were held in a large auditorium with a hundred pupils in attendance. In this environment of stale air, according to Bondar, fatigued students could not remain mentally alert. Under these conditions, the heuristic teaching method that Vostorgov claimed to utilize in the classroom was rendered useless.

Despite Bondar’s reservations about the schedule of the courses, his report was filled with praise for Vostorgov’s methods for moulding students into priests with a pastoral focus. These courses presented a new model for training priests as Vostorgov aspired to train zealots of pastoring (*pastyreï-podvizhnikov*). In particular, Vostorgov established a practicum for his students to develop their preaching skills. At the evening service on Saturday night and at the liturgy on

¹⁵⁰ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.90, l.23ob.

Sunday morning, students would preach in sixty Moscow churches. Impressed by the confidence and preparedness of the students, Bondar praised Vostorgov for adopting practices found in Baptist seminaries in London.¹⁵¹

Bondar recognized that an essential quality of Vostorgov's program was its training of people who understood the lives of the common people (*narod*) and would be prepared for the hardship of service in Siberia. As he wrote, "[These participants] are people...accustomed to living in an atmosphere of intense labour. Besides, the majority of them come from the common people, and know their life, [and] their needs."¹⁵² Understanding the culture of the common people allowed Vostorgov's students to speak and relate to parishioners in the language of everyday life: a trait Vostorgov held in high regard. To help his students practise such techniques, Vostorgov initiated evening gatherings called the popular missionary lecture halls in 1910. At these gatherings, held frequently during the week, students from the Moscow Courses would engage with lay people. For example, at Novospassky monastery, conversations were held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. On Sundays and holidays, students conducted edifying readings and on Tuesdays and Thursdays, choir practices were held, which typically drew between fifty to eighty people. On average, attendance for the other nights garnered between four to five hundred people. According to Bondar, all those in attendance were from the "lower classes" (*nizshii klass*).¹⁵³

Bondar experienced these popular events for himself, attending one of the conversations. With close to five hundred people in attendance, three of the

¹⁵¹ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.90, l.28.

¹⁵² RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.90, l.27.

¹⁵³ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.90, l.28ob.

Moscow pupils preached. Bondar described the course participants as speaking “simply and unpretentiously (*prosto i bezyskusstvenno*), and holding the lectern firmly and confidently.” He appeared impressed with how such simple and enthusiastic words held the congregation’s attention. At these events, parishioners were encouraged to participate in worship through the singing of hymns between speakers. Vostorgov had a pamphlet published, which cost five kopecks, with the most common chants of the Orthodox Church.¹⁵⁴ The entire evening projected the values Vostorgov sought to cultivate in his priests: pastors who could engage their parishioners in worship and not simply perform rites.

The reaction in secular circles to the work of the Moscow graduates appeared to confirm the achievement of Vostorgov’s goal. Reference to the extraordinary work of the Moscow clergy even appeared in Prime Minister Stolypin’s report on his journey across Siberia. Stolypin wrote of the strong impression that the Moscow graduates had made on the settlers and on him. Stolypin described how these men as having “deep faith” who undertook their work with an ardent commitment, which was clearly on display when he conversed with them.¹⁵⁵ Stolypin was not the only state official to praise these priests. The Governor of Semipalatinsk referred to the “selfless” (*samootverzhennyi*) and “useful” (*polezny*) work performed in his jurisdiction by the Moscow priests.¹⁵⁶ Finally, a 1911 report by A.A Kologrivov, a MVD official who visited the Omsk region to investigate the growth of sectarianism, also spoke

¹⁵⁴ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.90, l.29.

¹⁵⁵ Stolypin and Krivoshein, *Poezdka v Sibir' i povolzhe*, 54–55.

¹⁵⁶ *Vsepoddanneishii otchet ober-prokurora sviatskogo sinoda za 1908 i 1909 gody* (St. Petersburg, 1911), 163-164.

positively of the Moscow graduates despite noting the negative view of them held by diocesan officials, who claimed these priests were morally corrupt and unprepared for pastoral work.¹⁵⁷ Even though their fellow clergymen levelled criticism against the Moscow priests, Kologrivov stated that parishioners liked these men and admired their “selflessness, readiness at any time to assist with good advice in spiritual and solely worldly matters...” Kologrivov viewed these qualities as important for priests under modern conditions (*sovremennye usloviia*) and believed these men would help, not hinder, the development of Orthodoxy in the region.¹⁵⁸

One man vigorously contested such high praise of the *Vostorgovtsy* (pupils of Vostorgov). During his brief tenure as Omsk bishop, Vladimir engaged in a concerted campaign to establish a seminary in Omsk and to stop the flow of *Vostorgovtsy* to his diocese. He was the first and only bishop to challenge the suitability of recruits sent from Vostorgov’s Moscow Courses, arguing they were incompetent and that Omsk diocese would prosper if he could train priests locally. The bishop even blamed the growth of sectarianism in his diocese squarely on the shoulders of Vostorgov and his pupils (*pitomtsy*). These men, complained the bishop, were completely unprepared for pastoral work and corrupted the Orthodox population with their negative personal characteristics, which included “ignorance, crudeness, arrogance, non-recognition of authority, stubbornness, [and] especially self-interest...”¹⁵⁹ With such men leading flocks of Orthodox believers, it was little wonder why Baptists preachers had such success in the

¹⁵⁷ RGIA, f. 821, op.133, d. 289, l.26.

¹⁵⁸ RGIA, f. 821, op.133, d. 289, ll.26-26ob.

¹⁵⁹ RGIA, f.797, op.82, 2ot., 3st., d.477, l.3.

diocese. Bishop Vladimir claimed to have file upon file of cases proving the harm Vostorgov's pupils had instigated. Bishop Vladimir saved his harshest judgement for Vostorgov, calling him a half-educated (*poluobrazovannyi*) archpriest, who had perhaps done irreparable damage to the dioceses beyond the Urals. The tens of thousands of roubles directed toward training Vostorgov's pupils in Moscow could be used locally to train clergy.¹⁶⁰ Bishop Vladimir made his opinion known to the Holy Synod that he had no use for the graduates from Vostorgov's Moscow Courses and desired only the establishment of a local seminary and the withdrawal of Vostorgov from all church business in Siberia.

Despite the controversy surrounding the capabilities of the graduates, the Moscow Courses continued to the end of the empire. Even Siberian dioceses with seminaries could not solve their priest shortage, and the Moscow Courses provided candidates to them. According to a report by the Chief Procurator sixty-three priests still headed to the dioceses of Blagoveshchensk, Vladivostok, Enisei, Irkutsk, Omsk, Orenburg, Samara, Tobol'sk, Tomsk, Turkestan and Transbaikal in 1916.¹⁶¹ By that year, however, Vostorgov was no longer in charge. In 1913, Vostorgov abruptly lost his leadership position in administering the courses. The Chief Procurator, V. Sabler, removed Vostorgov because he was "offensive to the Left in the Duma" and Vostorgov's detractors refused to support releasing 53,000 roubles to pay for the travelling expenses of priests to Siberia.¹⁶² Even with this development, Vostorgov continued to be intimately involved in the expansion of

¹⁶⁰ RGIA, f.797, op.82, 2ot., 3st., d.477, l.4.

¹⁶¹ RGIA, f.1276, op.12, d.1767, l.3.

¹⁶² GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.55, l.1.

the church in Siberia.¹⁶³

Pastoral Missionary Courses

For Vostorgov, the pastoral courses represented something beyond a temporary solution to personnel problems in Siberia: they symbolized a different way to conceive of the role of the priest among his flock that should be applied across the empire. In an undated draft report, Vostorgov elucidated this vision: “The subject of my report is the question of the revitalization of missionary work, in connection with the preparation of missionaries and missionary assistants for pastors of the Church...”¹⁶⁴ The duties of the parish clergy must extend beyond simply performing rites; they must be teachers within the parish, missionizing to their parishioners and protecting parish life from sectarian and schismatic teachings. This task could not be left solely in the hands of diocesan missionaries. To prepare the parish clergy for this role, the education they receive must not focus only on theology, but also on missionary and pastoral training.¹⁶⁵

These courses, Vostorgov proposed, would train worthy members of the lower clergy and teachers in church schools to become missionary pastors in their communities. Upon completion of the course, they would return to their positions, to perform missionary or catechism work for three years. In the event that they excelled at their work and upon the recommendation of their superiors, it was

¹⁶³ An assessment of the Chief Procurator on his retirement, perhaps written by Vostorgov and located in his personal papers, shows clear disdain for the work of Sabler. See GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.18, ll.27-28.

¹⁶⁴ GARF, f. 9452, op.1, d.18, l.18.

¹⁶⁵ GARF, f. 9452, op.1, d.18, l.18.

possible for the bishops to elevate their status to deacon or priest. If the diocese needed priests, a bishop might choose to forgo the allotted three-year trial period and ordain the graduates.¹⁶⁶

Vostorgov, of course, was not the only one to recognize the significance of missionary training for Siberian clergy. By 1908, local diocesan officials in Omsk had acknowledged the importance of training all priests to take leadership roles in addressing sectarianism. Bishop Gavriil established a series of meetings on sectarianism for the Omsk city clergy called the Missionary-Pastoral meetings. The purpose of these events was to educate the clergy on some of the key questions of faith that would be raised in the battle against sectarianism such as infant baptism and the veneration of icons.¹⁶⁷ Bishop Gavriil argued that many clergy were unprepared for such difficult, yet fundamentally important work. In light of this deficiency, Omsk clergy needed to support each other and develop the tools necessary for defending the faith from the attacks by sectarians. While these meetings were limited in their scope, they illustrate a local initiative to link the pastoral role of local priests with missions work among their parishioners.

Vostorgov recommended that only certain cities be given permission to run the courses. He identified St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkov, Kiev, Odessa, Tiflis, Stavropol, Kazan, Tomsk, Irkutsk, and Vladivostok as good choices, since they were large cities in which it would be reasonable to find teachers and a location

¹⁶⁶ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.18, l.18ob

¹⁶⁷ "Pastyrskoe missionerskoe sobranie Omskago gorodskogo dukhovenstvo," *OEV*, no.4 (1908): 29; "Vtoroe missionersko-pastyrskoe sobranie Omskago gorodskogo duzhovenstva," *OEV* no.5 (1908): 44. Omsk bishops recognized the necessity of offering opportunities for the lower clergy to improve their skills. In 1902, Bishop Sergei hosted a short church singing course for sacristans and deacons in the diocesan capital. "Otchet o tserkovno-pevcheskikh kursakh dlia psalomshchikov v g.Omske 1902 goda," *OEV*, no.20 (1902):17-18.

for the courses; as well, the large number of church relics and historical sites would benefit course participants. These locations also could provide opportunities for training to neighbouring dioceses and Vostorgov insisted that information about the courses be shared with other regional bishops. He also highly recommended that pastoral courses not be held at the seminary. Combining them together, Vostorgov predicted, would be harmful (*vredno*) for both seminarians and course participants.¹⁶⁸ Seminarians and course participants were different in age, and their courses had different content and methods of study. Vostorgov acknowledged that if running the courses independently were not possible, then it would be better to combine a teaching college with the courses as opposed to a theological seminary.¹⁶⁹ Though he refrained from explicitly detailing his objections to interaction between seminarians and participants, it is clear that he viewed this project as being wholly distinct from the existing educational system for clergy.

Vostorgov's vision of pastoral courses as a means of reinforcing missionary efforts through strengthening the priest's support staff failed to take off; nonetheless, Pastoral Missionary Courses run by Vostorgov in Siberia enjoyed immense success. This reinterpretation of the Moscow Courses with a strong emphasis on developing the internal mission in Siberia gained momentum after the 1910 missionary congress in Irkutsk and Vostorgov's 1911 trip through Siberia. It took the Russian Orthodox hierarchy a few years to accept the religious implications of the state introducing freedom of religious conscience into the

¹⁶⁸ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.18, l.19.

¹⁶⁹ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.18, l.19.

Russian empire in 1905 and begin to explore how to coordinate a coherent and unified plan of action among the dioceses. Vostorgov was a central figure in promoting the need for an empire-wide strategy for the internal mission and for standardizing training for local clergy in anti-sectarian and anti-schismatic missionary work. Siberia offered Vostorgov the opportunity to test his educational program and prove its effectiveness in a territory that caused church authorities increasing anxiety over the perceived spread of sectarianism.

In 1912, the Holy Synod granted Vostorgov permission to lead three pastoral missionary courses in addition to his other Siberian duties scheduled for the summer. The cities of Khabarovsk, Tyumen and Tashkent were selected as the first sites of these courses. In the end, Khabarovsk and Tobol'sk received the honour. During the planning stage at the beginning of 1912, the Holy Synod clearly stated that although Vostorgov was the leader of the courses, they could not be held without the consent of the bishops.¹⁷⁰ In fact, all of Vostorgov's expenditures for the courses had to be approved by the local bishop.

The purpose of the missionary courses was to address the inadequate knowledge of Siberian clergy, priests in particular, in relation to the history and teachings of sectarian and schismatic groups and how to fight their propagation. Many Russian dioceses, including ones in Siberia, had developed the position of diocesan missionary, a person who travelled throughout the diocese holding conversations with parishioners to counteract sectarian propaganda in the region. Under this system, the position of missionary had become a specialized vocation. Supporting Vostorgov's mission to transform parish priests into evangelists, the

¹⁷⁰ RGIA, f.797, op.82, 2ot., 3 st., d.75, l.22.

Bishop of Tobol'sk, Aleksii (Molchanov), in his opening speech at the 1912 Pastoral Missionary Courses, compared the duties of parish priests to doctors, explaining, "Zemstvo doctors are obliged to treat all illnesses..."¹⁷¹ As such, priests must address all issues that appear in their parishes. Bishop Aleksii recognized the continued need for the position of the diocesan missionary to offer expertise, advice and leadership to aid local priests in their interactions with sectarians. Nonetheless, as the men who stood on the front line in the struggle, parish priests must be educated in the art of missionary work.

The actual breakdown of time spent at the Tobol'sk courses demonstrated the emphasis placed on combatting sectarian and schismatic faiths. Participants spent fifty hours learning about the history of sectarianism and how to address these beliefs and forty hours dealing with schismatic groups. Training on the history of socialism and techniques to combat it took twelve hours and eight hours were spent on the occult sects. Ten hours on preaching, catechism and building parishes and fourteen hours on how to teach the law of God in primary school rounded out the month-long courses.¹⁷²

The reaction to the courses was overwhelmingly positive. The Holy Synod's missionary council praised the courses and Vostorgov's work and expressed the desire that more be organized for the next year.¹⁷³ On 2 August 1912, Bishop Aleksii expressed warm words to Vostorgov on the final day of the Tobol'sk Pastoral Missionary Courses. After thanking him for his work in presiding over the courses, the bishop added that he did not agree with the

¹⁷¹ "Dukhovnyi dolzhniki," *MO*, no.10 (1912): 429.

¹⁷² RGIA, f.796, op.445, d.301, l.252.

¹⁷³ RGIA, f.796, op.445, d.301, l.218.

“terrible anger” directed toward Vostorgov’s work through the Moscow Pastoral Courses and the Pastoral Missionary Courses. In Aleksii’s eyes Vostorgov’s name would occupy an honoured place when the history of the religious life of Russian settlers was written. Aleksii spoke with deep affection not only for Vostorgov’s work, but also for him as a person.¹⁷⁴ This heartfelt defence of Vostorgov’s diligent and essential work in Siberia also acknowledged that not all found his work to be without controversy.¹⁷⁵

Vostorgov, Bishop Vladimir, and Omsk Clergymen

The “terrible anger” referred to by the Bishop of Tobol’sk emanated fiercely and publicly from the diocese of Omsk. The story of this outrage against Vostorgov and the graduates of the Moscow Courses illustrates local unhappiness with the expanding agenda of the Holy Synod Special Council at the expense of local initiatives. The idea that the Holy Synod could find funds for the Moscow Courses and nothing for the establishment of a local seminary raised the ire of the local clergy. In response, Omsk clergymen drew on arguments of Siberian particularism, emphasizing that Vostorgov and his pupils did not understand local conditions. To a certain extent, Bishop Vladimir shared these real grievances. Though he passionately argued for the necessity of a seminary to allow diocesan authorities to train their own priests, he took advantage of every opportunity to

¹⁷⁴ Aleksii, Episkop Tobol’skii i Sibirskii, “Rech, skazannaia protoiereiu Ioannu Vostorgovu 2-go avgustva 1912 goda v den’ zakrytiia Tobol’skikh missionerskikh kursov,” *Tobolskie Eparkhial’nye Vedomosti*, no.16 (1912): 355-356.

¹⁷⁵ The idea that pastoral courses were necessary to prepare clergy for settler parishes continued to the end of the empire. At the beginning of 1917, plans were being created for a pastoral course to be held in the city of Krasnoyarsk for such an event. See “Ob otkrytii pastyrskikh kursov pri Krasnoyarskoi,” *OEI*, no.1 (1917): 6-7.

question the integrity of Vostorgov and the canonical legitimacy of his actions. Bishop Vladimir viewed Vostorgov as a competing authority in his diocese and, in part, he was correct in this assessment. The power handed to Vostorgov in Siberia by the Holy Synod Special Council was unprecedented. Those at the apex of power, both in religious and secular circles, read his reports on the development of the settler movement in Siberia, and approved his trips. While his status as an archpriest entitled him to practically no authority within the Orthodox monastic hierarchy – a fact that Bishop Vladimir gladly reminded all who would listen – Vostorgov's influence in religious and secular circles developed in large part through his reputation as an inspiring leader, a capable teacher, and a thoughtful policy-maker. He also had a reputation as a divisive figure, a man who had a vision of Russia's future, which he worked tirelessly to promote.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the dispute between Vostorgov and Bishop Vladimir began. Bishop Vladimir took over the bishopric of Omsk at the beginning of February 1911. In his correspondence with his immediate superior, the Metropolitan of Moscow Vladimir (Bogoiavlenskii), Vostorgov revealed that Bishop Vladimir had refused to meet with him during the summer of 1911. That summer Vostorgov travelled through Siberia, meeting with local diocesan leaders to discuss the opening of new settler parishes. Although Vostorgov was scheduled to meet with Bishop Vladimir in Omsk, the bishop chose not to honour this arrangement. Claiming that he did want to create a scandal, Vostorgov did not report this event to his superiors in St. Petersburg. He argued that if he had sent a message by telegraph, according to past experiences, it would have appeared in

the newspapers the next day. Instead, he decided that since Bishop Vladimir had authority within the boundary of his diocese, the decision (and the consequences of it) lay with him.¹⁷⁶ This description reveals Vostorgov's notoriety in the empire, where even his telegrams were newsworthy, but also his lack of official standing, as the Bishop of Omsk could, with impunity, ignore him.

Hostile relations continued between the men throughout the fall. In October 1911, Bishop Vladimir submitted a complaint to the Holy Synod against the archpriest, citing Vostorgov's interference in a matter pertaining to Ioann Kislovskii, a graduate of the Moscow Courses and a priest in the village of Nikol'skoe in the Kokchetav district. Vladimir alleged that Vostorgov had submitted to the Holy Synod Kislovskii's petition about his salary, thereby flouting the power of the local diocese and breaking canonical law (*protivokanonicheskoe deianie*).¹⁷⁷

Vostorgov vehemently defended himself to the Metropolitan of Moscow. He denied ever communicating with the Holy Synod about Kislovskii's dispute with Omsk diocesan authorities, although he did admit that a reference to Kislovskii had been included in correspondence with the Economic Administration of the Holy Synod on a different matter. Making clear that this communication was over a financial issue, Vostorgov went so far as to list the bodies to which he personally had not written: the Holy Synod, the Holy Synod Special Council, and the Holy Synod School Council. Furthermore, he claimed

¹⁷⁶ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.39, l.3ob.

¹⁷⁷ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.39, l.2ob. At the beginning of January, Bishop Vladimir also complained to Sabler about another conflict with one of Vostorgov's priests. See RGIA, f.796, op.194, d.2037, l.56.

that his pupils knew his authority over them ended with their assignment to Siberia: “on receiving [their] place in the Siberian dioceses, they are completely subordinate to local diocesan power [and] all [my] relations with them end.”¹⁷⁸ The existence of correspondence with Siberian based priests in Vostorgov’s personal archives shows, however, that he stayed in contact with his former pupils.

Vostorgov refused to deny the spiritual connection clergy felt towards him. He insisted that answering their requests and letters for general advice and guidance on how to get books, buy church equipment, to preach, questions about catechesis and other such matters fell into his sphere of care. For matters relating to diocesan administration, on the other hand, Vostorgov reported that he always “sent them to the diocesan bishop.”¹⁷⁹ He also maintained that in all his activities as a synodal missionary, he showed “obedience to episcopal authority.”¹⁸⁰ He reminded the Metropolitan that 286 men had completed the course and none of them had broken the rules. Notably, the issue of what fell within the parameters of “diocesan concerns” was never clarified by Vostorgov.

A speech given by Vostorgov to the participants of the third Moscow Pastoral Courses created a stir in Omsk diocese, inspiring Omsk priests to attack Vostorgov and his pupils publicly. The speech was published in the *Supplement to the Church News*, a part of the Holy Synod publication *Church News*, which was read by clergy across the empire. The article received its title “Whom shall I send?” from Isaiah 6:8, in which Isaiah answers God’s call to be a prophet. The

¹⁷⁸ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.39, l.2

¹⁷⁹ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.39, l.2ob

¹⁸⁰ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.39, l.3ob

purpose of the speech was to fortify the spirit of his pupils in the face of their future challenges as priests in Siberia and to draw their attention to the importance of their role in connecting Siberia to European Russia.

Vostorgov's rich speech blended biblical references with an imperial vision, where his priests performed an essential role in shepherding the settler flock, and keeping it safe from the perils of Siberian life. The work of priests, according to Vostorgov, had always been difficult. Shepherding in Siberia posed great challenges and graduates must be commended for their commitment to being priests, but also aware of the road blocks ahead. Using the metaphor of scorpions ready to sting, Vostorgov warned his students about the environment they were about to enter and the people they would encounter. The history of Siberia as a land of criminals and political exiles created an inhospitable environment for pastoring.¹⁸¹ Even local diocesan officials, according to Vostorgov, had the potential to sting the Moscow graduates: "Sometimes you will be stung poisonously (*zhalit' iadovito*) even by church figures (*tserkovnye deiateli*) who themselves grew up and were educated in the old Siberian conditions of life."¹⁸² Notably, Vostorgov never specified any region in particular, speaking only in abstract terms of Siberia, Siberian clergy, and Siberian religious administration.

Vostorgov recognized that tensions between local clergy and the Moscow graduates would exist. Without providing any concrete evidence, he claimed that many local priests did not want to serve in settler parishes; nonetheless, they

¹⁸¹ Ioann Vostorgov, "Kogo posliu," *Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Vedomostiam*, no.11 (1912): 462.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

would be angered if Moscow graduates receive these assignments.

Unpleasantness surely would follow. Reminding the graduates that their training prepared them for their duty of serving settler parishes, Vostorgov encouraged them to view this as another hardship that they should meekly endure.¹⁸³

In this speech, Vostorgov painted a dreary picture of Siberia and the men who served the region. Siberia was a spiritually desolate land, inhabited by political exiles who preached socialism and atheism.¹⁸⁴ Siberia's history as a neglected dumping ground for undesirables was compounded by the absence of Orthodox culture in the land. According to Vostorgov, it was a land "without churches" (*beztserkov'ia*), where one could travel for over a hundred kilometres without seeing any evidence of Orthodox belief.¹⁸⁵ Vostorgov noted that Siberian parishes had developed historically with few churches spread out thinly and this distance limited the amount of contact between priests and their parishioners, creating an environment where parishioners only saw their priests during the performance of rites. Vostorgov argued that within this environment old-time Siberians only interacted with Orthodox clergy for the performance of rites. Hence, religiously, *Sibiriaki* and their priests fulfilled the very basic practices of Orthodoxy, but failed to create a vibrant religious culture which would connect them to Orthodox practices in Russia. This pattern of behaviour explained, in Vostorgov's view, the strength of Siberian ideas of separatism.

While the local Siberian population might be satisfied with this approach to religious life, settlers to Siberia would never stand for it. Parishioners from

¹⁸³ Ibid., 463.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 461.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 462.

European Russia, argued Vostorgov, had the habit of engaging in a host of religious activities on a regular basis, which local clergy could not handle.¹⁸⁶ Moscow Pastoral graduates would serve these parishioners. Within this environment, local priests simply could not represent European Russian religious culture and could not handle the duties associated with tending settler parishes. Local priests had little knowledge of Russia proper; the church needed men who breathed Russianness. Without such men, Vostorgov worried about what might happen if millions of peasants arrived in Siberia; they too might be seduced by ideas of separatism. According to Vostorgov, graduates from the Moscow Pastoral Courses served this function well; they would carry their experiences of the spiritual history of Russia and of Orthodox piety to Siberia.¹⁸⁷ Through these men, Siberia would be connected to Russia, a task which local clergy simply could not perform.

