

# EASTERN CHRISTIANITY IN NORTH AMERICAN RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE: ETHNIC TRADITIONALISM VERSUS CIVIC INVOLVEMENT AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS.

By Alexey D. Krindatch  
(E-mail: [Akrindatch@aol.com](mailto:Akrindatch@aol.com))

*Fr. John Meyendorff (Orthodox Church in America):*

*“In America today, we Orthodox face two major temptations. The one is to lose love for Divine Truth; to capitulate before the secular and relativistic environment; to consider our Church as a social club among many, using only more elaborate “Eastern” ritual than other clubs. The other temptation is to forget that the Divine Truth has not been given to us alone, as our own private possession: it is a truth which saves the entire world, and of which we have been made witnesses at our own peril. If we hide it under a bushel of our ethnic cultures, our prejudices, we will be judged accordingly” (Meyendorff 1987: 150).*

## Introduction

The last two decades have been marked by the rapidly increasing interest of scholars of religion in two research areas:

- A). Religion and civil society;
- B). Religion and ethnicity.

A) The significant role of religion in American democracy has been broadly recognized since Alexis de Tocqueville’s (1954) *Democracy in America*. Yet, as Ebaugh (2002) pointed out, it was not until the 1980s, when a new focus on civil society in a number of sociological sub-disciplines has again highlighted the importance of religion. Political sociologists and sociologists of culture, racial scholars and those studying the “new” immigrants began to use the concept of civic society to describe the factors that impact group behaviors.

While civil society and civic culture attracted attention in the broad scientific literature, religion as a bearer of culture and religious institutions as providers of social spaces in which social capital is generated gained attention as well. It has become common to look at religious participation as a gateway to other forms of civic engagements (Ammerman 1997; Lam 2002; Wuthnow 1999). The social scientists repeatedly point today to religious activities as an important source of civic-skills learning. Moreover, both political scholars (Houghland 1983; Wald 1987) and researchers dealing with social capital (Verba 1995) began to hold church participation as a major civic skill educator for the lower classes in particular.

B) As Tom Smith – the director of the General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center – noticed, it has been historically one of the manifestations of American religious pluralism that since colonial period this country “has continued to import foreign and spawn its own indigenous religions” (Smith 2002:577). In recent decades American religious diversity has surged forward as the 1965 and 1991 changes in immigrant laws increased the flow of adherents from all the world’s faith (Numrich 2001; Sherkat 2001; Smith 1991; Warner 1998). Consequently, the issue of religion and ethnicity is again at the forefront of the sociology of religion as scholars focus on the impact of religion on the settlement and acculturation patterns of the so called “new” immigrants (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000).

Amidst the ethnic revival movements of the 1970s, many scholars began to emphasize the role that religion plays in preserving ethnicity. Greeley (1971, 1982) maintains that religion and ethnicity are intertwined such that religion frequently plays an ethnic function in American society whereas ethnicity has powerful religious overtones. Smith (1978) argues that ethnic grouping is determined by the identification of immigrants with a particular religious tradition more than any other factor, such as common language, national feeling, or belief in a common descent. Some scholars (Stout 1975) went even further and suggested the term *ethnoreligion* to describe the entire oneness of ethnicity and religion in shaping identity.

In this paper I attempt to examine some aspects of the interplay between religious affiliation, ethnicity, and civic participation in the ethnically diverse communities of the Orthodox Christians (also known as “Eastern Christians”) in North America. The questions to be answered are:

“Does Orthodox Christianity still represent an alienated element in the North American religious landscape, once we compare the current profiles of the various Eastern Christian and the Protestant and the Roman Catholic Churches? To what extent do religious affiliation and ethnicity remain linked in the local parochial communities of Orthodox Christians? How does this linkage affect their social involvement and integration into American society at large? What role do the ethnically-based North American Orthodox churches and Orthodox clergy play in daily life and in shaping identities of these

communities? How (if at all) has modern American society transformed the Orthodox Christian Churches “transplanted” from the Old World?”

### **Historical Background: Eastern Christianity and the Orthodox Churches in North America**

The Western Christian – Roman Catholic and Protestant – religious cultures dominate the American church landscape. Yet, the presence of some 2 million Orthodox faithful gathered into 2,400 local parishes (congregations) attests to the firm establishment of Eastern Christianity in the USA.

Estimates of the total number of the Orthodox Christians around the globe vary from 180 million (Stokoe 1995) to 216 million (Barrett 2000). As to church organization, worldwide Eastern Christianity consists of more than twenty Orthodox Churches which are independent from each other and belong to the two major ecclesiastical families: the Eastern (also called “Byzantine”) Orthodox Churches and the Oriental (also called “Non-Chalzedonian”) Orthodox Churches. The churches within each family share the common doctrine and sacraments and they are in full communion with each other. At the same time, the notion of “one state – one nation – one Church” was historically quite characteristic of Eastern Christianity. Therefore, when Orthodox Christians are asked about their religious affiliation, they normally add an ethnic qualifier to identify their membership in a particular Orthodox Church: Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, etc.

Consequently, many Orthodox Churches from the Old World, that have followers in the United States have organized their jurisdictions (initially, dispersed individual parishes that have been later united into dioceses) with the purpose of ministering to religious needs of the corresponding ethnic communities of the immigrants (and later, their descendants) from the Old World: the Greeks, Russians, Romanians, Armenians, Copts (Christian Arabs from Egypt), and many others.

In 1794, the foundation of a mission on Kodiak Island in Alaska by monks from Russia marked the very origins of Eastern Christianity in America, but, with exception of Russian and less so of Greek, the first parishes of the other Orthodox Churches have been founded in North America much later: mainly around the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> century and during the decade prior to WWI. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period of dynamic and multi-faceted development of the diverse ethnically-based Eastern Christian Churches in America.

First, the several waves of immigration originating in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Middle East increased dramatically the total number of Orthodox Christians in America from no more than 50,000 in 1903 (Erickson 1999) to about two million – perhaps, the most modest estimate accepted by the experts and scholars (Stokoe 1995).

Second, the administrative and institutional composition of Orthodox Christianity in America has become much more complex. In 1906, the Orthodox Churches in America were represented by 74 parishes (sixteen – in Alaska) united into the so-called “Missionary Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church.” This Diocese has included also seven parishes of Syro-Arab mission and six parishes of Serbian mission specifically serving the Orthodox Christians from the Middle East and from Serbia (Summary 1999). In addition to the Russian Missionary Diocese there were a handful of dispersed Greek, Romanian and Armenian Orthodox parishes. Today, Eastern Christianity in America is represented by more than 20 major Church-jurisdictions. They consist of over 50 dioceses and of 2,400 local parishes and monastic communities. There are also several theological educational institutions to train an American-born generation of Orthodox clergy. The best known of these are St. Vladimir Orthodox seminary (Crestwood, NY) and Holy Cross Orthodox seminary (Brookline, MA).

Third, from the geographically limited territory of Alaska (Russian colonists and native Alaskan converts), some areas of California (Russians in San Francisco, Serbs in Jackson, Armenians in Fresno) and Massachusetts (Armenian communities in Cambridge, Watertown, Worcester), the coal mines and steel centers of Pennsylvania (Serbians, Carpatho-Russians also known as Rusyns) and a few major urban centers (Greeks in New York, Chicago, Boston; Orthodox Arabs in New York, Romanians in Cleveland, Albanians in Boston), the Orthodox have spread all across the country. These geographic changes can be attributed both to continuing immigration from the Old World and to the new patterns of settlement of children and grandchildren of the “old” Orthodox immigrants.

