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**“An Attractive Idea of Parochial Boards of Trustees...”  
 (based on the documents from Eastern Siberian dioceses dated 1914–1917)**

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**Abstract**

The article is based on research literature and published sources and it reveals charity work of parochial boards of trustees in the beginning of the XXth century. The historical analysis is limited by Eastern Siberia, serving as an example of religious aspect of civic activity genesis in pre-revolutionary Russia. The importance of parochial boards of trustees in material and non-material support to soldiers and their families during World War I is described. The factors that reduced the opportunities of parochial boards of trustees are emphasized in the evaluation of useful and necessary function of the boards. The following conclusion is drawn: different conditions in which the activity of this or that board of trustees developed influenced the differences in budgets and measures of support they gave.

**Keywords:** Eastern Siberia, Irkutsk diocese, Yenisseyk diocese, Zabaikalsk diocese, the Russian Orthodox Church, parish, parochial board of trustees, social assistance, World War I.

**1. Introduction**

During the wars in the beginning of the XXth century the Russian state tried to develop a system of measures that would mitigate the effects of the extremely increased social mobility. This resulted in renovation of assistance relations and creation of new population support methods. During World War I the Orthodox Church made a significant contribution into population social support. It showed in the support of the moral order of the army, in spirit and medical assistance to the sick and wounded soldiers, in reequipment of vacant monastic premises into hospitals, in the aid to the Russian Red Cross society and secular organizations referring their care of the war victims, in the fund raising, as well as in making boards of trustees in the Orthodox parishes for material and non-material support to soldiers and their families. Parishes were the closest to social assistance objects and thus they could provide universal forms of assistance with individual approach.

**2. Information and methodology**

Among the sources that we used there are annual reports of the attorney-general of the Holy Synod on the Orthodox confession government agency, church periodicals (Irkutsk diocesan bulletin, Yenisseyk diocesan bulletin, Appendix to diocesan bulletin) that were official information channels for the Orthodox organizations and discussion platform to discuss church reformations issues. “Short Description of Yenisseyk Diocese Parishes” publication dated 1916 gave us valuable information. These diverse sources were studied by means of stocktaking method. The synchronous method of historical studies allowed viewing forms and measures of population social support within the frames of a parish together with other social life phenomena.

**3. Discussions**

The present stage of Russian history development is characterized by significant widening and updating of scientific studies topics on the history of the Russian Orthodox Church. Among the great number

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of articles and monographs we mark out the closest ones to the present article. First of all, they are articles by historians (Ul'yanova, 2004; Pankrat, 2010; Beglov, 2014), revealing various aspects of parochial funds. The Orthodoxy evolution process in connection with social life phenomena in the beginning of the XXth century is studied in the monograph by U. I. Belonogova (Belonogova, 2010). The author places a focus on the issues of the parish clergy position, relationships between minor orders and congregation, studies of the rural working people spiritual order. This work allows considering the reasons of the 1917 revolutions and the problem of the Orthodox Christians participation in them from a new viewpoint. Several monographs (Shtepa, 2007; Tsys', 2008; Vlasova, 2009; Zubanova et al., 2013) based on the authors' theses represent various aspects of social administration of the Russian Orthodox Church. I. P. Pavlova's research is developed at the overlap of the issues of military history and history of social care (Pavlova, 2003). This work is worthy thanks to the author's analysis of interrelation between all the subjects of social assistance (including the Orthodox Church) during World War I.

The present article aims at studying church and public social administration through the activity of parochial boards of trustees during World War I based on the materials of Eastern Siberia. At that time the region was a deep rear zone where evacuation flows were directed. A village with a church functioned as the centre of a rural parish that often had the same borders with an uezd (county). Such parish included 5–10 or more villages that were located at long distances (from 20 to 135 kilometers), which gave poor opportunities for social forces consolidation. Thus, Turukhansk, Priangarsk and Usinsk Parishes of Yenissey'sk Diocese exceeded some provinces of the European Russia in size. It took a clergyman about six months to travel through Areysk and Batenevsk Parishes.

#### 4. Results

The parochial boards of trustees were organized at the order of the Holy Synod dated July 20, 1914, with the purpose to give assistance to soldiers' families. The assistance was to be given in the following cases: "a) if the head of the family is in the field, b) if the head of the family is dead, c) if the family juniors has been called up to military service". In the first case it was obligatory to raise money to help the family. In the second case the board was to make a proper provision for the family until it is necessary, which obviously meant giving support after the war was over as well. In the third case it was necessary to give assistance whenever possible. All these were preceded by a proper work on checking the financial situation of soldiers' families. The boards of trustees had to make up lists of soldiers' families, to explain the order in which the state support can be received, to distribute in a "sensible" way and to hand out allowances to needy families of church members. The data about the families were registered in a uniform record which included the following points: "1) the village name; 2) designation and the status of military service obligation of the person called up for military service (soldier or reserve officer) and the call-up time; 3) personal marital status of the person called up for military service and "who else (apart from wife and children) was on his hands"; 4) what the person called up for military service did for a living; 5) what allowance was given to the family: a) from government funds and b) from public and private funds; 6) what needs of the family of the person called up for military service are still not supplied; 7) special remarks" (Velikaya Otechestvennaya voina, 1916: 27–28; 93–94).

