Missionaries of Faith and Culture: Evangelical Encounters in Ukraine

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Ukraine was called the “Bible Belt” of the former Soviet Union. Before the collapse of the USSR, over half of the 1.5 million officially acknowledged Baptists and Pentecostals lived in Soviet Ukraine.1 The watershed arrival of global Christianity to formerly sequestered communities of evangelical believers in Ukraine followed quickly after the fall of the Soviet Union. This encounter has created a point of intersection that blends different religious traditions in novel ways. Local faith-based communities in Ukraine have become sites of cultural innovation as members take certain cultural values born of another historical experience and add them, often in a modified form, to their own cultural repertoire. The qualitatively new communities that are emerging are at once highly local and transnational in orientation. While still advocating a separation from the “world,” evangelicals in Ukraine are increasingly tied to a global community of believers as they attempt to articulate and reproduce new notions of morality and offer new sources of self-definition and belonging.

State policies, however, continue to play a prominent role in shaping the contours of this encounter and in defining the parameters of each religious field. This article explores why Ukraine exhibits a greater degree of religious pluralism than Russia and Belarus and illustrates the social and cultural consequences of these more permissive policies in terms of the access foreign missionaries have to Ukrainian believers. Using evangelical communities in Ukraine as a lens, I show how the different legacies of religiosity handed down from the past actually serve to create cultural and political differences in the present.

This article is based on oral histories of evangelical communal life in Kharkiv, Ukraine, recorded from 1999 to 2003 among seventy-two Baptist and Pentecostal believers, many of whom were able to compare evangelical practice under the Soviet regime with what it has become since the late 1980s. It also draws on seven months of ethnographic research conducted in evangelical communities in Kharkiv from 2000 to 2002. Given the So-

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viet and post-Soviet cultural contexts, I include Baptist, Pentecostal, and Charismatic communities under the umbrella term of evangelical. I should state from the outset that I am not an evangelical, nor have I ever been a missionary. Yet, in the course of this research I attended a multitude of services and rituals and participated as a visitor in a number of church-sponsored activities at a broad spectrum of evangelical churches. Some of these communities were established prior to the revolution of 1917 thanks to local initiative; others were literally created before my eyes thanks in large part to financing and other resources provided by American missionary organizations.

Kharkiv oblast remains one of the most secular oblasts in Ukraine, as evidenced by the fact that less than 50 percent of the population claims to believe in God, compared to an average of 63 percent nationwide and 90 percent in each of the seven western oblasts (L'viv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Rivna, Zakarpattia, Volynia, Chernivtsi). Less than 5 percent of the population in Kharkiv oblast attends religious services weekly. This oblast, together with neighboring Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, has only 8 percent of the total number of religious communities but 21 percent of the population. The pronounced secularism of the region and the paucity of religious institutions present particular challenges for those engaged in "church planting" and the search for new converts. Numerous scholars have documented that conversion rates are far higher among individuals who are reaffiliating, that is to say, switching from one denomination to another, than they are among those abandoning an atheist worldview to become believers. In the same vein, professing evangelical belief, certainly during the Soviet period, but even today, remains stigmatized. Combined, these factors in urban eastern Ukraine create a cultural context rich in impediments for missionaries.

Religious Renaissance

Religion provides individuals and social groups with a web of ideas, beliefs, and behaviors that can serve as the basis for a social contract and moral code. Many individuals in the former Soviet Union have argued that the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of communism as a viable worldview and a source of individual and collective meaning has simply

2. In spite of some doctrinal differences, these denominations share a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible and in the necessity of a "born again" experience in which one confesses one's sins and accepts Christ in order to receive eternal salvation. Congregational life includes extensive lay participation and the practice of nonmediated religious rituals. Pentecostals, in contrast to Baptists, draw on a theology of Pentecost and a belief in spiritual gifts, yielding an experiential knowledge of God through baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by glossolalia or speaking in tongues. Building on the Pentecostal tradition, the term charismatic refers to an experiential piety and a particular mode of worship that really only emerged in Ukraine in the 1990s.


been replaced by a religious-based orientation to self and society.\textsuperscript{5} Indeed, the disorientation prompted by sweeping social change as the Soviet system began to fall apart caused some to embrace religion as an anti-Soviet alternative, as a new moral compass to guide their ideas and behavior amidst social confusion and economic collapse.\textsuperscript{6} Yet, this is only a partial explanation.

Once dismissed by the "militantly godless" as "the opium of the people," religion is now posited as a fundamental and vital part of national culture. The millennium commemorations in 1988 of the 1,000-year anniversary of Christianity in Kievan-Rus' and the popular interest it generated in religion prompted a sea change in religious policy.\textsuperscript{7}

In October 1990 one of the primary goals of Soviet ideology, to establish a scientific atheistic worldview, was abandoned when the Supreme Soviet adopted legislation that guaranteed freedom of conscience and a legal status for all religious communities. Once claims to a nation's right to self-determination became a viable strategy for political and cultural elites to successfully challenge Soviet hegemony, the momentum for change in religious policy accelerated as national and religious resurgence occurred conterminously. With less fear of state retribution, some clergy and religious institutions used their moral authority to overtly lend support to nationalist movements as oppositional forces to Soviet rule.\textsuperscript{8}

5. The parallels between the two worldviews contributed to the accessibility of religious teachings on a broad scale and facilitated the substitution. The philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev was one of the first to note the similarities between Orthodox religious doctrine, communist ideology, and Marxism more generally. He argued that the Bolsheviks adroitly exploited aspects of Orthodox belief and practice to make their secular ideology more palatable to a religious people, thereby ensuring their conversion to communism. Nikolai Berdiaev, The Origins of Russian Communism (Ann Arbor, 1960). Keith Ward notes that ideologically communism promised a "bright future" and a means of attaining it via a proletarian revolution and a redesign of political and economic relations, whereas religion offers eternal salvation, a blissful state of equality and freedom from need, in the afterlife. See Keith Ward, Religion and Community (Oxford, 2000). I would add that the Soviet evocation of impending nuclear war and catastrophic human suffering brought on by an evil (American) force parallels Christian eschatological thinking, its assertion of the existence of Satanic forces, and a belief in the Second Coming of Christ, or Rapture, when all believers will experience salvation.


7. See especially Michael Bourdeaux, "Glasnost and the Gospel: The Emergence of Religious Pluralism," in Michael Bourdeaux, ed., The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia (Armonk, N.Y., 1995), for a discussion of the impact of the millennium celebrations on the growth of religious participation. For Ukrainians, the fact that the anniversary was initially commemorated in Moscow, with only subsequent "regional" commemorations in Kiev, underlined the colonial nature of the relationship of Ukrainians, their language, culture, and church, to Russians and simultaneously advanced religious and nationalist resurgence. See Catherine Wanner, Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine (University Park, 1998), esp. 140–69.

