

# The Pastoral Dilemma

## *Clerical Mutual Aid and Famine Relief during Russia's Crop Failure of 1905*

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### Abstract

The clerical estate (*soslovie*) of late Imperial Russia was legally segregated from the rest of the population, subject to separate systems of education, justice, taxation, and access to employment. The state permitted participation in free associations within the clerical *soslovie* in order to encourage the practice of mutual aid among clergymen and their families. By the late nineteenth century, the parish clergy had begun to use these mutual-aid associations to provide education, charity, and disaster relief to the non-clerical communities on which they and their families depended for tithes. By using their own mutual-aid networks as tools of pastoral work, the parish clergy expanded those networks, in terms of both beneficiaries and participants, beyond the limits of the clerical *soslovie*. Key reforms of the diocesan structure in 1905 both loosened central control over the clerical networks and authorized the direct participation of non-clergy in their work. The associations of the parish clergy thus obtained unprecedented independence and social integration at the moment when they were confronted with the humanitarian disaster of 1905. Focusing on the dioceses of Moscow and Tver, this article examines the parish clergy's use of their own *soslovie* networks to provide famine relief to fellow clerics and the general population between 1905 and 1909. This famine relief campaign demonstrated the independence and initiative of voluntary associations in late Imperial Russia. It also revealed the potential for cooperation and social integration among seemingly disparate communities, even within the divisive framework of the *soslovie* system.

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## Keywords

parish clergy – *soslovie* – free association – mutual aid – famine – 1905

In his short story, “The Nightmare,” Anton Chekhov describes a parish priest, Fr. Yakov, through the eyes of a young and idealistic zemstvo (land council) official. The official is at first annoyed with the priest’s squalid appearance and timid behavior, until he realizes the extent of his poverty. Fr. Yakov confides in the official that he and his family suffer from hunger because he gives most of his income to other people.

‘I get a hundred and fifty rubles a year from my parish, and everyone marvels at where I must put this money... But I’ll tell you honestly. I contribute forty rubles a year to the ecclesiastical school for my brother Piotr. He has everything there, but I provide him with pens and paper.... Besides that, I must give Fr. Avraamii at least three rubles a month.... Father Avraamii was the priest in Sin’kov before me. Where can he go? Who will feed him? Though he’s old, he needs a corner, bread, and clothes! I cannot allow him, as a priest, to go begging for alms.... I am worn out with hunger, Pavel Mihailovitch,’ Father Yakov went on. ‘Kindly forgive me, but I am at the end of my strength... I know if I were to beg and to bow down, everyone would help, but—I cannot! I am ashamed. How can I beg of the peasants? ...How can one beg of a beggar? But to ask of someone richer, the landholders, I cannot! My pride! My shame!’<sup>2</sup>

This revelation of rural poverty is the zemstvo official’s “nightmare.” With his dark humor and clinical insight into everyday life, Chekhov provides a dramatic glimpse of the parish clergy’s practice of educating and supporting their extended families and colleagues through a system of mutual aid, which ultimately rested on the voluntary tithes of parishioners. Fr. Yakov is painfully aware of his communal network’s debt to the laity, as were many Orthodox clergymen in late Imperial Russia.

The centrality of mutual aid to Russia’s Orthodox priesthood, as well as the consciousness among those same priests of their material dependence on their parishioners, shaped their pastoral work. Clergymen were forced to pool their meager resources to support the “ecclesiastical” (primary) schools and

2 A.P. Chekhov, “Koshmar,” *Izbrannnye proizvedeniia: Rasskazy i povesti*, 3 vols. (Moscow: GIKhL, 1960), 1: 168.

seminaries in their dioceses in order to secure the education and ordination of their sons. By the early nineteenth century, the parish clergy were contributing through official and unofficial avenues to provide education and material support for their poorest members. In order to retain these modest resources within the clerical community, the Holy Synod officially excluded children of non-clerical families from entering the seminary system in 1826. This exclusion, as Gregory Freeze has pointed out, exacerbated the legal and social segregation of the “clerical *soslovie*,” or estate, from the rest of society.<sup>3</sup> Yet, by the late nineteenth century, the parish clergy had begun to use their own mutual-aid networks to organize education, charity, and disaster relief for those non-clerical communities on which they and their families depended. The clergy’s transfer of tithes, donations, and other resources back to those lay communities that had contributed them in the first place was sometimes carried out hesitantly, but always voluntarily. By using their own mutual-aid networks as tools of pastoral work, the parish clergy expanded those networks, in terms of both beneficiaries and participants, beyond the limits of the clerical *soslovie*.