Fourth, the ethnic diversity of the Orthodox Christians in America increased greatly during 20<sup>th</sup> century and this process continues. With the exceptions of the early settled Russians, Greeks, Carpatho-Russians, and Romanians, the Orthodox began arriving in the United States in large numbers on the eve of WWI (including the Armenians who escaped from Turkey after tragic events of genocide in 1913), and later, specifically, in the early 1920s (including the immigration caused by the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 in Russia), in the wake of WWII (some 100,000 Eastern European refugees and displaced persons: Romanians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Ukrainians, Albanians), in the wake of the Cypriot crisis (some 160,000 Greek

immigrants), and in the wake of the civil war in Lebanon (Arabs, Armenians and Syrians) and of the Iran-Iraq war (Orthodox Syrians).

The last major influx of Orthodox Christians to the United States in 1990s was associated with the immigrants from ex-USSR republics (Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Moldavians), with the refugees from former Yugoslavia (Serbs, Macedonians, Albanians) after the break-up in 1991 and the following bloody conflict in this country as well as with Armenians from the former Soviet republic of Armenia, who came in the United States after the major earthquake in North-Western Armenia and after the beginning of a war in mountainous Karabagh (both events in 1988).

Among the newest and fastest growing ethnic groups of Orthodox Christians in this country are also the Copts (Arabic speaking Orthodox Christians from Egypt) and the Malankara Orthodox Christians from India. For instance, whereas in 1971 there were only three Coptic communities in the USA (Jersey City, Los Angeles, New York), by the beginning of the third millennium, more than 115 parishes of the Coptic Orthodox Church have been organized across the country. Similarly, whereas 30 years ago two small Malankara parishes existed in the United States (both in greater New York area), today 81 local parishes belong to two various Malankara Orthodox Churches in North America (Krindatch 2002b).

Hence, the patterns of development of the various Orthodox Churches in America are closely connected with the history of ethnically diverse communities of the Orthodox immigrants, who came to the US for various reasons, at different times and from many countries. As noticed earlier, nearly all major waves of the Orthodox immigration from the Old World were essentially involuntary. Therefore, it has become common for the Orthodox in America to view themselves as a “diaspora” – the ethnic communities forcibly dispersed from the motherlands. Because of this circumstance, and due to the administrative linkage to the Mother Churches overseas, the Orthodox Churches and their corresponding communities of Eastern Christians in the United States were always affected by political, religious and social transformations occurring back in the Old World.

For instance, following the publication of a 1929 Papal Decree that limited the freedoms and autonomy of the Uniate Greek-Catholic Churches (those celebrating Orthodox Byzantine liturgy yet being in administrative union with Rome), about 25,000 of Uniates in Johnstown, PA, left the Greek-Catholic Church and converted to Orthodoxy. These Carpatho-Russians (also known as Ruthenians, Rusyns), who immigrated to the US from Carpathian mountain region of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, formed their own independent Orthodox jurisdiction – the Carpatho-Russian Greek-Catholic Diocese of USA.

Another example is the establishment of the Communist regimes in the Soviet Union and later the Eastern Europe which caused the political breaks among the Russian (1920s), Armenian (1933), Serbian (1963), Bulgarian (1963) and Romanian (1951) Orthodox parishes in America. As a result, each of the corresponding American Orthodox Churches has been split into two hostile factions: those remaining true to the Mother Church abroad and the others, which have maintained that the Mother Church and its leaders were manipulated by the new Communist authority and which have formed more or less independent Church-jurisdictions.

Two circumstances are essential for understanding the nature of the Orthodox Christian Churches in North America:

1) Traditionally, in these Churches, a high priority has been given to the preservation of the ethnic heritage and identity of their members. This has been done in several ways: by retaining in the Church the language of the mother country; by the establishment of parochial all-day schools as a substitute for the regular American public schools; by organizing a network of one-day schools (that exist separately from religious Sunday schools) intended to teach the language, geography, literature and history of the mother country; by establishing nationwide Orthodox “ethnic” women and youth organizations; by various restrictive Church-policies with regard to the mixed inter-Christian, Orthodox – Non Orthodox, marriages, etc (Krindatch 2002b).

2) Most American Orthodox Churches remain the subdivisions of and subordinate to (though with the various levels of autonomy) one of the Mother Orthodox Churches in the Old World (Tab. 1).

**Tab. 1 Eastern Christian Churches in the USA**

Major Eastern Christian Churches in America	Status, relationship with and subordination to the “Mother Church”	Head-quarter of “Mother” Church”	Head quarter(s) in USA (number of parishes in US, as of 2001)	Estimated membership (!) (1000)	
				World-Wide	USA
1 Orthodox Church in America (on the US territory it consists of eight regular territorial dioceses and of semi-autonomous Albanian archdiocese and Bulgarian diocese and Romanian episcopate).	Since 1970 – an autocephalous (fully independent) American national Church; Before 1970 - a Metropolia of the Russian Orthodox Church.	N/A	Syosset, NY  <b>(456)</b>	N/A	115 - 120
2 Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	Part of Ecumenical Patriarchate Of Constantinople	Istanbul, Turkey	New York, NY <b>(525)</b>	3,500	450 - 500
3 Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	Part of Patriarchate of Antioch	Damascus, Syria	Englewood, NJ <b>(206)</b>	750 – 1,000	85 - 100
4 Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA	Part of Serbian Orthodox Church	Belgrade, Yugoslavia	Diocesan centers: Alhambra, CA Libertyville, IL Grayslake, IL Edgeworth, PA <b>(118)</b>	8,000	70 - 75
5 Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA	Autonomous part of Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople	N/A	Bound Brook, NJ <b>(106)</b>	N/A	30
6 American Carpatho Russian Greek Catholic Diocese	Autonomous part of Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople	N/A	Johnstown, PA <b>(76)</b>	N/A	20
7 Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America	Part of Romanian Orthodox Church	Bucharest, Romania	Detroit, MI <b>(14)</b>	19,000	6-7
8 Bulgarian Orthodox Diocese of the USA	Part of Bulgarian Orthodox Church	Sophia, Bulgaria	New York, NY <b>(9)</b>	8,000	4-5
9 Albanian Orthodox Diocese in America	Autonomous part of Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America	N/A	Las Vegas, NV <b>(2)</b>	N/A	0,5
10 Patriarchal parishes of Russian Orthodox Church	Part of Russian Orthodox Church	Moscow, Russia	New York, NY <b>(33)</b>	80,000 - 120,000	20 - 25
11 Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia	Independent (splitted from Russian Orthodox Church in 1920)	New York, USA (*)	New York, NY(*) <b>(128)</b>	150	N/D
12 Parishes of Macedonian Orthodox Church in USA	Part of Macedonian Orthodox Church	Scopje, Macedonia	- <b>(16)</b>	1,200	12 - 15
13 Holy Orthodox Church in North America	Autonomous part of True Orthodox Church of Greece	N/A	Roslindale, MA <b>(25)</b>	N/A	2
14 Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East	Part of the Holy Apostolic Assyrian Church of the East	Morton Grove IL, USA (*)	Morton Grove, IL (*) <b>(18)</b>	400	35 - 40
15 Armenian Church of America (Catholicossate Echmiadzin)	Part of Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicossate Etchmiadzin)	Etchmiadzin, Armenia	Diocesan centers: New York, NY Los Angeles, CA <b>(89)</b>	6,000	45 - 50
16 Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Catholicossate Cilicia)	Part of Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicossate Cilicia)	Antelias, Lebanon	Diocesan centers: New York, NY Los Angeles, CA <b>(38)</b>	800	20 - 25
17 North American Archdiocese of Coptic Orthodox Church	Part of Coptic Orthodox Church	Cairo, Egypt	Cedar Grove, NJ <b>(116)</b>	3,900	N/D

