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Historical and Anthropological Sketch on Parish Clergy Drunkenness in the Kazan Eparchy in
Mid-19th Century

Abstract

The article covers one of the least studied issues in Russian historiography — behavioral deviations of the Orthodox parish clergy in form of alcohol abuse (drunkenness). According to the authors, addressing this significant, interesting, and, most importantly, underestimated topic,

can shed light on poorly studied aspects of the daily life of various social strata of the Russian Empire; reveal their cultural and socio-psychological features, specifics of mentality and mechanisms of everyday communication; expand the existing ideas on the appearance of parish clergy in the heyday of the Synodal era. To this end, the authors turn to archival materials stored in the State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan. These are investigatory records of the Kazan Spiritual Consistory on priests and clergy of the Kazan diocese of the mid-19th century. Many are yet to come to the attention of researchers. Drawing on these records, a deep and complex scientific problem is identified, which is also yet to be addressed full-on. The article emphasizes the anthropological aspect and attempts to analyze the attitude to the phenomenon of “drunken cleric” in rural social space: diocesan authorities, clergy, and peasants. The study cites instances of addiction of individual representatives of the clergy, thus noting a habitude contributing to moral dissonance with the mission of the church. At the same time, there was a condescending attitude of parishioners to such deviations of their shepherds. One of the possible reasons for this, according to the authors, lies in the inherent desire of peasants to ward off all external interference in the space of rural world (in church terminology, parish), to maintain its closed character and ethical system that was formed and learned in older days. However, this attitude contributed to aggravation of negative trends among the parish clergy, to its polarization; transformed it from fighter against social vices into hostage of circumstances. Further study of this array of archival files is to clarify and expand the portrayal of this side of everyday life of the clergy of late imperial period, thus contributing to objectification of current scientific ideas on the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, its place and role in the Russian society of the second half of the 19th – early 20th century.

Keywords

Church historical sources, Orthodox Church, priesthood, clergy, drunkenness, social deviations, parish, peasants.

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