This article is based on research conducted in the city archives of Moscow and Tver on the parish clergy’s famine relief efforts of 1905–1909. The objective of this research was to obtain a local perspective on pastoral work at the parish and diocesan levels. After providing a brief outline of the development of the parish clergy’s mutual-aid networks over the nineteenth century, this article focuses on the use of these networks in the dioceses of Moscow and Tver to provide famine relief to peasant communities suffering from the crop failure of 1905. The picture that emerges is that of a relief effort carried out through voluntary, local initiative, and coordinated by the mutual-aid networks of the clerical *soslovie*. The clerical community comprised one of five *soslovie* categories, including nobility, merchantry, townspeople, and peasantry, which imposed different rights and obligations on their respective populations. The *soslovie* system has been blamed by historians for having fragmented Imperial Russian society and for preventing the formation of a cohesive “civil society.”<sup>4</sup> Within this *soslovie* framework, however, the parish clergy developed self-financed and self-directed free associations that achieved de facto autonomy at the local level. The collective decision of the parish clergy

3 Gregory Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 146; Gregory Freeze, *The Russian Levites: Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 210.

4 Leopold Haimson, “The Problem of Social Identities in Early Twentieth-Century Russia,” *Slavic Review* 47, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 1–20.

to use their own mutual-aid associations to deliver pastoral care to the laity resulted in the integration of disparate communities through cooperative participation in these *soslovie* organizations.

The parish clergy developed a robust culture of mutual aid in order to survive in their precarious economic position. The clerical community derived the majority of its financial support from the limited number of positions available for parish priests, deacons, and sacristans. The clergymen who occupied these positions were barred from engaging in extra-liturgical, entrepreneurial activity other than teaching and farming. Coveted positions in urban parishes entailed state salaries, while rural clergymen relied on the emoluments of their parishioners and whatever income they could derive from their parish land allotment. This allotment belonged not to the priest himself, but to his parish. Any investment he made into this property would benefit the successor to his parish rather than his family, and would be lost outright if he were transferred to another parish (as happened occasionally).<sup>5</sup> Thus, the accumulation of private wealth within the clerical *soslovie* was difficult. The clergy experienced a demographic crisis in the nineteenth century similar to that of the peasantry, which also increased in population but not in economic productivity.<sup>6</sup> By the early nineteenth century, clerical overpopulation relative to resources had created not only the problem of surplus clergymen, but also that of “hordes of dependants within the clerical estate.”<sup>7</sup> The numbers of clerical elderly, orphans, and widows in each diocese became too great for extended families to support. As the state was unwilling or unable to provide the parish clergy with adequate financial support, it was forced to permit the formation of mutual-aid networks among the clergy that could maintain the pastoral profession.

The parish clergy were first granted the right to participate in diocese-wide networks to address the problem of overpopulation in 1823. It was in this year that Emperor Alexander I granted the Synod permission to establish a trusteeship (*popechitel'stvo*) for poor clergy in each diocese. The Synod's request cited the need to obtain greater support for the growing number of orphans and widows within the clerical *soslovie* as the main justification for opening this new channel of communication to all the parish clergy of each diocese.<sup>8</sup> The central committee of the organization was composed of six members

5 See, for example: *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tverskoi oblasti (GATO)*, f. 160, op. 1, d. 9079, l. 34.

6 Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 1: 26.

7 Freeze, *Parish Clergy*, 170.

8 *GATO*, f. 318, op. 1, d. 654, l. 5.

elected from among the diocesan clergy, and approved by the bishop.<sup>9</sup> Local committees were to perform the work of gathering and distributing funds throughout the diocese.<sup>10</sup> This organization facilitated informal association among clergymen of different parishes, independent of the ecclesiastical and bureaucratic authorities.