Major Eastern Christian Churches in America	Status, relationship with, subordination to the "Mother-Church"	Head-quarter of "Mother" Church	Head quarter(s) in USA <b>(number of parishes in US, as of 2001)</b>	Estimated membership (!) (1000)	
				World-Wide	USA
18 North American Archdioceses of Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch	Part of Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch	Damascus, Syria	Diocesan centers: Teaneck, NJ Burbank, CA <b>(23)</b>	250	15-18
19 Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church	Autonomous part of Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch	N/A	Nanuet, NJ <b>(22)</b>	1,000	4-5
20 American diocese of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church	Part of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church	Kottayam, India	Bellrose, NY <b>(59)</b>	1,000	13-15

Note: **N/D** – No data available; **N/A** – Not applicable; (\*) – international headquarters of these Churches are located on US territory; (!) – a) estimated membership worldwide according to R. Roberson, "The Eastern Christian Churches", 6<sup>th</sup> edition, Orientalia Christiana, Roma, 1999; and J.H. Erickson, "Orthodox Christians in America", Oxford University Press, New York, 1999. b) estimated membership in USA according to A. Krindatch, "Orthodox (Eastern Christian) Churches in the United States at the beginning of a new millennium: Questions of nature, identity and mission." In "Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion", 41(3), 2002, pp.533-563.

In brief, the common situation of the various Orthodox jurisdictions in the context of American society in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is brilliantly characterized by the Orthodox historian Mark Stokoe: *"In externals, Orthodox Christians in North America resemble Roman Catholics. They share a similar sacramental view of life; liturgical forms of corporate worship; traditional form of piety such as fasting, prayer, monasticism; and generally conservative positions on contemporary moral issues. In administration the Orthodox in North America resemble Protestants and are splintered into distinct administrative "jurisdictions" based on ethnic origins and politics, both secular and ecclesiastical. In self-identity, however, Orthodox Christians in North America are like Orthodox Jews; a people apart, unable and at time unwilling to separate the claims of race, religion, and politics: people for whom the Greek term "diaspora" ("dispersion") has been an expression of enduring meaning" (Stokoe 1995: 2).*

Today, in spite of the fact that American society is richly endowed with multiple venues for public dialogue and cultural exchange, the Eastern Christians remain to a significant extent in self-isolated communities. Even gradual disappearance of the urban ethnic neighborhoods did not change this situation. For instance, according to a recent nationwide survey, less than one-fifth of members of the Orthodox Churches in the USA live in a walking-distance from their church-buildings, and more than two-fifths commute for at least 30 minutes to come to the church. Yet, the statement, "Our parish has a strong ethnic heritage and identity that we are trying to preserve" describes the situation in about half of Orthodox parishes in the USA. The proportion of inter-Christian (Orthodox-Non Orthodox) weddings is below 20% in a half and it is below 5% in a third of the Orthodox parishes in America (Krindatch 2002a).

### **Why Orthodox Christians and Orthodox Churches in particular?**

Starting in the 1970s, it has become obvious that fundamental changes in the demographics of the membership of the various Orthodox Churches in America (the increasing proportion of the second-third generation American born members and of converts who came to Orthodoxy from other Christian traditions mainly through inter-Christian marriage), the new developments in the area of religious education and liturgical life, and the grassroots Orthodox lay movements encouraging greater unity of all American Orthodox Churches for the sake of mission, were changing essentially the position of these Churches on the country's religious scene.

Today, the unanswered questions of the nature and identity of American Orthodox Churches is urgent for several reasons.

1) The "ethnocentric" character of the Orthodox Churches has limited their ability to become assimilated with the tradition of religious pluralism and ecumenical co-operation in this country. In the social sphere, there has been little concern about the responsibility of Eastern Christian Churches to the wider society, because they tended to see themselves as composed of people who were or are not really a part of American society. Accordingly, little attention has been paid to the civic engagement of local Orthodox parishes into the life of the "American" communities nearby. For instance, no more than one third of the Orthodox parishes participate together with the other Christian Churches in joint social projects or in local councils of Churches.

2) In the 1990s, the break-up of the USSR, the armed conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia, and the general political instability in the Middle East have caused a massive wave of the Orthodox immigrants from the Old World to North America. As a result, the new immigrants comprise currently 40% of the membership in the North American Orthodox Churches, and they represent the major source of the further demographic growth in each third Orthodox parish. The policies pursued in recently formed Orthodox parishes are frequently at odds with the natural trends of integration of Eastern Christian immigrants into the wider American society. For example, 41% of priests in Orthodox parishes founded after 1990 hold an active position against inter-Christian marriages (Orthodox - Non-Orthodox). Also a new problem has become urgent: the tensions between American-born generations of the Orthodox faithful, who are largely integrated into American culture and who accepted American value system, and the new immigrants, who are still attached to traditional ways of thinking.

3) As noticed above, the majority of the North American Orthodox Churches remain subdivisions of the Mother Orthodox Churches overseas, which are headquartered either in the post-Communist states (the former USSR republics and Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria) or in the states with predominantly Islamic populations (Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt). The future of relations between the USA and these countries is uncertain. At the same time, the waves of Eastern Christian immigrants, who accumulate in the newly-formed North American Orthodox parishes, reproduce in this country the constellation of political and religious circumstances in their home countries. In almost half of American Orthodox parishes the decisions taken by the Mother-Churches in the Old World are considered as an “important source of authority for the daily life of a parish.” (Krindatch 2002a).

### **Data and Research Design**

This paper presents the selected results of the author’s original two-stage study on Eastern Christianity in North America completed in 2000-2002.

In 2000-2001, in the national “Religious Congregation Membership Study”, I was responsible for compiling the database on 22 major Eastern Christian Churches in the USA. The information was obtained from the headquarters of the North American Orthodox Churches and in personal consultations with their leadership (bishops and chancellors). This work contributed to the reference book “Religious Congregations & Membership in the United States: 2000.” (Glenmary Research Center, Nashville Tennessee, 2002). The broader academic findings of this study were first discussed on the website of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research ([http://hirr.hartsem.edu/research/research\\_orthodoxindex.html](http://hirr.hartsem.edu/research/research_orthodoxindex.html)) and appeared later in a published form (Krindatch 2002b).