Vostorgov's speech, in conjunction with Bishop Vladimir's heartfelt disdain of Vostorgov and the Moscow graduates, briefly opened a window for Omsk clergymen to air publicly their grievances over the portrayal of Siberia, Siberian clergy and parishioners and the inherent unfairness of Moscow graduates receiving outright the rank of priest. In reality, Vostorgov's speech described an imperial vision much more than it degraded the activities of local priests. Nonetheless, small references to Siberian clergy took on a life of their own, and their interpretation at the local level reveal deep-seated clerical anger towards the policies implemented in their diocese. Public responses to Vostorgov's article

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 462-463.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 464. Vostorgov was not only fearful of Siberian separatism, but also Ukrainophilia, as many settlers from the western part of Russia moved to Siberia.

appeared in two places: an article in the unofficial section of the *Omsk Diocesan News* and the proceedings of the seventh Omsk diocesan congress. The article titled, “Siberian scorpions and the sheep of Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov” was an anonymous endeavour, signed simply by “a Siberian Priest” (*sibirskii sviashchennik*). In contrast, the congress proceedings included resolutions adopted by the representative deputies and reports submitted by individual clergy. In these forums, Omsk clergy challenged the conclusions drawn by Vostorgov on all fronts: from the ability of local clergy to work in settler parishes and the characteristics of Vostorgov’s trainees to the purpose behind the entire enterprise of the Moscow Courses.

Omsk clergymen reacted harshly to being attacked by Vostorgov in an official church publication, which was how they interpreted the article.¹⁸⁸ The local clergy were highly disturbed at the thought that educated people in Russian dioceses would read these words and form their impression of Siberia on its basis.¹⁸⁹ Father Aleksandr Troitskii accused Vostorgov of slander (*kleveta*) against the clergy of Omsk and repeatedly called Vostorgov’s words lies (*lzh*).¹⁹⁰ According to Father Ioann Vinogradov, Vostorgov had gravely offended the Siberian clergy, claiming that “with these words, Vostorgov not only had mocked all Siberian clergy, but belittled, slandered, flung mud--groundless lies and quite rudely.”¹⁹¹ The purpose of their responses to Vostorgov, therefore, was to set the record straight about Siberian clergy and Siberian religious conditions.

¹⁸⁸ *Omskii eparkhial'nyi s"ezd dukhovenstva* (1912), 120.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

Underlying this desire to fight against the circulation of these alleged lies was the aspiration to justify the opening of a seminary in Omsk diocese. Proving the incompetence of Vostorgov's pupils, their destructiveness in diocese, the misguidedness of Vostorgov, and the religious fortitude of local clergy supported the necessity of establishing a seminary that could produce hearty souls to serve in the trenches of settler parishes.

Omsk clergymen levelled many complaints at Vostorgov's pupils. These criticisms can be divided into two categories: ability and attitude. In terms of ability, the deputies described these priests as showing deficient knowledge in both the liturgy and in the practices of parish life. These priests acted according to their own personal judgement (*lichnoe usmotrenie*) instead of following the rules of the Synod (*dukhovnoe vedomstvo*). They used the performance of marriages as an illustration of Vostorgov's pupils' complete ignorance of ecclesiastical regulations: Vostorgov's priests allegedly married people without the proper documentation.¹⁹²

The fast-track training of priests for Siberia in Vostorgov's Moscow Courses raised the eyebrows of many within the clergy. They remained sceptical that priests could be trained to be competent in the liturgy and to engage in missionary work in such a short period of time. A priest, according to diocesan deputies, must perform a variety of church work within his parish: he must teach his parishioners about spiritual and worldly matters and act as a state agent (*gosudarstvennyi deiatel'*).¹⁹³ Vostorgov claimed that he sent to Siberia highly

¹⁹² Ibid., 151.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 150.

prepared, well-educated and innovative priests trained in homiletics, catechism, and missions. Retorted one Siberian author, he had never encountered them. Instead, Moscow graduates showed “extreme ignorance” and in certain cases could not even read.¹⁹⁴ Not only were they poor educators for the people, many also barely knew the rites of the Orthodox Church and had to be taught how to perform the liturgy and rites by local priests.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, Omsk priests argued that they were not hostile to the Moscow graduates because of their innovative practices; in contrast, it was because of the harm they might cause as a result of their complete unpreparedness for pastoral life.

In terms of attitude, the deputies claimed that Vostorgov’s priests displayed arrogant disregard for the diocese: “For them, the local diocesan administration does not exist, because they consider themselves subject to the Holy Synod and their teacher, Vostorgov. Pride, unsociability, arrogance, roughness and many other [traits] adorn the majority of alumni of the Moscow pastoral school.”¹⁹⁶ Fr. Vinogradov expressed a similar sentiment in a decidedly more sarcastic tone, writing, “But wise priests, light of the world, salt of the earth, don’t you know even this fact that the Synod is not the diocese and Vostorgov – holding the rank of a mitred archpriest – cannot be the head of the local church.”¹⁹⁷ The existence of the Moscow Courses and the role assigned by the Holy Synod to Vostorgov created a centralizing force in Siberian dioceses. The Moscow clergy, who indeed owed their new position to the involvement of the Holy Synod in building

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 152.

¹⁹⁵ Sibirskii sviashchennik, “Sibirskie skorpiony i ovtsy prot. Ioanna Vostorgova,” *OEV*, no.14 (1912): 40.

¹⁹⁶ *Omskii eparkhial’nyi s’ezd dukhovenstva*, 152.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 130.

Orthodoxy in Siberia, were viewed as arriving in Siberia with an attitude that matched their origins.

Diocesan officials claimed that Moscow graduates arrived with a negative attitude towards the region as a result of how Vostorgov presented the Siberian clergy, diocesan officials and the state of Russian Orthodoxy in Siberia to them. The Omsk clergy accused Vostorgov of planting in the minds of the Moscow graduates the idea that Siberian church figures might “sting” them, which “instigated his pupils against the native Siberian clergy....”¹⁹⁸ Also Vostorgov’s description of Siberia as a land “without churches” created the impression that the Siberian population lived without faith. The trusted position held by Vostorgov in the eyes of his students meant that they took literally these provocative images, arriving in Siberia with preconceived, negative perceptions of local life and of the ability of local clergy. To challenge this picture, one author from European Russia contended that local priests had not “stung” him upon his arrival and that most other European Russian clergy also had a similar positive experience.¹⁹⁹

Who best understood Siberian life, both from a political and religious perspective, emerged as a key issue of dispute between the Omsk clergy and Vostorgov. In particular, Omsk clergy took offence at the portrayal of Siberia as the home of a separatist and revolutionary spirit, which desired to free itself from the monarchy and from Russia. In reality, according to Vinogradov, it was European Russia, not Siberia where a “terrible revolutionary fire” burned. Instead of being incited by the political teachings of the exiles, *Sibiriaki* reacted with

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 122.

¹⁹⁹ *Sibirskii sviashchennik*, 35.

laughter. In fact, Siberian priests, who, in contrast to Vostorgov's presentation, maintained close relations with their parishioners, witnessed the puzzlement (*nedoumenie*) of the people towards these ideas.²⁰⁰ Only local clergy, they argued, could understand the political mood among the population: not priests trained in Moscow or an archpriest who only viewed Siberia from the "windows of railway cars and the deck of a steamship."²⁰¹ And that mood was patriotism and loyalty to the tsar.²⁰²

Omsk clergymen justified their position by describing the state of Siberian communities. They expressed concern over religious life in settler parishes, commenting that many had been "infected" (*zarazhenyi*) by sectarianism.²⁰³ To draw attention to the misleading representation of Siberian religious life, one author noted that *Sibiriaki* also showed a greater willingness to support their church and clergy with their own funds, in contrast to settlers who sometimes even converted to sects in order to avoid paying for parish life.²⁰⁴ In fact, he argued there was a tendency for Ukrainian settlers to join sects. This situation stood in sharp contrast to parishes of *Sibiriaki*, where the population, despite "living without churches" held firm to the faith of their ancestors in the face of sectarian preaching.²⁰⁵

One priest questioned the motivation behind the Moscow Courses, attributing their creation to ego and politicking in European Russia rather than in

²⁰⁰ *Omskii eparkhial'nyi s"ezd dukhovenstva*, 128.

²⁰¹ *Sibirskii sviashchennik*, 36.

²⁰² *Omskii eparkhial'nyi s"ezd dukhovenstva*, 125.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁰⁴ *Sibirskii sviashchennik*, 36.

²⁰⁵ *Omskii eparkhial'nyi s"ezd dukhovenstva*, 126.

response to the needs of parishioners.²⁰⁶ The clergy of Omsk viewed the existence of the Moscow courses and the absence of a local seminary as linked. At the end of a petition, the Omsk deputies requested that the bishop once again ask the Holy Synod to build a seminary in Omsk and to stop sending priests trained in the Moscow Courses to their diocese. They insisted that the Moscow priests fostered in their parishes “animosity and hatred” as opposed to “the light of Gospel teaching” and “peace.”²⁰⁷ They pressed that instead of bringing these nuisances to Omsk diocese, local lower clergy should be promoted as they proved to be better candidates for priesthood.²⁰⁸ Local clergy had the added advantage of desiring to stay in Siberia. Opponents of the courses contended that these Moscow graduates only travelled to Siberia out of a commitment to material gain and that after their mandatory five-year sentence in a Siberian parish, they would return to European Russia.²⁰⁹

Vostorgov chose not to respond publicly to these accusations emanating out of Omsk diocese, despite being well aware of everything being said. Copies of published proceedings and articles can be found among his personal papers. Information flowed to Vostorgov from local Moscow graduates, who kept him abreast of Vladimir’s intrigues against the *Vostorgovtsy*. In July 1912, Fr. Vasilii Gruzintsev sent a letter to Vostorgov reporting on the inhospitable atmosphere Bishop Vladimir had created for graduates from the Moscow Courses. Gruzintsev informed Vostorgov that Bishop Vladimir set the tone for the seventh Omsk

²⁰⁶ Sibirskii sviashchennik, 40.

²⁰⁷ Omskii eparkhial'nyi s"ezd dukhovenstva, 152.

²⁰⁸ Sibirskii sviashchennik, 40.

²⁰⁹ Despite being convinced that these priests would choose not to stay in Siberia, in reality, not enough time had passed to confirm this alleged trend.

diocesan congress by sharing secret correspondence between the bishop, the Chief Procurator and Vostorgov. This act, Father Vasiliï argued, was part of Bishop Vladimir's "systematic and persistent struggle" against Vostorgov and those associated with him.²¹⁰

The *Vostorgovtsy* did not receive a public forum to defend themselves. Nonetheless, their experiences and thoughts on being demonized in the diocese were preserved in letters sent to Vostorgov. Dmitriï Karneev, a graduate of the first Moscow Courses and the priest of Fedorovskoe parish in Pavlodar district in Omsk diocese, informed Vostorgov about the article by a "Siberian Priest" in *Omsk Diocesan News*. He referred to it as "an abusive article" that treated the Moscow Courses and Vostorgov unfairly.²¹¹ In response to the article's accusations, Karneev wrote a defence of the Moscow priests and Vostorgov, which he submitted to the diocesan journal. Despite his full awareness that the original article could not have been published without the approval of the Bishop, Father Dmitriï still wrote and submitted his response.²¹² Word arrived from his dean that his article was "one-sided" (*pristrastnyi*) and would not be published.

Karneev sent a copy of the article to Vostorgov, thereby preserving the response in spite of the ruling from diocesan authorities. Unlike the other writings on this topic, Karneev made an effort to abstain from polemics in his response. The article illustrated the reverence of the graduates towards Vostorgov, whom Karneev referred to as his "beloved teacher," yet also an understanding of

²¹⁰ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.39, l.13.

²¹¹ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.39, l.47.

²¹² While the fate of Fr. Dmitriï cannot be confirmed, he was noticeably absent from the list of clergy in the Omsk Diocesan Reference book published two years after this event.

Vostorgov's controversial public persona. Karneev admitted that he could not stop the barrage of slander thrown at Vostorgov and despite his great loyalty, he quickly moved on to assess the accusations against the Moscow graduates that they were all ignorant, uncultured, only concerned about material gain and stealing opportunities from local clergy.

One of the main criticisms of the Moscow graduates was that they lacked experience and knowledge related to church service. Admittedly, Karneev wrote, the first cohort of graduates was not as well trained as it could have been. The 1909-1910 courses lasted only four months and had to be convened hastily. Yet, Karneev challenged this view, arguing that only nine participants had little experience in this area. For those who might fall short of expectation despite their training, Karneev questioned why the unpreparedness of a minority should taint the reputation of the majority. He also questioned the evidence of his opponents given the thin distribution of Moscow graduates across Siberia. Most priests, Karneev argued, had never met a graduate of the Moscow Courses.²¹³ The inherent unfairness of generalizing on the basis of limited observation to denounce all Moscow graduates as useless and harmful to Siberian parishes irked Karneev. And even a Moscow graduate initially overwhelmed by the priestly duties of an expansive settler parish could after a few years develop into a capable priest. Opponents of the Moscow courses failed to consider the ability of these priests for personal growth.

Karneev freely admitted that the opportunity for material gain played a role in the decision of clergy to relocate to Siberia. All European clergy, not just

²¹³ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.39, l. 95ob.

the Moscow graduates, arrived in Siberia to escape the poverty of their lives. Karneev wanted to remind readers that the author of the *Omsk Diocesan News* article also had left his parish in European Russia six years earlier. If this author could accuse Moscow priests of being motivated by “Siberian gold,” why could not the same accusation be made of him? And what gave him the right to speak for not only priests of Omsk diocese, but also priests across Siberia? This environment, according to Karneev, had led those who found “the good life” in Siberia to be hostile to any new arrivals, viewing them as rivals. Criticism and hostility became their weapons against these new clergy who threatened their material livelihood. Karneev experienced this directly at the first deanery council he attended, where he had to endure abuse from local priests.²¹⁴

These virulent attacks on the Moscow graduates, argued Karneev, created an inhospitable atmosphere for these clergy serving in Siberia. Repeatedly emphasizing the negative characteristics of Moscow graduates promoted an environment of intolerance, where a priest was judged not by his actions, but by his origins. Despite these circumstances, which gave Moscow priests a legitimate reason to want to leave, Karneev insisted that they stayed, remaining committed to the principle of dying in Siberia.²¹⁵

By 1913, the animosity shown by segments of the Omsk clergy toward Vostorgov, at least on the surface, appeared to have subsided. In March, Bishop Andronik replaced Bishop Vladimir. On his arrival, the new Omsk bishop wasted little time before petitioning the Holy Synod for permission and funds to establish

²¹⁴ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.39, l.96.

²¹⁵ GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.39, l.96.

a short missionary course in July of that year. In fact, Andronik arrived in Omsk diocese on 5 April and twenty-five days later, he had submitted his petition. The vicar bishop of Akmolinsk, Mefodii (Krasnoperov), welcomed Andronik with a speech emphasizing the challenges facing the diocese: “The ship of the Omsk church is overwhelmed, strongly overwhelmed by a wave of sectarianism.”²¹⁶ The sectarian assault, according to Bishop Mefodii’s speech, utilized the weak presence of the Russian Orthodox Church, where in some places, sectarians provided the only spiritual presence in the village.²¹⁷ Concluding his speech, Mefodii commented on the disunity of Omsk’s clergy and the need for strong leadership within this difficult environment: “the clergy, the majority of whom come from other dioceses, wait for the firm (*tverdyyi*) voice of their archpastor.”²¹⁸ While choosing his words carefully, Mefodii appeared to be hopeful that the divisions within the clergy could be overcome through the unifying figure of the bishop.

In light of Bishop Andronik’s request, the Holy Synod transferred the pastoral missionary course scheduled to be held in Tashkent to Omsk. The missionary courses were to be conducted under the leadership of Vostorgov. Allocating three thousand roubles to the event, the Holy Synod made no mention of the tensions of the previous year.²¹⁹ The courses, held for approximately three weeks in July, garnered coverage in the *Omsk Diocesan News* and *The Missionary*

²¹⁶ “Privetstvennaia rech’ proiznesennaia Preosviashchennym Mefodiem, Episkopom Akmolinskim, pri vstreche v kafedral’nom sobore Preosviashchennago Andronika, Episkopa Omskago i Pavlodarskago,” *OEV*, no.9 (1913): 8.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

²¹⁹ RGIA, f.797, op.82, 2ot., 3st., d.75, l.47; For more on the planning of the courses, see GARF, f.9452, op.1, d.55, ll.6-9.

Review. One hundred and seventy Omsk clergy officially attended the courses, along with fifteen from Tobol'sk and fifty from Tomsk dioceses.²²⁰ The day began early, at seven in the morning with prayer and continued with lessons until nine at night. Missionaries and other clergy from Orenburg, Moscow and Kazan were invited to lecture. Yet, none had the following of Archpriest Vostorgov, whose animated lectures enthralled the audience and were the draw of the courses. Everyone attended his lecture on socialism.²²¹ Vostorgov's final lecture inspired the following description from one of the Omsk participants: "As always, his lively, imaginative, talented speech considering the sore subject of pastoral activity produced a deep impression on the audience."²²²

One of the primary forms of assistance Vostorgov and his courses offered to Siberian dioceses was literature. Vostorgov fervently believed that priests could not stem the spread of sectarianism without "spiritual weapons in [their] hands."²²³ To Omsk, Vostorgov brought from Moscow general missionary literature, bibles, and all new political and apologetic publications. Vostorgov offered his own publications on missionary themes for free; everything else was sold at a fifty to sixty percent discount.²²⁴

In gratitude, a participant in the courses presented Vostorgov with an icon of the Mother of God (*Bogomater*). An address delivered to the archpriest emphasized the difficult road ahead for the Russian Orthodox Church as it struggled with the ubiquitous enemy of sectarianism. According to the speaker,

²²⁰ "Khronika: Deiatel'nost' pravoslavnoi missii," *MO*, no.9 (1913): 154.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 156.

²²² "Missionerskie kursy v g. Omske," *OEI*, no.16 (1913): 49.

²²³ RGIA, f.796, op.445, d.301, l.246.

²²⁴ "Khronika: Deiatel'nost' pravoslavnoi missii," 156.

the growth of sectarianism in Omsk necessitated events like the Pastoral Courses to train priests to engage in pastoral-missionary work (*pastyrsko-missionerskoe delanie*). Vostorgov's leadership in this area was much appreciated. The speaker acknowledged the significance of Vostorgov's work, stating, "Believe, dear leader, that your words and instructions, speeches and living example of pastoral zeal and missionary work will never be erased from our memory. In the far and neglected villages of our diocese, we will keep in mind everything that we learned in the courses under your leadership..."²²⁵ The speech made no mention of past disputes, focusing solely on the present fight against sectarianism.

Conclusion

Dioceses in Siberia faced numerous challenges with the advent of colonization. The supply of clergy could not keep pace with demand, and local bishops and church authorities associated with the Holy Synod viewed the educational level of local clergymen as being dismally low. Palpable concern existed among church elites that these circumstances would aid in the spread of sectarianism across Siberia, particularly in Omsk diocese, where Baptists already had demonstrated the effectiveness of their organizational skills. With settlers arriving daily, action, not debate, was imperative. Instead of encouraging local solutions – the most logical and traditional being the establishment of a seminary in Omsk diocese – the Holy Synod decided to support Vostorgov's innovative, yet unproven idea of training lower clergy and parish teachers as special priests for

²²⁵ "Missionerskie kursy v g.Omske," *OEV*, no.16 (1913): 51-52.

settler parishes. Foregoing the traditional seminary curriculum, Vostorgov aspired to produce missionary pastors who could inspire and connect with their primarily peasant audience. The Moscow Courses and the Pastoral-Missionary Courses constituted the first steps in Vostorgov's dream of retraining the empire's clergymen.

Despite Vostorgov's insistence to the contrary, his involvement in Siberian parishes diminished the power of the diocese. Resources that could have been used at the local level were assigned to Vostorgov's Moscow Courses and his trips through Siberia. Moscow graduates, who filled newly opened positions as parish priests, remained dedicated and loyal to him; being selected from thousands of applicants, plucked from the middle of nowhere, relocated to Moscow to study under a recognizable priest in the Orthodox Church, who had been given his own courses by the Holy Synod, contributed to a swagger among Vostorgov's pupils. While it is doubtful that these men were as incompetent as they were portrayed by dissenting members of the Omsk clergy, it is clear that they became a lightning rod for a general sense of discontentment and alienation among certain segments of the local clerical population, who resented this interference into diocesan life and their portrayal by these outsiders to the rest of Russia. Without question, Bishop Vladimir's dislike for Vostorgov and his activities created a space within Omsk diocesan discourse to criticize the graduates of the Moscow Courses. The only article critical of Vostorgov published in *Omsk Diocesan News* appeared under Vladimir's leadership; after his relocation to another diocese, this forum for the clergy to discuss the implications of Vostorgov's work in Siberia closed.

Bishop Andronik, Vladimir's replacement, was the first Omsk bishop to recognize the necessity of building unity among Omsk's heterogeneous clergy population and his sponsoring of the Pastoral Missionary Courses was a first step in that direction.

Chapter 7: Interlopers in the Promised Land – Sectarians and Dissenters

Moreover, in the resettlement stream pouring into the boundaries of the diocese, there are a great number of ready, radical sectarians, propagating their sect everywhere: along the journey in the carriage, at transfer stations and after the settlement in new places.

Every year, the resettlement movement grows, increasing the general population of the diocese. At the same time, the number of sectarians increases through migration and there is no possibility to fight against this growth. No one can forbid them from arriving and settling in Siberia. And dissenters clearly understand all the benefits of life here and do not miss using them to their advantage.¹

Colonization created many problems for the Orthodox Church; yet, none was as disquieting as the growth of the non-Orthodox Christian population in the region. While this segment of the population caused concern for all leaders in Siberian dioceses, Omsk stood out from the others. Bishop Andronik (Nikol'skii) summarized the negative impression prevalent among Orthodox clergymen in the empire in relation to the diocese. In 1913, Andronik lamented to Archbishop Arsenii (Stadnitskii) that he was being assigned to Omsk, an “anthill of sectarianism” (*muraveinik sektantstva*); he would have preferred “quiet Tobol'sk.”² Local missionaries agreed with the bishop, comparing the growth of rationalist faiths to an infectious disease spreading through the diocese.³ By the

¹ Panteleimon Papshev, “Usloviia, blagopriiatstvuiushchiia sektantskoi propagande,” *OEV*, no.29 (1916): 20.

² Andronik (Nikol'skii), *Pishu ot izbytka skorbiashchego serdtsa* (Moscow: Sretenskii monastyr', 2007), 221. Other clergy mentioned the notoriety of Omsk as a centre of sectarianism. See Gerasim Shorets, “Sektantstvo v Tiukalinskom uезде, Tobol'skoi gubernii,” *OEV*, no.16 (1916):12.

³ “O deiatel'nosti protivosektantskikh missionerov i prikhodskikh sviashchennikov,” *OEV*, no.15 (1905): 22. Even more striking, one author predicted that Omsk diocese would have the same notoriety in the history of sectarianism as Kiev and Kiev diocese. See “Sektantstvo Priblizhaetsia,” *OEV*, no.17 (1906): 34.

early twentieth century, the Orthodox Church had labelled Omsk diocese as one of the primary battlegrounds for souls in the empire. Salvation, however, did not constitute the church's only concern. For some in the church, Russians who shed their Orthodox beliefs had ceased to be "loyal." Church leaders argued that Orthodox identity served as shorthand for true Russian culture, which also implied a strong political commitment to the Romanov dynasty.

Many state representatives shared this understanding with the church. They also understood fidelity to Orthodoxy as synonymous with fidelity to the Russian state. They argued that "real Russians" would fight to protect the empire, in contrast to sectarians, who sought to destroy Russian culture from the inside. In the borderlands, the state needed reliable men and women to act as purveyors of Russian culture. Particularly in Siberia, state officials viewed the control of this land through settlement as paramount to integrating it into the empire and out of the hands of aggressive neighbours also looking for land; sectarians and dissenters threatened to derail the purpose behind colonization with their patriotism under suspicion.⁴ For Russian state agents, colonization should showcase the power of the Russian empire, not reveal its insecurities, and these men and women constituted a constant reminder of its vulnerability.