The parish clergy's rights of association were further extended during the "Great Reforms" of the 1860s. Diocesan congresses of parish priests were first authorized in 1864 as part of the new seminary charter (*ustav*). These assemblies of elected representatives from each superintendent (*blagochinnyi*) district were merely intended to elect clerical representatives to serve on the pedagogical council of the diocesan seminary. Yet the rights and responsibilities of these bodies gradually, and often unofficially, increased over the next decade and a half to include the coordination of funding for clerical education, as well as the organization of mutual aid and charity. In 1867, the seminary charter was revised to authorize local assemblies as well, to be held in the ecclesiastical school districts (*okrugi*).<sup>11</sup> The delegates to these school district assemblies collected detailed information on the needs of their schools and submitted reports to the diocesan congress so that local needs could be more effectively addressed.<sup>12</sup> These new liberties allowed the parish clergy to expand and strengthen their mutual-aid networks. Yet clerical assemblies were also used to coordinate pastoral work. Beginning with Archbishop Mikhail (Golubovich) of Minsk in 1865, many diocesan bishops officially authorized and encouraged their parish clergy to assemble at the level of the superintendent district, not only to elect delegates to the diocesan congresses, but also to discuss religious life in their parishes, to collectively monitor relations among members of the parish staffs and with parishioners, and to coordinate responses to alcoholism, illiteracy, poverty, and other problems afflicting the parish communities.<sup>13</sup> Thus, these "pastoral councils" instilled the entire system of clerical association with a sense of pastoral mission from the ground up.<sup>14</sup>

9 T. Barsov, *Sbornik deistvuiushchikh i rukovodstvennykh tserkovnykh i tserkovno-grazhdanskikh postanovlenii po vedomstvu pravoslavnago ispovedaniia* (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia, 1885), 178.

10 Ibid., 177–178.

11 "Pastyrskii sobor," *Pribavleniia k tserkovnym vedomostiam*, no. 2 (12 Jan. 1908): 54.

12 V. Beliaev, A. Viktorov, and M. Mansurov, *Eparkhial'nye s"ezdy. Sbornik deistvuiushchikh zakonopolozenii ob eparkhial'nykh s"ezdakh* (St. Petersburg: "Bereg," 1908), 7–8.

13 "Pastyrskii sobor," 53–55.

14 For a discussion of pastoral councils in St. Petersburg, see: Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 86–105.

This use of clerical associations for pastoral work received official encouragement during the tenure of Konstantin Pobedonostsev as over-procurator of the Holy Synod (1880–1905). A highly influential and conservative statesman, Pobedonostsev believed that the Orthodox Church should work to unite the people with the autocratic state into one organic whole.<sup>15</sup> The over-procurator viewed the clergy's active pastoral work as one means by which to increase the Church's prominence as a force of social integration. Nevertheless, Pobedonostsev's deep suspicion of free association extended to the clergy. He viewed the growing independence of the diocesan networks as another manifestation of the artificial separation of Church and state. In his redrafting of the seminary charter in 1884, Pobedonostsev officially restricted the issues discussed at diocesan congresses to financial matters and abolished local congresses, i.e. "pastoral councils," altogether.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Pobedonostsev's tenure in the Synod was marked by the simultaneous encouragement of coordinated pastoral work through the diocesan networks, and the suppression of those informal, lateral ties that had developed to facilitate this work.

The paradox of Pobedonostsev's vision for the Church became apparent during the famine relief effort of 1891–1892. When massive crop failure struck seventeen provinces of European Russia in the summer of 1891, the Synod instructed the diocesan consistories to use their trusteeships for poor clergy to aid famine victims: "Requests [for aid] by parishioners are to be satisfied according to the same reckoning and in the same way as requests by clergy, i.e. through the trusteeships for poor clergy."<sup>17</sup> Thus, under Pobedonostsev's influence the clerical networks had been officially enlisted to participate in general famine relief. This work was to be carried out along the ecclesiastical chain of command. Priests were instructed to pass all donations on to their local superintendent, who, in turn, was to pass the money or grain on to the diocesan center. "In cases of special need," temporary committees could be formed at the district level.<sup>18</sup> Yet, the performance of the diocesan networks in this relief effort ultimately demonstrated that the effective management of diocesan resources depended on the freedom of the parish clergy to associate and cooperate. Local knowledge, direct contact with parishioners, and, most importantly, the collective willingness to dedicate diocesan resources to pastoral service,

15 K.P. Pobedonostsev, "Tserkov' i gosudarstvo," in his *Moskovskii sbornik* (Moscow: Sinodal'naia, 1896), 1–24.

16 Beliaev, Viktorov, and Mansurov, *Eparkhial'nye s'ezdy*, 47.

17 *Vsepoddaneishii otchet Ober-prokurora Sviateishchego Sinoda po vedomstvu Pravoslavnago Ispovedaniia za 1890–1891 gody* (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia, 1893), 338.