8. Much has been written about the role of religion in enhancing claims to national distinctiveness and about how nationalist movements helped to bring an end to seventy-four years of Soviet rule. A review of this enormous literature is beyond the scope of this article. It is key to note, however, that Protestants and other religious groups that are transnational and "nontraditional" rarely lent active support to nationalist political agendas.
The distinctiveness of Ukraine's religious tradition, its origins in Kievan Rus' and the cohabitation of Orthodox and Greek-Catholic churches, was used to distinguish its culture and historical experience from Russia and to further justify the political separation of the two nations. Long repressed and outlawed in the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (Uniate) positioned themselves, much as the Ukrainian diaspora had, as an anti-Soviet cornerstone of Ukrainian national identity. Of course, the Russian Orthodox Church also championed its fundamental role in broadly defining identity and shaping Great Russian civilization, an argument used to support the continued political and religious unification of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. This fusion of religion and nationality took on new relevance when it could be mobilized to force political change to move in a particular direction.

With the fall of the USSR, the trajectories of Orthodoxy in Ukraine and Russia diverged significantly, and this is the first of three key factors that explain why the religious landscapes in Russia and Ukraine have developed differently. The institutional structure of Orthodox churches mirrors the ideal of nation-state with each people ideally constituting a single ethnoreligious community. In Ukraine the political struggles after independence to create a single Ukrainian Orthodox Church to buttress the nascent state and unify the Ukrainian nation ultimately fostered competition and conflicts over property and power and significantly compromised the moral leadership of the clergy. The sustained efforts of intellectuals, dissidents, politicians, and diaspora leaders failed to unite the three Orthodox churches in Ukraine: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kiev Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate. This failure, combined with the Russian Orthodox Church's history of complicity with the Soviet state, tarnished the reputation of Orthodoxy in general and


Other studies note the importance of religious participation for creating and maintaining a Ukrainian diaspora that is politically influential on issues relating to Ukraine. See Myron B. Kuropas's study of immigrant communities in the United States, The Ukrainian Americans: Roots and Aspirations, 1884–1954 (Toronto, 1991), and Lubomyr Y. Luciuk, Searching for Place: Ukrainian Displaced Persons, Canada, and the Migration of Memory (Toronto, 2000).


brought an end to the state-backed monopoly status of the Orthodox faith in Ukraine.

This political bickering indirectly contributed to making Ukraine a model of religious pluralism among formerly socialist societies. When a single church cannot dominate and influence political policy, as it can in Russia and Belarus, a greater degree of religious freedom emerges. This religious pluralism, combined with a nominal commitment to Orthodoxy among large sectors of the population, has made Ukraine one of the most active and competitive “religious marketplaces” in Eurasia. Indeed, José Casanova claims that, “of all European societies, Ukraine is the one most likely to approximate the American model,” which he characterizes as “a free, and highly pluralistic indeed almost boundless religious market.”

Needless to say, this flourishing of religious communities in Ukraine has tremendous implications for the development and strengthening of civil society.

A second factor that distinguishes Ukraine from Russia is that Ukraine has particularly deep religious traditions and religious participation in a variety of faiths has always been exceptionally high. During the Soviet period, two-thirds of the Orthodox churches were located in Ukraine. Even today the presence of Orthodox churches in Ukraine remains disproportionately high when compared to Russia. Although the population of Ukraine is one-third that of Russia, there are currently more Orthodox churches in Ukraine than there are in Russia. Should the Orthodox churches in Ukraine unite and emerge from under the canonical jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church would become the largest Orthodox church in the world. There are also more Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, and communities falling under the rubric of “New Religious Movements” in Ukraine than in Russia. Only the number of Islamic and Buddhist communities in Russia exceeds those in Ukraine.

Vasyl Markus has written, “Ukraine must be viewed as a modern secular state, in whose formation the religious factor historically played a significant role and where even now, in the postcommunist environment, religion cannot be underestimated.” Indeed, during the imperial period

religion was a key factor defining a person’s identity and delineating community membership. This was particularly true in the western borderland of Ukraine where the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires met and where different religions fused with nationality for mutually reinforcing effect. The Soviet regime never extinguished either the inherited cultural tradition of religiosity or the use of religious affiliation as a marker among Ukrainians and between Ukrainians and others, despite impressive efforts to do so. Instead, this cultural tradition provides the groundwork that has allowed missionaries from many national backgrounds to help recreate robust religious-based communities since 1991.

The secularism of the present is challenged by a recognition of the importance of religion in the past and by an embrace of cultural traditions rooted in religion as signifiers of group and individual identity. As an ever-widening spectrum of denominations openly competes for members, religious life in Ukraine resumes its vitality. Over 1,000 new religious communities currently register annually in Ukraine. The most significant growth is and will continue to be in the southeast, which has three times fewer communities than the average for the country as a whole. The number of Protestant churches registered in this region already almost equals the number of Orthodox.

The difference in the degree to which religious authorities are located abroad is the third factor that distinguishes the religious landscape in Ukraine from Russia. Ukrainian government and clerical leaders have to reckon with the fact that not only do the nontraditional religions, such as Baptists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah’s Witnesses, have transnational connections, so do the so-called traditional ones. In 2003, the Russian Orthodox Church still controlled 10,040 of the 14,346 Orthodox congregations in Ukraine, and the Vatican is the spiritual authority for the approximately five million Greek-Catholics in Ukraine who have 3,334 parishes.

The Soviet regime sought to eradicat religious practice with antireligious campaigns so as to erase religious identities, especially those aligned with national identities. This failed effort was even less successful in Ukraine, where religion became not only a source of solace but a politicized form of resistance as well. As Ukrainian and Russian government leaders make religious policy now, they have to reckon with these historical legacies. This explains in part the different positions the Russian and Ukrainian states have taken toward foreign missionaries.

16. In addition to the Stalinist policies of the 1930s, Nikita Khrushchev’s antireligious campaign (1959–64), symbolized by the infamous dictum “We will see the last religious believer!” disproportionately affected Ukraine. In 1958, 54 percent of all registered religious communities were located in Soviet Ukraine; during this campaign, 43 percent of them were closed down. Nathaniel Davis, “The Number of Orthodox Churches Before and After the Khrushchev Antireligious Drive,” Slavic Review 50, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 612–20. Also see John Anderson, Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States (Cambridge, Eng., 1994).


Religious (In)Tolerance

Numerous recent studies of freedom of conscience and religious tolerance have come to the same conclusion: with the exception of the Baltics, Ukraine consistently ranks highest among former Soviet republics, and significantly above Russia and Belarus. \(^{19}\) Since the fall of the Soviet Union, policies regulating local religious organizations and the flow of missionaries and the myriad forms of financial, material, and logistical support they offer have evolved very differently in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Legally, Ukraine offers far more freedoms to nontraditional religious communities and foreign religious organizations and this, in turn, has generated greater religious diversity in Ukraine.