The relationship between "Russianness" and Orthodoxy emerged as a significant theme in scholarship in the mid-1990s and continues to be an important question today. At the heart of much of the scholarly debate on the

⁴ Dissenters refer to schismatic groups like the Old Believers (*Popovtsy* and *Bespopovtsy*, which divide into subgroups) who view themselves as practising the real Orthodox faith. For more on Old Believers in Russia, see Roy R. Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); Irina Paert, *Old Believers: Religious Dissent and Gender in Russia, 1760-1850* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003).

ideological underpinning of imperial expansion has been the definition of “Russianness” or ideas about Russian national identity and its relationship to religion. For instance, Nicholas Breyfogle has illuminated how conceptions of Orthodoxy in the definition of “Russianness” on the frontier changed during the nineteenth century. The Russian state under Tsar Nicholas I forced the migration of sectarians like the Dukhobors to outlying parts of the empire in order to isolate them from Orthodox parishioners, only to rely on these non-Orthodox believers to strengthen the Russian element in regions like the Caucasus. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, as the state integrated the Caucasus into the empire through the settlement of Russian Orthodox peasants, officials began to view these sectarian settlers as being inimical to the process of colonization. According to Breyfogle, by the late nineteenth century, state officials viewed Orthodox religious affiliation as an important attribute in guaranteeing “loyalty and commitment to the empire.”⁵ Conversion, therefore, symbolized more than a change in religious affiliation – it represented the loss of one’s Russian identity.

State and church officials viewed Baptists, in particular, as being unreliable subjects of the empire. As Heather Coleman has shown, the prominent role of German-speaking communities in the spread of the Baptist faith among ethnic Russians led many to equate German culture with the Baptist faith.⁶ After the unification of the German lands, Germany now became a political, in addition to being a cultural competitor with Russia. This change, along with the rise in

⁵ Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia’s Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 305.

⁶ Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 92–108.

Russian nationalism, intensified the competition and suspicion between the two empires and stimulated a growth in anti-German sentiment at the same time that the Russian state undertook the colonization of Siberia. A connection between the Baptist faith and Germanness was duly noted by secular and religious figures from the start of colonization, but took on a strident tone in the early twentieth century as voice promoting anti-German sentiment in the empire grew louder.

The growth of religious dissent in Omsk diocese served as a reminder of the perils of colonization. Colonization created enormous opportunities for the Orthodox Church: to expand its missions to the *inorodtsy*, to aid the state in russifying the land, and to use Siberia as a jumping-off point for proselytizing in Asia. Simply put, Siberia offered the Orthodox Church a canvas for projecting its power. Yet, it also amplified many of the problems the church faced as it participated in Russia's transition to a modern state: inadequate resources, and problems with leadership, structure, and personnel. The involvement of religious dissenters in colonization only served to illuminate these issues more brightly. Finally, colonization intensified the difficulties of the church as it struggled to adapt to the implications of Russia's post-1905 religious order.⁷ On 17 April 1905, Nicholas II approved a number of fundamental changes to Russia's religious laws. It was now legal to leave the Orthodox Church and religious dissenters could hold meetings in prayer houses or homes. The Orthodox Church still held the position of the established church in the empire and maintained the exclusive right to proselytize; nonetheless, this change, caused in part by the revolutionary

⁷ V. Skvortsov, "Deiatel'nost' pravoslavnoi missii," *Missionerskoe Obozrenie (MO)*, no.1 (1911):176; Ioann Vostorgov agreed with the assessment, see Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA), f.796, op. 445, d.301, l.241.

atmosphere of 1905, created anxiety for the church. In October of the same year, Nicholas also promulgated a manifesto that gave his subjects the right to freedom of conscience.⁸ The Ural Mountains did not protect Siberia from the implications of these changes and diocesan authorities in Omsk struggled in this new environment.

Dissenters, Sectarians and Colonization

Siberia had a long history of providing shelter to those the state considered to be of questionable religious character. Since the seventeenth century, Old Believers had found sanctuary in the region, establishing strong communities outside the immediate gaze of the Russian state. These communities thrived, producing their own leaders, traditions, and culture. The state and the Orthodox Church attempted on numerous occasions to bring Old Believers back into the fold. They were unsuccessful; instead, Old Believers managed to hold on to their faith and create insular communities that still survive today. Under Nicholas I, Siberia served the same function as the Caucasus: a dumping ground for the state to rid prized territories in European Russia of sectarians. Nicholas approved the exile of groups like the Subbotniki and the Skoptsy to Iakutsk. The population of sectarians spread and by the 1850s, communities also existed in Blagoveshchensk.⁹

Colonization, beginning in the late nineteenth century, added to this population. Dissenters and sectarians joined Orthodox settlers in migrating to

⁸ Coleman, 25.

⁹ "Irkutskii missionerskii s'ezd," *MO*, no.9 (1910):1718.

Siberia.¹⁰ Although the categories were not standardized, dissenters (*raskol'niki*) tended to refer to Old Believers who claimed to practise the true Orthodox faith and sectarians (*sektanty*) referred to those who had left the Orthodox Church, such as Baptists, Molokans, and others. Religious and secular officials agreed that colonization directly caused the growth of these groups in Siberia. In fact, they insisted on reporting this fact.¹¹ For instance, Fr. Ioann Goloshubin wrote, "I dare say that everyone knows, that Siberia, up to the settlement of settlers here, was absolutely free and clean from any rationalistic sect..."¹² Another clerical author articulated a similar position in *Omsk Diocesan News*: "Ten years ago native inhabitants of the city of Pavlodar... had no idea about Molokan sectarians and shtundo-baptists and now these and others appear not only in Pavlodar, but also in the district...Mother Russia (*matushka Rossiia*) awarded them to us, *Sibiriaki*."¹³ In Siberian dioceses, the idea that European Russian settlers bore not spiritual renewal, but spiritual corruption to the frontier emerged as an important topic of discussion. Orthodox clerical writers identified regions such as the provinces of Chernigov, Kiev, Poltava, Ekaterinoslav, Podolie, Kherson, and Voronezh as contributing the majority of sectarians to Siberia.¹⁴ While diocesan officials

¹⁰ Ioann Vostorgov, "Znachenie i zadachi obshchesibirskago missionerskago s"ezda," *OEV* no.17 (1910): 39. For information on the many groups, see "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Omskago missionerskago soveta za 1915," *OEV*, no.31 (1916): 4-18. According to the Governor of Akmolinsk, sectarianism to his province began in the 1890s with Molokan settlers from Samara. Afterwards, Baptists, Adventist and others joined in. See RGIA, f. bib-ka, op.1, d.1, l.43. For a short history of the settlement of Molokans in Semipalatinsk province, see *Pamiatnaia knizhka Semipalatinskoi oblasti na 1901* (Semipalatinsk, 1901), 15-16.

¹¹ RGIA, f. bib-ka, op.1, d.85, l.264ob.

¹² Ioann Goloshubin, "Iz vpechatlenii sel'skago sviashchennika," *OEV*, no.11 (1911): 35.

¹³ "Korrespondentsiia," *OEV*, no.1 (1905): 47. Although 416 kilometres away from Omsk, the Orthodox clergymen of Pavlodar had the reputation of being very active and they took the appearance of sectarians seriously. "Mery k podnatiuu religiozno-nravstvennoi zhizni v prikhodakh s sektantskim naseleniem," *OEV*, no.15 (1905): 21.

¹⁴ Gerasim Shorets, "Sektantstvo v Tiukalinskom uezde," 12.

fretted about this development, the numbers were still relatively modest. In 1910, according to figures compiled for the Irkutsk missionary congress (although representatives admitted having doubted about the accuracy of the data), 46,841 sectarians lived in Siberia¹⁵ along with approximately 162,000 Old Believers.¹⁶

This population grew, in part, because the state did not pass legislation to limit the settlement of non-Orthodox believers. Sectarians were free to travel to the steppe. Conversations among state officials did take place regarding the desirability of controlling the type of settler undertaking the journey; however, in reality restrictions based on the ethnic or religious backgrounds would have been difficult to enforce.¹⁷ The state allowed other ethnicities and faiths to settle in Siberia with the caveat that officials try to keep them away from Russian Orthodox settlers.¹⁸ This plan of action did not work well, as sectarians, non-Russians, and Russian Orthodox migrants frequently became neighbours,

¹⁵ Dimitrii Nesmeianov, "Doklad Irkutskomu missionerskomi s"ezdu Omskago eparkhial'nago missionera Dimitriia Nesmeianova," *OEV*, no.19 (1910): 30.

¹⁶ "Postanovleniia Irkutskago missionerskago s"ezda po voprosam missii protivoraskolnicheskoi i protivosektantskoi (6-ia sektsiia)," *OEV*, no.20 (1910): 38. These numbers are problematic. For instance, according to state sources, the number of Old Believers in six Siberian dioceses (Tobol'sk, Tomsk, Enisei, Irkutsk, Transbaikal, and Yakutsk) was 307,499 in 1911. See L. Kharchenko, *Missionerskaia deiatel'nost' Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi v Sibiri, vtoraiia polovina XIX v.-fevral' 1917 g.: Ocherk istorii* (St. Petersburg: [s.n.], 2004), 162. Kharchenko, quoting from the classic work *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, gives 7,482,142 as the total for the Orthodox population. The total population of these dioceses is given as 8,301,371. To offer a comparison, this same source indicates the population of these diocese to be 5,288,115 in 1897, with 123,403 Old Believers and 4,678,955 Orthodox believers. See Kharchenko, 161.

¹⁷ Concerns were also expressed about the settlement of non-Russians in region, particularly Germans. For an assessment of state policies toward German settlers, see P.P. Vibe, *Nemetskie Kolonii v Sibiri: Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskii Aspekt* (Omsk: Omskii gos. pedagogicheskii universitet, 2007), 27-44.

¹⁸ In the early years of colonization, local authorities presented sectarianism as an acceptable part of the process. *Missionary Review* covered the Khabarovsk congress under the leadership of General Subbotnik, where the local press and members of the intelligentsia discussed questions relating to sectarianism and colonization in the Far Eastern province of Primorskaia. The congress recognized that settling sectarians with Orthodox against the will of either community would only breed discord amongst settlers. It would also create difficulties for communities in their attempts to build churches and schools. Instead, the congress proposed to settle the sectarians in special, reserved areas. I. Aivazov, "Na raznyia temy: sektanty-pereselentsy (iz itogov Khabarovskago s"ezda)," *MO*, no.10 (1904): 1285-1289.

particularly in the booming towns along the railway. Even if the state had introduced real controls on where sectarians could reside, this would not have stopped the problem. Priests spoke of peasants identifying themselves as “Orthodox” in their passports despite their clearly unorthodox religious beliefs.¹⁹ Also, many undocumented migrants made their way into Siberia, a situation the state had struggled to control.

Not only did settlers bring sectarianism to Siberia, priests accused Orthodox settlers of readily converting and spreading the faith within the region. Most commentators agreed with the portrayal of the *Sibiriaki* as a people who did not join sects.²⁰ Whereas *Sibiriaki* expressed “distrust and hostility” upon encountering sectarians, according to Goloshubin, settlers were swayed by sectarian preachers.²¹ In his 1904 report to the Holy Synod, the bishop of Omsk, Mikhail (Ermakov), also reported that the native Russian Siberian population showed indifference toward sectarian teaching and only associated with non-Orthodox believers to engage in economic activity.²² Diocesan officials, therefore, identified settlers specifically as being vulnerable to sectarian propaganda and the church responded by focusing on the religious needs of that segment of the population.

The difference between the settlers and *Sibiriaki* in their religious proclivities puzzled Omsk clergymen. They did not consider *Sibiriaki* to be

¹⁹ “Vliianie pereselentsev na rasprostranenie sektantstva v Sibiri,” *MO*, no.10 (1914):198.

²⁰ The Governor of Akmolinsk presented this opinion in his 1911 report, see Neverov, 43. With the exception of Bishop Gavriil, who reported in 1909 that *Sibiriaki* were more inclined to join the Baptists because of their low level of piety and inclination towards drunkenness. See RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2342, l.9.

²¹ Goloshubin, 35.

²² RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2041, l.20.

exemplary in their faith; quite the opposite, in fact, clergymen complained of the general religious indifference of the 'native' Russian population. One missionary priest described how *Sibiriaki* did not join sects, "but at the same time they [were] very indifferent towards faith, and regard[ed] the whole church with a coldness that is incomprehensible to the Russian person."²³ Religious and secular officials in Omsk diocese also attributed contradictory traits to settlers. Some argued that settlers showed a deep appreciation for spiritual matters which explained why sectarians so easily seduced them, while others fretted that those who showed such willingness to leave their homelands to migrate to Siberia had been contaminated by peasant nihilism which stirred the desire in their hearts for freedom and a new faith.²⁴ On one level, such descriptions of the religiosity of Siberia's Russian population reflected a general disengagement of the Orthodox clergy with the culture of the peasantry. By portraying *Sibiriaki* as faithful, yet indifferent and settlers as sincere yet religiously promiscuous, clergymen demonstrated how deeply they struggled with understanding the religious actions (or inactions) of peasants.²⁵ In pondering the religious traits and characteristics of *Sibiriaki* and settlers, local clergymen engaged in a broader discussion taking place in Russian society during the late imperial period. Russian writers, scholars, state officials, and journalists contemplated the Russian peasantry, understanding

²³ Papshev, 18. Travellers through the region commented on this attribute as well. M. Petrov described *Sibiriaki* as being "indifferent" to religious rituals and how they did not view religion as a significant issue when dealing with non-Orthodox neighbours. See M. Petrov, *Zapadnaia Sibiri* (Moscow, 1908), 84.

²⁴ Papshev, 19.

²⁵ Admittedly, Cossacks were included in the *Sibiriaki* population and they were not, strictly speaking, part of the peasantry. My point is more about how the clergy looked upon the undereducated, rural population.

this group as a litmus test for the future of Russia.²⁶ In Siberia, where peasants lived relatively unsupervised by the state and the church, representatives of these institutions exhibited a heightened sense of anxiety, as they imagined how uneducated peasants would respond to the unknown temptations in Siberia.

For the Church, colonization offered both opportunities and costs to its position in the region. Admittedly, the arrival of Russian settlers had reinvigorated the importance of the Orthodox Church in Siberia. Church work received state support as state officials keenly expressed their desire for Orthodox settlers to keep their religious identity. In published sources, priests clearly supported the imperial visions of the state: they regularly communicated a narrative of transformation in telling the story of Siberian colonization. In this narrative, Russian pioneer protagonists arrived in a region devoid of Russians and God and established outposts which glorified the motherland and the Father. Priests expressed their feelings of joy when hearing Orthodox settlers praise God's name on the Kazakh steppe. If sectarians managed to thrive in this environment, then the Orthodox religious and cultural transformation of Siberia would be threatened. This narrative, as exemplified by Fr. I. Oksiiuk's description below, had no room for sectarianism:

Eight years ago our region was settled only by Kazakhs roaming from place to place through the vast and fertile steppe with their herds. There was not, eight years ago in our place, a Russian person, there was not heard here a Russian word, the name of Christ was not glorified and there was not visible here the Holy Cross – the symbol of the Christian faith. But now from faraway places in our great homeland arrive here our

²⁶ Cathy Frierson explores the images of the peasantry that developed in late imperial Russia and how these images related to how Russia's future was envisioned. Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth Century Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Russian people.²⁷

Local clergymen savoured their role in this transformation of the land, and sectarians challenged their self-image as the facilitators of God's holy will and their narrative of a divine marriage between Russianness and Orthodoxy.

The Orthodox Church understood the Baptists and Old Believers in Siberia as adversaries in the mission field. According to Omsk Diocesan missionary D. Nesmeianov, the Baptists approached Siberia from the perspective of a religious war. Nesmeianov identified Gavriil Mazaev, the presbyter of the Omsk Baptists, as one of the main proponents of this view: "...Mazaev proudly declared that henceforward they had a firm foot on the shore of the Irtysh and like Ermak, began a second conquest of Siberia, only in religious terms."²⁸ The repetition of Mazaev's alleged words illustrates how deeply the Orthodox clergymen perceived the Baptists as usurping a role the Orthodox Church had claimed for itself. The Orthodox clergy viewed this conquest, at its heart, as having the sinister goal of destroying Orthodoxy in Russia.²⁹

According to Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov, Old Believers also had designs on Siberia. Old Believers in Moscow viewed Siberia as the "promised land (*obetovannaia strana*) for the preservation and strengthening of Old Belief." He cited the opening of a women's monastery with sixty nuns close to Petropavlovsk

²⁷ I.Oksiiuk, "Novyi Khram," *OEI*, no.20 (1908):19.

²⁸ D. Nesmeianov, "Pervyi vpechatleniia shagi missionera," *OEI*, no.3 (1908): 23. Bishop Gavriil made the same comment that the Baptists sought to conquer Siberia like Ermak. See "Pastyrskoe missionerskoe sobranie Omskago gorodskogo dukhovenstvo," *OEI*, no.4 (1908): 26 and RGIA, f.796, op.422, d.225, l.8. Orthodox clergymen also expressed another version of the same idea in *MO*: see V. Skortsov, "Dieiatel'nost' pravoslavnoi missii," *MO*, no.1 (1911):176 and V. Skvortsov, "Nedavnee-proshloe i nastoiashchee pravoslavnoi missii: skazano na otkrytii pervago Sibirskago obshche-missionerskago s"ezda," *MO*, no.10 (1910):1739.

²⁹ I. Fokin, "Okolo Baptistov," *OEI*, no.13 (1910): 29.

in Omsk diocese as illustrative of the designs Old Believers had for Siberia.³⁰ For the Orthodox Church, the idea of co-habitation with these groups threatened its own purpose and destiny in Siberia.³¹

Concerns about the participation of sectarians in colonization were expressed early on by the Orthodox community. An article appeared in an 1897 issue of *Missionary Review* commenting on the damage caused by sectarians during the colonization of Siberia. The article presented sectarians as posing a political, as well as a religious threat, arguing that sectarian settlers challenged the power of the monarchy in the region.³² This article emphasized the tsar's personal interest in strengthening Orthodoxy in Siberia, commenting that Nicholas II desired that Orthodoxy would spread "...like a vital bulwark of our state power..."³³ Only through the spread of Orthodoxy would the ambitions of the state in Siberia be safe. Under this interpretation, colonization constituted a church-state cultural mission that would be destroyed by allowing sectarians and Orthodox peasants to settle next to each other.³⁴

Missionaries in Omsk diocese portrayed Russians who converted to the Baptist faith as adopting German culture and political allegiance to Germany. This opinion became widespread in Siberia once World War I started. As Nesmeianov

³⁰ RGIA, f.796, op.440, d.1274, l.9. Another article mentioned that the Old Believer community was strong enough to establish a local female monastery with fifty nuns in the Ishim district of the diocese. In the late nineteenth century, women monasteries and communities were viewed as key institutes for fortifying (and spreading) the faith. For more on the connection between the strength of Old Believer communities and women's monastic involvement, see "Raskol'nich'ia zhenskaia obshchina i deiatel'nost eia obitatel'nits," *Tobol'skie eparkhial'nye vedomosti (TEV)*, no.9-10 (1890): 216-226.

³¹ One Baptist believer referred to Siberia as God's gift to the Baptists. See Coleman, 50.

³² Many sectarian groups denied this was the case, instead pledging loyalty to the tsar. A similar discourse could be found in non-Russia communities which also found their loyalty to the crown called into question. See Coleman, 104-108.

³³ "Missionerstvo sekty i raskol," *MO*, no.6 (1897): 528.

³⁴ Ibid.

wrote,

In 1914, the war began. Baptists accompanied their children. But you did not hear the crying typical among simple Orthodox people. On the contrary, they were joyful in a real sense. Why were the Baptists happy? Honoured to fight the enemy? Nothing of the kind – they thirst for the destruction of Russia by Germany and think this hour has come.³⁵

While this allegation of a link between the Baptist faith and political loyalty to German intensified during the war, the idea that Russians lost their Russian identity through conversion emerged before fighting began.

Regardless of the church's apprehensions, sectarians continued to arrive in Siberia and Orthodox leaders spoke openly about their conviction that this problem would only intensify in years to come. The Russo-Japanese war constituted the only event which slowed the tide and only because it nearly stopped all migration to the region.³⁶ Like Orthodox settlers, many sectarians came for the land. Specifically, the opening of the Cossack lands in areas like Akmolinsk drew sectarians to the region as they would have the opportunity to live together unmolested by secular and religious officials. They communicated their intention of staying by signing long-term leases to rent this land.³⁷

Population counts confirmed that colonization increased the number of Old Believers and sectarians in Omsk diocese. By 1911, the population of Old

³⁵ D.A. Nesmeianov, "Sviatost' i patriotizm baptistov," *OEV*, no.46 (1916): 9-18. Particularly after 1910, missionary writings emphasized the connection between Baptists and German. Also see Gerasim Shorets, "Sektanty i voina," *OEV*, no.14 (1915): 34-36.

³⁶ According to the Orthodox Church, even when colonization closed during the war, these sectarians simply were waiting for their opportunity to move, rallying others to follow them to Siberia. See "Sektantstvo priblizhaetsia," *OEV*, no.17 (1906): 32-33.

³⁷ M. Orlov, "Otchetnyia svedeniia o sostoianii sektantva v Omskoi eparkhii za vtoryi polovinu 1900 goda i za 1901 god," *OEV*, no.19 (1902):16; "Otchetnyia svedeniia o sostoianii sektantva..." *OEV*, no.10 (1904): 30.

Believers stood at 21,865.³⁸ The majority of this population lived in the Bukhtarma region, with 12,067 Old Believers residing in this area. The rest of the population was spread out over the diocese, in the districts of Tara, Tiukalinsk, Ishim, Akmolinsk, and Omsk.³⁹ The geography and topography of Bukhtarma offered Old Believers a certain amount of natural shelter from Orthodox missionaries. Surrounded by mountains and located in the far reaches of the diocese, near the Chinese border, it was a difficult place for missionaries to visit. While the Orthodox Church considered Old Believers to be a lesser evil than sectarianism, the strengthening of their presence in Siberia still caused apprehension. Ioann Vostorgov described the Old Believers as showing “hatred towards Orthodoxy” and commented that the arrival of Old Believer leaders from European Russia had reinvigorated the movement in Siberia.⁴⁰

Omsk diocesan leaders adopted an almost fatalistic tone in speaking about sectarians, as if an unstoppable evil had been unleashed among them. In his 1907 report, Bishop Gavriil claimed to the Holy Synod, “At present time, sectarianism grows and multiplies, so to say, not by the day, but by the hour.”⁴¹ These types of comments gave the impression that sectarians had overrun the entire region. This, however, was simply not the case.⁴² According to the numbers provided for the Irkutsk missionary congress in 1910, the population of Omsk diocese included 6120 shtundo-baptists, 2116 Molokans, 12 Adventist, 64 Subbotniks, 125

³⁸ The accuracy of this number is difficult to assess. In 1902, Fr. F. Troitskii reported a dissenter population of at least 24,000. F. Troitskii, “Raskol v Omskoi eparkhii,” *MO*, no.11 (1902): 694.

³⁹ “Otchet Omskago eparkhial’nago bratstva za 1911 god,” *OEI*, no.16 (1912): 5.

⁴⁰ RGIA, f.796, op.440, d.1274, ll. 5-6.

⁴¹ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2225, l.7ob.

⁴² For an analysis on the politics behind statistics relating to dissent, see Irina Paert, “‘Two or Twenty Million?’ The Languages of Official Statistics and Religious Dissent in Imperial Russia,” *Ab Imperio* no. 3 (July 2006): 75–98.

Ioannity, and 37 Khlysty, for a total of 8474 sectarians.⁴³ Out of these groups, the local Orthodox authorities labelled the Baptists as most inimical to Orthodoxy in the diocese. As one missionary summarized, “The Baptist faith indisputably must be considered one of the most serious enemies of Orthodoxy within Omsk diocese”⁴⁴ This is an extremely strong statement, especially in light of the large population of Kazakh-Muslims living within the borders of the diocese. As Baptists constituted the largest number of sectarians in the diocese and were identified by the clergy as being the most detrimental to the Orthodox, this chapter will focus mainly on that faith.⁴⁵

The soil for sectarian propaganda was hardly as fertile as the Orthodox Church insisted. For instance, according to the coverage given to the issue of sectarianism on the pages of *Omsk Diocesan News*, one would think the diocese had completely succumbed to the Baptist faith. As the population numbers provided evidence to the contrary, why did sectarianism receive such prominent billing? I would argue that Omsk clergymen did not intentionally exaggerate the situation; instead, a number of factors combined together to give the issue higher visibility in the diocese. For example, many of the most educated men in the diocese were involved in the missions. They also tended to be the ones who wrote for *Omsk Diocesan News*, which helps explain the extensive coverage of this

⁴³ “Postanovleniia Irkutskago missioerskago s”ezda po voprosam missii protivoraskolnicheskoi i protivosektantskoi (6-ia sektsiia),” *OEV*, no.20 (1910): 30. The exact number of sectarians is difficult to ascertain. Bishop Andronik placed the number at 10,000 in 1914. See RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2654, l.13.