Boards of trustees were noted in all kinds of populated areas, but mostly in the countryside. The work "Short Description of Yenissey'sk Diocese Parishes" allows us counting the number of religious and social organizations that were created to help the families of people called up for military service. Thus, two such organizations functioned in the administrative centre of the province Krasnoyarsk (i.e. in every third parish); in the Krasnoyarsk Uezd – 4 organizations (that is 9.7 % of parishes), in the Kansk Uezd – 15 organizations (that is 19.7 % of parishes), in the Achinsk Uezd – 1 organization (that is 1.6 % of parishes), in the Minussinsk Uezd – 3 organizations (that is 3.8 % of parishes); in Turukhansk Krai parochial funds and boards of trustees were absent (Kratkoe opisaniye prihodov, 1916: 5–235).

The quantity of parochial boards of trustees in Zabaikalsk diocese was 41 in January 1915, and by the end of the year it numbered 106. During the year the funds collected 35542 roubles and handed out allowances in money, clothes and food in the amount of 26767 roubles. Assistance to the families of people called up for military service in Cossack villages was organized by the top brass, and the clergy in such villages only had to "abut upon military organizations". The town clergy participated in town committees that were organized to help the families of reserve officers and in rail transport committees, when it referred to families of railway workers (Runkevich, 1916: 1231).

The work of parochial boards of trustees was organized according to each particular local situation. Bishop for Yenissey'sk and Krasnoyarsk Nikon offered to organize "the assistance to the needy" in the following way. "Since a volost is a very large unit and a village – is a small one, each parish should have Fund of Assistance to the Wounded and Soldiers' Families". The Fund Committee should "certainly include all the church ministerings of the parish, the village headman and the church warden, and the teachers of the parochial schools". It was planned to attract the farm chief (if any), the volost head and the scribe, officials of forest division and migratory division, agricultural and cooperation organizations, assessors of small loans and "the whole intelligentsia of the parish, as well as at least one representative from each designated village and settlement". The bishop considered it necessary for the church ministerings to take part in the work of similar committees in town funds. According to his idea, "simple organization" of assistance to the wounded

and soldiers' families should include uezd funds to manage all the typical organizations in town and uezd, but provincial (diocesan) funds should control the work on a regional level (Nikon, 1914: 10–17).

Boards of trustees in some parishes did not function independently, but through local volost committees that had similar purposes. For instance, Barait Parochial Fund “did not have enough money” and was included into Uzhur local committee on care of the families of people called up for military service with “monthly grant in the amount necessary for regulation of maintenance amounts” (Enisejskie gubernskie vedomosti, 1915: 8).

Financial resources of parochial boards of trustees were mostly determined by social and economic condition of households, life level of the population in a particular volost or town, since together with special allowances paid from church amounts the main financial sources were voluntary donations that came through various fund raisings (“passing the hat”, collection at church services, collections by special records or subscription lists). Totally in Russia parochial boards of trustees handed out allowances to more than 2 million families in the amount of more than 6 million roubles during the first year of the war (Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1916: 72; Pavlova, 2003: 50). The structure of these expenses consisted of 50.3 % of congregation donations, 45.7 % given by various organizations and 3.9 % of properly church money (calculated by: Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1916: 72).

Total amount of personal donations collected by parochial boards of trustees at the churches in Irkutsk diocese (except the town of Irkutsk) ran at 22306 roubles during the first year of the war. 11807 roubles from this total were spent to help 1700 needy soldiers' families. The rest of the amount “was transferred to Irkutsk archbishop's Andreevskiy Red Cross Committee to hand out allowances to soldiers' families in many parishes together with provincial organizations” (Runkevich, 1917: 34–35).

The church psalm reader K. Orestov in Shunerskoye Settlement (Yenisseyskaya Province) reported in 1914, “People donate with pleasure; we think it's possible that in near future the fund should expand its activity. Everybody brings donations: whoever, whatever and as many as they can. The other day pupils of the local school inspired by a simple and devoted priest's sermon made their contribution to the common holy cause in such childlike, genuine and nice way. They wheeled out horses from their parents and brought in several loads of wood and hay to the families deprived of their breadwinners, and they also did some general work for them” (Orestov 1914: 32). However, the patriotic upsurge in the beginning of World War I gradually decreased, and as the national crisis aggravated, the ideas of Siberian population consolidation and self-identification lost their original appeal (Kattsina, 2014: 255), “giving space to other values, influences and intentions connected with social and political polarization of the society and growing confrontation of its classes and groups” (Harus', 2014: 99).