In 1997, by a vote of 358 to 6, Russia’s Parliament passed a bill establishing two categories of religious institutions, traditional and nontraditional, in contradiction to the Russian Constitution that states that all religions are equal under the law. \(^{20}\) Traditional religious communities, legally referred to as “religious organizations,” are defined as those with an established presence in Russia of fifteen or more years and include Orthodoxy, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism. This special status allows religious organizations and their individual centers to legally act as a corporate body, own property and commercial enterprises, run radio and television stations, distribute religious literature, conduct services in alternative locations (such as hospitals and prisons), and receive tax exemptions.

Although Catholic, Baptist, and breakaway Russian Orthodox denominations have been in Russia longer than fifteen years, they were classified as “religious groups,” denied the above-mentioned privileges, and subjected to cumbersome annual registration procedures. Registration, an erratic and time-consuming bureaucratic exercise, becomes a means to

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20. Russian Federal Law, “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations,” no. 125-82 (9/26/1997). For an assessment of this law and its relation to the Russian Constitution, see Emory International Law Review 12, no. 1 (Winter 1998), which is entirely dedicated to analyzing the legal ramifications of this law for various religious denominations. In this issue, see especially T. Jeremy Gunn, “Caesar’s Sword: The 1997 Law of the Russian Federation on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations,” 98–99. The aim of the law was to restrict “totalitarian sects” and “dangerous religious cults.” In practice, however, the law discriminates against less-established religious groups, especially Protestant and para-Christian denominations, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons, by making it difficult for them to establish institutional bases.
systematically disempower targeted denominations.\textsuperscript{21} Infringements on religious liberty are compounded by the fact that almost half of the regional authorities have passed legislation that is even harsher toward "foreign sects."

In November 2002 Belarus implemented legislation that is even more restrictive.\textsuperscript{22} It obliges all religious organizations to reregister by 2004 and criminalizes unregistered religious activity. Any group without the status of "religious association" has all its religious literature subject to censorship, is not allowed to invite foreigners or have them lead religious organizations, and, the harshest restriction of all, is not allowed to engage in any publishing or educational activities. In order to attain the status of "religious association," a group must fulfill three requirements: it must have at least ten registered communities; each one must have at least twenty adult members; and one of these ten communities must have been registered as early as 1982. In 2002 there were 2,830 registered religious organizations in Belarus, of which 895 were evangelical Protestant.\textsuperscript{23} All minority faiths, including Pentecostals, the second most numerous denomination in terms of number of communities, denounced this bill as repressive.\textsuperscript{24} Of course, electronic media, including the internet, allow missionaries to penetrate places where they are not welcome. State institutions in Russia and Belarus that seek to limit evangelical proselytizing will be increasingly forced to monitor multiple spheres and their efforts are likely to produce ever-diminishing results.

There is no equivalent legislation in Ukraine sharply restricting the activities of certain denominations. In 2002 there were no reports of non-native religious organizations having difficulties obtaining visas for foreign religious workers or registering with state authorities.\textsuperscript{25} Writing from a missionary perspective, Howard Biddulph asserts,

The Kuchma presidency has followed a fairly consistent policy of egalitarian treatment of the four traditional churches [the three Orthodox

Churches and the Greek-Catholic Church (Uniate) since 1995, seeking to reduce or resolve conflicts and to promote mutual tolerance. It has also taken a full toleration position toward the overwhelming majority of nontraditional faiths, including NRM s [New Religious Movements]. Officials of the State Committee for Religious Affairs, who administer religious policy and most of the judiciary, are the most visible supporters of that relatively full-toleration perspective.26

Violations of freedom of conscience in Ukraine do occur, of course. Local authorities sometimes interfere in the workings of local religious institutions, and the national law guaranteeing religious freedom may be inconsistently implemented. In Russia and Belarus, however, the problem is the law itself because it allows the state to selectively restrict certain religious organizations. This is a critical difference.

Yet Ukrainian government and cultural leaders remain concerned over two issues of religious life in Ukraine. First, the splintering of the Orthodox Church into various denominations hampers nation building and impedes the recognition of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church by the Constantinople-based universal Orthodox Patriarch.27 The second concern, the focus of the rest of this article, is the growth of nontraditional religious groups, meaning neither Orthodox nor Greek-Catholic. The growing presence of foreign missionaries in Ukraine buttressing these new religious institutions strains the ideal of Ukrainians as a unified ethnoreligious people and complicates the process of nation building. In 1999 alone, more than 2,600 foreign representatives from a wide spectrum of religious denominations visited Ukraine.28 In 2001, 463 long-term evangelical missionaries were working in Ukraine, and nearly 350 of them were American.29 Notably, some 900 Ukrainians served as missionaries in 2001, over one-third of them in Russia. The flourishing of these religious groups creates local communities with transnational ties that effectively bypass the significance of the nation-state as a source of identity and allegiance. Additionally, the nascent Ukrainian state is denied the possibility of a partnership with the church to generate legitimacy and loyalty amidst economic difficulties and charges of political corruption.

The desire to rein in proselytism, especially by foreigners and by foreign-imported nontraditional religious groups, is palpable among gov-


27. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Moscow Patriarchate is the only Orthodox church in Ukraine that is canonically recognized.


29. In contrast, in 2001 more than 2,200 missionaries were working in Russia, but only about one-third of them, or 794, were American. In Belarus, 44, or approximately half, of the 82 missionaries were American (and 13 were Belarusan). Patrick Johnson and Jason Mandryk with Robyn Johnson, Operation World: 21st Century Edition (Waynesboro, Ga., 2001), 645, 540, 100.
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government leaders and even among the population at large. The disdain evangelical communities inspire reflects the continued resilience of Soviet ideology. Yet, precisely because this ideology and its atheist component have been so vigorously and widely rejected, evangelicals have achieved measured growth. Official adult members of evangelical communities now constitute 3 percent of the Ukrainian population. By looking closely at the beliefs and activities of evangelical communities at this historical juncture in Ukraine, we can understand their appeal in the face of measured hostility from the population at large as well as explore Ukrainian evangelicals’ own conflicted attitudes toward western missionary assistance.

Modes of Worship

Approximately 750,000 Baptists and 700,000 Pentecostals were registered with state authorities in 1991, half of whom resided in Ukraine. Unofficial estimates of the number of Baptists in the USSR were considerably higher and had already reached three million prior to the onset of Nikita Khrushchev’s vigorous antireligious campaign. The significant presence of evangelical communities, during the Soviet period and continuing after the fall of the Soviet Union, is the culmination of a prerevolutionary tradition of Baptist settlements and the early introduction of Pentecostalism to Russia in 1911. Both denominations were further strengthened by the efforts of Ukrainians who immigrated to the United States and returned to their homeland to proselytize in the 1920s. This was possible because the Bolshevik plan to reduce the influence of religion initially focused on repressing the Orthodox Church. The 1920s, combined with the brief respite from coercive measures against believers during World War II, allowed evangelical communities to persist under otherwise repressive

30. Although there were no reports of violations of rights filed on behalf of evangelical organizations in 2002, leaders of these same organizations nonetheless pointed to instances of individual believers encountering difficulties, including job loss, as a result of their evangelical affiliation. “International Religious Freedom Report 2002: Ukraine,” 5.
conditions. During the most intense periods of religious repression, the late 1930s and under Khrushchev, tight networks and group solidarity served as buffers against hardship and enabled small groups to continue to meet clandestinely over the years.