⁴⁴ D. Nesmeianov, “Pervyiia vpechatleniia shagi missionera,” *OEV*, no.3 (1908): 23.

⁴⁵ Secular and religious officials identified sectarians like Molokans to be a lesser evil in comparison to Baptists. The Governor of Akmolinsk called Molokans simpler, more modest and less organized in their propaganda than the Baptists. He also commented that they knew less about the Bible and did not have a class of preachers. RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.1, l.43.

issue. Also, sectarianism had top billing on the Orthodox Church's agenda, particularly after 1905. Therefore, Omsk diocese reflected a larger trend in the empire – of the Orthodox Church struggling to adapt to its new environment. Finally, the perceived vulnerability of settlers weighed heavily on the minds of Orthodox clergy in Omsk. Despite the work of the church and state in building churches and dispatching priests, the need remained great and many settlers lived without any access to the official church and without supervision by religious officials. In this environment, the presence of the sectarian groups reminded Omsk officials of their powerlessness to care properly for their flock under the conditions of colonization.

Vulnerabilities on the Frontier: Favourable Conditions for Sectarianism

The Russian state dreamed that colonization would be a coordinated and well-organized endeavour. With the best technocrats of the empire arranging the process and the new Trans-Siberian railway easing the transportation of peasant-settlers, the possibilities for developing the region seemed endless. Colonization would showcase the power and control of the Russian empire and contribute to its future success. Russian Orthodox settlers, loyal to the tsar and the true faith, would plant Russian culture throughout the region. Sectarrians interfered in this dream, using their own ingenuity, the strength of their organizations, and the opportunities created by the state to share their faith with others. The Baptists, in particular, viewed missionary work among their neighbours as an important part

of their calling: to spread the good news of the true path to salvation.⁴⁶ Believers spoke to their neighbours, while itinerant preachers travelled throughout Siberia, using any available platform to spread their version of God's word.

Conversion of Orthodox parishioners to Old Belief and sectarian faiths confirmed to diocesan officials that these techniques worked. According to the Governor of Akmolinsk, in 1912, 432 people asked to leave the Orthodox faith from his province, with all but seven declaring their desire to become Baptist. The next year that number increased to 1218, with 1193 joining the Baptist faith.⁴⁷ In 1911, Vostorgov claimed that within recent years nine hundred families had left the Orthodox Church to become dissenters in Omsk diocese.⁴⁸ Compared to the overall population of Omsk diocese, these numbers were not astonishingly high; nonetheless, they caused significant handwringing in St. Petersburg. In 1912, the Assistant Chief Procurator contacted the Bishop of Omsk for an explanation as to why over a period of nine months, 350 Orthodox believers from Akmolinsk province had petitioned to leave the Orthodox Church, with 273 people requesting to be legally recognized as Baptists.⁴⁹

The correspondence between the Assistant Chief Procurator and Bishop Vladimir illustrates how contentious the issue of sectarianism had become. The tone of Bishop Vladimir's response was defensive, as he insisted that he had kept St. Petersburg well-informed about the growth of sectarianism in Omsk. As he

⁴⁶ For more on the importance of missions to Russian Baptists, see Coleman, 41.

⁴⁷ RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.1, l.298.

⁴⁸ RGIA, f.796, op.440, d.1274, l.8; Vostorgov, "Znachenie i zadachi," 40.

⁴⁹ RGIA, f.797, op.82, 2ot., 3st., d.477, ll.2-2ob. In the same year (1912), 1068 people petitioned to leave the Orthodox Church and became sectarians in Tomsk province, with 914 from three villages in the Kliuchevskii district asking to be recognized as Molokans. In 1913, 457 people petitioned to leave the Orthodox Church from Tomsk province. L. M. Goriushkin, *Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v Sibiri 1907-1914 gg.: Khronika i istoriografiia* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1986), 172.

offered reasons for the current situation, he tried to deflect attention from internal problems within the diocese and presented the issue as being directly related to decisions taken outside his control. He identified the priests sent to the diocese through Vostorgov's Moscow Courses as being one of the main causes of the spread of sectarianism. These men, he argued, possessed such negative personal traits that they pushed Orthodox believers into the arms of sectarian preachers.⁵⁰

Church officials debated and discussed the conditions which helped religious dissenters to propagate their faith in church publications, correspondence, and reports. They identified two main sites of interaction between dissenters and Orthodox believers – the railway and the village – as points of vulnerability for the Orthodox Church. Regardless of the many delays and problems in its construction and operation, the Trans-Siberian railway represented one of the greatest feats of the empire. People and resources could move freely and relatively efficiently between European Russia and Siberia. For all the benefits this connection offered, it also created a number of dangers. As the Church soon realized, the railway provided a path for sectarians to travel from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok spreading their alleged heresy across the empire.⁵¹ At the station of Chelyabinsk, sectarians opened a Bible society which supplied settlers passing through with religious literature.⁵² Towns with railway stations in Omsk diocese gained the reputation throughout Siberia as being hotbeds of sectarian activities. Clergymen in Tomsk diocese labelled three of the main

⁵⁰ RGIA, f.797, op.82, 2ot., 3st., d.477, ll.3-4ob.

⁵¹ Vostorgov, "Znachenie i zadachi," 39. Vostorgov also presents the railway as facilitating the spread of the Baptist faith, RGIA, f.796, op.445, d.301, l.241 and RGIA, f.796, op.440, d.1274, l.15.

⁵² RGIA, f.796, op.201, 6ot., 3 st., d.233, l.7.

railway stations in Omsk diocese – Petropavlovsk, Omsk and Marianovka – as “landmark posts of sectarianism.” In these towns, sectarians settled and established well-organized networks where leaders and their supporters worked diligently to propagate their faith.⁵³ Missionaries often mentioned visiting villages near the railway line in their activity reports.⁵⁴ Mazaev, the Baptist leader, recalled a number of organized and accidental meetings with Orthodox missionaries involving the railway. In one case, Mazaev met with an Orthodox missionary in a public meeting close to Petropavlovsk station to discuss difference between Baptist and Orthodox on the issue of the baptism of children.⁵⁵ Mazaev shared another encounter that took place while he waited for a night train in the station of Chumliak along the Trans-Siberian. As the passengers began to arrive, he recognized Omsk missionary Nesmeianov, who was accompanied by a priest. The missionary, priest, a young woman, and a gentleman joined Mazaev around a table, where they discussed the Orthodox faith.⁵⁶

The Orthodox Church viewed travel as a dangerous process that left settlers vulnerable to the wiles of these unscrupulous groups. Omsk religious officials presented the route to Siberia as a maze with traps set by sectarians to lure unsuspecting Orthodox peasant-settlers into heresy. Diocesan officials accused sectarians of exploiting the mobility of the population for propaganda purposes. They claimed that Baptist preachers engaged in seemingly innocuous

⁵³ “Sektantstvo priblizhaetsia,” *OEVS*, no.17 (1906): 33.

⁵⁴ “Otchetnyia svedeniia o sostoianii sektantva v Omskoi eparkhii za vtoryi polovinu 1899 goda i pervuiu polovinu 1900 goda,” *OEVS*, no.22 (1900): 10.

⁵⁵ Gavriel I. Mazaev, *Obrashchenie na istinnyi put' i vospominaniya baptista G.I.M.* (Omsk: Board of the Siberian Department of the Baptist Union, 1919), 52.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

conversations on steamships, and in train stations where they informed colonists about the spiritual corruption of local inhabitants, and the absence of churches and priests in Siberia. The purpose of such conversations, according to church leaders, was to make it appear that the Orthodox Church had abandoned settlers. Feeling vulnerable, settlers would be open to accepting assistance from sectarians.⁵⁷

The uncontrolled nature of colonization contributed to the high level of anxiety surrounding the movement of shadowy figures throughout Siberia. The state attempted to control the departure of peasants from their home regions and their arrival in Siberia. Documented workers, however, could still prove to be dangerous. A story in *Omsk Diocesan News* expressed fears associated with scouts surreptitiously spreading their heretical religious beliefs while in Siberia on official duty. Vasilisk Pauchenko, an Orthodox clergyman, relayed to readers how an unfamiliar man had arrived unexpectedly at his doorstep one spring day. This forty-year-old man proved himself suspicious from the start, as he did not remove his hat upon entering the kitchen; nor did he cross himself in front of the icons. He asked to buy some bread from the servant who answered the door. Instead of leaving, he engaged Pauchenko in conversation. When asked about his faith, the wanderer identified himself as an Adventist-Subbotnik. He had travelled to Siberia from European Russia as a scout to select land for future settlers.⁵⁸ While the article continued to describe the conversation held between the man and the clergyman, including the complaints of the man against the church, the primary

⁵⁷ Mikhail Orlov, "Otchet: Omskago Eparkhial'nago Bratstva za 1911 god," *OEV*, no.15 (1912): 22. Also see *Otchetnyia svedeniia o sostoianii sektantva v Omskoi eparkhii za vtoroi polovinu 1899 goda i pervuiu polovinu 1900 goda*, *OEV*, no.22 (1900): 8.

⁵⁸ Vasilisk Pauchenko, "Opasnye pereselentsy," *OEV*, no.27 (1916): 29.

thrust of its argument was summarized in the title: “Dangerous Settlers.” Priests feared that men like this moved unhindered across Siberia, spreading dissent and criticism of the Orthodox Church to all who would listen.

Once they reached their new villages, secular and religious officials argued that the vulnerabilities of settlers only grew. According to Orthodox missionaries, sectarians invaded villages and settled among Orthodox believers. Secular officials acknowledged that sectarians were materially wealthier than their Orthodox brothers in Siberia. In Akmolinsk province, the governor described sectarians as being financially successful in the towns, where they engaged in trade and ran coaching inns. They were also good farmers and cattle-breeders and, in general, harder workers than the Orthodox peasants.⁵⁹ Bishop Sil’vestr provided a similar story about the industriousness and wealth of the Baptists in Omsk to the Holy Synod. He wrote that Baptists were often materially better off than their Orthodox brethren, and those Baptists who lacked material comforts received help from the community in the form of money, animals, and access to farm equipment.⁶⁰ Missionaries made similar claims about the wealth of Old Believers, who lived better and were more willing to help each other.⁶¹ Orthodox priests acknowledged that mutual assistance bred strong communities, which, in turn, contributed to the growth of sectarian and dissenter groups.

Orthodox missionaries stressed that this wealth of the Baptist community and its ability to offer material support to converts were at the heart of the

⁵⁹ A.N. Neverov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet Akmolinskago Gubernatora za 1910 i 1911 gody* (1912), 43.

⁶⁰ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2791, ll.11-11ob.

⁶¹ F. Troitskii, “Sovremennoe sostoianie raskola missi v Omskoi eparkhii,” *Pravoslavnyi Putevoditel’ zhurnal za 1905 god* (St, Petersburg, 1905), 271.

Baptists' success.⁶² Settlers needed many things upon arrival; even basic necessities such as bread, butter, and animals were difficult to obtain. It was their destitution and the grave misfortunes that plagued the experience of settlers which made them open to the temptation of Baptist teachings; the material help offered by Baptists to settlers blinded their eyes to the heresy.⁶³ According to the Orthodox clergy, the settlement of the exceedingly wealthy Baptist leader Gavriil Mazaev in Petropavlovsk also gave local Baptists the backing and confidence needed to spread their message. Church officials made frequent reference to the wealth of Mazaev in articles for *Omsk Diocesan News* and in personal correspondence, including the fact that Mazaev had sold his property in the Don district and now had over 12,000 acres of land within Omsk diocese, in the Petropavlovsk and Ishim districts.⁶⁴ This obsession with the perceived wealth backing the Baptist cause illustrates the uneasiness of the Orthodox clergy with the popularity of the Baptist movement and its struggle to explain this popularity. In their discussions of Baptist wealth and financial support of converts, Orthodox clergymen refused to acknowledge that historically material support had been an important tool in the conversion toolbox of Orthodox missionaries.

Orthodox priests portrayed Baptists on the frontier as conniving people, who carry out their propaganda in secret behind the back of the local priest. Nesmeianov received a report from one priest describing how five Baptist

⁶² See RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.1, l.264ob and "Iz vpechatlenii i praktiki missionera," *OEV*, no.4 (1905): 44.

⁶³ Nesmeianov presented this point at the Irkutsk Missionary Congress. D. Nesmeianov, "Irkutskii missionerskii s"ezd," *MO*, no.10 (1910): 1718.

⁶⁴ RGIA, f. 796, op.442, d.2161, l.6ob. The sources list him as having (although some is rented) 35,000 desiatina; 1desiatina = 2.7 acres.

families had seemingly lived among Orthodox parishioners, “quietly and modestly” but, in reality, were engaged in sharing their faith. In this village, the Baptists targeted members of the younger generation “enticing [the youth] with material gains, ostentatious pharisaical holiness, denial of fasting and other anti-Orthodox opinions.”⁶⁵ The openness of the youth to sectarianism caused a deep sense of failure among Orthodox clergymen, who struggled to understand why this was the case. As a partial explanation, Orthodox priests presented their parishioners as being almost bullied by the dissenter population; they claimed that sectarians intensely criticized the practices of Orthodox believers, telling them that they would never achieve salvation through these acts.⁶⁶ The Orthodox, lacking in knowledge of their faith, were ill-prepared to defend themselves against such charlatans.⁶⁷

Poverty also laid the groundwork for the success of sectarian propaganda in another way. As peasants struggled to build their new lives, this struggle proved so strenuous that they felt “weak in body and spirit.” Community life provided little comfort as settlers, even after living next to each other for years, still remained strangers. A secular official noted that poor harvests caused in-fighting among settlers and homesickness along with daily hardships contributed to feelings of pensiveness and moodiness.⁶⁸ These feelings of melancholy, the absence of a supportive community, and the experience of intense poverty all

⁶⁵ D. Nesmeianov, “Pervyia vpechatleniia shagi missionera,” *OEV*, no.3 (1908): 24.

⁶⁶ “Trudno zhit’ i umirat’ sredi raskol’nikov,” *OEV*, no.1 (1912): 34.

⁶⁷ The Old Believers interfered in the Orthodox mission to the Kazakhs, telling them that Orthodox was not a true Orthodox faith. Even Catholic settlers conducted propaganda among the Orthodox, see Vostorgov, “Znachenie i zadachi,” 40.

⁶⁸ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, ll.27ob-28.

made settlers more susceptible to a new way of thinking.

Omsk clergymen in Akmolinsk province identified space as performing a multi-faceted role in the spread of sectarianism. Diocesan officials emphasized the vastness of the diocese and the unevenness of parish development as an explanatory factor for their difficulties in controlling sectarianism. Some parishes in Omsk diocese were small, with parishioners living close to the church and priest, while others were vast and unwieldy.⁶⁹ Even in parishes with priests, these men were overworked, as the majority of the parishes in the Akmolinsk province were tremendously large. A priest could hardly keep up with performing the liturgy and rites, let alone travelling through the parish to keep his flock on the straight and narrow path. In the cases when the church stood over three hundred kilometres away, parishioners would only visit the church once or twice during their entire lifetime.⁷⁰ Under such conditions, settlers were open to the teachings of travelling preachers of any faith. As the Governor of Akmolinsk noted in his 1910-1911 report, Baptist preachers visited distant villages, finding curious ears who longed to hear about the outside world.⁷¹ In 1913, the governor claimed that over fifty Baptist preachers roamed the diocese spreading their faith.⁷² Settlers showed little understanding of their faith, according to Bishop Gavriil, and therefore, without priests nearby to explain the basic tenets of Orthodoxy, these Baptist preachers had easy prey.⁷³

⁶⁹ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2225, l.8.

⁷⁰ Dimitrii Nesmeianov, "Sibirskii raskol staroobriadchestva. Propaganda chrez pereselencheskoe delo," *MO*, no.2 (1911): 334.

⁷¹ Neverov, 42-43.

⁷² RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.1, l.298.

⁷³ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.225, ll.6-6ob.

Even without interference from the Baptists, the absence of churches and clergy caused problems for the state of Orthodoxy in the region. Isolation from church life contributed to settlers developing habits surrounding important life events that simply did not involve the Orthodox clergy. Without priests nearby, events like marriage and death lost their religious significance as celebrations took on a secular tone. Acts like confession, communion, and baptism also lost their meaning, as settlers found no opportunity to have these rituals performed. By its absence from the daily lives of settlers, the church, in effect, contributed to the vulnerability of its own population.⁷⁴ The Governor-General of the Steppe reported that in the Pavlodar district, the clergy were almost completely absent, leaving the population susceptible to the propaganda of the Baptists.⁷⁵ In such an environment, the appearance of a missionary who could share this burden, as Fr. Sergii Smirnov claimed, elicited joy in the hearts of the few local clergy attempting to manage this space.⁷⁶

Clergymen liked to believe that they had the power to convince their parishioners to stay faithful to the Orthodox faith, although they admitted that many did not have the necessary knowledge to perform this task. The example of Andrei Lodzhanskii, a merchant in the Omsk district who petitioned the Governor of Akmolinsk to convert to the Baptist faith, illustrates this point. The local dean could not convince him “to remain in the bosom of the Orthodox church.” Despite the priest’s exhortations, Lodzhanskii only wanted to hear evidence from the Gospels to convince him to remain Orthodox. An intervening missionary finally

⁷⁴ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.28.

⁷⁵ RGIA, f.796, op.191-2, 3st., 6ot., d.69, l.5.

⁷⁶ Sergii Smirnov, “Po povodu missionerskikh besed v g. Akmolinske,” *OEV*, no.10 (1910): 39.

stumped Lodzhanskii with evidence from the Bible and he agreed to remain in the Orthodox Church.⁷⁷ Simple exhortations appealing to fidelity to family and community would not sway such apostates; Orthodox leaders believed that only direct references to the Gospel might change their minds. Training, therefore, was of the utmost importance to educate priests in how to respond appropriately to questions from their parishioners. The Orthodox Church knew that it did not have its best representatives on the ground in Siberia. Many clergy had not graduated from seminary and were ill-prepared for missionary work among their parishioners.⁷⁸ For the most part, these men desired to help their parishioners; however, they simply did not know how to manage parishes with sectarians and this bred a sense of helplessness and hopelessness in them.⁷⁹

After 1905, the issue of sectarians and dissenters became more pressing. Fundamentally, Orthodox clergy believed that Baptists would never follow the laws created by the Russian state. Stories of Baptists opening their own churches and schools without permission from secular authorities appeared regularly in religious publications in the empire and Omsk was no exception.⁸⁰ In fact, sectarians proved more difficult to control in Siberia. One secular official argued that unlike European Russia where state and church officials were well-established and could monitor sectarians, Siberia offered too many nooks and crannies for sectarians to interact with Orthodox peasants without any supervision. This freedom from supervision and the sparseness of an Orthodox

⁷⁷ RGIA, f.796, op.193, d.1918, ll.22-22ob.

⁷⁸ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.23ob.

⁷⁹ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, ll.24ob-25.

⁸⁰ Shorets, "Sektantstvo v Tiukalinskom," 14-15.

presence gave the Baptists a ripe field for mission work.⁸¹ Religious and secular authorities also did not have the information required to keep track of sectarians. On the frontier, simple information such as where they lived and worshiped eluded the authorities. This was hardly surprising as very few secular authorities patrolled the region. For example, the district of Pavlodar in the province of Semipalatinsk had only one police supervisor, one assistant and a few police officials.⁸² Such conditions made systematic supervision impossible, and therefore sectarians could move and act freely without any interference from the authorities. This absence of supervision, the church argued, had emboldened these groups to engage in propagandising their faiths. The Baptists, in particular, breathed in deeply this air of religious freedom as exemplified by their decision to hold widely publicized meetings in Omsk. In June, they assembled every evening for ten days at a local theatre from eight in the morning until eleven at night where preachers invigorated the crowds. Orthodox believers joined with Baptists in the festivities, where they enjoyed the preaching and the singing.⁸³ Vostorgov complained that they also held public baptisms in Omsk.⁸⁴ Such spectacles, formerly illegal, reminded Orthodox clergymen of the new reality in which they now had to operate. The new religious laws also reinvigorated the Old Believers.

⁸¹ State and church officials were not the only ones who expressed dislike of Baptist preachers. The Akmolinsk Governor also referred to tension between Baptists and Molokans, as Molokans did not appreciate Baptists proselytizing in their communities. See Neverov, 42-43.

⁸² RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.55. Akmolinsk province was slightly better with 5 district supervisors, 5 assistants, and several police. RGIA, f.1286, op.17, d.165, l.219ob.

⁸³ RGIA f. 796, op.442, d.2161, l.6ob.

⁸⁴ RGIA, f.796, op.440, d.1274, l.21. Vostorgov also makes claims about Baptists publicly abusing icons. Allegations pertaining to icon-abuse were frequently mentioned in Orthodox literature. See Heather J. Coleman, "Tales of Violence against Religious Dissidents in the Orthodox Village," in *Sacred Stories: Religion and Spirituality in Modern Russia* ed. Mark Steinberg and Heather J. Coleman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 203-204.

According to one missionary account, this change in 1905 strengthened Old Believer communities in Siberia and made them more uncritically dogmatic (*nachetnichestvo*).⁸⁵

With these new religious freedoms, the Siberian Baptists moved quickly to develop their local institutional framework with help from their co-religionists in European Russia. The decision to open a branch of the Union of Russian Baptists in Siberia at the 1906 Russian Baptist congress in Rostov-on-Don alarmed Orthodox clergymen in the diocese.⁸⁶ In 1907, the Russian Baptists built a large brick church along the banks of the Om river in Omsk, thereby establishing the ultimate symbol of the community's strength and permanency in the administrative centre of western Siberia.⁸⁷ As Mazaev himself noted, the prayer house served not only the Baptist community in Omsk, but also all of Siberia.⁸⁸ It stood as a great, physical affront to the Orthodox Church, as fiery preachers filled its pews with parishioners.⁸⁹ In addition to offering the Baptists a legitimate space to meet, it also was a draw for curious Orthodox believers, who would then come

⁸⁵ "Postanovleniia Irkutskago missionerskago s"ezda po voprosam missii protivoraskol'niceskoi," *OEV*, no.20 (1910): 39.

⁸⁶ Priestless Old Believers in Siberia remained connected to their brethren beyond the Urals. Representatives from Semipalatinsk province attended a meeting in the province of Samara. See O. Kruglov, "Sobor 'chasovennykh' bezpopovtsev," *MO*, no.2 (1916): 289.

⁸⁷ Petr Epp, *100 let pod krovom Vsevyshnego: istoriia Omskikh obshchin EKhB i ikh ob"edineniia, 1907-2007* (Omsk: Samenkorn, 2007), 172. Accessing public space through the building of churches by sectarian groups caused problems in other parts of the empire as well. See Nicholas Breyfogle, "Prayer and the Politics of Place: Molokan Church Building, Tsarist Law and the Quest for a Public Sphere in Late Imperial Russia" in *Sacred Stories: Religion and Spirituality in Modern Russia*, 222-252. To provide a sense of comparison, by 1910, ten Orthodox churches existed in the city of Omsk. Z. N. Berkovskaia, "Omskaia eparkhiia v kul'turnoi zhizni stepnogo kraia v kontse XIX-nachale XX veka," *Nauchnye soobshchestva istorikov i arkhivistov: intellektual'nye dialogi so vremenem i mirom* (Omsk, 2006), 202.

⁸⁸ RGIA, f.796, op201, 6ot., 3st., d.233, l.3ob.

⁸⁹ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2225, l.7ob.

into contact with the faith.⁹⁰ The Baptists regularly held daytime and evening conversations in this church, where Orthodox clergymen claimed they zealously preached against Orthodox rites and practices.⁹¹ This church must have been well-equipped with religious literature, as Orthodox clergymen alleged that Mazaev donated three thousand of these books every year.⁹² The only reason for this situation, according to the Orthodox Church, was the new law pertaining to religious freedom. Even more infuriating must have been the Baptists' dream of opening a seminary in Omsk. Orthodox writers asserted that the Baptists had the funds to build such a facility.⁹³ In contrast, Orthodox officials in Omsk diocese had to plead with St. Petersburg for funds to build an Orthodox seminary. Such gossip stung Orthodox leaders in Omsk, who felt that not enough was being done to support their cause.

Response of Omsk Diocese

In response to this perceived threat, Omsk diocesan officials followed, like many other dioceses in the empire, a multi-thronged approach to their work among the Orthodox population. Missionaries, the clergy, and the laity all had roles to perform in this drama. Siberia created particular problems for missions: the distances between parishioners and their churches, the absence of priests in many regions, the changing face of the diocese's population, and the diversity of

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ I. Fokin, "Okolo Baptistov," *OEV*, no.13 (1910): 31.