18 See *Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, no. 25 (8 Sep. 1891), "Ofitsial'nyi otdel" section, 76.

were all derived at the local level. The crucial logistical work involved in the storage and transportation of grain was often performed by the “temporary” district committees rather than by the diocesan authorities.<sup>19</sup> The over-procurator himself acknowledged, in his report to the emperor on the famine, that the diocesan congresses, of which he disapproved, had been convened in affected provinces out of necessity so that representatives of the parish clergy could agree on the utilization of their own pension funds for famine relief.<sup>20</sup> The parish clergy’s free associations, which Pobedonostsev had attempted to suppress, had facilitated the voluntary work and collective contributions that drove the Church’s famine relief campaign. It was during Pobedonostsev’s tenure, in 1896, that the seminary charter was once again revised to reinstate local congresses for the parish clergy.<sup>21</sup> This rare concession to freedom of association during the “counter-reform” period amounted to an acknowledgement of the important role of clerical associations within Church administration.

The voluntarism that animated this first, coordinated use of the parish clergy’s own diocesan networks to deliver humanitarian aid to the general population must be understood in the context of growing participation in the free associations of the clerical *soslovie*. Through active participation in the management of diocesan resources, clergymen like Chekhov’s Fr. Yakov had become acutely aware of their entire community’s direct dependence on the material support of the Orthodox laity. Any catastrophe affecting the laity would also affect the clergy. As Pobedonostsev pointed out in his report to the emperor: “Due to the universal impoverishment of the population, parish income—the voluntary payments of parishioners for religious services—which had been meager in previous years, shrank to an absolute minimum in some places, and ceased altogether in others.”<sup>22</sup> By taking part in famine relief, parish clergymen were not only saving lives, but also fortifying the social foundation of the clerical *soslovie*’s material existence. While the diocesan authorities could exhort priests to participate in famine relief, they could not force them to give their own resources to the starving. Yet, the clergy’s growing awareness of their common interests with the laity served to motivate their voluntary extension of mutual-aid resources beyond the limits of their own *soslovie*.

19 For examples of the work of district relief committees in Tver, see: *GATO*, f. 886, *op.* 1, d. 13, l. 25.

20 *Vsepoddaneishii otchet*, 339.

21 Beliaev, Viktorov, and Mansurov, *Eparkhial'nye s'ezdy*, 9.

22 *Vsepoddaneishii otchet*, 334–36.

In addition to such informed self-interest, recognition of their material dependence on the laity appealed to the clergy's "shame" and "pride" as well. Ever more frequently, clergymen expressed their conviction that the Church, as an institution, should earn the tithes of their parishioners through social as well as spiritual leadership. Amid rising social tensions at the turn of the century, parish clergymen began to identify socially, and even politically, with the lower classes of both rural and urban Russia.<sup>23</sup> The role of the Church in addressing the salient issues of poverty and social injustice became a frequent topic of discussion in the ecclesiastical press at this time. In 1907, one Moscow priest explained that he had organized a charity in his parish because, "I wanted to show the peasants, at least on a small scale, the concern of the Church for their needs. After all, the peasants have become accustomed always and everywhere to view the Church as an institution to which they must give."<sup>24</sup> By the late nineteenth century, a movement had arisen among the parish clergy via the ecclesiastical press and their *soslovie* associations to revitalize the parishes and dioceses by making them the focus of civic participation (*grazhdanstvennost'*).<sup>25</sup>

After Pobedonostsev's resignation amid the political upheaval of 1905, many prelates advocated the expansion of the parish clergy's rights of association. On 18 November 1905, the Synod once again "blessed" the convening of pastoral councils at all levels of the diocese and even authorized the participation of the laity in these councils. The Synod also authorized parish priests to invite up to twelve of their adult parishioners to form their own "parish council," (*tserkovno-prikhodskii sovet*) to promote greater involvement in parish life.<sup>26</sup> The diocesan networks of the parish clergy thus obtained an unprecedented degree of independence and social integration at the moment when they were confronted with the multi-faceted humanitarian disaster of 1905.