One of the rationales for targeting evangelicals in the Soviet Union for especially harsh repressive measures was that these denominations were perceived as "foreign." An additional factor was that Protestant fundamentalist denominations in the west, especially in the United States, were extremely anticommunist. Once the Soviet system collapsed, the same perceptions of foreignness, of western origin, and of opposition to Soviet power rendered these faiths, not just attractive, but even fashionable. Joining a community with a history of opposition to and noncooperation with Soviet authorities simultaneously became a means of de-Sovietizing and belonging to a new global Christian community. By fall 1991, 20 to 50 Evangelical Christian-Baptist churches were being established and registered per month in Ukraine.34 By the mid-1990s, 3,600 Protestant churches were formally registered in Ukraine and by 2000 there were over 5,000.35 In addition, many unofficial "prayer houses" function as churches.

Many forms of evangelization are used to attract new members: communities issue personalized invitations to nonbelievers to attend services; fire and brimstone street preachers expound the glories of God; large auditoriums are rented when a famous preacher comes to town; and extensive missionizing occurs among the poor and destitute in prisons, orphanages, and hospitals. Critical to the rapid success of "church planting" in Ukraine has been the funding of missions and the overall financial support from the United States. Beginning in the late 1980s, western missionaries began to travel to the Soviet Union in significant numbers. Evangelists of a culture as well as of the Gospel, these missionaries, intentionally or not, embodied the political values and morality of their home cultures.

The worldview of Ukrainian evangelicals provides something of a countertext to both the revolutionary modernist vision of Soviet society and the newly established post-Soviet notions of national identity and national history that attempt to reverse the inherited colonial narrative of historical development. This challenge to the past and present, combined with the perceived "democratic" workings of Protestant denominations at the local and international level (making room for individual voices and lay participation in church activities), partially accounts for their success and distinguishes these evangelical communities from more traditional and hierarchical denominations, such as Orthodoxy and Catholicism.

35. Johnson and Mandryk, Operation World, 644–45. The structural differences between Protestant and Orthodox congregations account for the high number of Protestant communities in Ukraine. Protestant congregations often serve a small group of highly active and committed believers, most of whom are official members of the church. This is in sharp contrast to Orthodox cathedrals that serve a large and amorphous group of local believers whose allegiance to a particular church may only be nominal.
In spite of government and popular fears of the encroachment of a new form of imperial domination brought on by western missionaries, a different dynamic has been unleashed. Although there may be enormous similarity on a doctrinal level between Ukrainian and American evangelicals, the cultural practices enshrouding religious worship and congregational life are often distinct and even mutually incompatible. To the extent that evangelical congregations in Ukraine acquire or adapt western missionaries’ discourses, customs, and institutions, they do so by molding them to their local preferences and in the process change the original model. By exploring attitudes toward western missionaries and visiting foreign preachers, especially among long-standing believers, we see a highly discerning selection of certain attributes and practices and a rejection of others. In recently created congregations, the overwhelming majority of whose members are recent converts, there is also a tendency to adapt imported models of congregational life to local cultural values and practices. Of course, this progresses more subtly and more slowly in congregations that have a number of believers or clergy who were practicing evangelicals under the Soviet regime than it does in the newer ones. Most of the established congregations are Baptist, whereas many of the newer ones are Pentecostal or Charismatic.

No one is more aware of the perils of culture clash than western missionaries themselves. Most efforts focus on fostering indigenous missionizing to garner new converts, a strategy that has proved highly successful elsewhere, especially in Latin America. Western assistance comes primarily from the United States and Germany and is largely used to provide the infrastructure for religious communities by financing seminaries, building prayer houses, renting halls or even stadiums for collective prayer, printing Bibles and other religious literature, and offering a variety of medical and other humanitarian services. Western assistance flows indirectly in the form of material support precisely because when misun-

36. Historically, Pentecostal believers maintained an even more adversarial relationship to Soviet state authorities than did Baptists, objecting to the state’s insistence that they be subsumed in an administrative unit with Baptists. They refused to an even greater extent to comply with formal registration procedures and as a result were obliged to gather clandestinely in private residences. For detailed depictions of how Pentecostal communities functioned under such circumstances, see Moskalenko, Piatidesiatniki, and A. I. Klibanov, Religioznoe sektantstvo i sovremennost’ (Moscow, 1969).


38. Pentecostal missionaries evangelized in Latin America with little success until the late 1940s when indigenous missionaries became active in the process. Since that time the growth of Protestantism has been explosive. See David Martin, Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America (Oxford, 1990). By the year 2010, scholars estimate that Pentecostalism will be the dominant religion in parts of Latin America, challenging the historic role of the Catholic Church. See Laura Nuzzi O’Shaughnessy, “Onward Christian Soldiers: The Case of Protestantism in Central America,” in Emile Sahliyeh, ed., Religious Resurgence and Politics in the Contemporary World (Albany, 1990).
derstandings arise among believers or among missionaries and potential converts, they usually involve a clash of mutually offensive cultural practices, rather than any disputes over theology. This is particularly evident in congregations that have a core group of long-standing believers or clergy. In these congregations many cultural practices established during the Soviet period are infused with moral meaning and hence there is reluctance to abandon them.

For example, a young man from Ivano-Frankivsk related how amazed American missionaries were by “the order” they saw in Ukrainian evangelical communities. They asked his pastor, “How is it that you have been able to keep alive the traditions of the first apostolic church? In America, it is not like that any more. Women don’t cover their heads. We pray sitting down.” The pastor answered half-jokingly, “I could keep that spirit alive as long as you weren’t here.”39 It becomes challenging for pastors to accept material assistance from western organizations, which they so desperately need, but not their culturally specific means of worship. Although more self-governing and accommodating of lay participation than the so-called traditional denominations, even the newer evangelical communities in Ukraine are far more hierarchical in nature and far more willing to defer to the person occupying a particular office (pastor, bishop, and so on) than their American counterparts. Among established communities of evangelicals in Ukraine there is a spectrum of more traditional to progressive communities as indicated by the extent of restrictions on behavior. Even the more progressive communities in Ukraine are far more traditional than their American counterparts, and this is manifest in their attitudes toward what constitutes behavior becoming of a believer.

