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Striving for Congregational Self-Sufficiency in Eurasia: A United Methodist Case Study

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Earn, Save, Give All You Can

The story goes that a certain man listened with great interest to John Wesley's classic sermon on "The Use of Money" (Standard Sermon 50). Wesley began by saying that nothing is wrong with making money. On the contrary, Christians have a "bounden duty" to be industrious, to work hard, and to gain all they can. The man agreed with Wesley and was enjoying the sermon. Next, Wesley went on to say that Christians should be very careful in spending money. He recommended simple living without luxury and expensive habits. The man listened with enthusiasm and agreed that Christians should save all they can.

Then, however, Wesley explained the purpose of earning and saving. "Let not any man imagine that he has done anything, barely by going thus far, by gaining and saving all he can....Nor, indeed, can a man properly be said to save anything, if he only lays it up. You may as well throw your money into the sea as bury it in the earth." Now the man became uneasy. This was not what he expected from a sermon that started so well. Wesley argued for a very purposeful use of money and encouraged Christians to "add the third rule to the two preceding. Having first gained all you can, and secondly saved all you can, then give all you can." By then the man was no longer satisfied and considered leaving the church.

Jesus tried to teach people the meaning of the paradox, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). We easily think the other way around. We are happy when somebody gives us something and believe that we are losing something when we have to give it away. Jesus gives us the spiritual logic about our belongings, "Give, and it will be given to you....for with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38).

"You get [it] back," Jesus said. Tithes and offerings are investments in the Kingdom of God, and the return is good! Pastors and church members, all those who sacrifice their time, skills, and money in our church have experienced this truth. They have been blessed—both in their personal lives and in the ministry of the church. So it is today, and so it will be tomorrow. (The phrase "tithes and offerings" derives from Malachi 3:8-12. According to Scripture the *tithe* is ten percent of earnings [Numbers 18:26] and *offerings* are all other contributions.)

Western Support Versus Striving for Self-Sufficiency

In 2009 our local United Methodist churches received \$738,809 from our partner churches abroad

(in addition to support of special projects and construction). In 2010 the figure was \$1,042,050. During the first two months of 2011 we received \$173,675, mainly for local churches. Thus, the blessings have not ceased. It is also a great privilege for us to do our own giving and to know that we are not losing anything when we give to the Lord.

Still, our situation today is not easy. Practically the whole world experienced a severe financial recession in 2009, and, in addition, in Russia, Ukraine, and Central Asia prices on everything have continued to increase. The average United Methodist in Eurasia is not rich, and if we would give only what is left over, not much would come in through tithes and offerings. Even so, our people continue to fight the good fight, both spiritually and financially.

Financial self-sufficiency was introduced in 2007 as one of the five areas in which all United Methodist groups and congregations in Eurasia were expected to grow. (The other four areas are attendance in worship, increased lay leadership, service to neighbors, and progress towards annual local church goals.) The concept of self-sufficiency has been widely accepted, some brave steps have been taken, and encouraging results can be reported.

Survey Findings

How are United Methodist churches in Eurasia actually doing in moving toward self-sufficiency? With answers from a third of our congregations we learned that:

- 40 percent of our churches receive more than 80 percent of their income from abroad;
- 30 percent receive 60-80 percent of their income from abroad;
- 10 percent receive 15-60 percent of their income from abroad;
- 5 percent receive less than 15 percent of their income from abroad;
- 15 percent receive no support at all from abroad.

When congregations were asked when they expected to be self-sufficient, answers ranged from "never" to ten years to five years to two years. Six of 116 reporting United Methodist chartered congregations and house churches are today self-sufficient, in most cases for lack of partnering churches abroad.

According to the opinion of the majority of United Methodist pastors, the main means for reaching self-sufficiency will be increased tithes and offerings. From their experience and understanding of the situation, they gave the following advice for increasing tithes and offerings:

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Self Sufficiency in Eurasia (continued from page 1)

Measures to increase the number of parishioners
• introduction of new ministries
• inspirational programs dealing with social problems
• evangelistic initiatives
Measures beneficial for spiritual growth
• prayer
• preaching
• teaching about generosity and tithing
• personal examples of pastors and church leaders
• sermons about specific needs
• studying our tithing brochure
• testimony of people giving tithes
• prayer about people giving tithes
• cultivation of healthy pride in self-sufficiency of one's church

Today, most United Methodist churches in Eurasia are to a high degree dependent on support from their overseas partner churches. This is not a sound state for churches with the ambition to be indigenous and to earn the respect of the society they serve.

To achieve self-sufficiency, administrative and economic measures are also important. It is necessary to:

- have a plan for transition to self-sufficiency;
- practice financial transparency;
- teach the church board about budget planning and church savings;
- have the budget as a standing item on the agenda of the church board;
- organize training workshops for local church finances;
- lease church premises; and
- address congregational financial issues at an early stage.

What Is Really Meant by Self-Sufficiency?

Church self-sufficiency is a broad concept, and clarity is needed about what is really meant by the phrase. Two basic principles need to be kept together.

Each United Methodist church of whatever form and size should be able to sustain itself through tithes and offerings when it comes to: support of its pastor or other leader; basic operating costs (rent, utilities, etc.); and basic program costs including a minimum of one weekly worship service, one ongoing evangelism program, and one ongoing social program.

1. The size of a church and its level of tithes and offerings directly determine the size of the budget. (A budget details income as well as expenses because it is not enough to list projected costs for ministry in the coming year. In addition, a strategic plan must include development of financial capacity, which is then reflected in the budget.) In the beginning, a church cannot afford to pay any salary to its pastor, or it may not even have an appointed pastor yet. However, as it grows in faith and commitment, it will also grow in worship attendance and in the number of people tithing. Then it can start to pay a pastor, at first part-time, and later full-time. Each church needs to determine to what extent it can pay a pastor or other leader—part-time, half-time, or full-time. This understanding needs to be formulated in a written agreement between the church and its pastor or leader. A house church meets with minimal costs, but when it grows, it can afford to rent and perhaps eventually build or buy a building.

If every member is tithing, offerings are as generous as could be expected, and the church still cannot cover its expenses, then probably nothing is wrong with the giving. Rather, the problem may be the level of expenses. It is not realistic to expect that ten members can finance both a full-time pastor's salary and leasing and maintaining a building. Thus, we come to the second principle.

2. Every United Methodist church can apply for defined-term financial support from global Methodism for:
 - the creation of new faith communities with new people;
 - education on the local, district, annual conference, and area levels;
 - special outreach;
 - camps;
 - start-up support; and
 - special growth and development support (for example, salary support to allow a pastor more time to equip parishioners for outreach).

It is important to note that support from the wider, global church is meant for development, outreach, and growth, not for basic costs that every church should underwrite. A church that is too small to cover its basic expenses and that has no sense of direction in terms of plans, efforts, or fruits, cannot expect global church support. Such churches have to make cuts in their budgets. Global church support cannot be given simply to secure the status quo.

From Dependency to Interdependency

Today, most United Methodist churches in Eurasia are to a high degree dependent on support from their overseas partner churches. This is not a sound state for churches with the ambition to be indigenous and to earn the respect of the society they serve. Our goal, however, is not to become independent. We want to remain in mission together with one another and with our partners abroad—in a broad sense, interdependent in Christ. Our common vision is to be self-sufficient on the local level. A timetable is always locally defined and unique, but in each case it has to be planned and clear. Hopes and wishes are not enough; each local church should be taking considered steps in faith.

Here is some step-by-step advice, some of which stems from our self-sufficiency survey.

- In examining the church's financial situation and planning for the future, first refer to the congregation's mission statement and its meaning. If the church does not have one, in preparing one, answer the three questions every church needs to ask itself: Why do people need Jesus? Why do people need the church? Why do people need our church?
- Financial matters and spiritual goals always go together. If we try to divide them, both become weak. If our faith grows deeper, our finances grow stronger.
- Re-examine expenses. How much money do we need to do what we believe God has called our church to accomplish?
- Re-examine income. What can we do to increase tithes and offerings? Does our church have other possible sources of income?
- After re-examining expenses and income, if a gap still exists between the two, do we have any growth plans or projects for which we can justifiably request help from abroad?

- Determine our degree of self-sufficiency in basic ministry by answering these questions:
 - How can we increase income?
 - Do we need to reduce expenses?
 - Do we need to make fundamental changes in the way we work and the way we are organized?
 - Can we increase our volunteer leadership?
 - Do we need to consider cooperation with another church in order to afford a full-time pastor?

In Summary

Several facts are clear.

1. United Methodists in Eurasia have abundant direction from Scripture and from the preaching of our church's founder, John Wesley, to give generously for the support of local churches. In addition, for genuine believers, giving will be understood as a privilege and a blessing, rather than as a burden.
2. United Methodists in Eurasia are seriously addressing the goal of local church self-sufficiency.

On the one hand, it is vital that local congregations make concrete plans to move towards financial independence in their operating budgets. On the other hand, while most of our churches have not yet reached the goal of self-sufficiency, they are consciously working toward that end and have, in most cases, moved further towards financial independence than the average Protestant seminary in the former Soviet Union (Mark R. Elliott, "The Current Crisis in Protestant Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union," *Religion in Eastern Europe* 30 [November 2010], 6).