In spring 2002, a grant from the Louisville Institute (Louisville, KY) enabled the national survey of all local parishes of six American Orthodox Church-jurisdictions: Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA, Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch in the USA, Romanian Episcopate of the Orthodox Church in America, Albanian Archdiocese of the Orthodox Church in America and the Alaskan Diocese of the Orthodox Church in America. Although the three the last groups are parts of one Church (Orthodox Church in America), they either exist quasi-independent on the base of the broad autonomy (Albanian Archdiocese and Romanian Episcopate) or are very distinct from the regular territorial dioceses of the Orthodox Church in America because of geographic location, specific membership’ composition and history (Alaskan diocese).

The basic information on history, geography, membership and clergy of investigated Churches is provided in Tab.2.

**Tab. 2**

	Patriarchal parishes (Russian Orthodox Church)	Ukrainian Orthodox Church	Albanian Archdiocese (Orthodox Church in America)	Romanian Episcopate (Orthodox Church in America)	Alaskan Diocese (Orthodox Church in America)	Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch
Total number of parishes in the USA (1)	33	106	12	57	23	20
Estimated number of adherents in the USA (2)	26, 500	30, 000	6, 500	23, 800	5, 500	15, 100
<b>History:</b>						
The oldest of currently existing parishes: time and place of foundation	1892: New York, NY	1897: Troy, NY.	1908: Boston,MA	1904: Cleveland, OH,	1794: Kodiak, AK	1907: Paramus, NJ
% of parishes established before WWII	70 %	68 %	100 %	45 %	71 %	20 %
% of parishes established after 1990	0 %	4 %	0 %	20 %	0 %	43 %

	Patriarchal parishes (Russian Orthodox Church)	Ukrainian Orthodox Church	Albanian Archdiocese (Orthodox Church in America)	Romanian Episcopate (Orthodox Church in America)	Alaskan Diocese (Orthodox Church in America)	Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch
<b>Geography:</b>						
Headquarters in USA	New York, NY	BoundBrok NJ	Boston, MA	Jackson, MI	Anchorage, AK	Teaneck NJ Burbank, CA
% of parishes located in rural settings or in the towns of less than 10, 000 population	22 %	17 %	0 %	9 %	69 %	7 %
% of parishes located in or near cities of more than 250, 000 population	43 %	27 %	55 %	58 %	5 %	47 %
Parishes located in North-East region (3)	48 %	76 %	91 %	22 %	0 %	60 %
Parishes located in South region (3)	9 %	5 %	0 %	16 %	0 %	20 %
Parishes located in North-Central region (3)	30 %	12 %	9 %	38 %	0 %	13 %
Parishes located in West region (3)	13 %	7 %	0 %	24 %	100 %	7 %
<b>Membership:</b>						
First-generation immigrants among members	16 %	39 %	25 %	58 %	2 %	74 %
% of parishes where newly arriving immigrants represent major source of further growth	24 %	17 %	60 %	46 %	0 %	60 %
Members with less than high-school education	16 %	21 %	21 %	27 %	23 %	29 %
Members graduated from college/university	53 %	32 %	40 %	42 %	15 %	32 %
Members in households with incomes below \$ 20, 000	25 %	35 %	26 %	29 %	38 %	17 %
Members in households with incomes above \$ 75, 000	21 %	21 %	26 %	33 %	14 %	43 %
<b>Clergy:</b>						
First-generation immigrants among clergy	37 %	45 %	0 %	78 %	5 %	93 %
Clergy with M.Div. or D.Min. degree in Theology	35 %	32 %	30 %	76 %	21 %	7 %

(1) – only parishes with permanent priest “in residence”.

(2) – “adherents” are generally defined as all those baptized who are known to the local parish and attend church services at least occasionally.

(3) - North-East: the states of NY, PA, NJ, RI, CT, MA, VT, NH, ME. South: the states of OK, TX, AR, LA, MS, AL, TN, KY, WV, VA, MD, DE, Washington DC, NC, SC, GA, FL. North-Central: the states of ND, SD, NE, KS, MO, IA, MN, WI, IL, IN, OH, MI. West: the states of AK, HI, WA, OR, CA, NV, ID, MT, WY, UT, CO, AZ, NM.

Our survey was commissioned as a mail survey. The questionnaires were sent from the Church headquarters and were accompanied by the letters from the bishops and chancellors. They were completed by the Orthodox priests, who are in charge of the local parishes. The average response rate to the survey was 61%.

The questionnaire included about 200 questions covering five broad subjects: “History, location and facilities of a parish”, “Worship and identity of a parish”, “Members of a parish”, “Mission work and social programs of a parish”, “Priesthood, leadership, and the sources of internal disagreements.”

About 50% of the questions in our survey were comparable with the items in the national “Faith Communities Today” study – the largest survey of congregations ever conducted in the United States, which examined 14,300 congregations of 41 denominations and faith groups (Dudley and Roozen 2001). This has allowed an analysis based on comparisons of data for:

- A) The American Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church and three major groupings of the Protestant denominations (liberal, moderate, evangelical);
- B) Six participating Orthodox Churches;
- C) The “old” (founded prior to 1970) and the “new” (founded after 1990) local Orthodox parishes (congregations).

The personal interviews with the leaders of the Orthodox Christian Churches and with their ordinary (parochial) clergy helped to interpret correctly the results of the analysis.

## Findings

1) The *striking jurisdictional (denominational) distinctiveness* remains a fundamental and noteworthy feature of the Eastern Christian Churches in the USA.

Although they share the common faith, doctrine, and sacraments, the actual differences between American Orthodox Churches (the “vitality” of life in their local parishes, their internal Church-policies, social programs’ priorities, approaches to the mission work, etc.) are as significant as the differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the liberal, and moderate and evangelical Protestant denominations (see Tab.3).

**Tab. 3**

	1. U.S. Christian Churches total	2. Roman Cathol. Church	3. Liberal Protest. denom.	4. Moder. Protest. denom.	5. Evang. Protest. denom.	6. Patr. parishes (Rus. Orth.)	7. Ukrain. Orthod. Church	8. Alban. Orthod. Arch- diocese	9. Roman. Orthod. Episco- pate	10. Alaskan Orthod. diocese	11. Syrian Orthod. Church
<b>Vitality of congregational (parochial) life</b>											
Our congregation (parish) is spiritually vital and alive: “yes”	68	73	58	61	67	65	44	55	73	58	67
Since 1995 (1990) the number of regularly participating adults in a congregation/parish has (*):											
- increased + 10% (20%) or more	34	29	32	26	37	22	17	40	27	19	40
- decreased 10% (20%) or more	9	9	9	11	8	9	20	0	5	0	7
We do not have problems getting people to make volunteer work in our congregation (parish)	22	23	24	23	21	50	18	46	49	22	27
We cannot find enough people who are willing to serve as volunteers	15	9	9	11	17	5	17	9	5	11	0
<b>Inviting and assimilating others</b>											
Our congregation (parish) is trying to increase its racial and ethnic diversity: definitely or rather “yes”	28	37	23	22	35	29	17	36	39	21	27
New people are easily incorporated into the life of our congregation (parish): definitely or rather “yes”	64	63	60	60	63	77	39	36	76	37	60
<b>Ecumenical involvement and attitudes</b>											
During the last 12 months, has your congregation (parish) been involved in joint ecumenical worship service with other Christian churches: “yes”	46	59	58	66	43	10	53	36	32	0	53
% of parishes where clergy pursue an active policy of discouraging inter-Christian marriages	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	35	7	0	22	No data	27
% of parishes participating in joint local social service programs with the other Christian Churches	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	25	45	45	19	26	21
<b>Social programs and services</b>											
The congregation (parish) provides following social services:											
- soup kitchen (food pantry)	85	86	95	91	82	76	62	100	62	44	29
- social advocacy programs	34	34	47	31	27	15	32	18	30	11	7
- senior citizen programs	43	43	40	44	41	20	29	36	25	6	13