⁹² Dimitrii Nesmeianov, "Doklad Irkutskomu missionerskomi s"ezdu Omskago eparkhial'nago missionera Dimitriiia Nesmeianova," *OEV*, no.19 (1910): 32.

⁹³ Nesmeianov, "Sibirskii raskol staroobriadchestva," 339.

people encountered by Orthodox believers in their new homeland, all complicated how the diocesan workers could perform missionary activities. While all these factors existed, the importation of missionary methods and priorities from European Russia demonstrates the extent to which a standard model to address sectarians and dissenters had developed in the empire.

Missionaries constituted one of the main weapons of the Orthodox Church in its fight against Old Belief and sectarianism. While many Siberian dioceses lacked an official anti-dissenter missionary, a fact that was criticized heavily by religious leaders in the region, Omsk diocese from the outset showed a commitment to having trained missionaries working in both fields.⁹⁴ During the 1899 clergy congress, the deputies approved the establishment of two anti-dissenter and anti-sectarian missionary positions and the creation of a library filled with publications on missionary work. The deputies acknowledged that the existence of schismatic faiths and the appearance of other sects because of the resettlement movement from European Russia necessitated such a strong reaction. To help cover the cost for the two positions, the congress approved allocating money to the cause from the sale of candles in the diocese.⁹⁵ By 1910, Omsk diocesan officials had requested another anti-sectarian missionary position be created. Citing the growth of sectarianism and the expansiveness of the diocese, Bishop Gavriil asked the Holy Synod for the necessary financial support to hire a

⁹⁴ The creation of Omsk diocese, however, did disrupt the work of the anti-dissenter missionary in Tiukalinsk district. By 1902, at least twenty parishes had been “infected” by Russians who dissented from the Orthodox faith, with a population of approximately 4500 people. Before 1895, the district had its own anti-dissenter missionary station there; this position ceased to exist once Omsk diocese was formed. F. Troitskii, “Iz istorii Tiukalinskago raskola,” *OEV*, no.16 (1902): 17-18.

⁹⁵ *Omskii eparkhial'nyi s"ezd dukhovenstva, zhurnaly s"ezda o.o deputatov ot dukhovenstva Omskoi eparkhii, proiskhodivshego v 1899 godu v Omske Akmolinskoi oblasti* (1899), 23.

missionary to work in the province of Semipalatinsk. Calling the request “extremely necessary,” Bishop Gavriil emphasized the spread of the Baptist faith in his appeal.⁹⁶

These missionaries travelled the diocese endlessly, talking to parishioners, helping priests and engaging in conversations with sectarians. In 1910, diocesan missionary Nesmeianov took twelve trips, in addition to his regular trips to Nikolaev and Omsk railway stations. During this year, he conducted over a hundred conversations on a variety of topics in various villages, covering over eight thousand kilometres.⁹⁷ Before Nesmeianov, Mikhail Orlov served this function and he often shared his schedules and experiences out in the field with readers of *Omsk Diocesan News*. Veneration of icons, child baptism, and the sign of the cross were well-worn topics during Orlov’s journey; however, in addition to questions of basic theology, he also addressed topical issues such as the response of the Holy Synod to the alleged heresy of the renowned Russian writer, Lev Nikolaievich Tolstoy.⁹⁸

Missionaries also performed the important function of collecting information on the sectarian population to help officials create a map of dissent in the diocese. In 1900, the church began collecting such information. Mikhail Orlov requested through *Omsk Diocesan News* that parish priests provide him with

⁹⁶ RGIA, f.796, op.191-2, 3st., 6ot., d.69, l.2.

⁹⁷ Mikhail Orlov, “Otchet: Omskago Eparkhial’nago Bratstva za 1911 god,” *OEVS*, no.15 (1912): 20; “O missiionerskikh besedakh s baptistami v selakh Medvekhenskoi i Uspenskoi Petropavlovskoi uezdy,” *OEVS*, no.5 (1911): 42-47. Such trips took place regularly. See “Otchet o deiatel’nosti Omskago missiionerskago Soveta za 1915,” *OEVS*, no.32 (1916): 10-21. The Governor of Akmolinsk also reported on missionary work being done in Omsk diocese, see RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.1, ll.298-298ob.

⁹⁸ Mikhail Orlov, “Otchetnyiia svedeniia o sostoanii sektantstva v Omskoi eparkhii za vtoruiu polovinu 1900 goda i za 1901 god,” *OEVS*, no.21 (1902):11.

information on sectarians in their parishes. Orlov asked many of the standard questions of the internal mission, such as the number of sectarians, where they lived, whether they had established places of worship, whether they proselytized and the measures undertaken locally to strengthen Orthodoxy.⁹⁹ With such information, missionaries could focus their energy on villagers in the most danger.

Diocesan leaders understood that a handful of missionaries, however, could hardly be expected to save the diocese from sectarians and dissenters. Protecting the true faith of Orthodox believers required more action within the afflicted communities. Churches and schools needed to be built and priests needed to inspire parishioners. In other words, parish life had to be strengthened to ward off the spread of sectarianism and Old Belief. Over the years, the bishops of Omsk attempted to create action plans for supporting Orthodoxy in settler villages. For example, in 1903, Bishop Sergii urged that in parishes where Orthodox believers lived near sectarians or Old Believers, priests should inspire the population with heartfelt performances of the liturgy and parish rites. He also promoted the idea that schools also should be established particularly for boys but where the opportunity arose, for girls as well. Access to education would provide children with the tools that they would need to study the Orthodox faith.¹⁰⁰ Classes on Orthodoxy would also help them to develop a basic understanding of the faith. The bishop viewed the strengthening of a structured approach to religious teaching and practice as the key to protecting his flock from the temptation of

⁹⁹ "Ukaz ego Imperatorskago Velichestva Samoderzhtsa Vserossiiskago iz Omskoi dukhovnoi konsistorii prichtam tserkvi Omskoi eparkhii," *OEV*, no.9 (1900): 3.

¹⁰⁰ In this way, women had a greater role to perform as teachers in diocesan schools. Bishop Vladimir mentioned that classes in the Diocesan Women's Institute had helped acquaint them with the teachings of sectarians. See RGIA, f.796, op.440, d.1274, l.41.

sectarian and schismatic faiths. He also emphasized that the priests should read from the Gospel in Russian or engage in a simple retelling of biblical stories to make their service more accessible to their parishioners.¹⁰¹ Many priests did read from the Gospels in the Russian language and provided explanations for the text. Icon processions also aided in the fight against sectarianism, as priests travelled throughout their parishes holding services and answering questions from their parishioners.¹⁰² Songs became another popular way to encourage the participation of the laity in religious activity.¹⁰³ In general, religious leaders in Omsk diocese viewed the clergy as the primary group with the potential ability to save the population from sectarianism.¹⁰⁴

Access to literature of an anti-sectarian and apologetic nature for priests and parishioners was viewed as an important factor in the fight against sectarianism. Many orthodox priests struggled to respond to the questions of parishioners and the criticisms of sectarians directed against the church because they lacked access to books and brochures explaining how they should answer.¹⁰⁵ Bishops supported the opening of libraries in regions with sectarians.¹⁰⁶ In this endeavour, the Omsk Diocesan Brotherhood emerged as a key resource. The Omsk Diocesan Brotherhood helped to create educational resources for the clergy and the peasant population in the diocese. It invested heavily in establishing a library in Omsk, which could serve the community by offering access to books

¹⁰¹ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.1965, l.26ob.

¹⁰² RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.1, l.298ob.

¹⁰³ Bishop Vladimir proposed that cantors should arrive thirty minutes before the service started to look over the text. See RGIA, f.796, op.440, d.124, l.41.

¹⁰⁴ Troitskii makes the argument that sectarianism can only be defeated by the clergy, Troitskii, "Iz istorii," 18.

¹⁰⁵ Orlov, "Otchet: Omskago Eparkhial'nago Bratstva za 1911 god," 19.

¹⁰⁶ RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2654, l.13.

and journals that would help in boosting the morals of the population. In 1903, nearly five hundred people used the library, which included subscriptions to many of the top religious journals in the empire.¹⁰⁷ It also was committed to the establishment of church choirs in villages as well as providing prayer books, liturgical equipment and vestments for a reduced price. The brotherhood contributed to the cultural development of the diocese through various projects such as assisting in the opening of parish schools and in the acquisition of books for schools and for parish libraries. Notably, the types of books included not only religious books but also those with patriotic content. Upon the request of the diocesan missionary, the brotherhood sent bibles in the Russian language and missionary books to serve as a guide to villages influenced by sectarianism.¹⁰⁸ By 1903, the brotherhood had expressed interest in financially supporting an anti-dissenter missionary and establishing an anti-dissenter library in the district of Tiukalinsk.¹⁰⁹

The Omsk diocesan brotherhood's work extended beyond the realm of education, and the organization illustrates one type of cooperative entity that developed between the clergy and the laity. Bishop Grigorii created the "Omsk Diocesan Brotherhood of Enthusiasts of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Russian

¹⁰⁷ "Deiatel'nost' bratstva," *OEV*, no.5 (1903): 11. For more on the importance of libraries and books for religious purposes in western Siberia, see N.V. Elizarova, "Rol' missionerskikh bibliotek v rasprostraneniі pravoslaviia na territorii Omskogo priptysh'ia kontsa XIX-nachala XX vv.," *Omskii Nauchnyi Vestnik* 25, no.4 (2003): 46-49; N.V. Elizarova, "Dukhovnaia kniga v repertuare chteniia zhitelei zapadnoi sibli v kontse XIX- nachale XX veka," *Russkii Vopros: Istoriia i Sovremennost'* (Omsk, 2007): 88-90.

¹⁰⁸ D. Nesmeianov, "Pervyia vpechatleniia shagi missionera," *OEV*, no.3 (1908): 26.

¹⁰⁹ "Deiatel'nost' bratstva," *OEV*, no.5 (1903): 8; "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Omskago missionerskago Soveta za 1915," *OEV*, no.31 (1916):12.

nationality and Christian good works” as one of his first acts as bishop.¹¹⁰ It took a few years to organize, but by 1898, the brotherhood had been established and approved, complete with a document of its statutes. This document of the brotherhood listed fifteen general activities that its members were to pursue. The list of activities provides a glimpse into the general issues viewed to be important by the diocesan hierarchy in the early years of the diocese. The first activity on the list referred to supporting the building of new churches, especially in settler and other poor parishes. Renovating dilapidated churches and chapels also was on the list of duties for the brotherhood. Supporting village and parish religious life ranked high on the brotherhood’s priorities.¹¹¹

Diocesan authorities also encouraged the participation of the local clergy in missionary work by holding pastoral missionary courses. Such events were a twentieth-century phenomenon within the Orthodox Church. They originated in Kiev province around 1904 and soon spread to other parts of the empire. Omsk diocese held its first missionary courses in 1906 under the leadership of Bishop Gavriil. The courses, which lasted twelve days in June, were described as holding significance for both the church and state. The Governor-General attended a speech by the bishop, in which Gavriil emphasized to his audience the difficulties

¹¹⁰ *Ustav Omskago Eparkhial’nago Bratstva revnitelei Pravoslaviia, Samoderzhaviia, Russkoi narodnosti i Khristianskago blagotvoreniiia* (Omsk: Tipografiia A.K. Demidova, 1898), 1-16.

¹¹¹ Brotherhoods in other dioceses in Siberia performed similar roles. See “Prosvetitel’naia deiatel’nost’ bratstva v dukhe pravoslavnoi tserkvi,” *TEV*, no.24 (1910): 331-346. From its inception, the brotherhood allowed both sexes to join. Later on, the brotherhood encouraged the involvement of women by creating a ladies’ committee to help in educating the people – a key line of defence in the fight against sectarianism. M. Orlov, “Ot damskago komiteta pri eparkhial’nom Bratstve,” *OEV*, no.23 (1913): 57-59. Despite the involvement of women, the majority of the members of the brotherhood were from the clergy. In 1912, the breakdown was as follows: 9 archpriests, 115 priests, 10 deacons, 98 sacristans, 2 monks, and 24 secular people. See “Spisok,” *OEV*, no.23 (1913):19.

created by the 17 April 1905 manifesto for the church and how this new environment required spiritual strength on the part of the clergy. Such words demonstrated how after 1905, parish priests grew in importance in the eyes of their superiors. These men formed the first line of defence against sectarianism; yet these courses reflected the lack of faith that bishops had in the leadership skills among pastors as they must be trained to address the spiritual need of their parishioners.¹¹²

The Missionary Council of Omsk encouraged the clergy to interact with parishioners beyond the parish church. Particularly in places “infected” with sectarianism, the council recommended that the clergy should perform the liturgy “not only in the parish church but also in prayer houses or spacious homes...”¹¹³ In addition to creating spaces for interaction outside of the parish church, this request opened opportunities for the participation of the laity and lower clergy in organizing and leading moments of worship. Enthusiasts (*revniteli*) of Orthodoxy were asked to create schedules for clerical visits and keep the population informed. These men, along with the lower clergy, could also be asked to chant an akafist hymn or lead the congregation in songs or conversations about questions of faith.¹¹⁴ The Missionary Council published a list of recommended books that could be read to parishioners on these occasions. Such activities were indicative of the activist policies pursued under Bishop Andronik, whose vision for the

¹¹² “Missionerstvo, sekty i raskol,” *MO*, no.7-8 (1906):169.

¹¹³ “Ot Omskago eparkhial’nago missionerskago soveta,” *OEI*, no.20 (1913):10.

¹¹⁴ Akafist hymns gained increasing popularity in personal and community worship during the nineteenth century in Russia. See Vera Shevzov, “Scripting the Gaze: Liturgy, Homilies and the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God in Late Imperial Russia,” in *Sacred Stories: Religion and Spirituality in Modern Russia*, ed. Mark Steinberg and Heather Coleman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 68-69.

diocese emphasized a pastoral role for the clergy, while acknowledging that the clergy alone could not perform all the religious duties necessary to support parish life.

Omsk diocesan officials directed their attention towards the route travelled by settlers and the villages that experienced high traffic due to the Trans-Siberian railway. The church sought to protect migrants on their journey and to keep villages near railway stations out of the hands of sectarians. When the Trans-Siberian first opened, railway cars were transformed into chapels, where priests tended to the religious needs of travellers and workers along the railway.¹¹⁵ In 1900, the consistory assigned two missionaries to attend to villages along the railway line: one focused on the western part of the line, between Omsk and Petropavlovsk and the other on the eastern part, between Omsk and Kainsk. Later, the Omsk Diocesan Missionary Council recommended that priests be assigned to travel routes between Petropavlovsk and Omsk to guide settlers spiritually as they travelled. The council expressed fear that settlers looking for spiritual comfort would turn to Baptist propagandists along the way if they could not find an Orthodox priest.¹¹⁶ It appealed to the Holy Synod Special Council and the Resettlement Administration to provide financial means to support travelling priests, who would hold services, perform rites for the settlers, hand out literature and protect against Baptist propaganda.¹¹⁷ The idea that settlers required religious

¹¹⁵ Steven G. Marks, *Road to Power: The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia, 1850-1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 168.

¹¹⁶ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.111. At the 1910 Missionary Congress, participants proposed assigning a special missionary to the routes of the migrants as they traversed Siberia by train and steamship. See "Postanovleniia Irkutskago missionerskago s"ezda po voprosam missii protivoraskol'niceskoi," *OEI*, no.20 (1910): 40.

¹¹⁷ RGIA, f.799, op.15, d.1679, l.111ob. The response of the Holy Synod was not recorded.

supervision on their travels illustrates the deep concern diocesan officials held for the spread of the Baptist faith.

The diocesan officials, somewhat tentatively, encouraged the laity to participate in combatting sectarianism. In 1909, over three hundred adherents of both sexes participated in a missionary gathering at the station of Omsk. The event had the blessing of Bishop Gavriil. During the gathering, participants studied the bible and learned how to help with the anti-sectarian mission and be vigilant watchdogs for sectarian propaganda.¹¹⁸ The Baptists regularly used private homes to carry out their propaganda work and these Orthodox men and women began to visit the hosts of these events, in an attempt to shame them. They also travelled to a number of villages to help with services by singing during vespers and leading conversations among parishioners with an archpriest and deacon accompanying them. One priest suggested that missionary groups be considered for all parishes with sectarian populations. By teaching Orthodox parishioners that the defence of their faith was the responsibility of every Christian, Orthodox leaders felt they had a better chance at containing the spread of sectarianism. For this undertaking, clergy must help to organize their parishioners.¹¹⁹ However, even though the church had made more efforts to

¹¹⁸ "Otchet: Omskago eparkhial'nago protivosektantskago i protivoraskol'nicheskago missionera D. Nesmeianova o sostoianii sektantstva i raskola v Omskoi eparkhii u deiatel'nosti missionerov v 1909-i god," *OEV*, no.10 (1910): 9. A priest described a similar event and the rules applied to this particular missionary circle. See Akindin Pravdin, "Pravila dlia missionerskago kruzhka pri Sviato-Troitstoi tserkvi stantsii Omsk Sib. Zhel, dorogi, Omskoi eparkhii," *OEV*, no.11 (1910): 32-38.

¹¹⁹ "Otchet: Omskago eparkhial'nago bratsva za 1911 god," *OEV*, no.15 (1912): 20. Bishop Andronik supported the hosting of similar events in the diocese, where enthusiasts of the Orthodox faith could meet and discuss missions. RGIA, f.796, op.442, d.2654, l.27ob. In certain areas, the clergy responded enthusiastically to the idea of sharing the defence of Orthodoxy, which Andronik supported: see "Arkhiepiskopskii prizyv dukhovstva k uchrezhdeniiu narodno-missionerskikh

involve the laity in nurturing their own religiosity, it still did not trust the laity fully to perform this function. Conversations about how to reinforce the faith of parishioners still began primarily with reference to the role of the priest; diocesan officials considered the laity only as a secondary line of defence. The shallowness of the church's faith in the abilities of parishioners to inspire each other reveals its continued paternalism toward the peasantry. Yet, as many would agree, the Baptists derived part of their success among the peasantry from their ability to speak the "language of the peasantry."¹²⁰ Who better to speak that language than the peasants themselves?

Diocesan authorities also reinterpreted traditional Orthodox practices to fortify the faith of the laity. For example, diocesan officials began organizing long-distance icon processions with anti-sectarian and anti-dissenter overtones. In addition to using such events to communicate with parishioners on issues of faith, diocesan leaders also viewed such celebrations as inspiring an atmosphere of spiritual delight, which nourished the faith of parishioners. In 1913, Omsk diocese held two such events. The first missionary procession took place over the course of eleven days in July between Omsk and the town of Tatarsk with two icons written on Mount Athos: the icon of the Mother of God "Quick to Hearken" (*ikony Bozhiei Materi Skoroposlushnitsy*) and the icon of the Great Martyr Saint Pantaleon (*Sv. Velikomuchenik Panteleimon*). At each village where the procession stopped, a sermon was also conducted. The type of sermon depended on the

kursov v eparkhii," *OEV*, no.23 (1913):1-2.

¹²⁰ The Orthodox Church recognized the significance of community involvement to the success of the Baptists, yet as Coleman points out, the Orthodox Church found this trait worrisome. Coleman, 78-79.

characteristics of the local populations – in places with sectarian or dissenter populations, priests held a sermon with a missionary theme in addition to services with an akafist.¹²¹ The second procession carried an icon of St. Evfronsiniia Polotskaia, a twelfth century noblewoman who gave up that life to become a nun, to the western part of the diocese. During this procession at the end of September, large crowds met the icon, which was transported in part by train. Booksellers associated with the Brotherhood sold icons of St. Evfronsiniia, hagiographic and anti-sectarian literature.¹²²

Orthodox missionaries sought to understand how other groups coped with and understood the presence of the Baptists and even hesitantly looked for allies in this struggle. In 1910, Moscow-based Old Believer theologian D.S. Varakin travelled to Enisei province to engage with the local population. On his way back, he stopped at Omsk, and local Orthodox clergy asked to have a private conversation with Varakin. Fr. Il'ia Fokin obtained an audience with Varakin and asked questions about the attitude of Old Believers towards the Baptist faith and why the Old Believers did not stand up against it. Fokin also asked about Varakin's personal views on the Baptists.¹²³ Varakin responded quite frankly to these questions. Without hesitation, Varakin labeled the Baptist faith as heretical. Yet, he failed to understand why Old Believer communities should engage in measures to stop the spread of the faith, particularly as Old Believers simply did

¹²¹ Pavel Svetlozorov, "Missionerskii krestnyi khod s Afonskimi sviatyniami ot g. Omska do g. Tatarska," *OEV*, no.17 (1913): 13-15. The route is along the railway line, and although the article mentions railway town churches, it does not indicate if the railway was used to transport the icons.

¹²² Nikolai Lebedev, "O krestnom khod po eparkhii s ikonoi Prep. Evfrosinii Polotskoi," *OEV*, no.23 (1913): 53-54.

¹²³ Il'ia Fokin, "Starobriadtsy i baptism," *OEV*, no.13 (1910): 24.

not become Baptists. As he stated, “Yours break away. Ours, Old Believers, do not turn to the Baptists...Not one in Moscow and not one in Omsk. When they go, we will defend [ourselves].” Varakin understood this issue as a problem of the Orthodox community. Even with Fokin emphasizing how sectarianism posed a common enemy, Varakin refused to acknowledge this connection. Instead he repeatedly claimed the moral superiority of his community by reiterating that Old Believers did not convert to the Baptist faith.¹²⁴

Community Life and Religious Pluralism

The attitude of the Orthodox population toward its non-Orthodox, Christian neighbours was a topic of great interest to diocesan authorities. They seemed to hunt for patterns which could help explain the personal and community traits that created vulnerabilities among the population. Numerical dominance, the abilities of the priest, and the fanaticism of the non-Orthodox population were a few of the explanatory characteristics proposed by Omsk clergymen. Such suppositions cannot be evaluated based on available evidence; yet, they reveal how the clerical population interpreted religious pluralism manifesting itself in community life. The picture presented on the pages of *Omsk Diocesan News* was contradictory, at best, and instead of highlighting the factors that led to the spread of sectarianism, they show the precarious nature of community life.

A number of priests presented local life as being influenced by the number of dissenters or sectarians living in the village. Omsk missionary priest F. Troitskii

¹²⁴ Ibid., 27.

offered the observation that in places where the dissenter or sectarian population outnumbered Orthodox believers, they could control administrative positions. In such villages, he claimed to witness how dissenters elected their own and used village authority (*sel'skaia vlast'*) to help their fellow dissenters to the oppression (*pritesnenie*) of the Orthodox population.¹²⁵ The opposite could also be true as a priest reported that the Orthodox villagers of Sergievskii requested the eviction of a local Baptist from the village.¹²⁶ Orthodox priests argued that sectarians acted quietly and modestly in villages where Orthodox parishioners held a majority, and where a strong parish priest resided. When sectarians did stridently promote their religious position, the Orthodox population only needed the guidance of priests to boost their resolve against these intruders. Once the Orthodox population had been reassured in their faith, they reacted with hostility, and sometimes even violence towards sectarians.¹²⁷ According to one priest, after he had held a meeting to remind them of their Orthodox faith Orthodox parishioners broke the window of a sectarian family's home.¹²⁸ This priest did not condone the act, but rather presented the story as one of the realities of religious pluralism in the village.

Moments of religious celebration could also provide an opportunity for protest from one side. A 1913 icon procession showcased the tensions religious pluralism could create in villages. At Isil'kul', a railway town with a strong presence of Molokans and Baptists, the arrival of the icon of St. Evfrosiniia

¹²⁵ Troitskii, "Sovremennoe sostoianie," 270.

¹²⁶ "Otnosheniia mezhdru sektantami i pravoslavnymi," *OEV*, no.15 (1905): 19.

¹²⁷ For more on violence between sectarian and Orthodox communities, see Heather Coleman, "Tales of Violence," 200–221.

¹²⁸ "Otnosheniia mezhdru sektantami i pravoslavnymi," *OEV*, no.15 (1905): 18-20.

Polotskaia engendered a reaction from this population. As the Orthodox population walked through the town with the icon, Baptists and Molokans publicly displayed their disapproval of such an event by drawing the curtains of their windows.¹²⁹

Fundamentally, however, village discord caused by religious pluralism was unpredictable. People of different religions could live peacefully together, as illustrated by the case of the village of Dimitrievka. Fr. Orlov described how the arrival of two Baptist families in 1905, and one shtundist family the following year, did not lead to blows among villagers. In fact, the main dispute took place among the settlers from eighteen different provinces over their local customs and habits, which had no relation to sectarianism, a reality that Orlov attempted to obscure through blaming local discord on the beginning of sectarian propaganda in the region.¹³⁰ In another case, Old Believers and Orthodox parishioners lived together harmoniously while shunning their sectarian neighbours. They even shared a graveyard (although they did divide it into two sections). Such a compromise was deemed impossible with villagers following other faiths, as Old Believers and Orthodox believers alike refused to allow sectarians to be buried with their dead.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Lebedev, 53.