3. Finally, United Methodists in Eurasia are blessed to have substantial prayer and financial assistance from global Methodism. However, this help must be understood not as a permanent subsidy but as a resource to assist local congregations in the short term to get on their feet and to further church growth across Eurasia. ♦

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Religious Intolerance towards Western Churches in Russia

Vyacheslav Karpov and Elena Lisovskaya

Editor's note: While this previously unpublished report was completed in September 2006, its findings still deserve careful consideration because Russian intolerance of Western churches, if anything, has deepened in the intervening years.

How Is the Term Western Churches Defined?

By *Western* we mean churches affiliated with Western religious traditions. In post-Soviet Russia, these churches are likely to be perceived as new, foreign, and non-traditional. Many of them are in reality neither new nor particularly foreign to Russia. Most have been long and well established in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere. Some existed in Soviet Russia clandestinely or under the watchful eye of the atheist state. The suppressed or clandestine status made these churches largely invisible and unknown to most Soviet Russians other than through scary, propaganda-generated rumors about dangerous "sectarians." Therefore, when the liberal 1990 law on religion allowed these groups to openly re-emerge, or emerge and expand, Russians inevitably saw them as "new," unusual, and non-native to Russia. These perceptions could only be strengthened by the fact that such groups have often relied on support from their fellow believers and missionaries from the United States and other Western nations.

The 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations solidified and institutionalized the status of these churches as foreign to Russia's traditions. The law officially designated these and many other groups "non-traditional," thus setting them apart from Russia's four "traditional" faiths (Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism). This status meant legal restrictions on religious freedom. "Non-traditional" groups were allowed to register officially only if they could prove that they had been in Russia for at least 15 years, that is, as early as 1982, when religious freedom was non-existent. This threshold disadvantaged many of those who either existed in the USSR clandestinely or came to Russia after the collapse of the USSR.

Although the 1997 law defines all Western churches in Russia as "non-traditional," some are unlikely to be perceived as such. For instance, Roman Catholic churches have been in major Russian cities for centuries, and some remained open even under Soviet

rule. Moreover, most Russians probably realize that Catholicism is in fact a traditional faith for many in their country, including ethnic Poles, Lithuanians, Germans and other groups. Thus, we do not include Catholics among those whose churches are likely to be perceived as new, foreign, and non-traditional.

How Was the Evidence Collected?

The present study is based primarily on evidence from our international collaborative study, "Religious Intolerance among Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Russia: How Strong Is It and Why?," funded by The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research in 2004-2006. In June 2005 a representative national survey was conducted in Russia including 2,972 in-person interviews. Trained survey workers from our Moscow-based sub-contractor, the Institute for Comparative Social Research, conducted the interviews, which took on average slightly more than one hour.

Findings

1. Western Churches Account for a Small Percent of Russia's Religious Population.

The number of Western religious organizations increased dramatically since 1990, even despite the restrictions imposed in 1997. Based on the data of Russia's Ministry of Justice, we estimated that in 2004 Russia was home to 5,266 registered Western religious organizations. Given the difficulty of registration, it is understandable that many other unregistered groups actually exist. In some regions, Protestant groups outnumbered Orthodox and other "traditional" organizations combined (A. A. Kraikov, "Religii v gosudarstve-faktor ukrepleniia ili raspada gosudarstva?," *Sovremenniaia Evropa* 4 [2003]: 22-34). However, since these groups are relatively small in size, our survey suggests that followers of Western churches account for only one percent, or about 1.4 million of Russia's population. In contrast, the 2010 U.S. Department of State *International Religious Freedom Report* estimates

Most Russians probably realize that Catholicism is in fact a traditional faith for many in their country, including ethnic Poles, Lithuanians, [and] Germans.

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Religious Intolerance towards Western Churches in Russia *(continued from page 3)*

more than two million Protestants in Russia.

The Protestant minority exists in an environment dominated by Orthodox Christianity and Islam. According to our surveys, presently over 80 percent of all Russians and over 85 percent of ethnic Russians identify themselves as Orthodox Christians. In our survey, 3.1 percent of Russian citizens identified themselves as Muslims.

While most Russians affiliate themselves with Orthodoxy or Islam, traditional religious beliefs and practices are not very common. Overall, attendance of religious services in post-atheist Russia has been among the lowest in Europe. Even using rather soft criteria of religiosity (including relatively consistent core beliefs and relatively active practice), in our study we estimated that only 10 percent of self-identified Orthodox and 20 percent of Muslims could be considered religious in a traditional sense. When stricter criteria are applied, proportions of traditional believers drop to single digits. Yet this relatively weak religious commitment does not preclude widespread religious intolerance toward Western churches.

2. Religious Intolerance Towards Western Churches Is Overwhelming.

According to our data, intolerance towards Western churches in Russia is overwhelmingly common and strong. Only a minority of Russians, regardless of their religious affiliation, would give Western churches basic religious freedom. Thus, less than one-third of all Russians (29 percent) would allow these religious groups to build churches in their hometowns; even less would allow them to fundraise (28 percent); only about a quarter of Russians would permit these groups religious publishing (25 percent) or the opening of a religious school (22 percent); even fewer would permit them public preaching of their faith (18 percent) or preaching on TV (20 percent); and only a small minority of Russians (eight percent) would not mind Western groups teaching their religion in public schools. There is only one liberty that more than one-third of Russians (41 percent) would grant Western groups: doing charitable work in their hometowns. But this number is still less than half. It is remarkable that most Russians would not permit Western churches to carry out charitable work that is so much needed in Russia today.

The strength of intolerance towards Western churches is evident from a comparison of percentages of those Russians who would fully deny Western churches all religious liberties with those who would give them nearly full religious rights. Astoundingly, only less than one in fourteen Russians (seven percent) would grant Western churches seven to eight liberties from our list, while four out of ten (39 percent) would deny them all eight liberties.

3. Western Churches Are the Least Tolerated Religious Group in Russia.

Intolerance toward “non-traditional” Western churches is substantially stronger than toward Orthodox, Muslims, or even Jews, the least tolerated “traditional” religious minority in Russia. Western churches are the least tolerated among the four religious groups included in our study even when Orthodox Christians in the overwhelmingly Muslim North Caucasus are included. Muslims and Orthodox are more willing to put up with each other and with Jews than with Western churches.

4. Both Orthodox Christians and Muslims Are Strongly Intolerant of Western Churches.

Only tiny fractions of Muslims and Orthodox

are ready to allow “non-traditional” churches public preaching of their religion (14 and 17 percent), or preaching on television (15 and 20 percent). For both Orthodox and Muslims, the least acceptable activity is Western churches’ religious instruction in public schools. Only eight percent in both groups would allow it. In comparison to all other activities, charitable work is more acceptable, but only minorities among Orthodox and Muslims would allow it in their hometowns.

5. Religiosity Does Not Make Russia’s Orthodox and Muslims More Intolerant of Western Churches.

Looking at self-identified Orthodox Christians and Muslims separately, we explored the relations between their religiosity and intolerance of Western churches. The aspects of religiosity we looked at included monotheistic and Christian beliefs, church or mosque attendance, frequency of prayer, and the reading of the Bible or Koran.

For both Orthodox Christians and Muslims, we found no link whatsoever between religiosity and intolerance of Western churches. Those who more fully share monotheistic and Christian beliefs are no more and no less tolerant than those who do not. Tolerance levels among those who go to church/mosque often and those who do not are statistically indistinguishable. The same applies to prayer and scripture reading. Thus, with intolerance strong across the board, no reason exists to attribute it to rising Orthodox and Muslim religiosity in Russia.

6. Near-Religious Ideologies Influence the Level of Intolerance Towards Western Churches.

While core religious beliefs do not make Russians more intolerant of Western churches, their ideological beliefs about religion do. Given the relatively small number of Western groups’ adherents in the country, it is clear that most Russians’ opinions about them are not based on personal experience. Furthermore, given the relatively low level of religious attendance, Orthodox churches and mosques do not appear to be the most important source of negativity toward Western churches. Moreover, our data show no connection between attendance (high or low) and negative opinions about Western groups. Thus, we are left with secular media and ideology as the key suspected sources of negative images of Western churches.

Russians hold very contradictory views on the general question of equal rights. On the one hand, about half agree to some extent that all religions should be treated equally. At the same time, 65 percent say that Orthodoxy should be given more rights than others, and more than one-third opine that all “traditional” religions should be given privileged status. Thus, very little ideological support exists for treating all religions equally, as reflected in intolerance toward religious minorities.