**Source of data** columns 1-5: the survey of national “Faith Communities Today Study” : [www.fact.hartsem.edu](http://www.fact.hartsem.edu) and (Dudley and Roozen 2001); columns 6-11: Krindatch, A. D. A national survey of the local Orthodox parishes of Albanian, Alaskan, Syriac, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian ethno-cultural origin and heritage. Completed by financial support of the Louisville Institute (Louisville, KY) in February – April 2002. Unpublished. The questionnaire is available at [http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/research\\_orthodoxindex.html](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/research_orthodoxindex.html) (\*) - this question was asked differently in the survey of the FACT study and in Alexei Krindatch’s survey of the local North American Orthodox parishes: a) in FACT survey “Since 1995 the number of regularly participating adults in a congregation/parish has “Increased (or decreased) for 10% or more”; b) in Alexei Krindatch’s survey “Since 1990 the number of regularly participating adults in a congregation/parish has “Increased (or decreased) for 20% or more.”



2) Despite such pronounced inter-Orthodox Church-to-Church differences, *all American Orthodox Churches have more explicit expectations and they have essentially stricter requirements for their members* compared to the congregations of various Protestant denominations and (though to the lesser extent) to the Roman Catholic parishes (Tab.4).

**Tab. 4**

	U.S. Christian Churches total	Roman Cathol. Church	Liberal Protest. denom.	Moder. Protest. denom.	Evang. Protest. denom.	Patr. parishes (Rus. Orth.)	Ukrain. Orthod. Church	Alban. Orthod. Arch-diocese	Roman. Orthod. Episco-pate	Alaskan Orthod. diocese	Syrian Orthod. Church
“Our parish has clear expectations for our members that are strictly enforced”: % of parishes responded “yes”	9	17	4	4	12	42	15	36	31	21	21

3) The Eastern Christian Churches demonstrate a rather *low level of the interest to active social participation in the life of the wider American society* in the comparison with the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches (see Tab.5).

**Tab. 5**

	U.S. Christian Churches total	Roman Cathol. Church	Liberal Protest. denom.	Moder. Protest. denom.	Evang. Protest. denom.	Patr. parishes (Rus. Orth.)	Ukrain. Orthod. Church	Alban. Orthod. Arch-diocese	Roman. Orthod. Episco-pate	Alaskan Orthod. diocese	Syrian Orthod. Church
The sermon focus frequently on social justice and social action (*): - in your local area - in the US nationally	29	No Data	35	28	16	5 5	8 5	0 0	0 3	5 0	0 14
The sermon never (seldom) focus on social justice/action (*): - in your local area - in the US nationally	29	No Data	14	20	35	70 75	63 58	73 54	69 61	84 79	54 50
Our congregation/parish is working for social justice: - definitely/rather “yes” - definitely/rather “no”	29 35	37 23	27 30	18 40	18 47	17 50	12 60	10 50	14 57	5 58	7 73

(\*) – this question was asked as one question in the survey of the FACT study (“How often does the sermon in your worship focus on social action and social justice?”), but it was divided in two questions in Alexei Krindatch’s survey of the local North American Orthodox parishes (“How often does your sermon focus on social issues in the area of your parish?” and “...on social issues in the USA in generally?”)

Also the social services sponsored by the parishes of Orthodox Churches are frequently offered exclusively to the members of the parish and not to all inhabitants of the local territorial communities (see Tab.6).

**Tab. 6**

	Patriarchal parishes (Russian Orthodox Church)	Ukrainian Orthodox Church	Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese	Romanian Orthodox Episcopate	Alaskan Orthodox Arch-diocese	Syrian Orthodox Church
The parish provides the following social services for its members only / for the local community						
- soup kitchen, food donations	76 / 67	62 / 49	100 / 100	62 / 38	44 / 6	29 / 29
- social advocacy programs	15 / 5	32 / 8	18 / 0	30 / 3	11 / 0	7 / 0
- senior citizen daily life assistance programs	20 / 0	29 / 5	36 / 18	25 / 3	6 / 0	13 / 0
- financial assistance for individuals or families	52 / 38	43 / 32	73 / 46	70 / 35	22 / 6	60 / 27
- any medical assistance	24 / 14	24 / 3	36 / 9	11 / 3	17 / 6	7 / 0
- prison ministry	36 / 14	10 / 5	9 / 0	30 / 14	22 / 6	27 / 7

A number of factors must be taken into account by the explanation of this self-oriented social and charity work. First, a significant proportion of the Orthodox Christians in the USA does not identify themselves with the wider American society. Furthermore, this proportion is in many cases higher than the actual share of the first-generation immigrants among the parish' members. The language and traditions of daily culture remain most significant criteria to distinguish between "us" and "them" (see Tab. 7).

**Tab. 7**

	Patriarchal parishes (Russian Orthodox Church)	Ukrainian Orthodox Church	Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese	Romanian Orthodox Episcopate	Alaskan Orthodox diocese (*)	Syrian Orthodox Church
Proportion of first-generation immigrants among members (%)	16	39	25	58	2	74
The members of our parish are dissimilar to the other residents in the area in terms of their culture and language: % of parishes responded "yes"	32	35	36	47	5	100

(\*) – a vast majority of the Orthodox faithful in Alaskan diocese of the "Orthodox Church in America" either belong to the native American peoples or they are multi-generation descendants to the Russians once lived in Alaska. Hence, there is no differences in the language or culture with the other area's residents in this particular case.

Second, the relationship between two notions, "vitality of congregational/parochial life" and "active social service", which is characteristic for the Orthodox Christians is distinctly different in comparison with their Western Christian counterparts. In the other words, in American Orthodox parishes, the optimistic self-estimation "Our parish is active and alive" is not associated with the statement "Our parish has various well organized social programs and activities" (see Tab. 8).

**Tab. 8**

% of parishes participating in a survey	Patriarchal parishes (Russian Orthodox Church)	Ukrainian Orthodox Church	Albanian Orthodox Arch-diocese	Romanian Orthodox Episcopate	Alaskan Orthodox Diocese	Syrian Orthodox Church
"Our parish is active and alive" – definitely "yes"	65	44	55	73	58	67
"We have various well organized social programs and activities" – definitely "yes"	23	15	36	41	10	47

Third, the relatively unstable financial situation in the Orthodox Churches is an objective obstacle to the development of the wide range of social services which are offered to all inhabitants of the local community. The differences in the average income between the members of the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic and various Protestant Churches are negligible. At the same time, the financial health of the Orthodox parishes is obviously weaker than in the case of the Catholic parishes and Protestant congregations. For example, in the Orthodox Churches participating in our survey the average proportion of their members living in households with annual income below \$ 20, 000 was 31% in comparison with 25% in the whole sample of Christian congregations from the FACT study. At the same time, in most of the investigated Orthodox Churches twice as less of their parishes report a good financial health in comparison with the Roman Catholic Church or with Protestant denominations (see Tab.9).