¹³⁰ M. Orlov, "Missionerskaia poezdka v pereselencheskii poselok Dimitrievku Kainskago uezda, Omskoi eparkhii," *MO*, no.7-8 (1910): 1208.

¹³¹ M. Orlov, "Otchet Omskago eparkhial'nago bratstva za 1911 god," *OEI*, no.16 (1912): 6. The actions of diocesan authorities could also lead to tensions within the community that did not previously exist as the case of the village of Aevskii demonstrates. The authorities closed the cemetery because Old Believers were burying their dead improperly and this led to arguments and strained relations between the Old Believers and the minority Orthodox population. Although this village did not have any settlers, it does show how interference from the outside could influence the dynamics of the village life. See IsAOO, f.16, op.1, d.83, ll.2-5. For information about the parish (Zav'ialovskoe) and its population, see Ioann Goloshubin, *Spravochnaia kniga Omskoi*

Even the relationship between sectarians and parish priests could be hostile or cordial. In general, Orthodox clergymen alleged that sectarians treated the parish priest with disdain and worked to undermine his authority in the village. They alleged that sectarians ironically referred to the priest using his first name and patronymic, mocked his clothing and hair. Suggesting that the priest only performed his duties for profit and that he purposely avoided engaging with sectarians because of his dismal knowledge of the bible, they questioned his commitment to his faith and calling. Yet, some Orthodox clergymen acknowledged they encountered sectarians who treated the parish priest with respect and gratitude and complimented the priest on his engagement in the community.¹³²

Missionary Congress 1910

The Missionary Congress held in Irkutsk in 1910 demonstrates how intertwined the issues of resettlement, sectarianism, and missions had become in Siberia. The Congress brought together representatives from Siberian dioceses, as well as top missionary figures like Ioann Vostorgov and a representative from the office of the Chief Procurator. V.M. Skvortsov, the editor of the empire's leading journal addressing the internal mission, *Missionary Review*, was also present and his attendance ensured that the proceedings would have extensive coverage in the journal. The Irkutsk Congress, held in July, followed closely on the heels of a

eparkhii (Omsk: Tipografiia Irtysh, 1914), 809-810.

¹³² "Otnosheniia mezhdru sektantami i pravoslavnymi," *OEV*, no.15 (1905): 19.

missionary congress in June in Kazan.¹³³ The Irkutsk Congress was a smaller event and with only ninety-five participants, it had less than half of the numbers of Kazan. The majority of the representatives were from the hosting diocese of Irkutsk (fifty-one people), with only a handful of participants from St. Petersburg and the other Siberian dioceses. Five secular representatives also joined the proceedings, including the Chief Inspector of Eastern Siberia, and a representative from the Resettlement Administration.¹³⁴ Omsk diocese sent three representatives: Archpriest A.A. Golosov, diocesan missionary D.A. Nesmeianov and Fr. I. Fokin.¹³⁵ The congress highlighted important questions related to the internal and external missions, exploring questions that held relevance for the church's future work in Siberia, Japan, China and Korea.¹³⁶

The congress was organized into six sessions, which covered a host of issues related to the external missions to various indigenous groups, as well as the anti-sectarian and anti-schismatic missionary activities.¹³⁷ Skvortsov opened the congress with a speech. Reproduced on the pages of *Missionary Review*, it highlighted the potential glory of the Siberian mission, acknowledged the

¹³³ For more on the congress in Kazan, see Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 395–400, 421–430 and Frank T. McCarthy, "The Kazan Missionary Congress," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 13 (1973): 308-322. On the Kiev Congress, see Heather J. Coleman, "Definitions of Heresy: The Fourth Missionary Congress and the Problem of Cultural Power in Russia after 1905," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 52, no.1 (2004): 70-91. The Kiev Congress helped those in Siberia to consider their own missionary efforts, P. Golovachev, "Sibirskie Missii," *SV*, no.17 (1908): 1-7.

¹³⁴ "Irkutskii missionerskii s'ezd," *MO*, no.9 (1910): 1538-1539. In addition to these secular representatives who participated in the congress, a number of higher secular officials also made an appearance.

¹³⁵ The Bishop of Omsk did not join the bishops of Tomsk, Vladivostok, Transbaikalia, Yakutsk, Irkutsk, and vicar bishops from Kyoto, and Kirenskii.

¹³⁶ Skortsov, "Dieiatel'nost' pravoslavnoi missii," 174.

¹³⁷ "Irkutskii missionerskii s'ezd," *OEV*, no.16 (1910): 42-44. For the resolutions adopted by the congress, see Nesmeianov, "Irkutskii missionerskii s'ezd," *MO*, no.10 (1910):1716-1717.

weaknesses that plagued the entire endeavour, and expressed his hopes for the future. He spoke of how Irkutsk, along with past congresses, had the goal of fulfilling the religious aspirations started with the Baptism of Rus'.¹³⁸ The future, however, was not settled, particularly in light of the uncertainty created in the post-1905 environment. The new laws had completely changed the conditions under which missions were conducted. It had taken a number of years for the Orthodox Church to adapt and while he hoped that these congresses symbolized the start of a new epoch in the history of the church, it was difficult to tell what the future held, especially for Siberia. As Skvortsov asked,

Will Siberia be a stronghold of Orthodoxy or a conglomerate of every sect and heresy, similar to a North American building of a religious tower of Babel – that is the great burning question, upon which our current congress must dwell, in deep thought and cast aside light-hearted complacency; [the congress] must remember that the enemy is at the gates.¹³⁹

For Skvortsov, settlement created both possibilities: it helped to create a new Siberia; yet it also planted enemies.¹⁴⁰ The fate of the region would depend upon the strength of the shepherds leading the flock.

Unfortunately, the congress highlighted the glaring inadequacies of missionary resources in Siberian dioceses. The commission that organized the proceedings did not have the wealth and material resources of the Kazan congress. Both types of missions, external and internal, revealed themselves to be in desperate straits. Nonetheless, for Skvortsov, the internal mission proved more

¹³⁸ Skvortsov, "Nadavnee-proshloe i nastoiashchee pravoslavnoi missii," 1735.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 1739. Vostorgov agreed with Skvortsov's assessment that the Irkutsk congress showed the urgency of the internal mission in Siberia. RGIA, f.796, op.445, d.301, l.242. Vostorgov also gave a speech at the beginning of the congress, see "Znachenie i zadachi obshchesibirskago missionerskago s"ezda," *OEV*, no.17 (1910): 30-34.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

significant for the church and state. Whereas the significance of the external mission was in saving the souls of the indigenous peoples of Siberia, the internal mission sought to save Siberia from a great danger. Despite the necessity of developing a strong internal mission, as the congress had shown, Siberian dioceses were completely unprepared for missionary work. The region lacked the organizational and personnel resources required for success.¹⁴¹

At the congress, how to improve the education of clergy emerged as a key question of the proceedings. Support existed for opening various types of educational institutions across Siberia, such as a seminary in Omsk, and a variety of missionary schools in various locations in the region. Participants also expressed support for establishing a theological missionary academy in Russia.¹⁴² The 1908 Kiev Missionary Congress had raised the question of a fifth theological academy and suggested Siberia as the proper site for such an institution.¹⁴³ Although the 1910 congress supported the idea of a new academy and not Siberia as the most desirable site, by 1914 a western Siberian civil servant, L. Lavrent'ev, had published a proposal promoting such an institution be established in Tomsk. Lavrent'ev argued that the missionary circumstances of Siberia helped to justify this choice. As he wrote, "No where in European Russia has such gratifying, interesting, and challenging tasks for missionary work, like in Siberia."¹⁴⁴

Training the clergy in missions emerged as a major topic of consideration

¹⁴¹ Skvortsov, "Deiatel'nost' pravoslavnoi missii," *MO*, no.1 (1911): 174-175. Positive coverage of the event and the need for missionary work also was found in the secular press. A. Kopmev, "Missionerskaia deiatel'nost' v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosy*, no.8 (1912): 54-61.

¹⁴² Nesmeianov, "Irkutskii missionerskii s"ezd," *MO*, no.10 (1910):1718, 1720.

¹⁴³ "Nuzhna li v Sibiri dukhovnaia akademiia?" *Sibirskie Voprosy*, no.31-32 (1908): 70.

¹⁴⁴ L. Lavrent'ev, *Sibirskaia dukhovnaia akademiia* (Tomsk: Pech. S. P. Iakovleva, 1914), 4.

at the congress. The congress provided an opportunity for Siberian dioceses to learn from each other and compare notes on how to organize diocesan missions. An assessment of the conference presented in *Missionary Review*, argued that only Omsk and Tomsk deserved credit for their internal missions. According to the article, Kazan Theological Academy candidate, D. Nesmeianov, Omsk's diocesan missionary, showed talent in his work and Tomsk had created two new missionary positions in the diocese to address their difficulty with sectarianism. The Bishop of Yakutsk also had vast experience in the missionary field to share, as did a number of other missionary specialists sent by the Holy Synod to help teach Siberian priests how best to organize their missions.

At the congress, Nesmeianov proposed a number of measures that could be implemented in Omsk diocese to address the issue of sectarianism. He proposed a more substantial institutional framework to reinforce missionary work. For example, Nesmeianov supported the establishment of a seminary in Omsk and a specialized missionary theological academy in Russia. Addressing the issue of settlement also occupied an important position for Nesmeianov. He proposed asking the Holy Synod to appoint missionary-priests at strategic points along the route of settlers to provide spiritual guidance. Omsk diocese needed to establish parish missionary circles not only in churches, not also in new settlements. Finally, settler parishes in danger of sectarianism should receive priority in church and school building.¹⁴⁵ The repetition of such an idea, which had been circulating

¹⁴⁵ Dimitrii Nesmeianov, "Doklad Irkutskomu Missionerskomu s"ezd Omskago eparkhial'nago missionera Dimitriia Nesmeianova," *OEI*, no.19 (1910): 37-39. A condensed version of this article appeared in the journal *Missionary Review*: "O Sibirskom sektantstve," *MO*, no.10 (1910): 1717-1718.

in the diocese for years, shows that Omsk diocese had a problem with implementing ideas, which most likely stemmed from the financial constraints of the diocese.

State, Church, and Sectarianism

The issue of sectarianism in Siberia, like in other parts of Russia, was not understood to be solely the concern of the church. Sectarianism had political implications as illustrated through the accusation that sectarians lost their connection to Russian culture and became political liabilities. Therefore addressing its spread throughout Siberia involved both church and state officials. This contrasted distinctly with Old Belief, which the church and state viewed as primarily a religious issue, although with political overtones, as the church adamantly disagreed with the state's proposed changes to the status of Old Believers.¹⁴⁶ Unlike sectarians, neither the church nor state questioned the loyalty and patriotism of the Old Believer community. In Omsk diocese, while the church focused resources on both the anti-dissenter and anti-sectarian missions, the state only concerned itself with the issue of sectarianism. The involvement of the state in this issue created a space for cooperation between church and state and more often than not, secular and religious authorities understood themselves as partners in this endeavour. Yet, tensions also existed in that relationship as both state and religious officials could use the issue of sectarianism as a platform to criticize the work of each other. These tensions demonstrate how politicized the issue of

¹⁴⁶ Peter Waldron, "Religious Reform after 1905: Old Believers and the Orthodox Church," *Oxford Slavonic Papers* 20 (1987): 110-139.

sectarianism remained throughout the empire and how the state continued to understand this issue as part of the responsibility of the state.

Words exchanged, both positive and negative, between religious and secular officials on the topic of missions illustrates the involvement of both groups in this matter. For example, Governor A. N. Neverov of Akmolinsk praised the Omsk diocesan brotherhood for its tireless work supporting Orthodox communities. For centuries, Orthodoxy had united Russians into “one great family” and during contemporary times, the Governor viewed the brotherhood as performing an important role in strengthening “a feeling of love and devotion toward the Orthodox church, the throne, and the fatherland (*otechestvo*).”¹⁴⁷ The brotherhood returned the accolades by expressing its deep appreciation for Governor A. N. Neverov of Akmolinsk, describing him as having “a pure-Russian Orthodox soul...”¹⁴⁸ Instead of showing indifference to the issue of sectarianism, Neverov expressed his grief and suffering at the growth of sectarianism in his region and the brotherhood commended him for understanding how this development contributed to the weakening of the Orthodox faith and the Russian state. Such service in “cold Orthodox Russian Siberia” would not be forgotten.¹⁴⁹

In 1910, the occupant of the most important secular position in the diocese, the Governor-General of the Steppe, also took a great interest in the

¹⁴⁷ Neverov 44; For another version of similar ideas, see RGIA, f.bib-ka, op.1, d.1, l.298ob.

¹⁴⁸ “Adres, podnesennyi ot Omskago Eparkhial’nago Bratstva byvshemu Akmolinskomu Gubernatoru A.N. Neverovu,” *OEV*, no.4 (1916): 26.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. As the war raged on, the Omsk Brotherhood became involved in helping refugees to the region. See “Otchet Omskago eparkhial’nago komiteta po okazaniu pomoshchi bezhentsam pri Omskom eparkhial’nom Bratstve,” *OEV*, no.6 (1917): 6-13.

activities of the anti-sectarian mission. Governor-General E.O. Shmidt assigned himself a leading role in addressing the region's response to sectarianism. Shmidt had little patience for any group, other than those from a "Russian" Orthodox background as he regularly made his displeasure known over the growth of German colonists in the region. From the beginning of his tenure in 1908, Shmidt drew the attention of St. Petersburg to the essential role performed by religion in the success of colonization. An absence of churches and clergymen on the Kazakh steppe only served to highlight the foreignness of the settlers' new environment. If the state did not help protect the Orthodox faith, then Orthodox settlers would lose their religious purity and hence, their national culture.¹⁵⁰ In a 1910 report, Shmidt continued to raise the necessity of strengthening Orthodoxy in his region and of stopping the spread of sectarianism. According to Shmidt, Baptists, Adventists, Shtundists, Molokans and Mennonites preached their faiths among the Russian Orthodox settlers. He felt the situation had disintegrated because of incompetency in the spiritual realm, viewing an appeal from Bishop Gavriil "to take administrative measures to prevent the disintegration of Orthodoxy..." as a sign of the "decrepit state of the clergy..."¹⁵¹ Orthodox missionaries and local clergy were unable to stop the apostates since, according to Shmidt, these men were indifferent and focused solely on material gain as opposed to spiritual enlightenment. He contended that these men were so morally corrupt that even priests converted to the Baptist faith. Travelling through his region convinced Shmidt that a problem existed and it was caused by two main factors: the

¹⁵⁰ RGIA, f.391, op.4, d.210, l.70ob.

¹⁵¹ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.2.

inadequate resources of the Russian Orthodox Church and the legal recognition of sectarian groups. In terms of the resources of the Church, a lack of churches and properly trained priests and missionaries to anchor the settlers in their faith, helped to ripen the field for sectarian propaganda.¹⁵² Shmidt emphasized the “unpreparedness” of local priests, who, he claimed were “often indifferent spectators of the victories of militant Baptists.”¹⁵³ Peasants, he claimed, were not indifferent to faith; despite being surrounded by sectarians, they longed to attend services. Yet, Orthodox pastors failed to provide peasants with a sense of comfort and Shmidt argued that under these circumstances, peasants became easy prey for Baptist ministers who spoke the language of the village, attacking Orthodoxy convincingly, and clearly.¹⁵⁴ These preachers challenged the core rites of the Orthodox faith, expounding to the peasants that salvation could be found in faith in Christ alone, and without the rituals which, Baptist preachers claimed, priests peddled for monetary gain.

In Schmidt’s vision of colonization, the concept of freedom of conscience only served to weaken Russia’s imperial presence in the region. As made clear by his report, Shmidt believed that the strength of the Russian state and of its imperial effort was directly tied to the strength of Russian Orthodoxy in the empire. As he wrote, “so long as the Russian *muzhik* [peasant] has not lost his Orthodoxy, Russia will remain strong and powerful, but with its loss, the dangerous cosmopolitanism, which the enemies of our motherland so

¹⁵² RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, ll.2, 3ob.

¹⁵³ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.3ob.

¹⁵⁴ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.2ob.

energetically sow, will take root.”¹⁵⁵ Officials like Shmidt refused to envision the empire as a place where people of different religious values and practices could show loyalty to the empire. In his eyes, the success of the colonization movement and the future development of Russia firmly depended on protecting the interests of Russian Orthodox settlers, as defined by state officials.¹⁵⁶

In addition to keeping St. Petersburg informed, the Governor-General undertook local initiatives to address the growth of sectarianism in the steppe. Shmidt promoted collaboration between secular and religious authorities by the calling a meeting in April 1910. He invited the Bishop of Omsk, the Akmolinsk Governor, the Procurator of the Omsk Judicial Chambers, and other secular and religious officials to discuss the measure that should be taken to stop sectarian propaganda. The participants considered the resources currently in place to address this issue and whether or not enough means existed locally to deal with this situation or if the central government needed to become involved.¹⁵⁷ A general consensus emerged that all levels of authority, religious, administrative and judicial, must work together on a local level to stave the tide of propaganda. Sectarrians must suffer real consequences when they flout Russian law.

Back in St. Petersburg, the anxiety of the Governor-General over sectarianism had caught the attention of the Prime Minister, P.A. Stolypin. Stolypin ordered the Department of Internal Affairs to investigate the issue; it sent Collegiate Councillor A. Kologrivov to the region to investigate and submit a

¹⁵⁵ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.5.

¹⁵⁶ Shmidt also recommended that Orthodox and sectarian colonists be settled in different areas. See Vibe, 35.

¹⁵⁷ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.51ob.

report.¹⁵⁸ Kologrivov travelled through Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk regions, producing a thorough report assessing the claims of Shmidt and the state of the Russian Orthodox faith in Siberia. Expanding on many of the themes raised by Shmidt, Kologrivov clearly shared the same perspective that sectarianism was not purely a religious matter, but rather an issue of national importance. Yet not every peasant who converted turned instantaneously into a foaming, gnashing traitor. Kologrivov acknowledged that many Russians who converted were seeking to better themselves spiritually. Nonetheless, by rejecting Orthodoxy, they also rejected Russian nationality (*narodnost'*) and would ultimately develop anti-Russian feelings.

Kologrivov admitted that problems existed within the clergy. In general, these men were not of a high quality, although a number of bright lights existed within the ranks. Yet, the situation was not unsalvageable. The clergy suffered primarily from an absence of leadership. They had little idea of how to react when sectarians appeared within their parish. Instead of tackling the problem swiftly, they hesitated, not knowing how to react and unable to conduct even the most basic conversation about the faith with the apostates. Kologrivov acknowledged that the state had a role to perform in saving Omsk diocese from the clutches of sectarianism. Yet, secular authorities had failed miserably to curtail the illegal activities of sectarians. To achieve this goal, the leaders of the sectarian movement, Mazaev in particular, had to have their wings clipped. Mazaev acted as if the laws of the empire did not matter and this emboldened his followers to act confidently. If Mazaev continued to engage in illegal practices, perhaps he

¹⁵⁸ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.6.

should be expelled from the region.¹⁵⁹ Religious officials claimed that sectarians committed many crimes, from holding unauthorized prayer meetings to blaspheming the Orthodox faith, without receiving any sort of reprimand. Kologrivov proposed that police needed to be educated as to how to deal with sectarians. They should be supplied with instructions related to sectarianism and encouraged to pursue those who would attack the Orthodox Church.¹⁶⁰

With the boundaries between secular and religious authority blurred, secular officials became to carve out a prominent role for themselves in the fight against sectarianism. In this fight, they took their role seriously and were not afraid to criticize religious leaders if necessary. For example Governor- General Shmidt openly challenged the position of Bishop Gavriil in St. Petersburg. In the fall of 1910, Shmidt requested that Stolypin help in the removal of Bishop Gavriil. Fr. Aleksandr Golosov, a relative of Bishop Gavriil, had engaged in inappropriate behaviour with his students at the Omsk female gymnasium. The scandal had already hit the press and Shmidt argued that this situation had diminished the authority of the bishop in the eyes of the clergy and parishioners. Shmidt emphasized the precariousness of the situation in Omsk; sectarians ran rampant, converting not only peasants, but Orthodox priests as well.¹⁶¹ Within this dangerous environment, Shmidt argued, the church needed upstanding men to inspire the Orthodox population, not drive them into the arms of sectarians. Prime Minister Stolypin found this line of argument convincing, as he wrote to the Chief

¹⁵⁹ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.63.

¹⁶⁰ RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.289, l.54ob.

¹⁶¹ RGIA, f.1276, op.4, d.853, l.32.

Procurator informing him of the situation.¹⁶² The Chief Procurator began his own investigation and in 1911, Bishop Gavriil retired to a monastery.

Conclusion

The church and state identified two main causes for the growth of non-Orthodox faiths in Siberia: colonization and the uncertainty surrounding Russia's post-1905 religious environment. Colonization caused this situation in multiple ways. First, Old Believers and sectarians moved to Siberia with Orthodox settlers for the opportunity to farm newly available land. Local officials attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to settle Orthodox migrants separate from these groups. Omsk diocesan officials understood that colonization would not stop; in fact, they never suggested that colonization be slowed to provide time for the church to better organize its mission on the ground. Perhaps these officials understood that with or without permission, settlers would continue to arrive for the foreseeable future. Second, in the post-1905 religious environment Orthodox clergymen were still coming to terms with religious pluralism and the freedoms granted to faiths they viewed as inimical to Orthodox Russia. The strength of the Baptist faith in the diocese caused much consternation and emerged as a core issue defining Omsk in the early twentieth century.

Even though Omsk diocesan officials accepted colonization as inevitable, they still understood that the church was completely unprepared to handle the yearly growth in its population. Orthodox settlers did not have access to churches

¹⁶² RGIA, f.1276, op.4, d.853, l.34ob.

and priests, which contributed to their vulnerability around preachers from other faiths, who offered them the spiritual comfort that the Orthodox Church simply could not provide. Orthodox priests indirectly explored the ways in which Orthodoxy was ill suited to be a frontier faith: the ritualistic nature of Orthodox practice necessitated the existence of a consecrated church and ordained clergymen. Orthodox priests expressed their fears about the adaptability of the Baptist faith to frontier life, as believers only needed lay preachers, bibles, and religious pamphlets to serve the population. And once conversion had taken place, the converts themselves could create, nourish, and administer the religious life of their community. Although the Orthodox clergymen recognized the desirability of incorporating the laity into nourishing religious practice, they found it difficult to loosen their control, even in a place like Siberia, where such experimentation was sorely needed.

Church and state officials viewed the growth of sectarian and dissenter faiths in Siberia as a crisis. Religious conversion symbolized more than simply leaving the Orthodox faith: it represented the rejection of Russian culture and nationality. Such settlers created a potential threat in the minds of religious and secular officials – they were people whose loyalty could not be confirmed and who would one day sabotage the primary goal of colonization, which was to integrate Siberia into Russia through its russification. They also served as a daily reminder of the failures of colonization and of the Orthodox Church's goals in this region. Despite the power of the state and the church, they could not contain the expansion of faiths like the Baptists, which seemed to spread effortlessly over the

Kazakh steppe.

Epilogue

Even with the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II on 2 March 1917, the activities of the church and state in pursuing their goal of creating settler parishes continued unabated. Across the empire, the Holy Trinity Day collection took place that year, contributing money to the Holy Synod's purse to fund its work in the region. Nicholas, although he performed a key role in initiating the Emperor Alexander III fund and frequently expressed his support for its work in building parishes, had little involvement once the process moved into the hands of the Holy Synod and the Resettlement Administration. His abdication, therefore, did not jeopardize the continuation of the program. In general, the church barely skipped a beat in reconciling itself to a post-monarchical Russia, which shows how separate those institutions actually were; at least publicly, church officials spent little time mourning the tsar's fall from grace. The reaction of Bishop Sil'vestr illustrates how quickly the bishops adapted to their new circumstances. In a speech after the abdication, Sil'vestr focused mainly on the suffering of the Russian people caused by the current environment of war and displacement. He emphasized that Nicholas' decision freed him from his obligations to the Russian people, just as it freed the Russian people from their oath to him. Now everyone had the responsibility of serving the new government.¹ Such scenes unfolded in dioceses across the country, as bishops informed parishioners of their new

¹ Ol'shevskii, Sil'vestr, "Pech' Preosviashchennishego Sil'vestra na mitinge, posviashchennomu prazdnovaniiu 'grazhdanskikh svobod' v g. Omske 10 Marta 1917 g.," in *V vere li vy?: Zhitie i trudy sviashchennomuchenika Sil'vestra, archiepiskopa Omskogo*, ed. Mitropolit Feodosii (Protsiuk) (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 2006), 582.

allegiances and life continued with only a few tears shed.

