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## BOOK REVIEW

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Jewdokimow, Marcin. 2020. *A Monastery in a Sociological Perspective: Seeking for a New Approach*, translated by Grzegorz Czewiel. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW. 279 pp. ISBN: 978-83-8090-704-1. Free ebook at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339536661\\_A\\_Monastery\\_in\\_a\\_Sociological\\_Perspective\\_-\\_Seeking\\_for\\_a\\_New\\_Approach](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339536661_A_Monastery_in_a_Sociological_Perspective_-_Seeking_for_a_New_Approach)

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Marcin Jewdokimow's *A Monastery in a Sociological Perspective: Seeking for a New Approach* was published in Polish in 2018 and this English translation is a welcome addition to research on what is usually called "the new monasticism" in religious studies, despite the focus being firmly on communities that are part of the Catholic Church as traditionally understood. The study is valuable because "there are actually few sociological texts that address Catholic religious life" (p. 14), of which a majority address the priesthood. Poland has been exceptional in the constant numbers of priests, though the number of nuns and brothers have declined. Chapter 1, "Transformations of Religious Life: Historical Perspective and Basic Definitions", explains the theology of celibate religious communities and provides a brief history from the fourth to the twentieth centuries of these monastic bodies, with an emphasis on their contributions to Western civilization.

Chapter 2, "Changes in Religious Life Since the 1970s in Quantitative Terms", is a detailed examination of the declining number of nuns and brothers in Poland in the context of other European nations in which the decline was more dramatic (for example, from 1974 and 2015 numbers of nuns fell by 82% in the Netherlands, 73% in Belgium, 70% in Austria, 69% in France and 68% in Germany). This data is illustrated by clear graphs and other visual aids. Hypothetical explanations are given such as the Church's failure to change to meet the needs of young Catholics, social changes in secularized Western society, and the negative impact of Vatican II on Catholics across the board (pp. 101–102). Jewdokimow makes some points of interest about such generic hypotheses, mainly that "religious orders that lead intense communal life and are more clearly separated from secular life boast more candidates" (p. 107). This vindicates data from high demand Protestant churches, which are more successful generally than liberal Protestant churches.

Chapter 3, "Sociological Studies of Religious Orders", gives an overview of historical studies of monasticism, noting the contributions of Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber (the latter in detail), and highlighting some important later scholars including Ilana Friedrich Silber, Michel Foucault, H. P. M. Goddjin, and Stefania Palmisano. Concepts of the monastic life as association, community, and utopian project are explored. The issue of decline is tackled,

referencing Danièle Hervieu-Léger's idea that "religious life is now becoming an element of folklore" (p. 147), Helen Rose Ebaugh's diagnosis of the "deterioration of an organization's adaptation to its domain... and... the reduction of resources within the organization" (p. 150) and Isabelle Jonveaux's studies of the economy of monasticism, especially of "non-religious, commercial forms of activity undertaken... as an economic necessity" (p. 158). Jewdokimow's research is impressive; I could have selected other scholars whose work is discussed but found it interesting that so many female researchers are interested in communal, vowed religious life. The second half of the chapter is a detailed analysis of Polish scholarship on religious life.

Chapter 4, "Original Research on Cistercian Monasteries in Relation to Tourism, Economy and Collective Memory", is a fascinating examination of the presentation of monasteries on websites promoting tourism, interviews with monastics and local council representatives and other interested parties, and other sources of relevant information. A short historical sketch of the Cistercian order in Poland is provided, and the range of activities that now take place in monasteries (classical concerts, heritage tours, art exhibitions, guesthouse and hotel accommodation, onsite museums and cafes, and commercial enterprises) is detailed. The fate of dissolved Cistercian foundations is part of this story, as is the relationship of Catholicism and patriotism in Poland. Marcin Jewdokimow has produced an interesting and well-researched study of contemporary trends in monastic life that will be of interest to scholars of secularization, ecclesiology, religious life, and sociological methods in the study of religion more generally.