The clash of culturally tailored religious practice is particularly visible at one new 300-member congregation. In addition to the new church built with financing from America, the church grounds contain a small medical center where American doctors and dentists on short-term missions offer their services free of charge and where free English classes are taught by American missionaries. The church complex also houses a library, Sunday school classrooms, and rooms for music rehearsals. The pastor of this Baptist church was born into a Baptist family and struggles to maintain local traditions, which, of course, are embedded in the experience of a repressive state apparatus and local cultural mores. He contrasted the differences in worship between Ukrainians and Americans:

Our church is much more spiritual. They have given in more to the flesh. Our church is more traditional, whereas theirs has been too reformed. Whenever our believers go abroad, whether to America or Europe, if they have allowed prima donnas to emerge, there is already not the same spirituality you find here. How many pastors they have who are divorced! Can you tell me that this is normal? They can drink a glass of beer and nothing will happen. But here, if I drank a glass of beer today, tomorrow I would no longer be a pastor. They bring us a lot of good but a lot of bad...

39. I have changed the names of all respondents to ensure confidentiality. All interviews cited here were conducted between October 2001 and January 2003.
also. As long as we are still building our church, we will be patient, but after that, it's good-bye. I tell them, "If you want to help us, thank you, but don't bring us your western customs."

Ironically, clothing and styles of dress are one of the western customs that arouses the most ire. In Ukraine, it is standard for women in Baptist and older Pentecostal communities to cover their heads, wear only long skirts, and to abstain from using makeup or wearing jewelry. Very devout, well-intentioned western missionary women often show up in jeans wearing lipstick. It becomes difficult for the leaders of these Ukrainian congregations to justify and maintain the biblical reasons for these restrictions on dress and behavior when westerners, who are supposedly there to assist in the spiritual development of the country, flagrantly defy the behavioral norms espoused by Ukrainian believers and upheld by local evangelical communities.

One woman who housed three visiting American missionaries recounted how they asked her to call her pastor to see if they could preach during the Sunday morning service. Over the telephone, the first question the pastor asked her was, "How are they dressed?" She glanced over at the three Americans clad in sweat pants, T-shirts and flip-flops. "As if they are going to the beach," she responded. "Well, then let them go to the beach," he retorted. The dress of these American missionaries during a casual encounter was enough to preclude the possibility of preaching in front of a Ukrainian congregation. For Ukrainians, purity of belief and depth of conviction are esteemed attributes that are expressed in modest and respectful clothing. Violating the norms of dress automatically has a challenging, and hence chilling, effect on relationships between believers of the same faith from different cultural traditions.

Cultural differences are also abundantly apparent in styles of preaching. Not all Ukrainians criticized the American style of preaching, some even advocated it as a model, and many newer congregations have outright adopted it, but nearly all noticed clear differences. Ukrainian respondents commented how American preachers often begin their sermons with a joke, smile throughout, and generally make far greater appeals to emotion. Sermons by American preachers are more readily understandable because they use personal information and stories about family life to explain passages in the Bible and personal anecdotes to illustrate how they became believers and strengthened their faith. This contrasts sharply with the characterization of Ukrainian sermons as "lectures." One young woman claimed that the delivery style of Ukrainian pastors was so wooden that if you put an apple on the pastor's head at the beginning of the sermon, it would still be there at the end. The formality of sermons, much like the formality of dress, is taken as an indicator of conviction and devotion.

In a curious twist, the contrast between the American preachers' casual approach and the Ukrainian pastors' earnestness masks the fact that it is the American preachers who are often able to devote hours to preparing their sermons. They often have the benefit of prolonged, specialized
training and are not obliged to work a day job to meet their families' expenses. In Ukrainian services, three or four "brothers" usually preach, each extrapolating on a theme that the first preacher has presented. Such a format enhances the improvisational nature of sermons and lay participation. In essence, the formal Ukrainian style often overlays tremendous stream-of-consciousness preaching. American preachers, in contrast, plan and consciously insert spontaneity and humor into their sermons.

Communities created since 1991, particularly Charismatic and Pentecostal ones, exhibit a somewhat different reaction to the cultural values that enshroud the assistance offered by American missionaries than the older communities described above. In these newer communities, attitudes toward women's behavior and self-presentation are a particularly poignant indication of a rejection of the link between gender-based restrictions on behavior and piety. Challenging the obligation of married female members to cover their heads, some young women at older Pentecostal churches have begun to place a scarf over their head, but not to tie it. In doing so, they acknowledge the symbolic practice, but have begun its unmaking. At Pentecostal congregations where women are not obliged to cover their heads, fewer than half the women do so, and only a handful of women cover their heads at Charismatic churches. Reflecting the importance of generation, many of the younger women at new Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations have adopted the American "come as you are" attitude to casual dress and no longer feel obliged to wear a skirt. New Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have also taken the significant step of allowing women to become pastors and of allowing lay female leaders to participate in services in highly visible roles. Far from equal, female pastors remain barred from performing any rituals (communion, baptisms, and so on), but their very existence is remarkable.

A woman who repented in 1993 in an older Pentecostal church had second thoughts when she learned that she was now subject to a list of prohibitions. For her, the two most objectionable restrictions were that secular sources of information, including television, were now forbidden and that she could no longer have an abortion. Barely able to make ends meet with two children, she refused to have another child. She switched to a new Pentecostal megachurch that presents "guidelines" for behavior, as opposed to prohibitions. In 1997 she was baptized and eventually became one of fifteen pastors to the church's 2,500 members. She describes her experience as the first woman to preach during a service in August 2002 at the height of dacha season.

It all happened by accident. Quite simply there weren't enough brothers to preach that day and it wasn't possible to postpone the service. The pastor proposed that I go up on stage. I was really nervous. I heard unfriendly heckling from the crowd. When I began to speak, everyone in the room froze, and then they talked about it for a month. Women go up on stage constantly but usually for only two reasons: to bring offerings or to read announcements. But now they are starting to preach. Just last Wednesday, one of the sisters preached.
In older congregations only male pastors and male deacons preach. Women’s leadership is limited to participation in youth education, and sometimes in rare, albeit increasing instances, in musical direction. Allowing women into such visible leadership roles represents a strong break with overall cultural beliefs in traditional gender roles, especially those upheld by evangelical communities.

In newer congregations, not just who is allowed to preach, but how one preaches is also radically different. No longer delivering “wooden lectures” to a few hundred people, newer Pentecostal pastors make ample use of the “call and response” technique to create drama and dialogue among those leading the services and the congregants. Charismatic churches take it one step further and introduce theatrical interludes, puppet shows, and other performative genres to present stories from the Bible before the thousands in attendance. Images link the human and divine realms in an economy of ritualized exchange that is particularly accessible to the spiritually curious and to recent converts. These newer, more expressive communities enact and viscerally experience lessons from the Bible, thereby inscribing them in memory, as opposed to cognitively processing them through reflection. As a result, the entire tenor and atmosphere of the services is altered.

