

Wanner, Catherine. *Everyday Religiosity and the Politics of Belonging in Ukraine*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 225 pp. \$130.00 (cloth). \$27.95 (paper). ISBN 978-1-5017-6495-0 (cloth). ISBN 978-1-5017-6496-7 (paperback).

Everyday Religiosity and the Politics of Belonging in Ukraine is composed of five chapters plus an introduction, conclusion, and a preface. Wanner has produced a remarkable volume on the role of vernacular religion in Ukraine among the “Just Orthodox,” that is those who do not align with any of the three Orthodox Churches in Ukraine but rather with the faith tradition as a whole. The book is clearly centered in the Ukrainian experience and draws from fieldwork between 2014-2020; it explores the role that Orthodox faith and vernacular religious practices play in secular Ukraine. Her research is extremely valuable for scholars working on Orthodox practices in the post-socialist space in general. Wanner discusses the influence of the shift from an official policy of atheism and the role of current events, from the Maidan to Russia’s ongoing war (beginning with the 2014 annexation of Crimea).

Wanner elucidates the complex interactions among vernacular faith, politics, national identity and memory in Ukraine. Chapter 1 lays the groundwork to understand the pervasive nature of Orthodoxy in daily life (even though most citizens are not active members of a congregation) and the political backdrop in Ukraine. This study explores Orthodox religion as it is lived and the intersections of national faith traditions and a Ukrainian national identity.

In Chapter 2, Kyiv serves as the centerpiece for her argument about the importance of the sacred atmosphere of place. Wanner argues that the intersection between secular and sacred in Ukraine is central to an understanding of daily life, the role of belief, and political attitudes among the Just Orthodox. She demonstrates how the infusion of the sacred into secular places lends a numinous, extraordinary atmosphere to place. For example, she explores how prayer animates place with an aura of religiosity, according to believers. Visits and pilgrimage to such spots have become some of the most prevalent ways to connect to the sacred, removing people from daily life and providing them with a sense of calm and release. Wanner also discusses how private spaces, such as homes or businesses, can be imbued with religiosity, e.g., installing icon corners or blessing by a priest. The ability for Orthodox Ukrainians to create such sacred sites, both in private and public, imbues the secular landscape with a power akin to long-established monasteries and holy sites.

Chapters 3 and 4, dedicated to the Maidan, are the centerpiece of the book. Wanner first outlines the shift that this event represented in contemporary Ukrainian identity. In addition, she illuminates how this seminal political event became synonymous with faith. People now ascribe the location of the Maidan with a numinous power similar to that of the religious sites in the previous chapter. More importantly, it is an excellent demonstration of the ease with which religious and secular belief systems are intertwined in the Ukrainian consciousness, and not only among the Orthodox. Wanner describes how Greek Catholics, the Ukrainian

Orthodox Church, and Protestant religious figures all made statements about how the treatment of citizens violated religious tenets; an interconfessional tent chapel was installed for ecumenical religious liturgies. In Chapter 4, she explores this process in more detail through commemorative sites dedicated to the Heavenly Hundred, the protestors killed by a sniper on the Maidan. At first, memorials were a means to grieve this horrific loss of life. However, because of the association between the victims and Christian martyrdom, these spaces became associated with Orthodox vernacular mourning practices. People not only placed flowers, but religious objects, e.g., icons and rosaries, as well as candles. Thereby, a secular political space became charged with numinous power.

The final chapter is especially intriguing because it explores the development of military chaplaincy as a result of the war in the Donbas after the Crimean annexation. Chaplains are employed by the Ministry of Defense to serve at the front with the soldiers and also counsel veterans upon their return home. On the surface, it would seem that a study of this official institutional position, which relies both on military imprimatur and religious ordination, is out of place in a book on vernacular religion. However, Wanner convincingly demonstrates how vernacular understandings of Christian practice formed the basis for these men's commitment to and creation of these new roles. In addition, it also meshes with her overall argument about the secular-spiritual connections in Orthodoxy. It may seem out of place, given that the topic of the book is Eastern Orthodox practices, but I wished, given Wanner's excellent treatment of Protestant sects in *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (2007) that she had included a bit about Protestant military chaplains. I hope a study on chaplains of other faiths will appear in other venues, since this material would be extremely useful for researchers of religion and the East Slavic world. Protestantism in Eastern Europe has often been overlooked by scholars of religion, and this study would help to fill this gap in the literature.

Overall, Wanner has provided a much needed and excellent study of Orthodox practices in Ukraine today. She explores the intersection of institutional and vernacular religion in a way that most other religion scholars studying this region have not. As I have mentioned, while the book is dedicated to Ukraine, it is an extremely useful model for those studying Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe broadly. Her nuanced treatment of the role of the national church in identity and how secular spaces become numinous is worthy of attention by scholars in many fields outside of religious studies, including political science, anthropology, folklore, history, and sociology. This volume would certainly make an excellent addition to graduate courses related to these disciplines.

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