In fact, the Orthodox Church embraced its liberation from state control. The desire for church independence extended from the top of the Orthodox hierarchy down to the laity. The clerical voices calling to convene a church Council (*sobor*) – which would have the authority to reorganize church administration and create a new vision for the future of the church within Russia – had been growing throughout the early twentieth century.² In August, this became a reality as bishops, clergymen and parishioners gathered together to participate in the Council.

Omsk diocesan authorities also welcomed the new era initiated by the tsar's abdication. By July 1917, a new diocesan publication, *New Life*, replaced *Omsk Diocesan News*. *New Life* emphasized its egalitarian roots by identifying itself as a diocesan organ of church-society renewal. It also promoted its support of independence from the old system in its slogan – “a Free Church in a Free State” – a rallying cry that also emerged in other dioceses.³ Parishioners grabbed centre stage in this drama as articles in the newspaper explored the new relationship developing between parishioners and priests, as well as between the church and the state. This renegotiation of the social expectations and conventions

² See Paul Valliere, “The Idea of a Council in Russian Orthodoxy in 1905,” in Robert L. Nicholas and Theofanis George Stavrou, eds., *Russian Orthodoxy under the Old Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1978): 183-201; George T. Kosar, “Russian Orthodoxy in Crisis and Revolution: The Church Council of 1917-1918” (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 2004), 11.

³ Its full publication information was as following: *Novaia Zhizn'* (Bratstvo, Ravenstvo, Svoboda) Omskii Eparkhial'nyi ezhenedel'nyi organ tserkovno- obshchestvennago obnovleniia Svobodnaia tserkov' v Svobodnom Gosudarstve. This new experiment in religious publication was short-lived, as by the end of 1917, *New Life* ceased circulation. A new publication, *Izvestiia po Omskoi eparkhii* started and ended in 1918. For more on the church during this revolutionary period, see Pavel Gennad'evich Rogoznyi, *Tserkovnaia revoliutsiia 1917 goda: vysshee dukhovenstvo Rossiiskoi Tserkvi v bor'be za vlast' v eparkhiakh posle Fevral'skoi revoliutsii* (St.Petersburg: Liki Rossii, 2008).

of tsarist Russia, however, created tensions and confusion within religious life as cracks in the Orthodox community appeared in Omsk diocese and in other parts of the empire. Parishioners showed either initiative or depravity, depending on which author one read. One author described parishes as sites of drunkenness, revelry and brutality, complaining how such conditions created great difficulties for priests, who found themselves among peasants with newly acquired confidence, willing to challenge their authority. Particularly in the matter of marriage, priests complained that peasants proved aggressive in their manner towards the local priest.⁴ Within an atmosphere of lay confidence, a period which Gregory Freeze has called “power to the parishes,” parishioners embraced an active role in the daily running of their parishes, no longer content to allow diocesan authorities and the parish priests to call the shots.⁵

The Russian civil war contributed to the difficulties of the Omsk diocesan authorities. The Bolsheviks gained power in November 1917, and in 1918, Siberia plunged into civil war. In Omsk diocese, the relationship between the bishop and local Bolsheviks proved tense, as they arrested Bishop Sil'vestr after he organized a procession to fortify the faith of his parishioners. His captivity was short-lived, as the Bolsheviks released the bishop a few days later in response to protests in the streets.⁶ This incident set the tone for relations between secular and spiritual officials within this revolutionary atmosphere. Opposition to the new regime,

⁴ “Eparkhial'naia zhizn' v Priural'e i Sibiri,” *Pribavleniia k tserkovnym vedomostiam*, no.15-16 (1917): 530-531.

⁵ Gregory Freeze, “All Power to the Parish? The Problems and Politics of Church Reform in Late Imperial Russia,” in *Social Identities in Revolutionary Russia*, ed. Madhavan K. Palat (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 174-208.

⁶ “Arest Omskago episkopa Sil'vestra,” *Tserkovnye vedomosti*, no.15-16 (1918): 533-536.

referred to collectively as the White Army, organized in the borderlands: Ukraine, South Russia, the Caucasus, and Siberia emerged as key spots for this resistance. The Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia was declared in Omsk as members of the White Army drove Bolshevik supporters back to the Urals in 1918. Instead of adopting a position of neutrality, as did the newly elected head of the Orthodox Church Patriarch Tikhon, Bishop Sil'vestr of Omsk threw his lot in with the White forces, which by November 1918 were led by Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak. Bishop Sil'vestr embraced his role of spiritually supporting the efforts of the Whites; he even led a procession with an icon to the home of Admiral Kolchak and gave a rousing anti-Bolshevik speech at the beginning of April 1919.⁷ The Bishop also used his spiritual position to reach out to other religious leaders in the world, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, to whom he sent the following plea:

It is with the most profound sadness that we acquaint your Grace with the misery from which millions of real Russians are suffering. In the name of human solidarity, and in the spirit of Christian brotherhood, we trust we shall be able to count upon your Grace's compassion.⁸

Despite his willingness to support Kolchak, Bishop Sil'vestr's loyalty remained to his parishioners; as the cause of the White Army floundered in the face of unrelenting pressure from the Bolshevik forces, Bishop Sil'vestr chose to stay instead of retreating with Kolchak. In light of the new political circumstances, Bishop Sil'vestr encouraged his parishioners now to withdraw from politics and follow Patriarch Tikhon's declaration of the neutrality of the church. The

⁷ *V vere li vy?: Zhitie i trudy sviashchennomuchenika Sil'vestra, archiepiskopa Omskogo*, ed. Mitropolit Feodosii (Protsiuk) (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 2006), 90.

⁸ "Omsk Archbishop Tells of Atrocities," *New York Times*, 15 February 1919, 5.

Bolsheviks found this change of heart unconvincing and they arrested Bishop Sil'vestr at the end of 1919; he died in their custody a few months later, in 1920.

The results of Russia's imperial project to recreate the religious conditions of European Russia for Orthodox settlers to Siberia cannot be determined. Omsk diocese had just over twenty years to pursue this project, in a region continually transformed by the next batch of settlers streaming over the Ural Mountains. With the Soviet takeover of power, this version of Russia's imperial project in Siberia effectively ended. While the Soviet state continued to promote settlement in the region and Soviet technocrats continued to use the resources of the state to support efforts to integrate Siberia into the new Soviet empire, Orthodoxy would no longer perform a role in this process.⁹ Instead, the state delinked religious concerns from colonization, as befitting a self-proclaimed atheist state. Omsk diocese technically continued to exist throughout the Soviet period, with the exception of a ten-year period between 1937 and 1947 when the diocese was closed; yet, the inhospitable environment of the Soviet state ensured that the leadership of the diocese remained weak and ineffective.

In retrospect, the last years of tsarist Russia were golden for the church in Siberia. Overall, the partnership between church and state proved to be an enormous success. A significant amount of money was directed solely towards funding the religious life of settlers, which facilitated the building of churches and schools where none previously existed. To create a sustainable system, the church

⁹ Many of the same individuals in the bureaucracy maintained their positions from the tsarist era, see Peter Holquist, "In Accord with State Interests and the People's Wishes': The Technocratic Ideology of Imperial Russia's Resettlement Administration," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 151–179.

and state relied on providing loans to support religious life. Such a system reflected the technocratic mentality of state officials working for the Resettlement Administration, who believed that through knowledge and expertise colonization could be efficiently and efficaciously run. The emergence of such a partnership illustrates how the Russian Orthodox Church contributed to the state's imperial expansion in concrete ways: the church participated directly in planning, implementing and monitoring the building of parishes in Siberia and supporting settlers as they formed new communities. The commitment of the Orthodox Church to systematic and rational planning for religious life is an attribute of the church bureaucracy that has been overlooked in existing scholarship.

With both sides engaged and committed to building parishes on the frontier, settlers reaped the benefits of this system, which provided funds and materials to those who could not afford the added cost of church-building as they worked to establish farms in their new homeland. Gratitude hardly describes the reaction of many settlers, who understood this type of financial support as part of the responsibility of the state. This expectation of support shows that peasants assumed that they would have access to the same religious life as they left behind in European Russia. For many, this expectation remained unfulfilled as villages were left without churches and access to priests.

The assumption that Orthodoxy would ease the transition of pioneers in adapting to their new homeland proved more complicated than initially imagined by secular and religious officials. Even at the end of the nineteenth century Orthodoxy remained a faith where localized practices dominated the religious life

of the community. The reaction of settlers to their new neighbours illustrates how intransigent many peasants tended to be in matters related to their faith. They refused to accept their neighbours' variations of religious practices as legitimate, which led to many quarrels within the community. The deep connection between faith and family, both past and present, in peasant communities stands as one explanation for this stubbornness. Adhering to the traditions of one's ancestors held great meaning for the peasantry, particularly in Siberia where too many elements of daily life appeared new and foreign.

The newness of life in Siberia and the opportunity this land afforded drew not only peasant-settlers, but also clergymen to the region. In Siberia it was possible for men with little education or those who had run afoul of diocesan authorities in European Russia to find positions, many times with coveted salaries. Without a seminary, the bishop of Omsk had little choice but to welcome these clerical recruits. To solve this problem of priest shortages experienced across Siberia, religious and secular officials in St. Petersburg supported the creation of the Moscow Pastoral Courses. These courses offered an innovative approach to training clergymen who could speak the language of their peasant parishioners, which reflected the pastoral emphasis found in religious circles across the empire. In Omsk diocese, many of these men received a cold welcome. Both Omsk clergymen and Ioann Vostorgov framed this dispute as a conflict between Siberian priests and those in European Russia; such a position held little sway, as many of Omsk's priests were also outsiders who arrived in the region from all over the empire. The interpretation promoted by the Omsk clergymen that the Moscow

Pastoral Course graduates lacked the proper professional capabilities reveals that much of this animosity arose because the graduates were viewed as being outside of diocesan control, and outside of the clerical tradition.

The frontier environment challenged diocesan authority in a number of ways. The involvement of secular officials on councils making decisions on where to open parishes, build churches, and assign priests weakened the authority of the consistory to act according to its own rules; diffusion of authority created legitimate alternative routes for peasants to pursue when diocesan authorities acted in ways contrary to their wishes. In Omsk diocese, bishops struggled to provide steady leadership as the men rotated in and out of the position at an astonishing rate. The professionalization of the position of bishop in the empire guaranteed that an underdeveloped diocese like Omsk would be sent men with potential, but who were inexperienced at running their own diocese. Men with experience and talent could vie for coveted positions in European Russia and would not find themselves on the candidate lists for an unappealing diocese like Omsk, where religious pluralism, distance, and poverty created difficult conditions for parish life. Despite this, Omsk bishops showed a commitment to interacting directly with parishioners, as they undertook annual trips around the diocese.

Religious pluralism, which emerged on the frontier as one of the key issues of colonization, in many respects summarized the anxieties involved in such a daunting enterprise. Russian Baptists, Molokans, Old Believers and many other religious groups moved with Russian Orthodox settlers to Siberia. The

Russian state dreamed that colonization would be a coordinated and well-organized endeavour that would showcase the power and control of the Russian empire and contribute to its future strength. These groups interfered with the dream of Russian Orthodox settlers planting Russian culture and thereby binding Siberia to the empire. Although local officials agreed that it would be desirable to settle other religious faiths, along with other ethnicities, away from the prized Russian Orthodox settlers, in reality, segregation was too complicated to enforce. Omsk diocesan authorities expended tremendous energy trying to strengthen their missionary efforts to fortify the faith of parishioners. After 1905, the new rules related to freedom of conscience created more difficulties, as the exact nature of this new religious order was not clear to either secular authorities or diocesan officials. In Siberia, where peasants lived relatively unsupervised by the state and the church, representatives of both institutions expressed deep anxiety about the religious temptation that uneducated peasant-settlers would experience without their protection. Such concern illustrates the continued paternalism that coloured the relations between peasants and their secular and religious superiors in Russian society. It was not only Russian officials who perpetuated traditional lines of authority, however. Within the village, settlers complained of their children who had lost contact with their ancestral faith and respect for their elders. Even on the frontier, where rural development far outpaced urbanization, communities still experienced the break down of tradition as cultural changes took hold and they entered a new age in a new land.

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Sel'skii Vestnik

Journals

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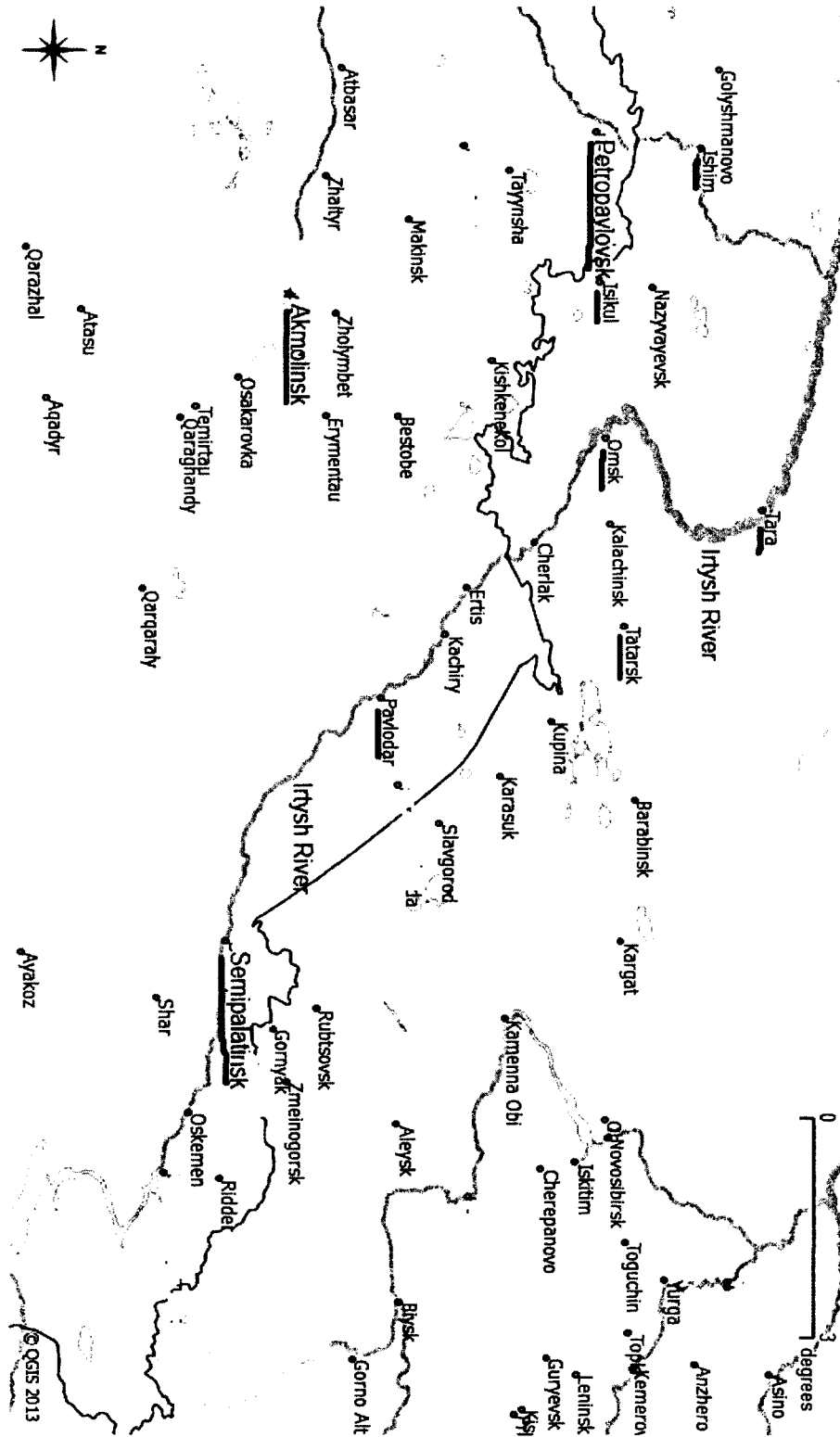
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Appendix One

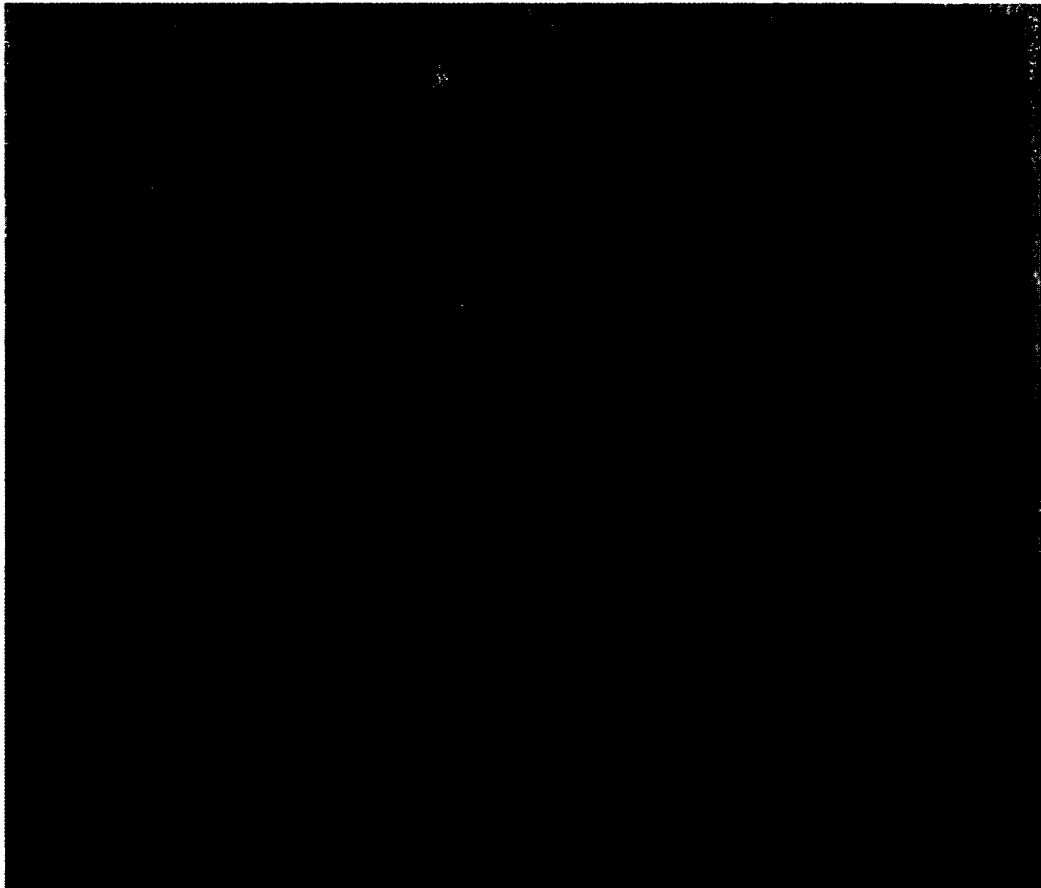
Map 1: Places in Omsk Diocese



Source: Made by author

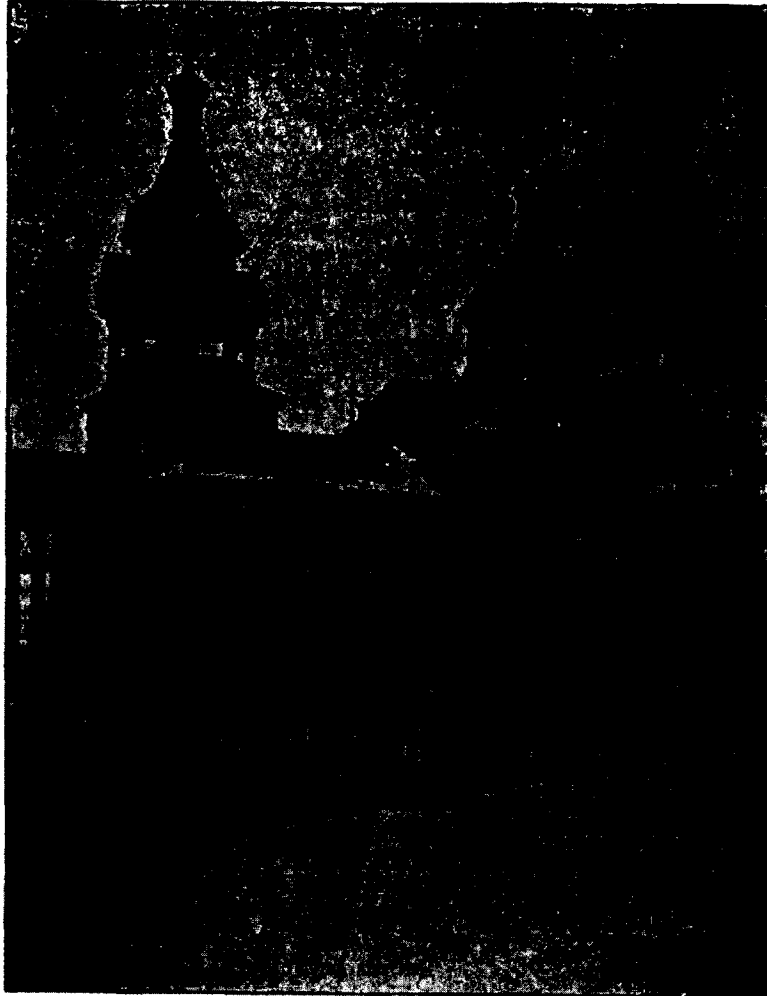
Appendix Two

Picture 1: Prayer House in Akmolinsk Province



Source: *Aziatskaia Rossiia: Liudi i poriadki za uralom tom.3.* (St. Petersburg: Izd. Pereselencheskago upravleniia Glavnago upravleniia zemleustroistva i zemledeliia, 1914), 470.

Picture 2: Wooden Church at the Station of Isil'kul'

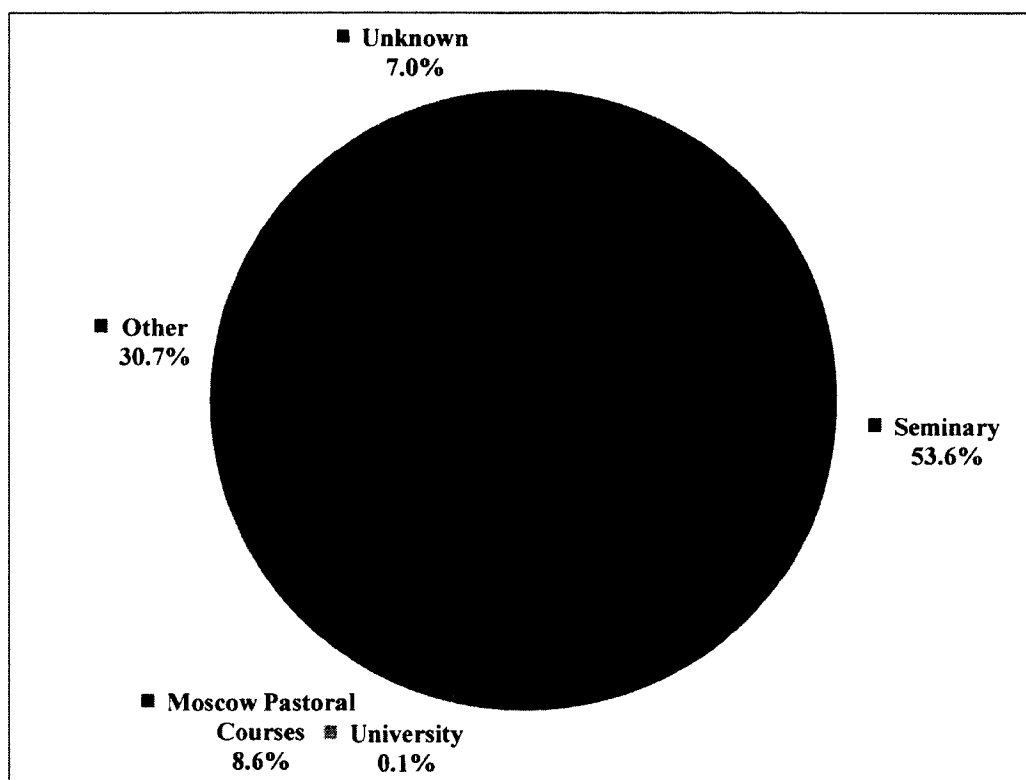


Wooden Church at the station of Isil'kul' (Omsk Diocese)

Source: Dmitriev-Mamonov, A. I and A.F Zdziarski., eds. *Guide to the Great Siberian Railway Published by the Ministry of ways of communication.* Trans. by L. Kukoi-Yasnopolsky. (St. Petersburg: Artistic printing society, 1900), 208.