**Tab. 9**

	U.S. Christian Churches total	Roman Cathol. Church.	Liberal Protest. denom.	Moder. Protest. denom.	Evang. Protest. denom.	Patr. parishes (Rus. Orth.)	Ukrain. Orthod. Church	Alban. Orthod. Arch-diocese	Roman. Orthod. Episco-pate	Alaskan Orthod. diocese	Syrian Orthod. Church
How would you describe your parish/congregation current financial health?											
Excellent or good	64	70	60	64	68	45	35	30	35	22	40
In difficulty	8	7	10	9	6	5	22	20	16	11	7

4) Beginning in the 1970s, religious faith and ethnic identity, once seen as inseparable, have been increasingly less understood as such by the English-speaking, socially-mobile, and geographically-dispersed, US-born generations of the Orthodox faithful (Stokoe and Kishkovsky 1995:87), but *this trend of integration of the Orthodox Churches with the wider American society has been again reversed in the 1980s and 1990s* because of the new wave of Orthodox immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe and from Middle East and North Africa.

Today, three basic factors determine the specific situations in the various Eastern Christian Churches.

- A) The linkage between ethnic identity and denominational loyalty that has traditionally been maintained in the North American Orthodox Churches in a particularly strong way;
- B) The slow, yet inevitable, process of their cultural assimilation, because of the growing proportion of their American-born members, and an increasing number of “Anglo-American” converts through the mixed inter-Christian marriages, which have challenged this linkage;
- C) The continuing massive influx of the new immigrants from overseas, who contribute to the refreshment of the “ethnic values and sentiments.”

The differences between various American Orthodox Church-jurisdictions are further augmented by the distinctions among individual local parishes within each Orthodox Church, which are associated with the different duration of their existence.

Our hypothesis is that the level of the cultural integration of communities of Eastern Christians with American society in general and with tradition of religious pluralism in particular depends on:

- A) The duration of their existence in the USA and, thus, the number of generations of the Orthodox faithful “rooted” in the American cultural soil;
- B) Specific “ethnic” traditions and Church-policies, which vary greatly from one Orthodox Church to another.

Because of financial limitations and time restrictions, we were unable in this pilot-study to survey the largest American Orthodox Churches (Greek Archdiocese, Orthodox Church in America, etc.) and to undertake a comparative analysis of the “old” (founded prior to 1970) and the “new” (founded after 1990) parishes within the single Orthodox jurisdictions (such samples of parishes in our study were too small for drawing serious conclusions). Therefore, the attempts to examine “what is caused by the uniqueness of each Church” versus “what is associated with various duration of existence of their individual parishes in America” were to an essential degree empirical. Nevertheless, some findings deserve attention.

First, the duration of the existence of the individual Orthodox parishes in America and, consequently, the share of their US-born members and clergy have an obvious impact on the extent of usage of English as a language of liturgy and sermon. There is also a correlation between the parish’ age and proportion of its US-born members, on the one hand, and the share of the inter-Christian (Orthodox - Non Orthodox) weddings, on the other hand (see Tab.10).

**Tab. 10**

	1. All	2. “New”	3. “Old”	4. Rus	5. Ukr	6. Alb	7. Rom	8 Alsk	9. Syr
Proportion (%) of clergy born in the USA	48	18	58	63	55	100	22	95	7
Proportion (%) of members born in the USA	59	30	67	84	61	75	42	98	26
Average proportion (%) of usage of English language during sermon on a typical Sunday	61	33	68	80	63	91	39	89	46
Average proportion (%) of usage of English language in a liturgy on a typical Sunday	53	31	59	72	52	78	37	81	24
Estimated proportion (%) of the inter-Christian (Orthodox – Non-Orthodox) weddings	34	24	38	35	49	60	23	12	27

- 1. All – all parishes of all six Orthodox Churches participating in the survey;
- 2. “New” – parishes of all Orthodox Churches participating in the survey that were founded from 1991-2001;
- 3. “Old” – parishes of all Orthodox Churches participating in the survey that were founded prior to 1970;
- 4. Rus – Patriarchal parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA;
- 5. Ukr – Parishes of Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA;
- 6. Alb – Parishes of Albanian Archdiocese of the Orthodox Church in America;
- 7. Rom – Parishes of Romanian Episcopate of the Orthodox Church in America;
- 8. Alsk – Parishes of Diocese of Alaska of the Orthodox Church in America;
- 9. Syr – Parishes Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch in the USA.

Second, it seems, however, that *the factor of “jurisdictional distinctiveness and Church-to-Church specific traditions” has a larger impact on various aspects of religious and social life* in the American Orthodox Churches than the duration of existence of their parishes in the US and the share of their US-born clergy and members.

There is no relation between proportion of the first-generation immigrants among parishioners (or clergy) and the self-assessment “Our parish has strong ethnic heritage that we are trying to preserve.” Similarly, there is no linkage between the share of US-born clergy (or their educational level) and their policies towards inter-Christian marriages or towards future religion of children from these religiously mixed families. For instance, despite the relatively low level of education and high proportion of the first generation immigrants, the Ukrainian priests demonstrate rather liberal approaches towards inter-Christian marriages, while essentially more “Americanized” and well educated Russian Orthodox priests pursue more restrictive policies. There are no first-generation immigrants among Albanian Orthodox clergy and 70% of them have the secular education equivalent to Master’s or Ph.D. degree, but a majority of them still consider preserving Albanian ethnic culture and identity in a parish as an important goal (see Tab.11).

**Tab. 11**

	All	Rus	Ukr	Alb	Rom	Alsk	Syr
Proportion of priests (%) who’s level of a secular education is Master’s or Ph.D. degree	34	45	34	70	33	6	20
First generation immigrants among clergy (%)	52	37	45	0	78	5	93
First generation immigrants among members (%)	41	16	39	25	58	2	74
“Our parish has a strong ethno-cultural heritage and identity that we are trying to preserve”: % of parishes that responded “yes”	47	33	34	55	59	37 (*)	79
% of parishes where clergy pursue an active policy of discouraging inter-Christian marriages	18	35	7	0	22	No data	27
% of parishes where position of local clergy is “I will not bless the inter-Christian marriage of the member of my parish unless he/she will promise to baptize future children in our Orthodox church”	16	30	12	0	16	10	14

(\*) In the parishes of Alaskan diocese of the “Orthodox Church in America” most of clergy are the representatives of native Alaskan peoples. Consequently, primary not-American “ethnic identity” means “Alaskan”.

Furthermore, the declaration “Our parish is trying to increase its ethnic and cultural diversity” does not imply the practical missionary efforts and an openness for the converts into Orthodox Christianity, when the parish would be actually, “to a great extent involved in recruiting new members and converting into Orthodox faith the people of a different ethnic and religious heritages” (see Tab.12).