Another source of intolerance deals with ideology that rigidly links a group’s ethnic identity to its dominant faith and that regards other religions as alien and harmful for the group. This ideology of religious ethnocentrism is strikingly common in Russia. For instance, 85 percent of ethnic Russians believe that they are Orthodox in their hearts even if they were not baptized and do not go to church. Nearly half believe that only ethnic Russians can be true Orthodox, and more than one-third see converts to non-Orthodox faiths as no longer truly Russian. Similar beliefs about the ethnic nature of Islam are also common among Tatars and other historically Muslim ethnicities. However, among Muslims, acceptance

According to our data, intolerance towards Western churches in Russia is overwhelmingly common and strong.

of these views does not increase their intolerance towards Western churches. At the same time, religious ethnocentrism makes Orthodox Russians more intolerant of Western churches.

7. *Secular Ideology Influences Religious Intolerance.*

Religious intolerance toward Western churches is further influenced by beliefs and attitudes that have nothing to do with religion. In particular, undemocratic and anti-Western ideological orientations noticeably increase intolerance. The striking popularity of such reactionary orientations helps explain why intolerance of Western churches is so strong among Russians. For instance, in our survey two out of three Russians (67 percent) shared the opinion that Western governments are trying to undermine Russia and cause its collapse.

Almost 55 percent said that adopting Western ways can only harm Russia. Less than one-third (32 percent) see Russia as a European nation that will eventually join the Western world. Furthermore, 52 percent of Russians see chaos and lawlessness in their country as the result of democracy, and 77 percent think that elections and competition among parties do Russia more harm than good. In this reactionary ideological atmosphere, the fact that Western religious groups are facing mass hostility and an unwillingness to give them any rights comes as little surprise.

Next, a meaningful link exists between an unwillingness to grant civil liberties to dissidents and non-conformists (for example, to atheists and homosexuals) and religious intolerance toward Western churches in Russia. Here, a more general aversion to diversity manifests itself in the widespread hostility to specific religious out-groups.

Finally, religious intolerance toward groups associated with the U.S. and other Western countries is worsened by anti-American attitudes. While only 14 percent of Russians openly express negative opinions about Americans, such opinions add fuel to religious hostility toward groups perceived to be American.

8. *Regional and Social-Demographic Differences Affect Levels of Intolerance.*

Religious intolerance toward Western churches is especially strong (markedly above the national average) in the North Caucasus and Central regions of Russia. In contrast, intolerance is weaker than average in the North-Western and Far-Eastern regions. Moscow's population appears somewhat more tolerant than the rest of Russia, although some actions of city authorities against Protestant groups might suggest otherwise.

Additionally, we detected social-demographic differences that usually surface in research on tolerance. Thus, younger Russians (under 30 years of age), people with at least some college education, and city dwellers are more tolerant of Western churches than people who are older, less educated, and who live in villages or small towns.

Conclusion

In addition to restrictive laws and their arbitrary application by unfriendly authorities, Western churches and other "non-traditional" groups face powerful constraints to their religious freedom "from below," that is, from ordinary Russians and their prevailing hostile sentiment. International observers' reports of hostile acts against these groups reveal no more than a tiny part of this hostility to religious freedom in Russia.

A sad fact is that, restrictive as it is, existing law still treats Western and other "non-traditional" groups more liberally than most Russians would. The law allows such groups at least some activities, while most Russians would not allow them any. If the law were to become more accommodating of public opinion, it would simply eliminate the little that remains of religious liberties of "non-traditional" groups. Thus, religious freedom in Russia needs protection from popular hostility no less than from authorities' arbitrary decisions.

Clearly, even massive international efforts to address prejudice, stereotypes, and ideological clichés that feed intolerance toward Western churches in Russia will have little effect unless they are matched and surpassed by Russians' own endeavors to combat reactionary ideologies. However, U.S. organizations can make specific contributions to reducing religious intolerance. For instance, ordinary Russians know little if anything about U.S.-based Western churches they quite commonly perceive as "dangerous sects." Their perception could change drastically if they knew more about the fundamental role some of these "sects" play in U.S. society. Similarly, ordinary Russians' perceptions could be changed considerably if they were more informed about the religious liberties that minority groups, including Orthodox Christians and Muslims, enjoy in the U.S. This relevant knowledge could be spread more actively by American governmental and nongovernmental organizations working in and with Russia.

A necessary condition for estimating the level of existing threats to religious freedom is systematic monitoring of religious intolerance among ordinary Russians. We consider our study a first step toward such monitoring. ♦

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The Revival of Russian Iconography

Irina Yazykova

Longsuffering Russia and Joyful Icons

One cannot help being struck, while leafing through historical manuscripts and chronicles of ancient Russia, how year after year first one area and then another was overcome by political unrest—half of an entire city burned to the ground, then another city visited by plague or sacked by invaders. The Russian people also suffered repeatedly from impoverishment and crop failures and natural calamities. But when we look at the

icons of this same Russia, we find beautiful faces; we see clear colors and the light-filled world of divine joy.

In the 1960s Russian film director Andrei Tarkovsky directed the film *Andrei Rublev* that well portrays the gloom of life in ancient Rus' under the Tatar-Mongol conquest. Russians in the fifteenth century were entirely stripped of their freedoms. Their churches were defaced, and they were murdered, tortured, burned, and bribed. Russian princes, meanwhile, fought among themselves

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even as the Tatars did their best to set brother against brother. The entire Russian world, it seemed, was on the verge of complete physical and moral collapse. And yet—as if Russia itself were that phoenix described in its fairytales—the nation rose again from the ashes.

Tarkovsky shot his film in black and white. Only at the film's end, when the audience sees Andrei Rublev's timeless icons—the Holy Trinity, Our Savior of Zvenigorod, and Archangel Michael icons, among others—does color burst upon the screen like a flame through the darkness. Tarkovsky found here a magnificent metaphor with which to tell us that heavenly harmony comes into being not thanks to, but rather in spite of, the laws of this world. Audiences of the Soviet era, who lived under the crushing weight of ideology for more than 70 years, were particularly sensitive to this message. Whatever the age, however, the senselessness and ugliness that so often scars this world encounters a bulwark of resistance in the icon—in the radiant face of divine wisdom.

A Renaissance of Iconography

In today's Russia we are witnessing a renaissance in the art of iconography, and both believers and non-believers are showing a renewed interest in icons. In the 1970s and 1980s iconography had no discernable impact on the country's cultural life. Under the Soviet system it was all but illegal. The painting of icons with the intent to sell was subject to criminal sanctions punishable by a prison term of up to four years. This is why iconography continued as essentially an underground art form, focusing on either restoration work or fulfilling commissions from private individuals. Far from advertising their work, iconographers hid the fact even from their colleagues, lest one of them turned out to be an informer. With iconographers forced to work under such difficult conditions, it is little wonder that, to the casual gaze, contemporary iconography simply did not exist. But it was precisely during these years of "stagnation" that the innovative masters who define late twentieth-century Russian iconography first began to paint.

The Danilov Monastery

A turning point came in 1988 when the Russian nation celebrated the millennium of its baptism. Even prior to the anniversary celebration of 1988, the state had begun returning some properties to the Russian Orthodox Church. Among the first of these was the Danilov Monastery, which went on to become the focal point for nationwide celebrations. The monastery was completely restored within five years (1983-1988). Iconography work was led by Abbot (Vladimir Teodor) Zinon, who by this time was already renowned as an important iconographer. He was joined by a whole brigade of artists and restorers, including Alexander Sokolov and Alexander Chashkin. Father Zinon participated directly in painting the icons for the Pokrov and Prophet Daniel side chapels of the Church of the Holy Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Councils as well as the icons for the lower church. He also painted the monastery's most prominent icon of Prince Daniil of Moscow. The rebirth of Danilov Monastery demonstrated that the Church had managed to revive the spirit of ancient iconography.

Maria Sokolova and her students contributed to the restorations in Danilov Monastery. Maria set up an iconography atelier in the monastery headed by Irina V. Vatagina, an iconographer who trained during the

post-war years under Mother Juliana at the Trinity-Saint Sergius Lavra. Vatagina's workshop produced icons both for the monastery and for other churches and monasteries. Her workshop painted the icons of the new saints canonized during the thousand-year anniversary Council of the Russian Orthodox Church that took place in 1988. Together with Sokolova, this workshop created the archetypal images of such saints as Andrei Rublev, Ksenia of Saint Petersburg, Maxim the Greek, Amvrosy of Optina Monastery, among others—the standard upon which later artists based their icons.

The 1989 Modern Icon Exhibit

An important signpost along the road to restoring the tradition was the Modern Icon Exhibition held in 1989 in the Znamensky Cathedral in Moscow. Now located on Varvarka Street, in 1989 it was still Razin Street. This was the first exhibition of contemporary church art held during the entire Soviet period. Prior to that, icons had been exhibited only as museum pieces, if they were shown at all, and always only as something from a previous time period, something from before 1917. The term *modern icon* did not even exist in the Soviet lexicon. Icons had been treated as though they had no connection with the modern world, but the exhibit on Varvarka Street demonstrated that icons were still a living and developing form. The exhibit provided iconographers newly emerged from the underground with the opportunity to demonstrate their strength. Most of all, the Varvarka Street Exhibition, which included works by more than 100 modern iconographers, showed that the Russian icon, while connected to the past, also had a future. In a review written at the time, M. Gusev commented on the event's significance:

The simple fact that it was now possible to assemble, within four walls, works by all the nation's leading iconographers—this was already for them something of a miracle. Many of the participants gathered here are relatively young. Their average age is 30. The future of Russia's ecclesial art is in their hands.

