

SCAFFOLDS OF THE CHURCH: TOWARDS POSTSTRUCTURAL ECCLESIOLOGY.
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In this new book archimandrite Cyril Hovorun, professor at Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles, USA), continues ecclesiological studies begun in *Meta-Ecclesiology*.¹ His earlier book encompasses different traditions and somewhat resembles Roger Haight's three-volume *Christian Community in History* and Erick Jay's *The Church: Its Changing Image through Twenty Centuries*. The reviewed book is different: its scope is limited to the Eastern branch of Christianity; and in writing it the author seeks to meet the need for "critical analysis" of the structures of the Orthodox Church (2).

Dr. Hovorun endeavours "to lay bare the structures that define the life of the eastern churches" (1). He deconstructs the ontological perspective on the structures, explaining how they evolved and transformed, using the instruments of critical theory (structuralism/poststructuralism) (1, 181). He suggests that "the formation of administrative structures in the church increased the distance between ordained clergy and laity" and that "the development of the internal borderlines in the church strengthened its imagined external boundaries" (9). The author builds on these two hypotheses indicating how in the process of historical development the structures transformed, departing from their original functions and eventually changing the original beliefs about the church.

The author approaches the task creatively using different images that correlate to the ecclesiastical institutions treated in the respective chapters. The images expose typical features, as well as strong and weak traits of the structures. Moreover, with these images he wants "to establish causality between various structural shortcomings" (192).

The book consists of introduction, seven chapters, conclusion and four appendices.

The first two chapters set the stage for further analysis of ecclesial structures. In Chapter One the author suggests that theoretical distinctions – the image of fine pencil lines – used by theologians evolved into the "blueprints" and, eventually, resulted in different ecclesiological models. These distinctions are between the church as historical phenomenon and object of faith; church for everyone and for some; dualism of sacred and profane; church universal and particular. Though "theoretical" and "imagined" (11) they had practical consequences. Thus, the church as historical reality challenges some beliefs about the church as the object of faith (15), while the dualism of visible and invisible

¹ Cyril Hovorun, *Meta-Ecclesiology: Chronicles on Church Awareness* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Ukrainian translation: Архімандрит Кирило (Говорун), *Мета-еклезіологія: хроніки самоусвідомлення Церкви* (Київ: Дух і літера, 2018).

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introduces difference between the real and ideal church that demotivates Christians to traverse the gap between them (24).

Chapter Two treats the church as community and movement. Community was the initial structure that belonged to the nature of the church (50). The communities shared fundamental values and practices, they adopted different models: synagogue, *ecclesia*, *collegium* or household (51-56). As the movement developed and spread the need for inter-communal relations emerged. Again, these adopted different models: some were attached to one centre – Jerusalem (the model of diaspora); others were more or less autonomous (*polis*); still others adopted a model of *imperium* that united different Roman *collegia* and employed complex structure (59). The networks required some form of leadership to deal with the issues that exceeded capacities of local communities. Thus, in the neighbourhood model churches were equal, served each other's needs and considered crucial issues at the occasional councils of bishops (59-60). However, soon some churches claimed higher authority because they were planted by apostles or had very authoritative bishops and, therefore, occupied a higher level in the chart of honour. This is reflected in ordering the neighbourhood and transition to "metropolitan" model which united the churches of a province, introduced and institutionalised hierarchy among the bishops, made the councils of bishops regular and, finally, turned network of communities in the province into "super-church" (60-3). The author applies to this process a metaphor of partition walls and convincingly demonstrates the ambivalence of the structures which, besides helping and uniting communities, erected barriers between the networks of churches.

The next three chapters focus on the consequences of the shift towards territoriality for church structures. Chapter Three explains how adoption of the Roman concept of territoriality and civil order helped churches to realise their universalistic impulse and solve many administrative issues (74-5) but caused tensions between different jurisdictions (77-9) and eventually conditioned growth of the concept of sovereignty (the image of ditches) coined in modern times as "canonical territory" (82-7). The idea of political sovereignty, that emerged in the mid-XVIIs and fully ripen by XIXs century, as well as connectedness of church sovereignty to the national borders facilitated this development. Admitting some negative aspects of the "canonical territory" – tensions between old jurisdictions and new national churches in the early XXs century; disputes over "no-church's land" (83); connection with neo-imperial projects (85) – the author believes it is still valuable if it serves the end of unity and is "applied with the interests of the communities, not jurisdictions" (86). Chapter Four explores versions, transformations of the meaning and historical cases of autocephaly (the image of a stronghold). Describing autocephaly the author goes beyond the canonical and administrative perspectives, highlighting its role in strengthening political independence of states, formation of national and cultural identities, serving as an instrument of deimperialization and indigenization (89). Territoriality also raises the question of primacy treated in Chapter Five (image of pyramids). Perhaps, this is the most interesting and important chapter (along with the conclusion) in the book where the author touches very sensitive issues: primacy among historical churches and its implications for church hierarchy. He goes to the root of the problem, asking whether