Appendix Three

Figure 1: Education Levels of Omsk Priests in 1914



Notes: The term “other” includes: clerical district schools, city schools, district schools, home-schooling, teacher training institutes etc.

Figure 2: Education Levels of Priests with Peasant Backgrounds in 1914

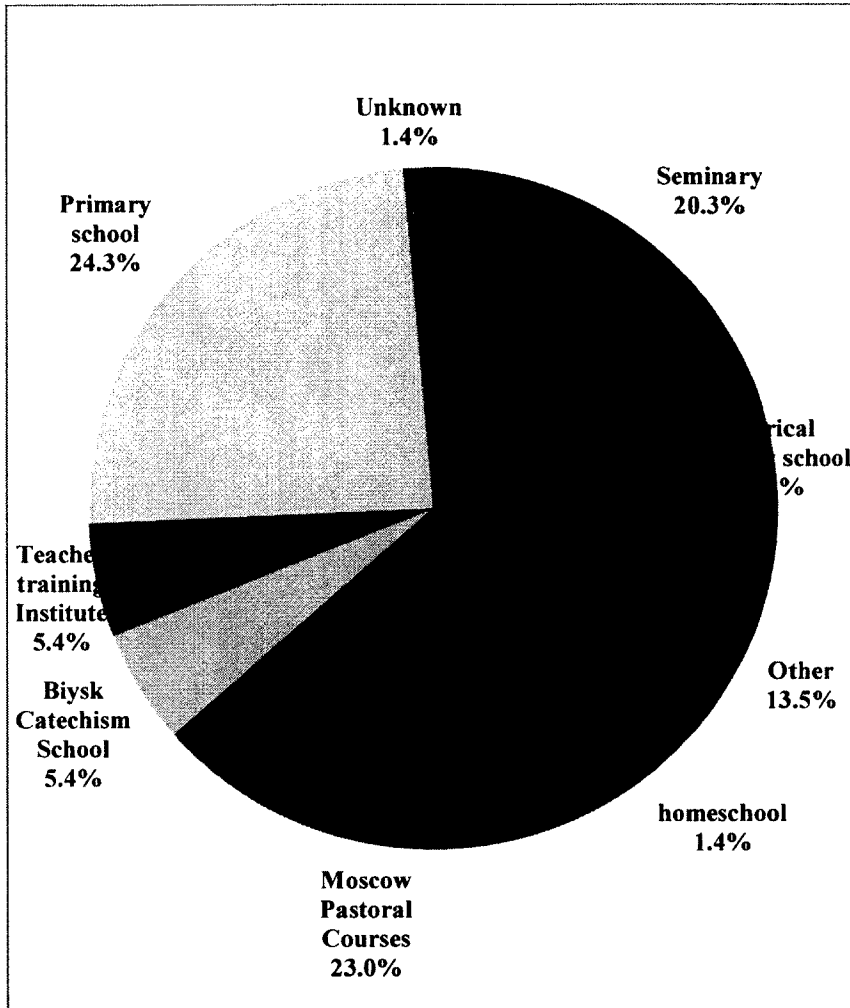


Figure 3: Education Levels of Priests with Clerical Backgrounds in 1914

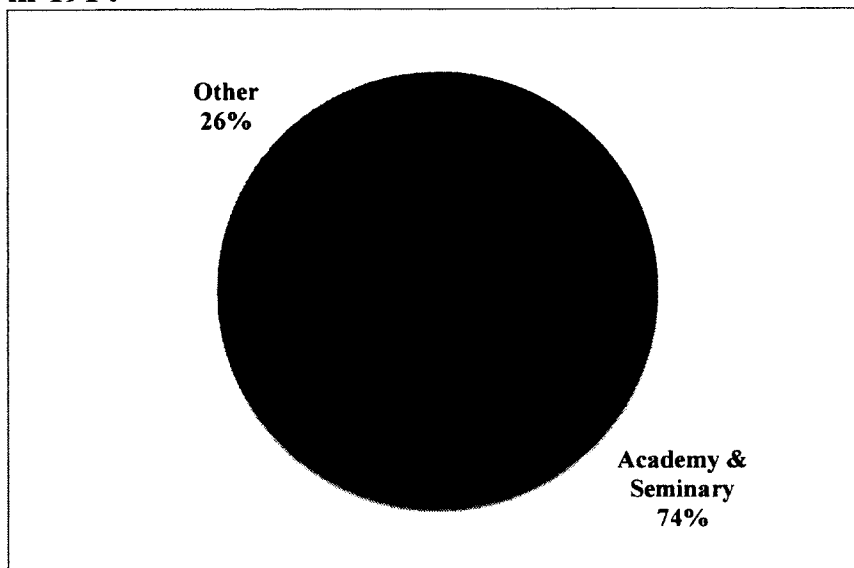


Figure 4: Education Levels of Priests with non-Peasant and non-Clerical Backgrounds in 1914

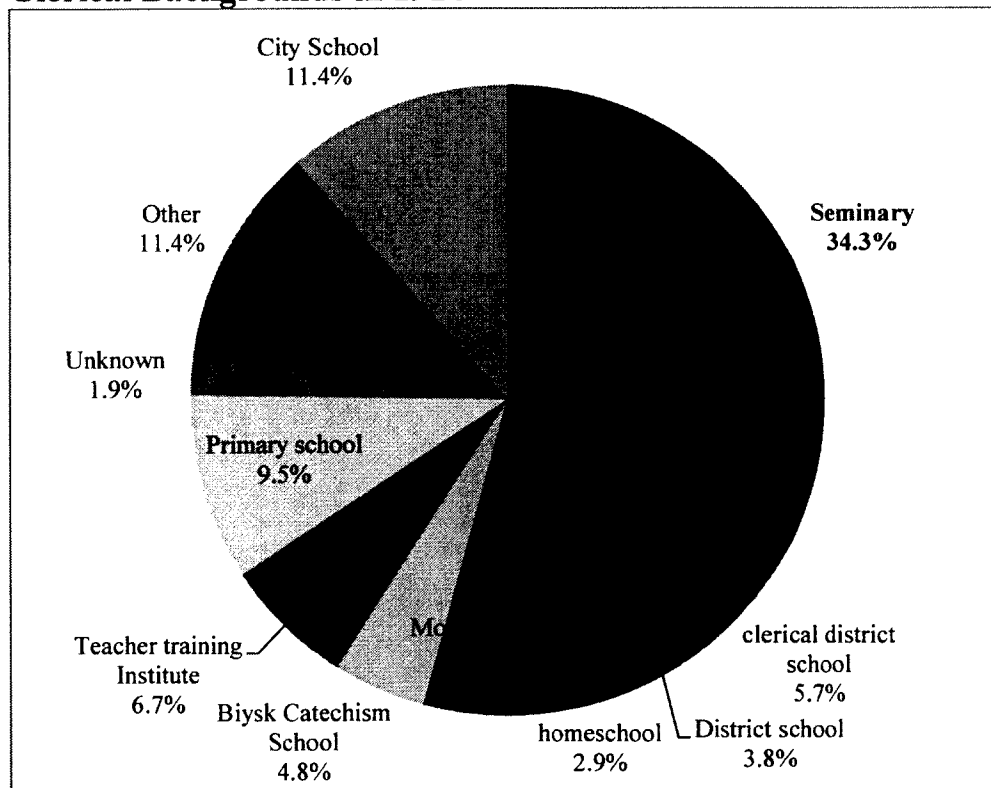
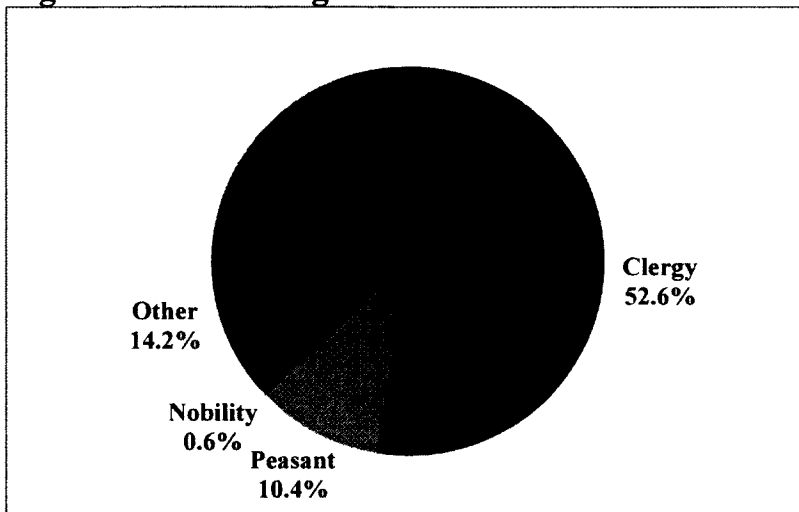
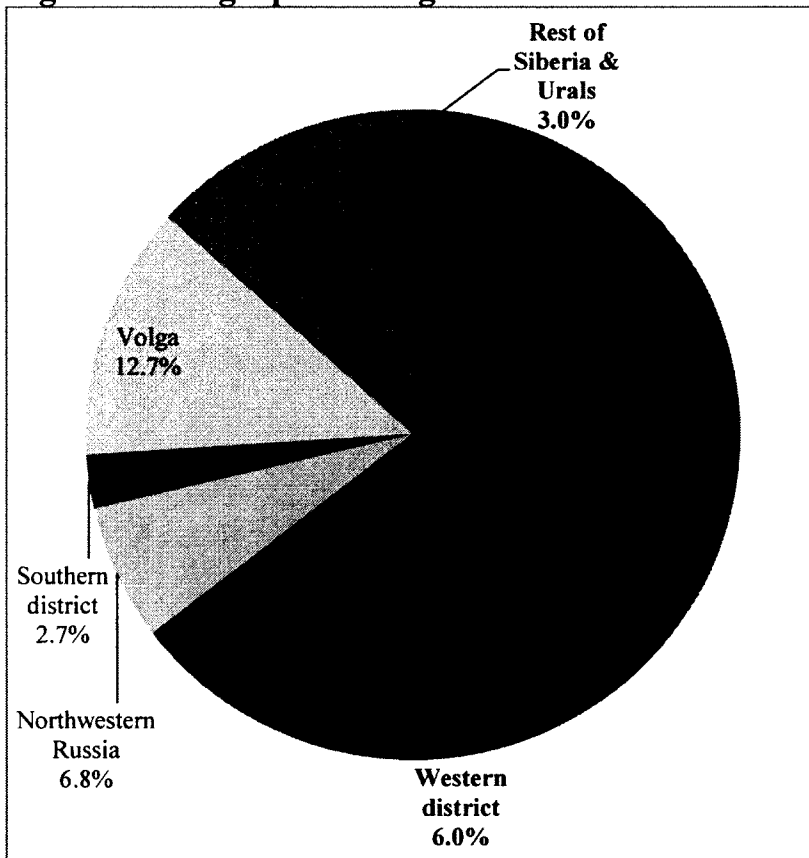


Figure 5: Social Origins of Priests in 1914



Notes: The term “other” includes: teachers, townspeople, Cossacks, bureaucrats, distinguished citizens etc.

Figure 6: Geographical origins of Priests in 1914



Notes: Geographical categories chosen by author (see next page):

Urals: Cheliabinsk, Kurgan, Orenburg, Perm, Ekaterinburg, Tyumen,
Central Russia: Vladimir, Voronezh, Kaluga, Kostroma, Kursk, Moscow, Orël, Riazan,
 Smolensk, Tambov, Tver, Tula, Iaroslavl
Northwestern Russia: Arkhangelsk, Vologda, Kaliningrad, Karelia, Novgorod, Pskov, St.
 Petersburg
Southern: Astrakhan, Volgograd, Krasnodar, Rostov, Stavropol, Tiflis,
Volga: Ufa, Kirov, Nizhny Novgorod, Penza, Samara, Saratov, Kazan, Ulyanovsk
 Caucasus
Western: Bessarabia, Chelm, Chernigov, Ekaterinoslav, Grodno, Kharkov, Kherson, Kiev,
 Kishinev, Poltava, Riga, Simferopol, Taurida, Vitebsk, Volyn,
Siberia: Irkutsk, Enisei, Siberia, Turkestan
Moscow Pastoral Courses: Those trained in Moscow, geographical origins tended to be unknown

Figure 7: Geographical Origins of Priests with Peasant Backgrounds in 1914

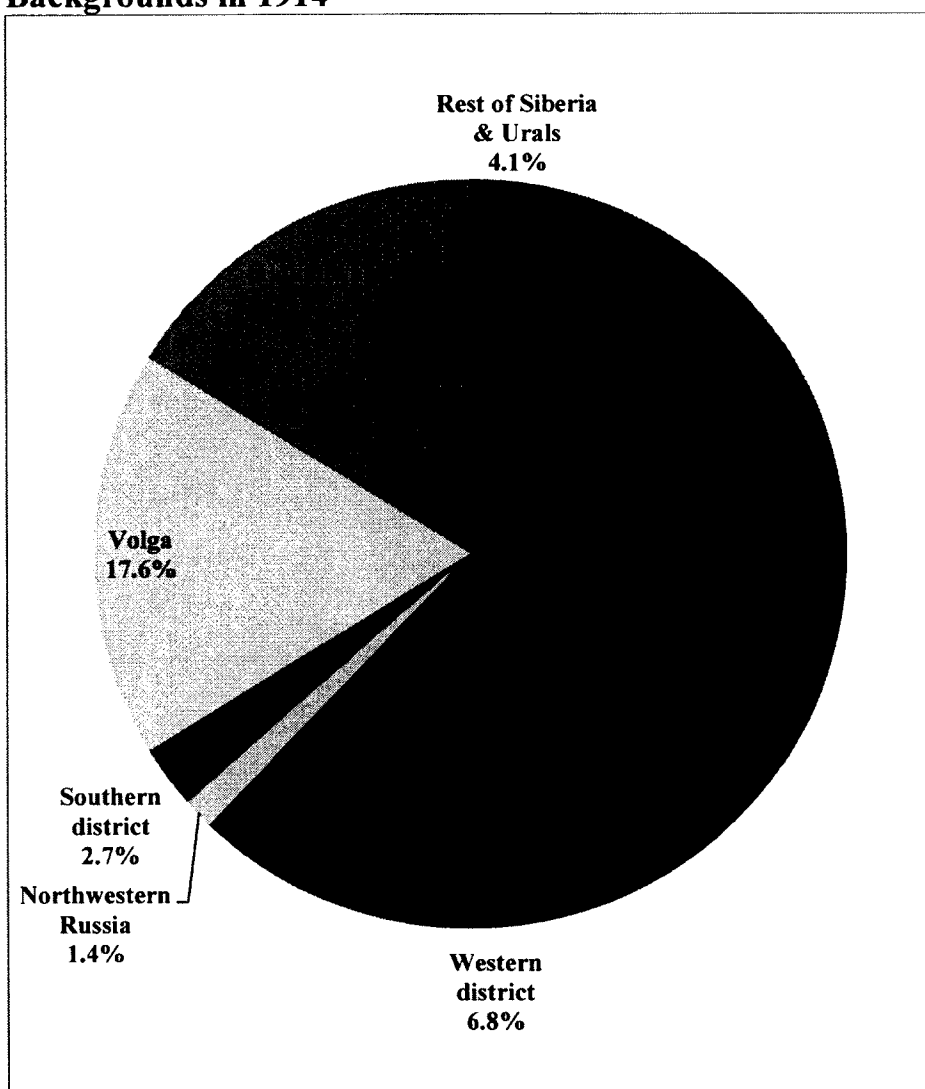


Figure 8: Geographical Origins of Priests with Clerical Backgrounds in 1914

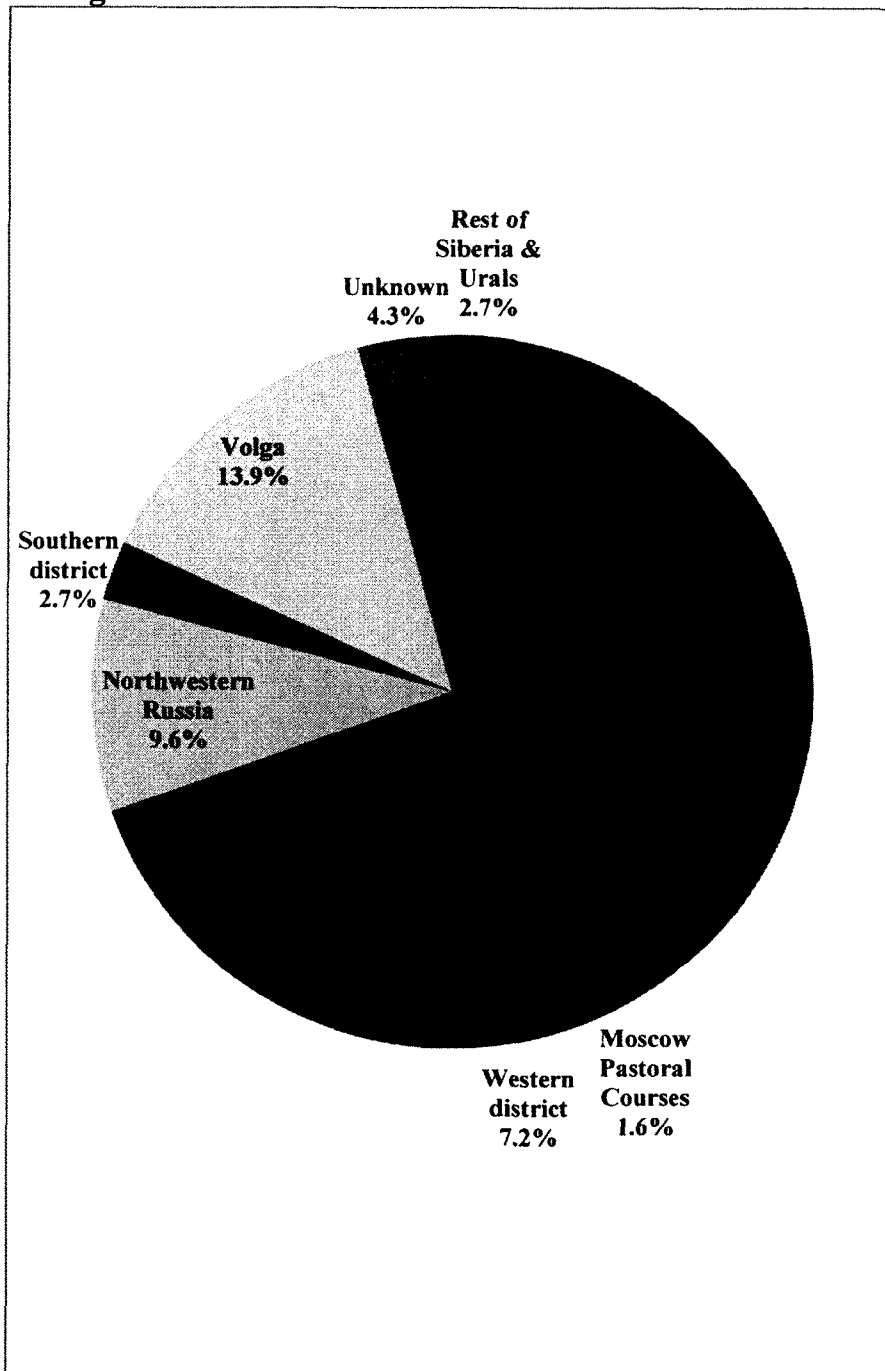


Figure 9: Geographical Origins of Priests with Non-Peasant and Non-Clerical Backgrounds in 1914.

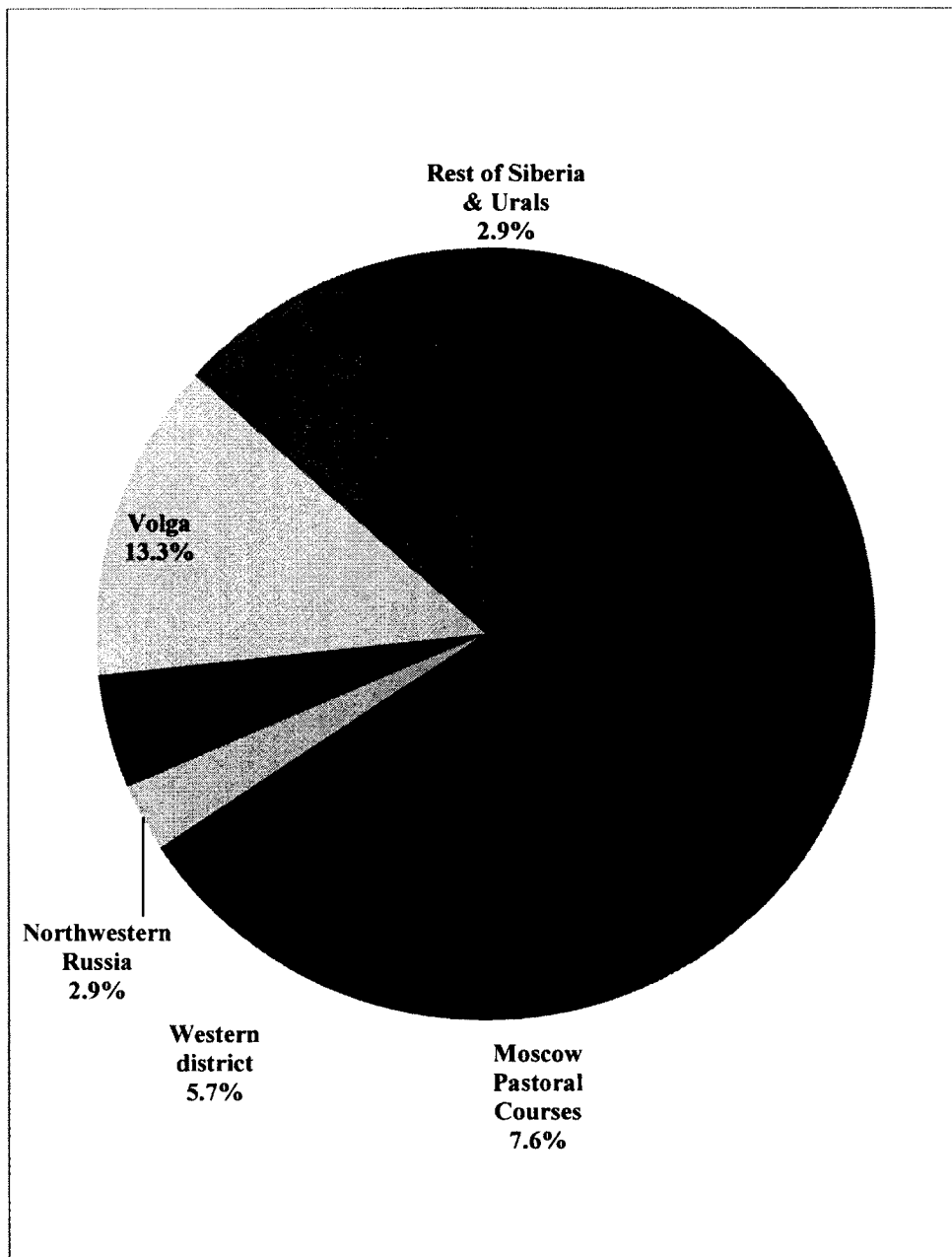
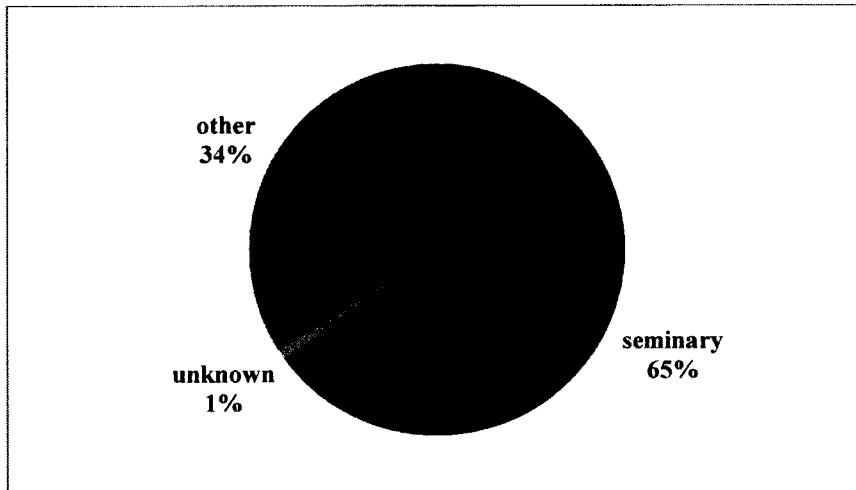


Figure 10: Education of Priests from Omsk, Tomsk and Tobol'sk in 1914.



All data used for these pie charts was compiled by the author based on the following source: Ioann Goloshubin, *Spravochnaia kniga Omskoi eparkhii* (Omsk: Tipografiia Irtysh, 1914), 1081-1223.