**Tab. 12**

	All	Rus	Ukr	Alb	Rom	Alsk	Syr
Proportion (%) of clergy born in the USA	48	63	55	100	22	95	7
Proportion (%) of members born in the USA	59	84	61	75	42	98	26
“Our parish is trying to increase its ethnic and cultural diversity”: % of parishes that have responded “definitely yes”	28	29	17	36	39	21	27
% of parishes parishes to a great extent involved in recruiting new members and converting into Orthodox faith the people of a different (not the parish’s traditional) ethnic and religious heritages	13	26	10	10	16	21	0

Finally, the degree of ecumenical involvement also does not discriminate the old and the recently established parishes. The participation in the ecumenical worship simply varies greatly from Church to Church. The well-educated and US-born clergy in the Patriarchal parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church are rather reluctant to take part in the ecumenical events. Yet, the priests from the Syrian Orthodox Church, who are mainly first-generation immigrants and who's educational level is far below that on the average (as a matter of fact in this Church the profession of priests is associated first of all with the certain family clans – not with education) demonstrate a great interest to the ecumenical activities, etc. (see Tab.13).

**Tab. 13**

	All	“New”	“Old”	Rus	Ukr	Alb	Rom	Alsk	Syr
Proportion of priests (%) who's level of a secular education is Master's or Ph.D. degree	34	29	35	45	34	70	33	6	20
Proportion of priests (%) who's level of theological education is M.Div. or D.Min. degree	39	47	38	35	32	30	76	21	7
Proportion (%) of clergy born in the USA	48	18	58	63	55	100	22	95	7
% of parishes participating in ecumenical prayers/services together with other (Roman Catholic, Protestant) Christian churches.	34	35	32	10	53	36	32	0	53

**5) *The local parochial clergy of the American Orthodox Churches can be seen as the bearers of the ethno-cultural identity and heritage*** in the communities of Eastern Christians in the USA.

In numerous personal interviews, the leaders (bishops and chancellors) of American Orthodox Churches have typically recognized or even declared the need of the deeper integration with the American society and with traditions of religious pluralism in this country. Yet, the position of the local clergy towards issues of inter-Christian weddings, or the future religion of children from the religiously mixed families, or acceptance of the “WASP”- converts to Orthodox faith, or ethnic education of the second-third generation Orthodox faithful born in the USA, etc., tend to be more traditional and conservative. The data from our survey testify to this assumption.

First, the American Orthodox priests are largely recruited amidst the first-generation immigrants. In the other words, the share of the first-generation immigrants among clergy is essentially higher than the proportion of newcomers among the members in most of American Orthodox Churches. The word “recruited” is more appropriate than “imported” to describe this situation, because at least one third of Orthodox clergy, who are first generation immigrants, were ordained being already in the USA and not in their countries of origin (see Tab. 14).

**Tab. 14**

	All	“New”	“Old”	Rus	Ukr	Alb	Rom	Alsk	Syr
Proportion (%) of first-generation immigrants among the members of parishes	41	70	33	16	39	25	58	2 (*)	74
Proportion (%) of first generation immigrants among Orthodox clergy	52	82	42	37	45	0	78	5	93
Proportion (%) of first-generation immigrants among clergy who came to the USA being already ordained to the priesthood.	35	53	30	21	27	0	68	5	40

(\*) – as mentioned above, a majority of the Orthodox faithful in Alaskan diocese of the “Orthodox Church in America” either belong to the native American peoples or they are multi-generation descendants to those Russians who once lived in Alaska, and, hence, the issue of the “new” immigrants does not exist in this particular case.

Second, provided that the Orthodox religious doctrine and moral suppose generally conservative attitudes to the various social questions, one can assume that the Orthodox priests are more likely to be found among those persons for whom the keeping of traditional ethnic culture and identity is of an essential significance. More research is needed to compare the role of ethnic values by the parochial Orthodox clergy and by their parishioners as our survey was limited to the clergy only. Yet, the vitality of the ethnic “sentiments” among Orthodox clergy is quite remarkable especially given the fact that currently a substantial number of them are US-born persons. For example, in our survey, the proportion of Orthodox clergy who were actually born in the USA (50%) is essentially higher than the share of the Orthodox priests who consider English as their “mother” tongue (36%) or who's primary identity is “I am American” (12%). In the other words, for many American Orthodox clergy, “to be born in America” does not mean “to be a part of American society” (see Tab. 15).

**Tab. 15**

	All	“New”	“Old”	Rus	Ukr	Alb	Rom	Alsk	Syr
Proportion (%) of priests who were born in the USA	48	18	58	63	55	100	22	95	7
Proportion of priests (%) who consider English as their mother tongue	36	18	42	50	42	82	19	47	7
Proportion of priests (%) who’s primary identity is “I’m American”	12	12	13	15	17	36	8	11	0

Third, we have noted that the proportion of the first-generation immigrants among Orthodox priests and their educational level vary essentially in the different Eastern Christian Churches participating in our survey. Nevertheless, a vast majority of the American Orthodox clergy are rather reluctant to recruit the new members of the different ethnic or religious backgrounds and to accept any changes in the style of worship (see Tab. 16).

**Tab. 16**

	1. All	4. Rus	5. Ukr	6. Alb	7. Rom	8 Alsk	9. Syr
Proportion of priests (%) who’s highest level of a secular education is Master’s or Ph.D. degree	34	45	34	70	33	6	20
First generation immigrants among clergy (%)	52	37	45	0	78	5	93
“Our parish welcomes changes and new ways of doing worship” - % of parishes that responded: “yes”	10	5	7	11	11	5	20
The parish is involved in recruiting new members and converting into Orthodox faith the people of different (not the parish’s traditional) ethnic and religious heritages: % of parishes responded “yes”	13	26	10	10	16	21	0

(\*) In the parishes of Alaskan diocese of the “Orthodox Church in America” most of members and clergy are the representatives of native Alaskan peoples. Consequently, “ethno-cultural identity” of members or of priests means “Alaskan” (not Russian). “Not-English” language of liturgy or of sermon as well as parish’ priests’ mother tongue means “Yupik”.

6) The so-called “*ethnarcy*” – *combining the priestly vocation of the Orthodox clergy with their social leadership – remains very characteristic of the parishes of American Eastern Christian Churches.*

In virtually all examined Orthodox Churches the “guidance of a ruling bishop” is seen as the most important source of authority in the daily life of the parish excelling by far “human reason and understanding” or “historic tradition and ethnic culture.” Neither the differences between “old” and “new” parishes (provided, that they should demonstrate various levels of “Americanization”) nor specific ethnic background of the parish can challenge an influential social position of the Orthodox clergy in North America (see Tab. 17).

**Tab. 17**

% of parishes participating in the survey	1. All	2. “New”	3. “Old”	4. Rus	5. Ukr	6. Alb	7. Rom	8 Alsk	9. Syr
Human reason and understanding are considered as a very important source of authority in the daily life of parish: % of parishes answered “yes”	39	53	35	20	41	73	40	37	40
Historic traditions and ethnic culture are considered as a very important source of authority in the daily life of a parish: % of parishes answered “yes”	35	53	32	19	18	46	49	37	67
Guidance of the ruling bishop is considered as a very important source of authority in the daily life of parish: % of parishes answered “yes”	76	88	75	81	56	64 (*)	87	100	80

(\*) - The seeming “Albanian exception” only testifies to this general rule. Due to historical circumstances the Albanian Archdiocese of the “Orthodox Church in America” doesn’t have its own ruling bishop and the head of the whole “Orthodox Church in America” serves only formally as a bishop of Albanian Archdiocese without any practical intervention into the Archdiocese’ administration.