primacy is part of the nature of the church or its scaffolding (129). Dr. Hovorun points that western and eastern theologians viewed primacy differently: as divinely instituted (129-30) or as rooted in eucharistic ecclesiology (von Balthasar, de Lubac, Zizioulas). Zizioulas builds his view of primacy on the bishop presiding in the Eucharist and monarchy of the Father in relations to other hypostases of the Trinity. The author claims that Zizioulas approach “endangers the fundamental idea of the equality of the trinitarian persons” and cannot logically pass from “Trinity to primacy within the church” (131). Answering the root question, he turns to Ambrosiaster and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. The former represented the conventional perspective on the structures and “projected the earthly hierarchies to the divine realities” while the latter “placed the structures of the church in a metaphysical matrix ... from God to the church” (132). The second view drew from Neoplatonism, which creatively synthesised Platonic and Aristotelian visions of hierarchy, and was thoroughly grounded on its philosophy (133-42). The author raises the appropriate question whether this view is rooted in the Christian tradition (139). His answer is negative for neither the Bible nor early theological tradition knows anything similar to it. Moreover, it even contradicts the Neoplatonic idea of unchanging nature. Since hierarchy depended on the varied historical and social contexts it could only be “*useful, but not sacred*” (143).

In Chapter Six the author turns to the issue of ministry. He admits that it belongs to the nature of the church while the hierarchical principle does not. In his survey of the historical transformation of ministry and emergence of hierarchy the author highlights several reasons for this: (a) legalization of Christianity (145); (b) development of administrative structures (146); and (c) combining charismata with offices (150). Hierarchy is the result of a long and slow historical journey from egalitarian and charismatic ministry to mono-episcopacy. Growth of significance of episcopacy resulted in the exclusion of laity from episcopal elections and further stratification of the church (the image of strata). Hierarchy was theologically justified by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. This caused further division between the laity and ministry but, surprisingly, “facilitated assimilation between the civil and ecclesial strata that appeared to be on the same level of the hierarchical ladder” (161). “The fine line of the demarcation between the community and its ministers that had existed in the early Christian centuries turned into a high wall between lay people and hierarchs,” concludes Dr. Hovorun (162).

Chapter Seven touches the question of boundaries of the church. The author points out that developed administrative structures increase the divide between the laity and ministers and erect the walls between the church and the world. He uses the image of frontiers which is “a key image for understanding what the church is in its nature and how it is related to the world” (163). Surveying theological positions on the conditions for admission into the church, Dr. Hovorun comes to the conclusion – similar to that of Nikolay Afanasiev – that “attitude to baptism in other denominations reflected the varying historical circumstances rather than a firm theological position” (166). He claims that none of the proposed approaches solves the problem and suggests that “this problem has no solution at all, until we get rid of the conventional image of borderline between the church and non-church as sharp-cut edge” (179). His proposal consists of returning to

the idea of frontiers which are not lines but territories porous and open for expansion. The image, opines the author, coincides with the early church's concept of mission aimed at including new peoples and territories and transforming them.

In the concluding chapter Dr. Hovorun collects together all the major threads of his argument, coming to the conclusion: "the ecclesial structures emerged in the course of history, as instruments to facilitate the church's pursuit of particular goals" (181). He insists on the distinction between *esse* and *bene esse* of the church. Thus, communities, sacraments, ministry, even liturgy, belong to the church's nature while the supra-communal structures and hierarchy represent the latter (183). He argues that the structures are subject to such maladies as jurisdictionism, hierarchism, institutionalism and ecclesiocentrism (190-2). That is why every generation needs to re-evaluate the structures and rediscover the reason for their existence and their relation to the mission of the church (193). Dr. Hovorun is convinced that the structures should be perceived not as "ontological" but as "relational" (196) and "accommodate human freedom" (197).

This is a creative, instructive and very engaging book, written in a clear prose. The author demonstrates a high level of competency while dealing with complex and delicate issues. He argues convincingly for his thesis, supporting it from a wide range of historical, sociological, philosophical and political studies. Some maps reproduced in the book are of poor quality and leave the reader with the feeling of disappointment. In spite of that anyone interested in ecclesiology in general and the ecclesial structures in particular will benefit from reading this book.

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