Music plays a key role in either reinforcing the solemn, sacred, and restrained aspects of services or heightening the expressive, ecstatic mood. All evangelical congregations allocate a prominent role to music to enhance spirituality and strengthen faith. Older congregations use only organ, piano, and acoustic instruments, such as guitars. Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic churches offer nothing short of a rock concert. Electric guitars, synthesizers, and a variety of percussion instruments at high volume accompany groups of animated singers on stage. People dance, sway, embrace, and basically do whatever they feel like doing in cathartic release. Although Pentecostals technically frown on (or forbid) dancing, that is precisely what is going on during these services. In sharp contrast, one stands quietly when hymns are performed or sung in older congregations.

Given the multitude of exchanges that local communities organize among themselves (choral and musical groups, youth groups, pooled


41. The differences in style do not necessarily imply a generational split among believers. A number of elderly attend these tremendously youthful Charismatic services that boom out Christian rock at volumes I can barely tolerate. Similarly, the older congregations offer a full spectrum of youth activities. The growth in the number of new members is, perhaps not surprisingly, higher among Pentecostals and Charismatics. Yet, as Baptists are fond of pointing out, no one keeps track of the number of new converts who leave. Anecdotal evidence suggests that fewer Baptists abandon the church after a lengthy period of spiritual instruction (usually several years after repenting and before baptism at approximately age 18) than do Pentecostals and Charismatics.

42. For an analysis of the effect of music on faith, see Robert Wuthnow, All in Sync: How Music and Art Are Revitalizing American Religion (Berkeley, 2003).
attempts to organize summer camps, to name a few), recent converts—usually members of newer churches—have the opportunity to interact, collaborate, and participate with members of long-standing communities. Although missionaries might have played a role in presenting alternative modes of worship that have significantly broadened the spectrum of practices concerning dress, music, and preaching, the spread of these more expressive and casual practices will be more attributable to Ukrainians influencing other Ukrainians through sustained interaction and genuine appeal. In other words, now that a variety of religious communities have been established, ongoing intradenominational programs and exchanges will shift the understanding of difference from a polarized choice between Americanized or Soviet Ukrainian to a spectrum of choice from more traditional Ukrainian to more contemporary Ukrainian congregations.

**Points of Agreement, Points of Disjuncture: Attitudes toward the State**

A half-hearted engagement with religion was a trait rarely found in Soviet society where one openly practiced religion at great personal peril. The repressiveness of the Soviet system and the legalism of Soviet evangelical practice meant that for many Ukrainian believers, a certain moral justification was marshaled to contravene cultural norms and state policies. Regardless of the consequences, which were sometimes formidable, believers evoked God's benevolence and the belief in God's plan for one's life to cope with hardship. Under the Soviet regime, one's commitment to fellow members of the church community was total, contact was frequent, and trust was at a premium. Faiths that demand significant sacrifice from adherents generally have more highly committed members and a minimum number of “free riders.” Members' vigorous engagement in congregational life creates robust communities that offer a variety of activities and services, and these, in turn, make the community attractive to potential converts.43

The established practice among older evangelical communities of observing sharp membership demarcations to foster a rich inner-looking congregational life and separation from the world also collides with western missionaries’ ideas about outreach. Because a multitude of religious organizations are competing for converts and because many Soviet-era believers have emigrated to the United States, outreach is of critical importance to building and rebuilding communities.44 Missionaries have traditionally placed a premium on reaching the unsaved and therefore orient services and assistance to the unchurched. Some, such as Olena


44. Thousands of evangelicals from the former USSR have relocated to the United States thanks to the 1989 Lautenberg Amendment, which offered the possibility of emigrating as refugees. See Susan Wiley Hardwick, *Russian Refuge: Religion, Migration, and Settlement on the North American Pacific Rim* (Chicago, 1993), 36–37. Some of these Baptists and Pentecostals periodically return to their homeland to evangelize and engage in sustained missionary work. The double benefit of local cultural knowledge and western missionary training and resources makes them highly effective in garnering new converts.
Petrivna, a middle-aged woman who was christened in 1979, find the “religious shoppers” who respond to such outreach an intrusion:

A lot of Christians adopted the American idea that we should help the world. But the world then comes into church. They think it is possible to move beyond traditional values and canons, as long as it’s in the spirit of attracting the unsaved. This doesn’t mean that I’m against nonbelievers coming to church. I myself came to church for the first time as a nonbeliever. But we have to surround them with love and teach them, and not build everything around them. For example, on the third floor [of the church community center], they built a cafe. But why do they allow smoking there? So that it will be lively? So that young people can meet there? One shouldn’t go to church to be entertained! All the reverence is lost.

She disagrees with the emphasis on reaching out to nonbelievers, maintaining that “Christianity is truly a narrow and prickly path and not everyone can live by the Word of God.” She thinks that believers and nonbelievers must meet at a middle point. To try to cultivate a sense of spirituality, a desire for a dialogue with God, among nonbelievers is futile, in her view. Nonbelievers must be searching for a way to express their faith and be inclined to dedicate their lives to pursuing their faith. She and others accuse American missionaries of sometimes making compromises to bring nonbelievers into the fold.

In spite of the individual objections raised above, which are not uncommon in older congregations, institutionally, across denominations, there is widespread endorsement and implementation of American models of social service outreach. All evangelical communities offer a plethora of free educational, musical, and social programs. Now allowed to provide some of the social support services that the state is no longer willing or able to provide, basic church activities include offering material and other forms of support to orphanages, boarding schools, and other state-run institutions. To members and potential members these churches offer summer camps, after-school activities, clothing redistribution, job referrals, and elderly visitation, to name the most common outreach activities. Sunday school, adult Bible study, small prayer groups, and a multitude of vocal and musical ensembles round out their offerings. In addition, Pentecostal churches have historically stressed faith healing as a key doctrinal component.

Today, along with Charismatic churches, many offer members a full roster of self-help groups for recovering alcoholics, people who are terminally ill, singles, couples grappling with infertility, parents struggling to raise difficult children, and so on, which complements the tangible forms of material assistance they provide. As religious organizations assume more and more functions of the state, providing material, social,

45. For an analysis of these types of activities, see Wanner, “Advocating New Morali-

46. For a depiction of faith healing ceremonies among Soviet-era Pentecostal belie-
ers and their justifications for preferring them to traditional, science-based medical services, see Klibanov, Religioznoe sektantstvo, 160–63.
and healing-oriented services in the name of outreach, not only are expectations of both the state and religious institutions shifting, but potentially feelings of allegiance as well.

It is easier to remake the obligations one expects from the state than it is the obligations one feels to the state. Ukrainian and American evangelicals share minimal expectations from the state in terms of assistance to the poor and willingly fill this lacuna themselves. Understandings of obligations to the state are far more contentious and reflect considerable differences. Clearly, American evangelicals advocate withdrawal from worldly activities far more selectively when these activities concern obligations to the state. For Ukrainian evangelicals, the morally compromised, corrupting attributes of the world include the state and its bidding. The strong patriotism of American evangelicals is often bewildering to Ukrainian believers, and to Ukrainians more generally, who have long been accustomed to maintaining an oppositional and defiant stance toward state authorities and state policies. The state is almost universally seen as an adversarial force that must be resisted on moral grounds.