## **Conclusions:**

1) The ethnic values, culture and identity, though to a different extent, remain essential elements in the lives of the American Orthodox Churches.

The first-generation immigrants from the Eastern and Central Europe and from the Middle East comprise today more than 40% of the membership in the investigated Orthodox Churches and they represent a major source of the further growth in each third Orthodox parish. 60% of parishes make the purposeful “efforts to identify and to contact the new Orthodox immigrants who recently settled in the area of a parish”.

The fact that ethnicity plays an important role in the lives of most Orthodox in America is widely recognized even by the clergy and ideologists of the “Orthodox Church in America” – the Church who’s very self-definition is “an American Church, rather than a church in exile, or an American outpost of a foreign patriarchate” (Stokoe and Kishkovsky 1995:115).

2) More than two centuries of history of the Eastern Christianity in USA allows little doubt about future development of various Orthodox Christian Churches in this country. Yet, the place that they will occupy in the North American social and religious landscapes is still in question. The answer to this question will depend on their ability to articulate clear policies with regard to the following issues:

- A). The dichotomy between religious and ethnic identities of their members and clergy;
- B). The relationship of the American Orthodox Churches with the “Mother Churches” in Old World;
- C). The notion of their missionary work and ecumenical involvement in North America;
- D). Their social participation and responsibility towards the wider American society.

3) Due to restricted finances and time frame, our pilot-study has had essential limitations:

- a) We were unable to examine the situation in the largest American Orthodox Churches (Greek Archdiocese, Orthodox Church in America, etc.). There was also no possibility to compare the “old” and the “new” parishes within single Orthodox jurisdictions (such samples of parishes in our study were too small for making conclusions). Consequently, the attempts to find out “what is caused by the jurisdictional distinctiveness and uniqueness of each Church” and “what is associated with various duration of existence of their parishes in American cultural soil” were based on the numerous assumptions.
- b) The surveying of the Orthodox clergy was not supplemented by the similar investigation carried out among their faithful – the ordinary members of American Orthodox Churches.

Consequently, more research work is needed in these two areas in order to accomplish comprehensive analysis of the Orthodox Churches and affiliated Eastern Christian communities in America

4) Finally, whereas our academic discipline – sociology of religion – provides us with a certain set of tools for investigating the religious life of society, the theologians and historians of religions can help greatly in examining Eastern Christianity in America by responding to two mutually linked questions:

- A) What elements of Orthodox religious culture serve as a major cause of keeping the Orthodox Churches in the USA socially and culturally apart both from each other and from the mainstream of society?
- B) What is the nature of the Orthodox understanding of nationality versus nationalism?

## **Acknowledgements**

The author is grateful to the Louisville Institute (Louisville, KY) for providing a research grant, which has enabled the surveying of the Orthodox parishes in USA. I am also thankful to Dr. Scott Thumma (Hartford Theological Seminary) for the assistance in computer processing of the survey’s data and, especially, for his help in the dissemination of the study’s results on the web-site of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research. Finally, I must express a very special appreciation with regard to the Institute for the Study of American Religion (Santa Barbara, CA) and to his director, Prof. J. Gordon Melton, who encouraged and supported in different ways this continuing study on Eastern Christianity in North America.

## **References:**

Ammerman, N. 1997. *Organized religion in a voluntaristic society*. In “Sociology of Religion”, 58:203-215.  
Barrett, D.B. (ed.) 2000. *World Christian encyclopedia. A comparative study of religions and churches in the modern world.*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York: Oxford University Press.

- Dudley C. S. and D.A.Roozen. 2001. *Faith communities today: A report on religion in the United States today*. Hartford, CT: Hartford Seminary.
- Ebaugh, H. R. and J.Chafetz. 2000. *Religion and the new immigrants: Continuities and adaptations in immigrant congregations*. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira.
- Ebaugh, H. R. 2002. *Return of the sacred: Reintegrating religion in the social sciences*. In "Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion", 41, No.3: 385-396.
- Erickson, J. H. 1999. *Orthodox Christians in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fitzgerald, T. E. 1998. *The Orthodox Church*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers.
- Greeley, A. 1971. *Why can't they be like us: America's white ethnic groups*. New York: E.P. Dutton.
- Greeley, A. 1989. *Religious change in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hammond, P. 1991. *Is America experiencing another religious revival: What would Tocqueville say?* In "Social Compass", 38 (3):239-256.
- Houghland, J. G. 1983. *Religion and politics: Relationship of religious participation to political efficacy and involvement*. In "Sociology and Social Research", 67(4):405-420.
- Krindatch, A. D. 2002a. *A survey of the local Orthodox parishes of Albanian, Alaskan, Syriac, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian ethno-cultural origin and heritage*. Completed by financial support of the Louisville Institute (Louisville, KY) in February – April 2002. Unpublished. The questionnaire is available at [http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/research\\_orthodoxindex.html](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/research_orthodoxindex.html)
- Krindatch, A. D. 2002b. *Orthodox (Eastern Christian) Churches in the United States at the beginning of a new millennium: Questions of nature, identity and mission*. In "Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion", 41(3):533-563.
- Lam, P-Y. 2002. *As the flocks gather: How religion affects voluntary association participation*. In "Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion", 41(3):405-422.
- Meyendorf, J. 1987. *Witness to the World*. Crestwood, NY: St.Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Numrich, P. D. 2001. *The numbers question: Or how many immigrants does it take for a research initiative on religion?* Unpublished report.
- Sherkat, D. E. 2001. *Tracking the restructuring of American religion: Religious affiliation and pattern of religious mobility, 1973-1998*. In "Social Forces", 79 (June): 1459-1493.
- Smith, T. 1978. *Religion and ethnicity in America*. In "American Historical Review", 83:1155-1185.
- Smith, T. W. 1991. *Counting flocks and lost sheep: Trends in religious preference since WWII*. In "GSS Social Change Report", No. 26. Chicago, IL: NORC.
- Smith, T. W. 2002. *Religious diversity in America: The emergence of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Others*. In "Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion", 41(3):577-586.
- Stark, R. And C.Clock. 1968. *American piety: The nature of religious commitment*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Stokoe, M, and L.Kishkovsky. 1995. *Orthodox Christians in North America, 1794-1994*. Syosset, NY: Orthodox Christian Publications Center.
- Stout, H. S. 1975. *Ethnicity: The vital center of religion in America*. In "Ethnicity", 2:204-224.
- Summary of the presentation by the committee on diocesan boundaries and diocesan administrative structures*. Materials of the 12<sup>th</sup> All-American council of the Orthodox Church in America (July 30, 1999), Syosset, NY: Department of archives and church history of OCA).
- Tocqueville, A. [1835] 1954. *Democracy in America*. Ed. by P.Bradley, 2 vols. New York: Vintage Books.
- Verba, S. 1995. *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wald, K. D. 1987. *Religion and politics in the United States*. New York: St.Martin's Press.
- Warner, R. S. 1998. *Religion and migration in the United States*. In "Social Compass", 45: 123-134.
- Wuthnow, R. 1999. *Mobilizing civic engagement: The changing impact of religious involvement*. In "Civic engagement in American democracy", ed. by T.Skocpol, pp.331-363. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.