As it turned out, this reviewer was right. Most of the participants in this exhibition are still actively working today. Their number includes Alexander Sokolov, Alexander Lavdansky, Alexei Vronsky, Andrei Bubnov-Petrov, Sergei Cherny, Vladimir Sidel'nikov, Ilya Kruchinin, Ksenia Pokrovsky, and Olga Klodt, among others. These are the iconographers who are defining the main trends in Russian iconography.

At the end of the same year as the Modern Icon Exhibition, another exhibit opened: "Christian Art: Tradition and the Modern World" (Moscow, Manezh Hall, December 1989-January 1990). Similar exhibits followed on its heels with, today, exhibits of modern ecclesial art becoming a regular and widespread part of Russian culture, held in places like St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara, and Pskov, and indeed in cities throughout the world.

The Demand for Iconographers

The primary developmental problems experienced by iconography during the final two decades of the twentieth century were problems of growth. With every passing year, the increasing number of newly constructed or restored churches and monasteries meant that the demand for iconographers far outstripped the supply. The Church's growing needs required iconographers to organize new forms of labor: unions of workers, work brigades, and production teams. The

The term *modern icon* did not even exist in the Soviet lexicon. Icons had been treated as though they had no connection with the modern world.

With every passing year, the increasing number of newly constructed or restored churches and monasteries meant that the demand for iconographers far outstripped the supply.

Moscow Patriarchate officially incorporated some of these groups, conferring certain privileges and benefits in the process. The Sofrino Company, for example, is an iconography studio attached to the Theological Academy of the Moscow Patriarchate. Others remained independent of the patriarchate, without enjoying any special privileges, but still received orders from both churches and private individuals. By the end of the 1990s, in Moscow alone, more than 20 iconography studios and production teams were fulfilling contracts for the Church. Teams formed in other cities as well.

Getting on a “First-Name” Basis with Tradition

Archimandrite Zinon is the most prominent iconographer in Russia today, and his work influences developments in iconography both at home and abroad. In the 1990s, some of Father Zinon’s reflections on the meaning of tradition were published in *Conversations with an Iconographer*. He wrote, “True creativity is possible only within the framework of a tradition, and it takes time and effort to get on a first-name basis with a tradition. Learning the craft aspect is not enough. An iconographer who takes this work seriously knows that he or she is just an apprentice in training. And nothing more.” The archimandrite considers himself a student studying at the feet of the old masters, even though he himself has been the teacher of a great many iconographers. His creative path provides eloquent testimony to what it means to “get on a first-name basis” with tradition.

Archimandrite Zinon

Archimandrite Zinon was born in Olviopol, a southern Ukrainian city founded by the Greeks. At an early age, he learned from his mother and grandmother to feel at home in the church. When he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Odessa, he became acquainted with icons and frescoes. The artists under whom he was working had no special training in iconography, but as it was the canonical style that most attracted the future iconographer, he decided to study it on his own without a teacher. At first he made copies of old icons, most often from reproductions.

The Pskov-Pechersk Monastery

In 1976, with the blessing of his spiritual father, Archimandrite Serafim (Tyapochkin), he was tonsured a monk, taking the monastic name Zinon. At this time he entered the Pskov-Pechersk Monastery, renowned for its iconographic tradition. The monastery’s abbot, Archimandrite Alipy (Voronov), was both an expert in and a lover of the arts who had a wonderful collection of Russian and West European art and early icons. He himself was a fine iconographer, and his icons and frescoes continue to beautify the monastery.

Even in Soviet times tourists to the area were often amazed at the contrast between the city of Pechersk,

gray and dusty like most provincial Soviet towns, and the Pskov-Pechersk Monastery, appearing as if out of nowhere like the fairytale city of Kitezh of Russian folklore. Whether it was the lawns and flowerbeds, the deep blue cupolas ornamented with stars, or the brightly decorated frescoes against a background of freshly whitewashed walls—here, everything was lovingly cared for.

The monastery, naturally, was a constant thorn in the side for Soviet ideologues who made repeated efforts to close the place on one pretext or another. But even during the worst years of Khrushchev’s anti-religion campaign, Abbot Alipy managed to keep the monastery open. For iconographers, the conditions here were close to ideal, all the more so as Abbot Alipy actively encouraged artistic creativity and the further development of iconography.

Sadly, Father Alipy passed away a year before Father Zinon entered the monastery, so the two never met. As a result, entering the monastery, Father Zinon was obliged to take possession of the wisdom of iconography on his own. Fortunately, Father Zinon benefited from the receptive atmosphere for iconography that the good abbot had created. He was immediately given a workshop and was allowed to paint for the Church.

The Patronage of Patriarch Pimen

Early on, the young iconographer’s work attracted the notice of the Church hierarchy. In 1979, Patriarch Pimen called Father Zinon to the Trinity-Saint Sergius Lavra where his talents were put to use fulfilling many orders for the patriarch. He painted the iconostasis for the crypt of the Dormition (Uspensky) Cathedral along with many individual icons. Patriarch Pimen, who was an expert in early icons, held the young artist in high regard, and in 1983 put him in charge of icon painting at Danilov Monastery.

In the 1980s and early 1990s Father Zinon also continued to work in the Pskov-Pechersk Monastery creating iconostases for the Church of the Holy Martyr Cornelius (1985), the Pokrov (Holy Protection) Cathedral, and the Church of Pechersk Saints on the Mount (1989-1991). In addition, he created icons for the iconostasis of the lower church of Pskov’s Trinity Cathedral dedicated to Saint Serafim of Sarov.

Edited excerpts reprinted with permission from Irina Yazykova, Hidden and Triumphant: The Underground Struggle to Save Russian Iconography (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2010).

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International Religious Freedom Advocacy

H. Knox Thames, Chris Seiple, and Amy Rowe

Editor’s note: The first half of this article was published in the previous issue of the East-West Church and Ministry Report 19 (Spring, 2011): 10-12.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is an important institution for advocacy in Europe and Eurasia. Encompassing North America, Europe, Russia, and the successor states emerging

from the former Soviet Union, the 56-member OSCE is the largest regional security organization in the world. Religious freedom has been an integral part of the OSCE process, which over the past 30 years has developed some of the most sophisticated commitments on religious freedom at the international level. OSCE

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All U.S. embassies have at least one foreign-service officer detailed to cover human rights and religious freedom issues. These civil servants generate the first draft of the *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom*.

participating states have repeatedly affirmed freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief as a fundamental human right.

The body originated in 1975 with the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, a politically binding agreement between NATO, Warsaw Pact, and neutral and non-aligned nations that focused on three “baskets” of issues—security matters, economic concerns, and the “human dimension.” The human dimension is OSCE parlance for human rights, and under this rubric falls religious freedom.

With the end of the Cold War and the emergence of new countries from the remains of the Soviet Union, the geographic scope of the OSCE shifted east and now reaches into Central Asia. All of the countries formerly under Communist governments have acceded to the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent OSCE agreements. Importantly, unlike with other international systems, no reservations may be taken in the OSCE system, so these new members completely accepted all previous commitments.

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is a special arm of the OSCE that concentrates solely on human rights and democracy building (<http://www.osce.org/odihr/>). Headquartered in Warsaw, Poland, ODIHR assists participating states in carrying out and consolidating their democratic systems through election monitoring, technical assistance on the drafting of laws, and convening regional meetings to discuss various human rights topics. For instance, ODIHR has held two meetings in Central Asia on religious freedom-related issues and has provided critiques of draft religion laws. ODIHR is also responsible for organizing an annual human rights review conference. The OSCE maintains field missions in Southeast Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. These OSCE missions represent an on-the-ground presence in a number of countries where religious freedom may not be fully respected.

United States Human Rights Bodies

Due to the unique history of the United States and its longstanding commitment to religious freedom, various U.S. government agencies and offices promote international religious freedom. As many early immigrants came to the United States fleeing religious persecution in Europe, the importance of protecting religious liberties was enshrined in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, guaranteeing that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

The U.S. transition from domestic protection to international promotion of religious freedom, and human rights generally, did not emerge until the 1970s and 1980s. As these new foreign policy priorities developed, because the U.S. Congress believed the State Department could more vigorously promote religious liberty, it passed the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) in 1998 (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/>). In its findings, IRFA juxtaposed the international standard guaranteeing religious freedom against the poor compliance by many countries, noting that more than one-half of the world’s population lived

under regimes that severely restricted the religious freedoms of their citizens. IRFA established religious freedom as a priority in all bilateral and multilateral talks and created new institutions, foremost of which is a special office within the State Department to monitor religious freedom worldwide, headed by the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom.

