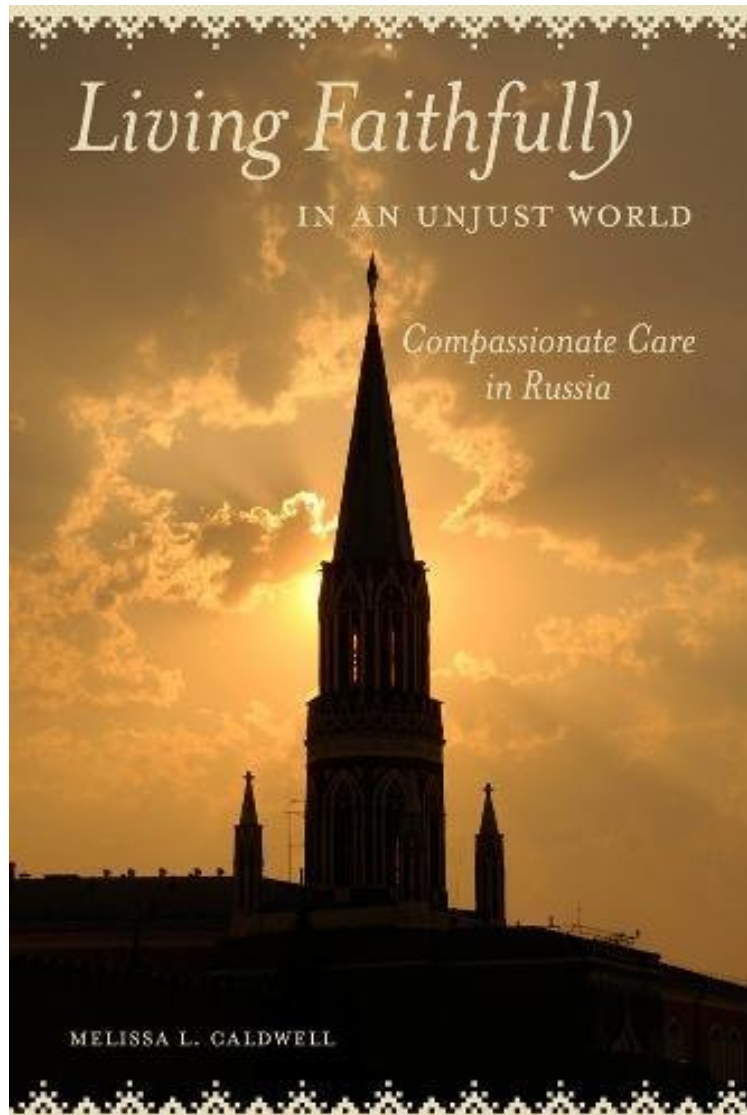


(Ebook pdf) Living Faithfully in an Unjust World: Compassionate Care in Russia

Living Faithfully in an Unjust World: Compassionate Care in Russia

Melissa L. Caldwell

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Melissa L. Caldwell : Living Faithfully in an Unjust World: Compassionate Care in Russia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Living Faithfully in an Unjust World: Compassionate Care in Russia:

What does it mean to be a compassionate, caring person in Russia, which has become a country of stark income inequalities and political restrictions? How might ethics and practices of kindness constitute a mode of civic participation in which doing goodhelping, caring for, and loving one another in a world marked by many problems and few easy solutions is a necessary part of being an active citizen? *Living Faithfully in an Unjust World* explores how, following the retreat of the Russian state from social welfare services, Russians efforts to do the right thing for their communities have forged new modes of social justice and civic engagement. Through vivid ethnography based on twenty years of research within a thriving Moscow-based network of religious and secular charitable service providers, Melissa L. Caldwell examines how community members care for a broad range of Russias population, in Moscow and beyond, through programs that range from basic health services to human rights advocacy. As the experiences of assistance workers, government officials, recipients, and supporters reveal, their work and beliefs are shaped by a practical philosophy of goodness and kindness. Despite the hardships these individuals witness on a regular basis, there is a pervasive sense of optimism that human kindness will prevail over poverty, injury, and injustice. Ultimately, what connects members of this diverse group is a shared belief that caring for others is not simply a practical matter or an idealistic vision but a project of faith and hope. Together care-seekers and care-givers destabilize and remake the meaning of faith and faith-based by putting into practice a vision of humanitarianism that transcends the boundaries between state and private, religious and secular.

From the Inside Flap *Living Faithfully in an Unjust World* is an important contribution and an insightful look at the world of faith-based charities in Russia. Caldwell knows the anthropological literature well and inserts this work into meaningful conversation with prior work on humanitarianism, aid, and hope. Elizabeth Cullen Dunn, Associate Professor of Geography and International Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington A compelling portrait of the ethics of care in post-Soviet Russia. Caldwell's sensitive ethnography takes us to the streets of Moscow, where an interfaith network of Christian groups toils for social justice in soup kitchens, food banks, medical aid programs, and immigration clinics. It is here that religious nonprofits gain productive force through their collaboration and confront the limits and creative possibilities of the compassion economy they have inspired. Erica Bornstein, author of *Disquieting Gifts: Humanitarianism in New Delhi* Theoretically rich, engagingly written, and based on extremely robust ethnographic scholarship, Caldwell's analysis deals with one of the most crucial themes of our time: how people make life better for fellow humans in contexts of extraordinary difficulty, when state and economic structures fail to alleviate, and in fact exacerbate, suffering. Heath Cabot, Professor of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh Set in impoverished Russia, which is wracked with devastating cuts to social services and beset with a widespread sense of moral decline and social disintegration, *Living Faithfully in an Unjust World* shows us something quite beautiful faith not as religious dogma but as a mode of ethical life and everyday labor of kindness. Caldwell uncovers how her interlocutors put this practical love to work as they try to enact rightfulness even when the realization of their efforts seems doubtful. Written from the vantage point of twenty years of experience in the field and a deep command of Russias specific histories of scarcity, deprivation, and social solidarity, this extraordinary book guides us toward asking a crucial question of more general importance: what are the politics, precarities, contradictions, promises, and potentialities of faith, love, compassion, and hope in our world today? Andrea Muehlebach, author of *The Moral Neoliberal: Welfare and Citizenship in Italy*