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## **CAPABILITIES AND RANGES OF SOCIAL TEACHING OF ORTHODOXY AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH.<sup>1</sup>**

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A Review

Whenever one thinks, speaks or writes about Christianity, chances are small that he or she might have its Eastern version in their minds. The fact that the Catholic Church has come forward to be the prototypical one for many different reasons leaves all other denominations in a strange position. Whereas the Protestant Church still has the opportunity to enter everyday thought and mainstream science, the Orthodox Church seems to have been pushed aside in almost all types of conventional writing. *Capabilities and Ranges of Social Teaching of Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church* is a collection of papers edited by Dragoljub B. Đorđević and Miloš Jovanović which tries to change this trend and shed new light on the issues involving the social elements of the Eastern mode of Christian thought. In the process, the editors managed to compile and integrate numerous dissimilar approaches, so as to address as many emergent problems as possible.

In the comprehensive introductory article entitled *Sociology of Orthodoxy: Foundations, Tasks, and Perspectives*, Dragoljub B. Đorđević and Miloš Jovanović present the reader with the state of the art by summing up the previous efforts to approach the topic from various perspectives and by stressing the problems and possibilities for further investigation. The introduction serves as a good basis for the rest of the book and all the opinions that follow. Dragoljub B. Đorđević's *File of Sociology of Orthodoxy* includes seven papers which recapitulate his pioneering work in the field which started almost twenty years ago and stress the importance of creating a balance between the West and the East in the studies of Christianity. What follows is the paper named *Max Weber and The Orthodox Church* in which Demosthenes Savramis shows that Max Weber's ideas and methodologies could be more than useful in the future studies of Orthodoxy, as they proved to be efficient in the analysis of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. In *Sociology of the Eastern Orthodox Tradition* Andreas Buss investigates the position of an individual in Byzantine and Russian Orthodox traditions. *The Problems of Establishing a Sociology of Orthodoxy* by Vladan Stanković stresses the

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importance of the development of the newly founded discipline due to all the uniqueness of "Orthodox societies." In *Sociology and Eastern Orthodoxy*, Peter McMylor and Maria Vorozhishcheva also recognize the obvious lack of papers involving a sociological approach to the Orthodox branch of Christianity and see the issue as a possibility for progress. This paper concludes what we can label the theoretical section of the book. In the following papers, we can encounter a number of particular approaches to the problem.

The next paper in the collection is titled *Orthodox Sociology or Sociology of Orthodoxy: On the Possibilities of a Confessional Sociology*. Its author, Larissa S. Astahova, explores the perspectives for studying Christianity and Orthodoxy from a Russian perspective, given the political and social framework stemming from the previous century. *Sociology and Orthodoxy: A Remarkable Example from Albania* by Alexios Panagopoulos summarizes the historical and social reasons for all the peculiarities related to the Orthodox Church of Albania and discusses its operational modes in the given context. The ninth paper is named *Is Conventional Sociology of Religion Able to Deal with Differences between Eastern and Western European Developments?* In the paper, Miklós Tomka first notes the growing interests in the study of religion in Eastern and Central Europe and then contrasts the conceptualization of the East and the West and their religious traditions. Inspired by Tomka's studies, Sergej Flere explores the ways in which Orthodoxy can be studied in the paper entitled *Questioning the Need for a Special Methodology for the Study of Eastern Orthodoxy*. Alexander Agadjanian's *Breakthrough to Modernity, Apologia for Traditionalism: The Russian Orthodox View of Society and Culture in a Comparative Perspective* explores the views of Russian Christianity on the modern world and its own place within it, and tries to integrate these views into Western thought. The paper *Religious Dynamics Among the Citizens of Russia From 1989 to 2006*, authored by Yulia Sinelina, tracks the changes in religiousness induced by various changes in socio-political and economic systems in the Russian Federation, followed by Thomas Bremer's *Religiosity in Contemporary Russia. Examination of a Recent Sociological Research*, in which he similarly analyzes the changes triggered by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the events which led to it.

In the next paper, *Religion in Belarus*, Larissa Titarenko summarizes the historical events related to the formation of religious groups and institutions in Belarus, as well as modern tendencies linked to religious practices. Mirko Blagojević's approach in *Attachment To Eastern Orthodoxy in Terms of Statistics: Sociological Measurement of Churchism* is empirical in the sense that he explores statistical possibilities of measurement of churchism in everyday life. In *Going to Church*, James R. Payton Jr. shows that the Eastern approach to Christianity largely differs from the Western one mainly due to a higher degree of integration into the dominant religious group. In the following article, *Orthodoxy and Global Pluralism*, Peter L. Berger tries to describe the encounter between Orthodoxy and religious pluralism, which is frequently linked with neotraditionalism. Elizabeth Prodromou's *The Ambivalent Orthodox* explores the connections between Orthodoxy and democracy (along with the processes that accompany it). The topic of Radovan Bigović's *The Orthodox Church And European Integrations* is self-explanatory, as the author is trying to present some of the challenges that the Orthodox church is facing on the road to EU membership. In *The Orthodoxy and Serbian Society*, Vesna Trifunović investigates the position and the role of Orthodoxy in the stages

of the development of Serbian society. The article titled *Charitable Work of the Serbian Orthodox Church* by Maja Vranić-Mitrić and Dragomir Janković examines the history and the current needs for humanitarian activity of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

What follows is Nina Dimitrova's analysis of the social and religious circumstances in Russia in the last decades of the nineteenth century in *Social-Orthodox Utopianism of the Russian Silver Age*. After this, Žikica Simić relates Serbian Orthodoxy to a number of ethical elements from the Old Testament in the paper named *The Old Testament, Legal, Moralistic, and Pharisaic Spirit in Serbian Orthodoxy*. Simić's paper is followed by Vasilios N. Makridis's *Orthodox Christianity and Economic Development: The Case of Greece*, in which he uses religious practices in Greece as a case study for relating Orthodoxy to various aspects of economic development. In *Orthodoxy, Weber and the New Russian Capitalism*, Valentina Gavrilovna Fedotovna and Sharyl Cross set a comparison between Weber's views on the Protestant influence on the development of capitalism and the economic principles of the Russian Orthodox Church. *Russian Religious Rejections of Money and Homo Economicus: The Self-Identifications of the 'Pioneers of a Money Economy' in Post-Soviet Russia* by Natalia Dinello firstly compares the concepts of 'Homo Orthodox' and 'Homo Economicus' and then analyzes them in the context of Post-Soviet Russia. The paper entitled *Historia magistra vitae est – a Proposal of a Theological Revaluation of the Secularization Process* by Zoran Krstić uses a historical approach to compose a new evaluation of the process of secularization on a rather global level. The collection closes with Ivica Živković's *The Orthodox Discussion with the Closest Ones "between" Theology and Sociology*, in which we encounter a revision of religious relations, with a special emphasis on the role of the Christ.

Equipped with author biographies and a name registry, this book is more than likely to serve as a perfect starting point for any future studies of Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church. The diversity and comprehensiveness of all the approaches it offers is outstanding, while the number of possibilities it offers seems to be inexhaustible. The fact that the authors come not only from the Eastern world, but also from a number of Western countries gives us hope that the study of Orthodoxy might find new ways of expansion.

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