In addition to the disastrous war with Japan and the eruption of widespread revolutionary violence in 1905, crop failure struck the countryside of Russia's central black earth region and developed into an outright famine by the spring of 1906.<sup>27</sup> The Church's famine relief efforts, stretching from roughly 1905 to as late as 1909, emerged almost exclusively from the diocesan sphere, free from

23 The most comprehensive study of political dissidence among the clergy remains Argyrios Pisiotis, "Orthodoxy Versus Autocracy: The Orthodox Church and Clerical Political Dissent in Late Imperial Russia, 1905–1914" (PhD diss., Georgetown, 2000).

24 "Popytka k ustroistvu popechitel'stva," *Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, no. 40 (7 Oct. 1907), 1239.

25 Pisiotis, "Orthodoxy Versus Autocracy," 558.

26 "Opredeleniia ot 18-go noiabria," *Tserkovnyiia vedomosti*, no. 48 (26 Nov. 1905): 525.

27 Ascher, *Revolution of 1905*, 2: 170–171.



the state direction that had characterized the 1891–1892 famine relief campaign. The Synod did issue an order on 7 October 1905 for all parish clergy to begin holding weekly collections of donations for the families of wounded soldiers, and to grant the Red Cross access to their churches.<sup>28</sup> Yet, in keeping with the movement to free the Church from institutional stagnation and to strengthen the social bond with the common people, the clergy of most dioceses chose to organize their own campaigns and focus relief work on victims of the famine rather than aid for the military. Upon the promulgation of the Synod's instructions, Moscow's Metropolitan Vladimir issued his own decree, establishing a diocesan relief committee in Moscow with famine relief as its primary aim.<sup>29</sup> The diminutive role of the Synodal bureaucracy and de facto autonomy of the parish clergy made this campaign highly illustrative of the complex and ambiguous understanding of pastoral duty among rank and file parish clergymen.

By 1905, the various functions of the diocesan networks, ranging from practical and self-interested mutual aid to the exportation of resources for the relief of distant communities, had all come to be understood as part of the clergy's pastoral mission. An article in Moscow's diocesan press from February of 1906 illustrates the overlapping functions of clerical institutions. The article was written by a Moscow priest who described his observation of conditions in the famine-stricken dioceses of Samara and Kazan in an appeal to his fellow pastors in Moscow to contribute to famine relief:

At a ceremony for the opening of a temporary children's shelter to feed and care for orphans, I heard one priest, almost unable to contain his understandable anxiety, ask the assembled circle [of clergy] who ran the shelter if his children might be permitted to eat in the shelter's cafeteria that was supported by private donations. How can the clergy support themselves when those who support them, the peasants, have absolutely nothing for themselves! ...Is it not our holy duty to provide them with support in their helpless sorrow and terrible need? And not only support through sympathy, but also through the material relief of their difficult circumstances!<sup>30</sup>

28 "O sbore pozhertvovaniĭ v pol'zu postradavshikh ot neurozhaia," *Tserkovnyia vedomosti*, no. 48 (26 Nov. 1905), 526.

29 "Rasporiazheniia eparkhial'nago nachal'stva: O proizvodstve sbora v pol'zu golodaiushchikh," *Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, no. 45 (6 Nov. 1905): "Ofitsial'nyi otdel" section, 418.

30 Fr. I. Kedrov, "Vozzvanie k dukhovenstvu Moskovskoi eparkhii," *Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, no. 7 (18 Feb. 1906): 187.

The article illustrates how a charitable institution that was organized and run by the clergy for the lay community could also support clerical families in desperate times. The priest pointed out the direct link between the interests of the clergy and the well-being of the communities that supported them. His exhortation subsumed the full range of what had come to be considered pastoral duty—spiritual care, material aid, support for the pastorate, and support for the faithful in general—under the rubric of “holy duty.” Amid the chaos and relative freedom of the years following 1905, the scattered communities comprising the clerical *soslovie* could interpret this “holy duty” for themselves. To varying degrees, the clergy of most dioceses used their mutual-aid networks during the famine both as professional support systems to keep pastors in the field, and as tools of collective pastoral action for the benefit of the Orthodox population in general.