Reflecting the Anabaptist origins of Protestant religious doctrine in the former Soviet Union, both Soviet-era and post-1991 evangelical communities advocate nonviolent resolution of conflict and refuse to take up arms. Although there is discussion of a professional army, military service is still mandatory for men in Ukraine. If one is a conscientious objector on religious grounds, it is possible to complete alternative service, but conscientious objectors usually serve in construction brigades together with those who have a criminal record or a history of mental illness. Many petitions concerning the violation of religious rights in Ukraine have involved alternative military service. Some are denied the possibility, and others object to the double length of service.

Ukrainian evangelicals are stunned to learn that their American counterparts serve in the armed forces. A long-standing Baptist was surprised when a group of young American cadets visited his congregation and commented, "How deep can their faith be? . . . How can a believing Christian study in a military academy? They could give him an order and he would have to shoot! That means that for him, the interests of his government are higher than the interests of God!" In the same nonviolent spirit, some Ukrainian believers criticize the American attacks on Afghanistan and the war on Iraq as unbecoming of Christians, who, they argue, should categorically oppose the use of violence. The more orthodox believers can justify this position because they understand the infliction of violence as a struggle between the divine and the satanic and not as a human response to specific social and political circumstances. Witness how an older woman, who became a Baptist during World War II, understands the attacks on 11 September:

When Americans come here, we don't like their behavior. They sit in church, leg to leg. How is such a thing possible? Liberties with clothes, cosmetics, and other such things—everything comes from America. They have moved away from God. And now, look at America! They live without God and he sent them a punishment. The eleventh of Septem-
ber is a sign, the finger of God showing the whole world to be careful. God allowed that so that they would repent! If they will not repent, he will destroy them! And in time we will be punished too. Where can you see this? Vodka is sold day and night! Where are we heading? Do you think we will escape punishment for this?

For fundamentalist believers, explaining tragedy is often difficult. This woman, much like Jerry Falwell and other American fundamentalists, understands the violence inflicted on Americans on 11 September as a punishment from God for moral laxity. If God is omnipotent and has a plan for each of us, then nothing happens outside his will. If God is benevolent, then he does not harm innocent people. If tragedy befalls individuals who seem pious, perhaps they were not so innocent after all. Believers attempt to read tragic events as signs, as part of a dialogue with God. The invocation of evil is merely part of God’s plan to separate the redeemed from the sinner and often further strengthens individual believers’ resolve to save the unsaved through evangelism and proselytizing. One woman, reflecting on the tragedy of 11 September, claimed, “I think more and more often that the church in America is dying, spiritually dying. And the proof for me is the events of the eleventh of September. Nothing is done without the will of God, and if God allowed those events—in the birthplace of Baptism [sic]—that means that it was a punishment for spiritual lapse and a warning against future spiritual degradation.”

These interpretations of the events of 11 September indicate different conceptions of and relationships to God. For Ukrainian evangelicals, God is often a powerful, benevolent overseeing force that punishes transgressions, much like a strict father. The “fraternal” relationship to God they feel Americans advocate with potential converts, almost like a life partner, smacks of a lack of respect. Fear of God is instilled in childhood, and this principle continues to guide and shape behavior in significant ways into adulthood. The fear of God’s ability to punish inappropriate behavior evolves for many into a fear of offending God and fellow members of one’s congregation. Because the Americans they encounter do not exhibit the same discipline, self-sacrifice, and restraint in the name of faith as Ukrainians think they themselves do, they attribute to them a lukewarm commitment to living according to the Bible.

47. After 11 September, Jerry Falwell, speaking on The 700 Club with Pat Robertson, said, “I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way—all of them who have tried to secularize America—I point the finger in their face and say, ‘You helped this happen.’” To this statement, Pat Robertson replied, “Well, I totally concur, and the problem is we have adopted their agenda at the highest levels of government.” Later Falwell was forced to issue an apology for his comments and for using this tragedy to advance his particular vision of social and political life in America. See Ramesh Ponnuru, “The Uses of War,” National Review, 14 September 2001, for a comprehensive analysis of their comments and how they were received.

48. These attempts to comprehend the seemingly unjustifiable punishment of the innocent are reminiscent of attempts to explain the purges of committed communists, devoted party members, and average citizens during the Stalinist regime.
In spite of these and other criticisms of foreign missionaries by Ukrainian believers and the population more generally, evangelical organizations continue to grow and to garner legitimacy in post-Soviet society for two reasons. First, church institutions and doctrine are seen as timeless and yet relevant to contemporary life. Second, the strong emphasis on Scriptures and on their interpretation provides for an authentic, historical tradition and the possibility of infusing it with local cultural values and practices. Non-evangelical Ukrainians object to missionaries, not because they are American, but because they proselytize. Ukrainian evangelicals, on the other hand, share the missionaries’ convictions, but find aspects of their Americanized attitudes objectionable. Rather than suggesting that these forms of global Christianity represent another hegemonic ideology “converting” Ukrainians to its worldview, I see a blending of cultural influences that is altering notions of morality and religious practice in novel ways. Ukrainian believers selectively appropriate, and sometimes reject, the practices missionaries offer in spite of the clear power differentials that exist between international missionary organizations and local Ukrainian congregations. The process of local adaptation in Ukraine and elsewhere places these global models of religious institutional organization in a permanent state of evolution where the models are constantly transformed as they are applied.

Peter van der Veer, writing of other colonial contexts and religious encounters, stresses the importance of not seeing the processes of encounter as one in which the missionary unilaterally modernizes the Other, whose role is limited to reaction. He writes, “The immense creativity in colonial encounters, both on the part of the colonizers and the colonized, is often done little justice in accounts that rather stress failure than innovative practice. The colonial era makes new imaginations of community possible, and it is especially in the religious domain that these new imaginations take shape. In that sense, conversion to another faith is part of a set of much larger transformations affecting both converts, nonconverts, and the missionaries themselves.”49

Rather than glorify, endorse, or condemn the arrival of foreign missionaries in Ukraine, my aim is to illustrate the agency of Ukrainians reacting to this encounter and highlight the extent to which this encounter facilitates, not just the imaginings of, but actual membership in, a global community of believers. Thanks in part to financing from the west, Ukraine now has some of the best seminaries in the former Soviet Union that train clergy bound for service throughout the former Soviet Union. Hundreds of Ukrainians now travel annually to Russia and elsewhere as

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Evangelical missionaries. Just as American missionaries maintained a visible presence in Ukraine throughout the 1990s, a steady stream of Soviet evangelicals relocated to the United States and now call Sacramento, Portland, and Seattle home.50 The presence of American missionaries in Ukraine has brought about changes in religious practice there just as the presence of Soviet evangelicals in the United States has added to the diversity of religious life and expanded the dimensions of evangelical practice here. In the United States, Soviet evangelicals missionize first and foremost among other immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Many also return to Ukraine, where they are some of the most active and successful missionaries thanks to western training and local cultural knowledge.