The activity of the boards of trustees was not restricted by assistance to soldiers' families; it can be proved by Knyshinskiy board of trustees report on the money flows (Yenisseyskaya Province). During the period from October 1, 1914, till March 1, 1916, they handed out allowances to 367 families in the amount of 265.65 roubles, “sent 107.13 roubles to Kuraginskiy Committee in favour of the poorest families; 50 roubles to the provincial Committee in favour of the sick and wounded soldiers; 147.99 roubles in the name of Master (bishop) in favour of the sick and wounded soldiers, 70 roubles in favour of refugees, 50 roubles in favour of asylums for soldiers' and refugees' children; 27.71 and 116.13 roubles to the farm chief of District 2 of the Minussinsk Uezd in favour of refugees and to arrange a health resort for the wounded soldiers in the Southern Crimea; 11.35 roubles to the Red Cross County Committee in favour of the sick and wounded soldiers; also 143.58 roubles were sent with subscription lists; 52.36 roubles were spent on linen for the wounded. Moreover, 247 pud of bread was given to soldiers' families. Soldiers' families also received aid in kind, such as: ploughing for seeds, grain crop harvesting, hay cutting, wood bringing etc. – in the amount of 1200 roubles. 229 pud of wheat toasts was sent to the army through the Red Cross County Committee. Linen and underwear for the soldiers were sent through the provincial Committee in the amount of 35 shirts, 35 pants, 50 towels, 45 handkerchiefs, 166 arshin of scrim, 155 pairs of mittens, 33 pairs of stockings and 3 pairs of wool foot wraps” (Otchet, 1916: 21–22).

The parochial fund in Shunerskoye Settlement of the Minussinsk Uezd (Yenisseyskaya Province) rendered assistance to 35 poor families of reserve lower army-ranks in the form of ¼ brick tea and 1 pound of kerosene monthly (Orestov, 1914: 32). This aid was essential. Minussinsk mayor P.A. Bakhov declared that 55.3 % of families from those who receive state allowance could not do without extra hand-out in May 1915, and Krasnoyarsk mayor S.I. Potylitsyn insisted on increasing the state allowance by 50 % at least (Protokoly, 1915: 14, 52).

Together with positive motivations of the stable improvement of soldiers' families live level, a part of those who received financial support gained a welfare mentality. Thus, it was reported from Shalabolinskoye Settlement of Yenisseyskaya Province that “some soldiers' wives thoughtlessly treated the allowance they got” (Zhurnal, 1915: 13). Minister K. Prozorovskiy who was the head of Novo-Nikolskiy parochial board and fund (Yenisseysk diocese) wrote, “Our first experience of arrangement a nursery orphanage for soldiers' children showed us that its organization was a noble and necessary cause, but it was a pity that population partially saw it at something obligatory; they did not bring children to the orphanage because there was nobody home to look after them or they had nothing to feed them, but for the reason that ‘since the orphanage was open, soldiers' wives *must* bring their children there and the workers *must* feed the children there’. Soldiers' wives

demanded payment to them at least 20 kopek per day for each child, who could not be brought to the orphanage for some reason” (Prozorovskii, 1915: 24).

## 5. Conclusion

“The attractive idea of parochial boards of trustees and their activity caused in 1915 the appearance of infantry general N. N. Beliaevskiy’s project to transmit the whole state allowance distribution cause from volost funds to parochial funds”. However, this idea was rejected by the Supreme Soviet on the care of families of people called up for military service, as well as families of the wounded and died soldiers. It was decided not to change the established order of state allowance distribution and to leave “brotherhood charitable assistance” to parochial boards of trustees (Runkevich, 1916: 119).

Parochial boards of trustees expanded measures of state support through various kinds of material and non-material aid to soldiers’ families; and they often exceeded the bounds of their target group. Opened with participation of ministerings and church wardens, the boards had particular organizational democracy, since they were created to solve vital issues at the initiative of the population itself, united by habitation and the system of formal and informal relationships – family, friends, neighbours and others. As a rule, the population of smaller local communities had a proper idea of each other’s life level and they could determine the needy people much better than higher authorities. At the same time, boards of trustees as well as charitable organizations possessed spontaneous character and voluntarism, which made their activity unstable. The territories of Siberian parishes, remoteness of the centres from settlements gave poor opportunities for consolidation of public forces, in the cause of the population social support including. Different conditions in which activity of this or that board of trustees developed influenced the differences between their budgets and the measures of assistance they rendered.

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**«Симпатичная идея приходских попечительных советов...»  
(по материалам епархий Восточной Сибири 1914–1917 гг.)**

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**Аннотация.** В статье с опорой на исследовательскую литературу и опубликованные источники раскрывается благотворительная деятельность церковно-приходских попечительных советов начала

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XX вв. Исторический анализ ограничивается территорией Восточной Сибири, на примере которой можно составить представление о религиозном аспекте генезиса сферы гражданской деятельности в дореволюционной России. Показана роль приходских попечительных советов в материальной и нематериальной поддержке фронтовиков и членов их семей в годы Первой мировой войны. При оценке роли приходских попечительных советов, в целом как полезной и необходимой, отмечены факторы, значительно снижавшие их возможности. Формулируется вывод о том, что различие условий, в которых развивалась деятельность того или иного попечительства отражалась на различии их бюджетов и масштабах оказываемой помощи.

**Ключевые слова:** Восточная Сибирь; Иркутская епархия, Енисейская епархия, Забайкальская епархия, русская православная церковь, церковный приход, приходской попечительный совет, социальная помощь, Первая мировая война.