Letters from the recipients of aid from the Moscow diocesan famine relief committee reveal a variegated response among the clergy of different dioceses to the call for pastoral action against the famine. Some dioceses used their networks to channel outside aid to those sections of their own clerical community that were most severely affected by the famine. Bishop Arkady of Riazan', for example, addressed a letter to Moscow's relief committee, explaining that a requested sum of 1,500 rubles would be distributed to those people who were “most in need of material aid, due to their poverty and large families, for relief from the effects of the 1905 crop failure; these people have received neither support from the government nor support from the *zemstva*.” There followed a list of the names, positions, and parishes of 172 clergymen and orphans and widows of clergymen.<sup>31</sup> The bishop's indication that these victims had received no help from non-Church institutions, may have been intended to justify the exclusion of laity from the list. In his presentation of a similar list of needy clergy, the bishop of Tula claimed, perhaps disingenuously, that, “the Diocesan Administration has no information on the needs of individuals outside of the clerical domain.”<sup>32</sup> The bishop of Orel simply asked that 1,500 rubles be donated to the trusteeship (*popechitel'stvo*) for poor clergy in his diocese.<sup>33</sup> It is not surprising that bishops and other members of diocesan consistories concerned themselves primarily with the plight of their parish clergy, and the orphans and widows of clergymen. As Riazan's bishop remarked in another letter two years later, the peasantry would have to complete their own recovery from the crop failure before they could begin supporting their pastors again.

31 *Tsentral'nyi istoricheskii arkhiv goroda Moskvy (TsIAM)*, f. 2171, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 20–26ob.

32 *Ibid.*, l. 209.

33 *Ibid.*, l. 183.

In the meantime, these pastors and their families would have to get by somehow.<sup>34</sup>

The clergy of some dioceses used their networks to identify and deliver aid to remote or marginalized famine victims among the laity. Bishop Innokentii of Tambov, for example, submitted a list of twenty peasant land societies (*sel'skie obshchestva*) across two rural districts, "in greatest need of urgent help." He provided the names and addresses of eight different superintendents who could receive and distribute aid to those communities.<sup>35</sup> Clergy who chose to serve the laity thus employed the same kind of precision in allocating small but effective grants as they did in the distribution of aid within their own communities. The parish clergy of Saratov were able to provide relief for rootless urban poor, driven from the countryside by famine and bereft even of the support that a peasant commune could provide. One priest in Saratov, Fr. Chetvernikov, described his committee's use of a 500-ruble grant from the Moscow committee in a letter of thanks:

The money was received during Holy Week, at the most critical moment. That very week had marked the end of the city's drainage work, which had provided wages all winter for several hundred people from famine stricken areas. All of these workers, together with their families, were left in Saratov without any means to support themselves, having been deprived of the pittance of 25 kopeks a day that the city had paid them.... Members collected information on other impoverished people in this or that parish. They learned of an entire sea of poverty in the city of Saratov, huddled among ravines of Glebuchevo and Beloglinskii. The following impressions, gathered by a committee member, present a striking picture of this poverty. 1) Potap Meshcheriakov is an unskilled worker (*chernorabochii*) with a family of six small children who gather wood chips from the ravines for kindling and rags to sell, and sometimes beg alms. His wife is sick. She is unable to earn any wages, watch her small children, or support her family in any other way. Their home is a shanty without a bench or a bed. They owe sixteen rubles for this dwelling. They were given a grant of ten rubles.... 3) Evgeniia Romanova is forty years old, unmarried, and missing one arm. She has a nine-year-old girl and an infant. They live in indescribable poverty. They have no linens, only one dress, and no change of clothes. Their apartment is empty and cold and the rent has

34 TsIAM, f. 2171, op. 1, d. 4, l. 3.

35 TsIAM, f. 2171, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 212–212ob.

not been paid for two months. She was given three rubles.... The Committee distributed grants of one to five rubles to all the unemployed. More was given in cases of exceptional need or large families. The committee granted a total of 673.06 rubles to 192 families. Fifty rubles were sent to one of Saratov's villages for the construction of a soup kitchen and a nursery.<sup>36</sup>

The case of Saratov, in particular, demonstrated a transcendence of the mutual-aid function of the clerical relief organizations. It was Saratov's bishop Germogen who called attention back to the needs of the clergy. In April of 1908, he requested more aid from Moscow for seven clergymen, nine clerical widows, one former diocesan clerk, and four laymen whom "the diocesan committee has not been able to help."<sup>37</sup>