When Ukrainians evangelize in Russia or when Ukrainian immigrants capitalize on their residence in the United States to return to their homeland to missionize, we must acknowledge that global Christianity provides a platform from which to challenge the dichotomy of colonizer-colonized and center-periphery when it comes to inciting and shaping cultural and political change. Indeed, the largest evangelical megachurch in Kiev was founded by a 33-year-old Nigerian who came to Minsk to study in 1987. One year after graduating in 1993, he moved to Kiev and founded the Word of Faith Bible church with seven members. As of 2003, 17,000 people routinely attended services in his newly renamed “Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations” church. This church has already sent Ukrainian missionaries around the world to open eighteen Embassy of God churches, including four in the United States, in New York, Sacramento, Miami, and Cleveland. In other words, global Christianity fosters local communities based on close, daily interaction while simultaneously facilitating the intersection of different cultural, political, and, of course, religious and moral traditions from around the world.

Yet despite the transnational nature of these communities, individual states continue to shape these communities in significant and important ways. Attitudes and loyalties toward individual states, deeply rooted in historical experience, remain a point of division among believers. More important, the diverse policies adopted by the Ukrainian, Russian, and Belarusian states have structured the frequency and intensity of this evangelical encounter and, by extension, the dynamics of religious life in each respective society. Religious practice is grounded in a particular place, even as it transcends it. As a result of state policies, Ukraine has emerged as a

50. Approximately 500,000 evangelicals from the former Soviet Union currently reside in the United States. Many factors make counting the number of Soviet evangelicals difficult. Refugees are not tracked according to religious affiliation. Once in the United States, refugees use the Family Reunification Act to invite extended family members who have been denied refugee status to join them, thereby bringing evangelicals from the former Soviet Union into the United States through other channels. Finally, immigration to the United States is often a “theologizing experience,” meaning that immigrants from many regions, the former Soviet Union included, often become religious and assume a religious affiliation once in the United States. See especially R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner, eds., Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration (Philadelphia, 1998), and Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz, eds., Religion across Borders: Transnational Immigrant Networks (Walnut Creek, Calif., 2002).
key recipient and supplier of evangelical missionaries, adding to the cultural landscape of this traditionally Orthodox land qualitatively different social and religious institutions.

With its emphasis on morality and healing, David Martin calls evangelicalism a faith that appeals to “the insulted and the injured.”51 As identities and understandings of community and morality continue to evolve in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet state and the brutality of the so-called transition, evangelical communities will most likely remain visible and retain their influence. The reasons for this are myriad. Roger Lancaster asserts that the power of evangelicalism lies in the fact that “a religion of renunciation and despair opens up a space of order in the midst of disorder, morality in an immoral world, and a defined hope in a prevailing social terrain of hopelessness.”52 As more people experience anomie in the face of a postsocialist life teeming with choices and challenges, but short on clear guidelines for behavior, beliefs, and a sense of purpose, the promise of a shared, meaningful life with a supportive group of like-minded people will continue to exert appeal.

The “state religions” in the former Soviet Union are effective political players, influencing social, political, and religious policies on a number of levels. The same could be said of evangelical denominations in the United States and their umbrella organizations.53 There is no reason to think that the withdrawal from “the world” and the atomization that the Soviet regime forced on Protestant communities will reemerge. Indeed, 41 percent of Ukrainians maintain that their president must be a religious person, as compared to 24 percent in Russia.54 Nor is it reasonable to expect that religious groups meeting in scattered rented cinemas will be any less influential than more traditional, hierarchical religious organizations with leadership and doctrine emanating from a center. Serhii Plokhy points to the growing role of Protestant communities in Ukrainian politics. He suggests that the significant interest demonstrated by various political parties in the Protestant vote and the participation of Protestants in Ukrainian politics at the highest levels of government indicate a general tolerance for and the growing power of Protestant churches in predominantly Orthodox Ukraine.55 The identities and allegiances that these new communities are forging are likely to prosper and to continue to exert an appeal among the tens of millions of unchurched Ukrainians, as they have in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

Religious participation specifically of an evangelical Christian variety is on the rise throughout the developing world.56 Meanwhile, Europe has

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56. See Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom: The Rise of Global Christianity (Oxford, 2002), for a detailed demographic analysis of the projected growth of evangelical believers. Jenkins argues that although we are accustomed to thinking of Christianity as a western (First World) phenomenon, the locus of believers is shifting to the southern hemi-
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become the last bastion of secular society, prompting scholars to reconsider modernization theory with its inherent assumptions about the natural evolution of secularization and political marginalization of religious belief. Increasingly, scholars are recasting this phenomenon as “European exceptionalism.” Although Ukraine and Russia aspire to join Europe, they do not entirely fit that model even though they too are modern secular societies. I do not mean to suggest that we should introduce another exception to account for religious change in formerly socialist societies. Rather we need to consider how Soviet-imposed secularism, as opposed to the voluntary embrace of secularism seen in western Europe, has created a legacy affecting the growth of evangelical Christianity in a specific way and cultural and political change more generally.

I have tried to illustrate some of the factors that regionally shaped the historical legacies of atheist ideology, how these factors influenced the religious resurgence in Ukraine and Russia differently, and how they have combined to prompt the adoption of different state policies concerning religious organizations. As a result of these policies, different fields of religious practice have emerged in Ukraine and Russia creating cultural differences between Ukrainian and Russian societies after the shared historical experience of socialism and its accompanying atheist ideology. Much has been written about the west’s role in introducing democracy, capitalism, and market economies in Eurasia. These ideologies and their associated practices are part of a cultural bundle. Another element, which has received far less attention, is the arrival of global Christianity and the creation of tight local and broadly transnational evangelical communities. Along with other aspects of western culture and ideology that are indigenously adapted to local cultural values and practices, evangelical communities weave the supernatural into the social and political fabric of everyday life in Ukraine. These localized and transnational communities challenge traditional ties that link a particular religion to a certain ethnic group, social hierarchy, territory, or state. In return, they provide new social capital that links individuals to communities in another form by creating new cultural values and practices that simultaneously separate nations that have historically been politically united, such as Russia and Ukraine, and reattach these groups to a far greater social field inhabited by a global community of believers.

sphere. He details what he sees to be the potential negative political consequences of its expansion. This view is challenged by Timothy Samuel Shah, “Evangelical Politics in the Third World: What’s Next for the Next Christendom?” The Brandywine Review of Faith and International Affairs 1, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 22, who argues that the penchant for splintering and autonomy among evangelical groups will preclude them from ever forming a united political front. Rather, Shah chooses to stress the role these Christian churches, and specifically those of an evangelical variety, have for the development of civil society and the fostering of overall democratic values.