IRFA also created the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to act as a watchdog to the State Department’s handling of religious freedom concerns (<http://www.uscirf.gov>). All U.S. embassies have at least one foreign-service officer detailed to cover human rights and religious freedom issues. These civil servants generate the first draft of an annual religious freedom and human rights report. The Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and his staff prepare this *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom*. Exceeding 800 pages, the report assesses the state of religious freedom in every country in the world except the United States. All the religious freedom reports are posted on the State Department’s Web site (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010>) and are translated and posted on U.S. embassy Web sites as well.

IRFA provides a calibrated list of actions the State Department can take in response to religious freedom violations, be they mild or severe. The Act created a new designation for the worst offenders, found to be committing “particularly severe violations of religious freedom”—Country of Particular Concern (CPC) status. “Particularly severe violations” are defined as “systematic, ongoing [and] egregious,” listing examples such as torture and imprisonment. At the time of writing, current countries designated as CPC are Burma, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), Eritrea, Iran, People’s Republic of China, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan.

Established in 1976 by Congress, the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, monitors the compliance of the Helsinki Final Act and the other commitments under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). A U.S. government commission, its staff monitors all 56 member countries in North America, Europe, and Eurasia concerning their human rights and religious freedom commitments.

Nongovernmental Organizations

Religious freedom NGOs share a common nongovernmental identity that affords them several general advantages. First, they maintain a significant amount of autonomy in the strategies and methodologies they employ to advocate for religious freedom, unconstrained by many of the political and bureaucratic limitations of national or international bodies. This autonomy allows them to speak more frankly, act more quickly, and innovate more freely than can international bodies and governments. In addition, NGOs typically can more easily access and gain the trust of persecuted faith communities, especially if they are coreligionists, as persecuted groups are often suspicious of governmental agencies because of past mistreatment.

NGOs also share a commitment to religious

freedom as a fundamental human right and a deep compassion for victims of religious persecution. Many religious groups form NGOs specifically dedicated to the freedom of their faith internationally. These organizations are typically staffed by adherents to the faith and are motivated by shared religious beliefs and concern for their coreligionists around the world.

Faith-based religious freedom NGOs typically acknowledge that improved religious freedom benefits all faith communities, both their own and others', and there are many positive examples of interfaith collaboration in the field. Notably, the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act was passed in large part through the joint efforts of faith-based religious freedom NGOs lobbying the U.S. Congress. The NGOs ranged from the Religious Action Committee of Reform Judaism, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, to the National Association of Evangelicals, to the Uighur-American Association (representing the largely Muslim Uighur people in China).

Many human rights organizations are avowedly secular, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. This secular identity helps such organizations avoid skepticism about a hidden religious agenda, erecting fewer barriers to collaboration with secular entities, and allows them to work with all victims of persecution rather than those of a particular faith group. Furthermore, they have easier access to partnerships and funding from nonreligious sources, including large philanthropic foundations and governments.

Gathering and Disseminating Information

In repressive climates, where speech and press freedoms are also restricted, information about religious freedom abuses is often difficult to obtain. Many religious freedom NGOs work with on-the-ground contacts—including government officials, aid workers, and coreligionists—to obtain such information. NGOs must take steps to determine the veracity of the information they receive.

After obtaining reliable testimony, NGOs disseminate information about abuses in a number of formats: e-mail campaigns, public presentations, reports, press releases, editorials, and consultations with relevant government agencies and international bodies. Examples of NGOs that gather and disseminate information include Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Compass Direct, and Open Doors.

Generating Pressure and Influencing Policy

NGOs can also attempt to generate pressure against repressive governments in the hope of bringing about changes to policies affecting religious freedom. Examples of such NGOs include Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, World Evangelical Alliance's Religious Liberty Commission, Jubilee Campaign, Human Rights First, International League for Human Rights, and the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom.

Another aspect of influencing policy is working to make religious freedom a more prominent issue in foreign policy considerations. The passage of the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998 made significant advances toward this goal in the United States, guaranteeing religious freedom's prominent role in American foreign policy. However, many Western policymakers remain generally uninformed about religious freedom and, more basically, about

the role of religion in international affairs, a topic that is generally avoided in traditional foreign service courses. For this reason, some NGOs are working to increase the understanding of the importance of religion and religious freedom in foreign affairs. This work may take the form of journal articles, lecture series, conferences, and dialogues that highlight the importance of religious freedom in foreign policy considerations. Examples of NGOs that perform this function include the Institute on Religion and Public Policy, the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, and the Council on Faith and International Affairs.

Assisting Victims of Persecution

Some religious freedom NGOs focus their efforts on supplying aid to victims of persecution. This aid can take many forms: legal aid to assist victims in filing claims with relevant agencies and courts; material assistance to families of victims who have been imprisoned or killed; medical or mental care for a religious believer who has been tortured; religious resources, including sacred texts and teaching materials that are illegal or too expensive to obtain normally; and assisting religious refugees with documentation, referrals, sponsorship, and resettlement. Their assistance may also take more abstract forms, such as organizing moments of silence or days of prayer dedicated to those persecuted for their faith.

These activities are often viewed with suspicion or hostility by foreign governments and local communities. Traditional societies sometimes view religious minorities as traitors who have adopted a foreign culture, undermining indigenous culture and power structures. When these believers then receive aid from foreign organizations, this view is reinforced, confirming suspicions and creating resentment. Providing religious resources can be controversial, as it can jeopardize the safety of the recipients and, in some cases, violate the laws of the state. Examples of NGOs that aid victims of persecution include Christian Freedom International, Christian Solidarity International, International Christian Concern, Iranian Christians International, Physicians for Human Rights, and Voice of the Martyrs.

Mediating Religious Freedom Conflicts

Some NGOs seek to mediate conflicts between religious communities and the governments that repress them. These NGOs seek to persuade governments to protect religious freedom, and to persuade religious believers to act in ways that do not unnecessarily provoke government suspicion or trigger a reaction.

In this kind of work NGOs quietly build relationships with key leaders and create a climate of trust. This relationship allows NGOs to offer direct critiques of government actions at strategic moments, many of which are private conversations rather than public meetings. NGOs may also host nonthreatening events, such as scholarly conferences and policy forums in which non-Western scholars and practitioners subtly argue the importance of religious freedom. Such strategies give governments ownership of the concepts of religious freedom, helping them to understand its importance and implement it.

NGOs stressing conflict resolution must also work closely with religious groups, being careful not

Faith-based religious freedom NGOs typically acknowledge that improved religious freedom benefits all faith communities, both their own and others', and there are many positive examples of interfaith collaboration in the field.

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to alienate them through an inappropriately close relationship with the government. This kind of quiet work is unconventional, and thus NGOs conducting it are far less common than those described above. One example is the Institute for Global Engagement.

Developing and Promoting Rule of Law

Many countries that repress religious freedom do not have a well-developed legal system and tradition of rule of law. As a result, laws and treaties protecting religious freedom are sometimes ignored or arbitrarily interpreted in whatever way officials choose. When religious freedom violations occur, victims rarely have access to legal representation, and if they do, they cannot be guaranteed a fair trial. As a result, strengthening countries' legal systems and providing legal assistance is important to improving religious freedom in the long term as a right that is firmly upheld in law.

One common strategy is filing lawsuits on behalf of victims in international tribunals or the domestic courts of offending countries. These lawsuits provide expert legal representation to victims who might otherwise not have access. They also raise the profile of such cases, leveraging popular opinion against the government and thus indirectly applying pressure. Another strategy is to work from within to develop the legal system's capacity. Activities may include assisting in curriculum development at local law schools, providing training for lawyers and judges, or working with national lawmakers to develop religious freedom laws that are in accordance with international standards. Examples of this kind of NGO include the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and Advocates International.

Signators to Human Rights Treaties					
	European Convention on Human Rights 1950/1953*	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966/1976*	First Optional Protocol to the ICCPR (ICCPR-OPI) 1966/1976*	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) 1975	European Union Charter 2004
Former Soviet Union					
Armenia	X	X	X	X	
Azerbaijan	X	X	X	X	
Belarus		X	X	X	
Estonia	X	X	X	X	X
Georgia	X	X	X	X	
Kazakhstan		X		X	
Kyrgyzstan X	X	X	X		
Latvia	X	X	X	X	X
Lithuania	X	X	X	X	X
Moldova	X	X		X	
Russia	X	X	X	X	
Tajikistan		X	X	X	
Turkmenistan		X	X	X	
Ukraine	X	X	X	X	
Uzbekistan		X	X	X	
Central and Eastern Europe					
Albania	X	X		X	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	X	X	X	X	
Bulgaria	X	X	X	X	X
Croatia	X	X	X	X	
Czech Republic	X	X	X	X	X
Hungary	X	X	X	X	X
Macedonia	X	X	X	X	
Montenegro	X	X		X	
Poland	X	X	X	X	X
Romania	X	X	X	X	X
Serbia	X	X	X	X	
Slovakia	X	X	X	X	X
Slovenia	X	X	X	X	X

*adopted/ratified

Edited excerpts reprinted with permission from H. Knox Thames, Chris Seiple, and Amy Rowe, International Religious Freedom Advocacy: A Guide to Organizations, Law, and NGOs (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009).