The clergy of dioceses that were not directly affected by the famine faced the more abstract dilemma of whether to simply link their relief campaign to the clerical networks of other dioceses, or to ensure that some of their contributions were used to benefit the laity. The parish clergy of the city of Moscow, who enjoyed state salaries and the contributions of wealthy parishioners, were expected to provide generous support for their rural colleagues and, in cases of extreme need, for the clergy of other dioceses as well. They received admonitions to this effect from Moscow's clerical mutual-aid societies in the diocesan press.<sup>38</sup> For the clergy of the empire's second capital, the obligation to support less fortunate clergy was a pastoral obligation because it was necessary for the support of pastoral work throughout the diocese. "How can a priest or deacon give himself entirely and with all his soul to his holy calling, to the dear task of enlightening the people, when over him, like the sword of Damocles, there hangs this terrible and inevitable question [of how to support his family]?"<sup>39</sup> Moscow's diocesan committee was willing to grant the request by Samara's diocesan leadership to simply send donations directly to the trusteeship for poor clergy without further explanation. On the other hand, Moscow's committee granted equal support to dioceses that provided aid to their laity, and it gave at least two grants (of 2,000 and 1,000 rubles) to the "All-Zemstvo" organization for famine relief in April of 1908.<sup>40</sup>

36 Ibid., ll. 27–28.

37 *TsIAM*, f. 2171, op. 1, d. 4, l. 5.

38 "Okonchanie," *Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, no. 22 (31 May 1908): 561.

39 "Kratkii ocherk deiatel'nosti Obshchestva vspomoshchestvovaniia nastoiashchim i byvshim vospitannitsam," *Moskovskie tserkovnye vedomosti*, no. 21 (24 May 1908): 545.

40 *TsIAM*, f. 2171, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 1–10b.

The clergy of Tver Diocese adopted a much more deliberate approach to the question of whom their funds should be used to support. Almost every donation sent to Tver's diocesan committee came with instructions for its use. Shortly after Tver's clergy launched their campaign in 1907, the consistory began issuing forms to every parish priest on which to record famine relief donations and to specify their intended use: for clergy or for laity. The recipients of Tver's donations in other dioceses were asked to honor these designations. In June of 1907, for example, Kazan's diocesan committee reported back to Tver that the funds it received had been divided between their clerical trusteeship and a lay committee, in accordance with Tver's specifications.<sup>41</sup> From January of 1907 until December of 1909, Tver's diocesan consistory collected a total of 1,314.28 rubles designated for clerical communities, and 1,873.09 rubles for lay communities in areas affected by crop failure.<sup>42</sup> Per capita, clerical famine victims received more relief from this contribution than lay victims, who comprised a vastly larger portion of the population.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, Tver's remarkably complete famine relief records reveal a campaign in which more than half of the funds raised by clerical organizations were diverted toward the relief of the non-clerical population.

Tver's donation records do not suggest that the diocesan leadership drove the campaign to help the laity. Beyond his role in the formal aspect of donation collections, the involvement of Tver's bishop, Aleksei, in the campaign was inconspicuous. He contributed two personal donations of twenty rubles for clergy and twenty-four rubles for laity. This sum, together with sixteen separate donations from the seminary rector, monasteries, and convents around the diocese bring the monastic clergy's overall contributions to 126.60 rubles for the clergy and 240.65 rubles for the laity, or ten and thirteen percent, respectively, of the diocese's total relief funds.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, there is no evidence that the diocesan leadership applied any pressure to the parish clergy to designate funds for the laity. On the contrary, the diocesan committee followed the instructions that were included with donation submissions. When donations

41 GATO, f. 886, op. 1, d. 24, l. 22.

42 GATO, f. 886, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 1–26.

43 In 1903, there were 105,962 parish clergymen employed throughout the empire, and 4,904 retired. Combined with the female and non-ordained members of the clerical *soslovie*, this figure would comprise less than 2% of the population that had reached about 126,367,000 by 1897. See: *Vsepoddanneishii otchet Ober-prokurora Sviateishago Sinoda po vedomstvu Pravoslavnago ispovedaniia za 1903–1904 gody* (St. Petersburg: n.p., 1909), 24–27; B.R. Mitchell, ed., *European Historical Statistics, 1750–1975*, 2nd ed. (New York: Facts on File, 1980), 33.

44 GATO, f. 886, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 1–26.

were submitted without instructions, the diocesan committee divided them evenly between clergy and laity.<sup>45</sup> The decision of whence donations would be sent was made at the parish and district levels.