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Religious Trends in Southeastern Europe

Felix Corley

The Favoring of “Traditional Faiths”

With the surge of nationalism amid the breakup of the old Yugoslavia, religious freedom in southeastern Europe has become even more hostage to the desires of governments and ruling elites to support what they regard as “traditional” faiths. Croatian authorities favor the Catholic Church, while Orthodox-majority Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania favor their national Orthodox churches and restrict the rights of minority faiths; Bosnia remains divided into areas largely dominated by one faith—Muslim, Serbian Orthodox, or Catholic.

The end of fighting in Bosnia brought about by the 1995 Dayton Agreement led to renewed attempts by governments across the region to consolidate their societies around national faiths. New religion laws enshrined differential treatment for favored faiths in Bulgaria in 2002, Kosovo in 2006, Serbia in 2006, and Romania in 2007. Many countries retain openly partisan and secretive government religious affairs offices to oversee implementation of these laws.

Although these laws often replaced harsh Communist-era religion laws and thus formally abolished Communist bans on a wide range of religious activities, they are deficient in their support of religious freedom. Many are based on a hierarchy of rights, with the dominant faith holding the greatest rights, other “traditional” faiths—usually an undefined concept—having lesser rights, and all other faiths left out in the cold.

Legal Restrictions on Minority Faiths

Religion laws enacted since 2000 have made life difficult for minority faiths. Macedonia’s 1997 law recognized five faiths—Methodists were the only Protestant denomination recognized, largely because the then president, Boris Trajkovski, was Methodist. Serbia’s 2006 religion law recognizes seven “traditional” denominations, as the government sees them—all of them Christian except for Islam and Judaism—while among Christians, only three Protestant denominations are recognized (two Lutheran and one Reformed, all representing ethnic minorities), not Baptists, Nazarenes, Adventists, or others. Thus, the only recognized faith for ethnic Serbs is the Orthodox Church. Kosovo’s 2006 law recognized “traditional” faiths, though the region’s international overseers required it to specify Muslims, Serbian Orthodox, Jews, Catholics, and Evangelical churches.

Romania’s new law recognized 18 denominations, but with few rights for smaller faiths, who would need about 22,000 members and 12 years of legally recognized existence to even apply for top-ranking status. Indeed, Romania is merely echoing the position in Slovakia, where, in 2007, the law was tightened even further to require not merely 20,000 adults, but 20,000 adult members to sign an application for a denomination to gain legal status. Those who cannot gather such numbers cannot gain legal recognition as a religion, although some may have a legal status as nongovernmental organizations. Even Slovenia,

the most westward-looking of the former Yugoslav republics, barred legal recognition of all new faiths between 1999 and 2003, a restriction fiercely opposed by the Tibetan Buddhist community, Hindus, and a number of small Protestant churches.

Restrictions on “Traditional Faiths” in Minority Settings

Ironically, some of the major victims of these restrictions have been “traditional” faiths, especially in countries with minority Orthodox groups. Under pressure from the powerful Serbian Orthodox Church, the Serbian government has restricted the rights of the Romanian patriarchate even though it is an ancient Orthodox patriarchate that has mutual recognition with the Serbian Orthodox. Serbia has also restricted the newer Macedonian and Montenegrin Orthodox churches, which are not widely recognized in the rest of the Orthodox world. In contrast, Macedonia recognizes the Macedonian Church while seeking to crush the local branch of the Serbian patriarchate. Meanwhile, the Bulgarian government has taken sides in an internal split in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

“Suspect” Minority Faiths

The denial of top-ranking legal status to smaller Protestant churches, Hare Krishna communities, Baha’is, Ahmadi Muslims, and others goes hand-in-hand with a widespread popular opinion that such faiths are “sects” and thus possibly dangerous. Adherence to them is interpreted as a betrayal of one’s cultural heritage, while denial of legal status reinforces these perceptions. School textbooks, official versions of history, and media coverage often reinforce popular suspicions and prejudices, possibly leading to a denial of rights. In Serbia and Bulgaria minority faithful have faced difficulty retaining jobs in sensitive areas, such as teaching school. When members of minority religions are in institutions, including prisons, hospitals, or the army, they find it difficult to invite their spiritual leaders to minister to them.

Such attitudes at the official and popular levels also allow religious minorities to be attacked with near impunity. Officials who dislike particular religious communities have an array of tools to use against them. Bulgaria’s prosecutors and courts have repeatedly tried to prosecute leading bishops of the Alternative Orthodox Synod as impostors, as well as running a long legal battle to strip the tiny Ahmadi Muslim community of its legal status. Meanwhile, Macedonian authorities have demolished a Serbian Orthodox monastery, claiming it was built without due permission. Serbia also has threatened to demolish a Romanian Orthodox Church, and serious physical attacks on minority places of worship and individuals have occurred in Serbia and Kosovo. More than 140 Serbian Orthodox churches in Kosovo have been destroyed or badly damaged since 1999, including a spate of attacks in 2004.

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With the surge of nationalism amid the breakup of the old Yugoslavia, religious freedom in southeastern Europe has become even more hostage to the desires of governments and ruling elites to support what they regard as “traditional” faiths.

Property Rights Infringed

In addition to attacks on individuals and property, one of the thorniest issues has related to building or extending places of worship. The denial of full legal rights to religious minorities, combined with official and popular prejudice against them, has made building or expanding facilities all but impossible in many states. In practice, Macedonia almost never allows religious minorities to build places of worship, while Bosnia's local authorities generally obstruct building places of worship other than those of the dominant local faith, whether Orthodox, Catholic, or Muslim. Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses have also suffered. Croatia has failed to return confiscated churches to the Serbian Orthodox, neither permitting the rebuilding of destroyed churches, nor protecting existing churches from attack. In Slovenia, the Muslim community has complained for many years of official foot-dragging over its attempts to build a mosque in the capital, Ljubljana. In Serbia and elsewhere religious minorities also find it hard to recover property confiscated during the Communist period.

International Protection of Religious Freedom—In Theory

All the states of the region are members of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), while several are also members of the European Union (EU), which should in theory require them to respect full religious freedom. Although these bodies have intermittently tried to press for or encourage improvement in these countries' laws and practices, local ruling elites have been adept at avoiding the changes needed to meet these commitments. When OSCE and Council of Europe experts assess new draft religion laws, for example, governments often ignore their recommendations. In an apparently successful bid to avoid close international scrutiny, religion laws have often been rushed through parliaments at awkward times of the year. Bulgaria adopted its law around Christmas 2002, Serbia adopted its 2006 law during Orthodox Holy Week,

and Romania adopted its law around Christmas 2006.

Although nowhere in the region are religious communities persecuted to the extent they are in Uzbekistan or Belarus, let alone Saudi Arabia, the continuing denial of rights is very real. Of all the intergovernmental bodies, the Council of Europe has proved to have the most teeth in promoting religious freedom, primarily because of the existence of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Through a growing number of judgments and despite a few erratic ones, a strong case law is developing to uphold rights to religious freedom.

Additional Threats to Religious Freedom

Europe is still settling down from the upheavals of the 1990s, including the ending of Communist rule, and the Yugoslav Civil War. These upheavals, coupled with the challenges of European integration and mass migration, coexist with religious freedom held hostage to nationalist insecurities and competition for adherents and property. Rights continue to be seen in communal rather than individual terms. Hope remains that a more stable future will allow religious communities to have a place in society based on their own merits rather than due to state backing or state prejudice. It also is to be hoped that individual rights will be protected regardless of the way powerful sectors of society regard minority faiths, and that atheists, secularists, and agnostics will be allowed to reject the dominant faith of their ethnic group. To that end, of necessity, undemocratic rule and growing nationalism in much of southeastern Europe will require ongoing close scrutiny of threats to religious freedom. ♦

Edited excerpts reprinted with permission of the author and Paul A. Marshall, ed., Religious Freedom in the World (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

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American Evangelical Missionaries in Romania: Overcoming Ignorance and Ethnocentrism

Andrew LaBreche

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Overcoming Ethnocentrism and Differing Values

In order for Americans to overcome their ethnocentrism, it is crucial for them to recognize the strong contrast between their preference for direct communication and the Romanian preference for indirect communication. Because Romanians are very adept at indirect communication, they tend to "read into" what is said, thereby deciphering what the speaker is "really saying." When they do this with "straight-talking" Americans, they often miss the mark by assuming something was said that was not intended. From the American perspective, the

indirect allusions and inferences, if caught, are seen as deceptive at best and dishonest at worst.

Obviously, lack of fluency in the Romanian language is also a huge problem for some American missionaries. It is unacceptable for a missionary in a country almost seven years to report only a 10 percent comprehension of sermons, and another in a country eight years with only a 40 percent comprehension level.

The American ideal of social equality is another major source of conflict. Although varying levels of respect and deference exercised by Romanians "above" and "below" them grate on American egalitarian sensibilities, American missionaries

Hope remains that a more stable future will allow religious communities to have a place in society based on their own merits rather than due to state backing or state prejudice.

must concede that the existence of high context cultures is not necessarily evil. Democracy and social equality are not to be found in the Bible. If practicing some formality in addressing people of higher social classes promotes the cause of the gospel, is that such a huge price to pay?

A practical way for Americans to implement the Romanian value of formality would be first to learn the language and to use it properly, using formal pronouns when needed, as well as formal titles for people who possess them. In meeting new people, the Romanian equivalent of “hi” is inappropriate. Especially when first meeting someone, formal verb forms and pronouns and formal titles are best. The American tendency to hug, shake hands vigorously, and slap people on the back also can grate on Romanian nerves. Americans enter Romania with an ample portion of “social credit,” but they often squander it quickly with their informality.

Trust and Suspicion

Surveys indicated lack of trust or suspicion was also a common underlying cause of conflict. Americans as a whole are a very trusting people, whereas, in contrast, Romanians are a very suspicious people. Much of this difference undoubtedly has to do with very different historical contexts. For Romanians, foreigners who historically have been the oppressors are typically regarded with suspicion. Being cautious of others is not necessarily a negative trait, especially if naivety is the alternative. It is also clear, however, that Romanian Evangelicals need help in this area, and that suspicion of others is not something Americans need adopt—perhaps more cautious at times, but not suspicious.

In Romania lack of trust is a very serious problem. One European Values Study ranked Romania last (31st out of 31 European states) in level of trust (Tom van Schak, “Social Capital in the European Values Study Surveys,” 27 September 2002, 19; <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/22/2381883.pdf>). In another survey Romania ranked 13th most cynical out of 47 cultures studied. In contrast, the United States ranked the 46th least cynical out of 47 cultures studied, with only Norway being less cynical. (Michael Harris Bond *et al.*, “Culture-Level Dimensions of Social Axioms and Their Correlatives across 41 Countries,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 35 [September 2004], 563.) This lack of trust among Romanians has important spiritual ramifications. Romanian Evangelicals not only often distrust church leaders, they also, in my opinion, distrust God Himself, which feeds a Romanian proclivity toward fatalism.

Coping with Change and the Pace of Change

Americans value change as a means to progress and a better future. Romanians, on the other hand, are much less future-oriented and place much less emphasis upon planning and organization. It is very difficult for Romanians to plan for the future and to set goals. For the sake of both parties, the issue of expectations needs to be addressed. American evangelical missionaries, at the very

least, need to adjust their expectations of the degree and speed in which change can and should take place in Romania.

Miscommunication

Honesty is a very important value for both parties yet, surprisingly, both consider the other to be dishonest. The problem in this case appears to be primarily an issue of misinterpreted communications. Americans interpret the indirect style of Romanian communication as deceitfulness, whereas Romanians tend to read what they want to hear into what Americans are saying. Then when what Romanians “heard” does not come to pass, having heard a promise rather than a suggestion, they accuse Americans of not keeping their word.

Weighing the Value of Possessions and People

Because of contrasting cultural norms, Americans and Romanians hold different views of private property. In Romania, for example, borrowing a tool indefinitely is not stealing. The length of the loan is simply indefinite. The Romanian assumption is that the lender will ask for it back when it is needed. What difference does it make who is storing the item in their garage if neither is using it? However, because of the strong American attachment to private property, not returning the tool is thought to be dishonest, if not outright theft. For American evangelical missionaries the issue of biblical stewardship can come into play. The problem is that Americans can confuse taking care of property entrusted to them by God with jealously holding on to material possessions and placing greater value on them than on relationships with people. Ultimately treasures are supposed to be in heaven, not hanging on a nail in a garage.

Valuing Hospitality

Hospitality is one value that is extremely important to Romanians but very unimportant to many Americans working in Romania. Almost 20 percent of American respondents did not even consider “lacking in hospitality” as a sin. American evangelical missionaries must make a conscious decision to “practice hospitality,” following the biblical injunction in Romans. Too often missionaries tend to see their homes as an oasis where they can close the doors and “get away” from nationals. Understandably, everyone needs periodic breaks from ministry, but the home-as-oasis mentality signals to Romanians that at best hospitality is not important to Americans, and at worst, Americans do not really care for the people with whom they are working.

Valuing Reverence

Another specific value that American evangelical missionaries need to respect is the high value Romanians place on reverence in church. In order not to offend, American missionaries need to regain a greater sense of reserve and respect in worship. American informality has little place in a high context culture like Romania in general, let alone in church. For the sake of the gospel, greater decorum and formality is a small price to pay. Included are such practical matters as dress, with

Romania ranked 13th most cynical out of 47 cultures studied. In contrast, the United States ranked the 46th least cynical.

(continued on page 14)

American Evangelical Missionaries in Romania *(continued from page 13)*

Americans, for example, being willing to return to the past American custom of wearing “Sunday best.” As a matter of respect, Americans should also refrain from humor in the pulpit and should keep their children under control in church.

Valuing Humility

One final very important Romanian value is humility, which American evangelical missionaries need to take into account. The simple fact that Romanian Evangelicals cited “arrogance” and “superior attitude” as the second most common cause of conflict with American missionaries clearly reveals a significant problem to be addressed. All missionaries would agree that humility is an important value for Christians, but it does seem to be a particularly difficult spiritual quality for Americans. The response should be to acknowledge the sin of pride, become a learner, empathize, and as the Bible clearly commands, “consider others better than yourself.”

Confrontation Versus Third-Party Mediation

As opposed to the direct confrontational approach of Americans, conflict is dealt with in the Romanian context primarily through third-party mediation. On one occasion I was explaining this Romanian cultural pattern to a fellow American evangelical missionary. Shortly into the conversation the missionary interrupted me and with some disgust said, “Why don’t they just read the Bible? The Bible is very clear we are to go to our brother alone!” (Matthew 18). This American seemed totally unaware of the many examples of third party mediation in Scripture: The interaction of David and Abigail (1 Samuel 25), Jacob’s pacification of Esau (Genesis 32), Esther’s intervention, the high priest’s role as mediator, and, of course, Christ as mediator between God and His fallen creation. Nathan’s approach to David regarding his sin (2 Samuel 12), although not third-party mediation, is a very good example of indirect confrontation.

This ethnocentric tendency to interpret even the Bible’s “culture” through American eyes obviously

can have serious missiological consequences. The danger is that missionaries will judge behavior different from their own not only as improper but also, as unbiblical. Not only can such an approach harm relationships, but it adds to the difficulty of conflict resolution when one party not only considers the other wrong, but also less spiritually mature.

Just as direct confrontation in American culture has its shortcomings, so too, mediation can have its pitfalls. In Romania the ideal of third-party mediation can degenerate to gossip and backbiting as offended parties seek out mediators. Neither direct nor indirect communication is foolproof. They both have their place, depending upon the situation.

Coupling Bible Knowledge and People Skills

American evangelical missionaries working in Romania must be competent in many fields besides biblical knowledge. An effective missionary must have at least practical competence in basic cultural anthropology, cross-cultural communication, and cross-cultural psychology. To be effective, missionaries do not have to be professional cultural anthropologists and psychologists, but they do have the responsibility to be the best at whatever God has called them to be. Social, interpersonal skills are very important ingredients in effective missionary work because knowledge is simply not enough. If a missionary couple knows the Bible from cover to cover but is so deficient in social skills that no one ever wants to be near them to hear the message, what good is that? ♦

Edited excerpts published with permission from Andrew LaBreche, “Ethnocentrism. U.S.-American Evangelical Missionaries in Romania: Qualitative Missiological Research into Representative Cross-Cultural Value Based Conflicts,” Ph.D. dissertation, Evangelical Theological Faculty of Leuven, Belgium, 2007.

Andrew LaBreche is an American missionary who has served with Greater Europe Mission in Romania since 1997.

As opposed to the direct confrontational approach of Americans, conflict is dealt with in the Romanian context primarily through third-party mediation.

Book Review

Raber, Mary and Peter F. Penner, eds. *History and Mission in Europe: Continuing the Conversation*. Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld Verlag, 2011. Reviewed by Michael Bourdeaux.

Only modestly—on the back cover—does this fine book proclaim itself as a *festschrift* produced in honor of the outstanding Mennonite scholar and activist, Walter Sawatsky. At least he deserves a full-page color photo, rather than the four unobtrusive black and white ones set out in a strip along the middle of the back cover.

That grouse stated, one is able to welcome this book not only as a deserved tribute, but also as a many-sided work of interest to anyone who follows the destiny of Protestants in the former Communist countries of Europe. Walter Sawatsky is a Canadian Mennonite, well known to readers of this journal, but his interests have always spread far beyond the confines of his own denomination. Walter, it is

stated (p. 12), visited the USSR 22 times before its collapse. For three years in the early 1970s he was my colleague at Keston College, Kent, after his secondment there by the Mennonite Central Committee. I was its founder and director, and this invitation to review *History and Mission in Europe* gives me the opportunity to add my tribute to a cool, calm colleague. Walter’s personal knowledge and impeccable judgment, in an atmosphere often riven by conflict of the KGB’s making, was an example to us all.