Influence over the relief campaign from the other end of the diocesan spectrum is harder to evaluate, as peasant parishioners left few documents expressing their wishes. Parishioner donations composed the largest share of the Church's famine relief contributions, just as they composed the largest share of diocesan funds in general. The designation of tithes for use within the parish was agreed upon by the priest and the church elder, the parishioners' elected representative. Yet, before 1905, parishioners had no public forum in which to express their wishes regarding the use of Church funds at the diocesan level. Tver's famine relief records may reflect the beginning of a new assertiveness on the part of parishioners. In 1907, three newly established "parish councils" participated in the relief effort, contributing to the central committee sums of 163.75, 157.75, and six rubles, all of which were designated for the laity.<sup>46</sup> In parishes where parishioners ceded authority over their contributions to a single church elder, priests may have been inclined to designate a slight majority of the relief funds they collected toward their fellow clergymen and their families.<sup>47</sup> Yet where parishioners collectively engaged their pastor regarding their donations and other aspects of parish administration, the priest would likely have been obliged to respond to the priorities of his flock, such as the support of starving peasant communities.

The superintendent committees tipped the scales of Tver's relief campaign in favor of contributions to the laity. The fifty-six contributions from superintendent committees amounted to 657.07 rubles for clergy and 1,093 rubles for the laity, or fifty percent and fifty-eight percent respectively.<sup>48</sup> These superintendent committees met in the same administrative centers that were used for pastoral councils. After 1905, they were permitted to include lay parishioners in their meetings. The combination of lay representatives and a sense of pastoral mission may have been what prompted the superintendent committees to designate almost twice as much of their collective contribution for the relief of

45 This can be observed by comparing donation submission forms with their corresponding diocesan records: *GATO*, f. 886, op. 1, d. 24, ll. 29, 33, 37, 43; *GATO*, f. 886, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 16ob.-17ob.

46 *GATO*, f. 886, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 1-26.

47 The fifty-nine individual parishes that sent their donations directly to the diocesan committee collectively designated 291.06 rubles for the relief of clerical communities and 266.33 rubles for the relief of lay communities. *GATO*, f. 886, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 1-26.

48 *GATO*, f. 886, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 1-26.

lay communities than for fellow clergymen, lending Tver's overall response to the famine a more universal character.

The parish clergy's main contribution to the 1905–1909 famine relief effort was not purely quantitative. The significance for the clergy of the 3,187.37 rubles that Tver diocese collected for famine relief from 1907–9 may be understood by comparing this figure with the financial statement submitted by Tver's diocesan administration to the Synod for the year of 1906: 6,883.76 rubles of income from parish taxation.<sup>49</sup> Any estimate of the combined, monetary contribution of all the diocesan committees together would be dwarfed by the Second Duma's famine relief expenditures of 39.5 million rubles in 1907.<sup>50</sup> Yet, the parish clergy had drawn on extremely limited resources throughout the nineteenth century to develop strong systems of education, mutual aid, and disaster relief for their own communities. Their accomplishment in 1905–9 was analogous to these achievements within the clerical *soslovie*. The parish clergy drew on the organizational skills and local knowledge of their pastors to solicit and consolidate voluntary contributions from socially and geographically diverse communities, integrating those communities through a campaign to address a common disaster.

The Church's famine relief campaign of 1906–1909 was one dramatic episode in an ongoing process, begun in the late nineteenth century among the parish clergy, of utilizing clerical mutual-aid networks to perform pastoral work. The Orthodox laity supported these networks with voluntary tithes and donations because they were necessary to maintain the pastorate and the performance of the liturgy and sacraments. For the parish clergy, however, participation in mutual-aid associations was more than a professional necessity. It became a way of life, crucial to the survival of the communities that comprised the clerical *soslovie*. This way of life influenced their pastoral work. The clergy voluntarily transferred some of their collective diocesan resources back to the lay communities that supported them, both to preserve this important source of material support and to maintain the traditional prestige and authority of the pastorate. In so doing, they encouraged more active and direct participation in the management of these resources from outside the clerical *soslovie*.

The expansion of the parish clergy's *soslovie* networks to include the laity as both beneficiaries and active participants contributed to the growing public sphere of late Imperial Russia. Key reforms of the diocesan structure in 1905 both removed the veneer of central control over the clerical networks and

49 GATO, *f.* 160, *op.* 1, *d.* 8672, *ll.* 5–16.

50 Ascher, *Revolution of 1905*, 2: 319.

authorized the direct participation of the laity in their work. The famine relief campaign of 1905 demonstrated the independence and initiative of voluntary associations in late Imperial Russia. It also revealed the potential for cooperation and social integration among seemingly disparate communities, even within the divisive framework of the *soslovie* system.