The 21 chapters go well beyond strictly Mennonite perspectives and discuss many practical as well as theoretical issues. The contributors include several who are not Mennonites, though

the editors are. Dr. Mark R. Elliott, editor of this journal, writes a telling article on the uncoordinated burgeoning of Protestant theological educational institutions after 60 years of total suppression in the USSR (Ch. 12). He provides wise counsel of how this training needs to be less diffuse, less exclusive, and more ready to abandon theory in favor of adapting “to the unique complexities of the post-Soviet environment” (p. 235).

One practical and selfless scheme in which Walter Sawatsky was involved as project coordinator was the production over nine years of a Russian translation of William Barclay’s 15 volumes of New Testament Bible commentaries. This was an immense team effort and the story is movingly told by one of the editors, Mary Raber (Ch. 16). How did the choice fall on Barclay? How was it practically coordinated? How was a text produced for an Anglo-Saxon reader culturally transformed into one whose allusions and quotes of poetic sources would be comprehensible to a Soviet reader? The answers are all here. During the long years of production the Soviet Union was transformed from a closed to an open society (at least temporarily), and soon after its completion in 1986 an official message came through from Moscow in February 1987, “Approval granted, send all commentaries.” There were some grumbles at the text from more conservative-minded Russian believers, but here was something which had cost countless hours of painstaking work and financial sacrifice in the West and bridged the immense gap until Russians could produce their own systematic commentaries.

How refreshing it is to read contributions by young Russians and Ukrainians. Here, though, we come across a problem. Three of the chapters are in Russian, two in German, albeit prefaced by adequate summaries. One of the contributions, “History of the Baptist-Initsiativnik Movement” (Ch. 7), is of great interest, but is in Russian only, thus inevitably cutting off the detail of its insights from many readers of the book. Tatiana

Nikolskaia (St. Petersburg) has gained access to state archives and retrieved documentation about the origins of the devastating schism among Russian Baptists which originated in the early 1960s and persists to this day. She uses these sources to tell a moving story of resistance to persecution and of the indomitability of human nature. Yet one curious fact emerges. Ms. Nikolskaia mentions Walter Sawatsky’s comprehensive book of 1981 on Russian Baptists, but does not quote it. Indeed, her sole sources appear to be the state archives of the Russian Federation. The story she tells—with the excitement of uncovering something new—was first recounted in my own book, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, published in 1969. She has no knowledge of the immense wealth of the Keston Archive, now housed at Baylor University, Texas, which tells the story, but with a hundred times more detail. One waits for the day when Russians will know of the sources often richly existent in the West and Western scholars will have unrestricted access to Soviet archives.

The text is well edited, but nestling among the many interesting chapters of rich interest there are a few contentious points. For example, William Yoder’s acerbic piece, “Correct Losers—but the Wrong Winners” (Ch. 17), focuses on the dissolution of East Germany. Perhaps one who lives in Belarus and commutes weekly to Moscow might be expected to hold unconventional opinions, but I leave it to others to agree—or disagree—with his eulogy of President Alexander Lukashenko, the dictator of Minsk, for his social policies supporting his country’s poorest (p. 340). However, I cannot let pass his incidental remark criticizing the unbalanced reporting of Forum 18, a news service which emphatically does not inherit a mandate from “Britain’s erstwhile Keston College.”

Every reader of this journal would be stimulated and enriched by reading this book. Could we have a second edition with the entire text in English? ♦

Canon Dr. Michael Bourdeaux is the founder and president of Keston Institute, Oxford.

Correction

For the chart, “Missionaries to and from Selected Former Soviet Republics and Central and Eastern Europe: 2010,” in the *East-West Church and*

Ministry Report 19 (Spring 2011), 14, the figures for Bosnia-Herzegovina should read 270 missionaries sent and 610 missionaries received.

Book Review (continued from page 16)

Hopefully, in future works he will demonstrate a more gracious attitude toward other writers while energetically critiquing their writing. He shows little respect for more experienced authors who had fewer educational opportunities. It is possible to provide rigorous criticism of research without calling authors’ professional training and competence into question. Puzynin’s comments create the impression that he alone has adequately analyzed his topic. He is a talented scholar who will make significant contributions—if he is able

to serve in a civil and collegial manner with fellow writers.

The bottom line? Buy the book, evaluate his arguments, and welcome the gradual growth of scholarship on the history of Christianity in Slavic lands. ♦

Matthew Miller is assistant professor of history at Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minnesota. From 2005 to 2008 he taught church history and biblical studies at the Russian-American Christian University in Moscow.

Book Review

Puzynin, Andrey P. *The Tradition of the Gospel Christians: A Study of Their Identity and Theology during the Russian, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Periods*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2011. Reviewed by Matthew Miller.

Andrey P. Puzynin serves as adjunct lecturer of Nyack College/Alliance Theological Seminary at its extension site in Kyiv, Ukraine. This book, which draws on his University of Wales doctoral dissertation, analyzes shifts in the self-understanding and doctrinal positions of the Gospel Christian movement. This is a very significant book, since few scholarly works systematically explore the history of Russia's Evangelical Christians, as they are more frequently identified. (In 1944, the Union of Evangelical Christians merged with the Russian Baptist Union to form the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.) Since the end of the Soviet Union many believers have chosen to identify with the Evangelical Christian heritage rather than with the organization formed in the 1940s.

Puzynin breaks down his comprehensive study of the movement into five periods, each marked by a key leader: Lord Radstock, Vasily Aleksandrovich Pashkov, Ivan Sergeevich Prokhanov (two periods), and Aleksander Vasilevich Karev. For each period Puzynin highlights the formative experiences, doctrinal trends, and dominant themes of self-identification. One theme that runs through the book is how the identity of Gospel Christians has been shaped by contemporary geopolitical forces. For the first period (1873-1878) Puzynin describes the St. Petersburg ministry of Radstock, his Keswick holiness and premillennial beliefs, and Radstock's hope for the revival of the Russian Orthodox Church. During the second period (1878-1902) Pashkov expanded the ministry of his English mentor, developed restorationist views, and built stronger connections with Western Protestants

after his exile from Russia in 1884. After the establishment of limited religious freedom in 1905 Prokhanov emerged as a leader and continued until he left Russia in 1928. He led ventures in publishing and education, organized a Russian branch of the ecumenical Evangelical Alliance, championed adult baptism, and expressed an optimistic postmillennial eschatology. After 1944, Karev, a Gospel Christian, provided leadership for the merged denomination. He operated under limitations enforced by the Soviet regime and did not openly challenge the discrimination and persecution faced by believers in the USSR. Under Karev dispensational premillennialism grew in influence and overshadowed the postmillennialism expressed by Prokhanov. Denominational leaders began to exert strict controls over local congregations.

This reviewer welcomes the publication of a volume which addresses so many significant questions. Puzynin provides a critical evaluation of many valuable sources; footnotes and an extensive bibliography point readers to primary works and secondary literature. The author's evaluations of recent research will doubtlessly produce the most discussion among readers. Puzynin rigorously criticizes the recent historical and theological writings of Russian and Ukrainian writers such as Marina S. Karetnikova, Sergei V. Sannikov, and Mikhail N. Cherenkov.

This book raises a number of concerns, which can be categorized as identification and interaction. First, the author does not clearly define the Gospel Christian movement and seems to assume that readers have a prior understanding of the basic historical narrative. He also does not adequately explain the current status (location, membership, leadership) of Gospel Christian churches today. He mentions that several groups use the label, but he briefly focuses on only one current leader. When discussing major events in the life of the movement, he pays little attention to the evangelistic growth of the 1920s or the repression of the 1930s—these broader developments deeply influenced the self-understanding of the group. Also, he provides little context on developments in society or the Russian Orthodox Church. He mentions the Russian YMCA and the Living Church movement more than once—but his footnotes do not direct the reader to the most significant secondary literature. Finally, Puzynin does not clearly explain or justify his methods of historical and theological interpretation. He discusses post-liberal theology as a way to develop a better understanding of Gospel Christians, but he does not adequately define or evaluate this recent American movement.

Second, a more significant concern is Puzynin's interaction with other scholars.

Puzynin shows little respect for more experienced authors who had fewer educational opportunities. It is possible to provide rigorous criticism of research without calling authors' professional training and competence into question.

The quarterly *East-West Church & Ministry Report* examines all aspects of church life and mission outreach in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe as a service to both church and academia. Letters to the editor are welcomed. Annual subscription rates are \$49.95 (individuals, U.S. and Canada); \$59.95 (individuals, international); \$53.95 (libraries, U.S. and Canada); \$63.95 (libraries, international); and \$22.95 (e-mail). Reprint and photocopy policy: 1) Quantity photocopies or reprints of up to three articles from a single issue may be distributed or reprinted at no charge. 2) Written permission is to be secured for each distribution or reprinting. 3) The following statement is to be carried on each photocopied article reproduced and each article reprinted: Reproduced (or Reprinted) with permission of the *EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT*. Currently indexed by American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies (ABSEES), OCLC Public Affairs Information Service (formerly PAIS), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Zeller Dietrich (formerly Zeller Verlag), and Christian Periodicals Index.



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