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Proselytism and Religious Freedom: The Case of Russia, Ukraine and Poland

Religious studies or science of religion is a subject and field of academic research where different denominations can work together peacefully, using similar standardised scientific methods.¹ Thus in this paper we first make an effort to take an even deeper and more profound look at the existence and creative dynamism of commitment and openness to dialogue in some post-Soviet countries, most notably in Russia, especially as regards the situation and state of religious freedom there.

Next, another regional case study researches the much-debated effects of Polish Roman Catholicism on the world of the Orthodox Church, especially in the country of Ukraine and in some areas and places in Poland itself, and in connection with the tragic phenomenon of proselytism (sheep-stealing). In the summarising third part we draw possible theoretical consequences from the two case studies.

I. Dilemmas of Religious Freedom in Russia and other Post-Soviet Countries

1. Legal Aspects of Religious Liberty

Important milestones in the legal development of religious freedom in Russia were Tsar NICHOLAS II's decree in 1905, as well as the Religious Freedom Acts in 1990 and 1997. It was Tsar NICHOLAS II's aforementioned historic legal decree on building and strengthening the foundations of religious tolerance, issued on 17 April 1905,

which "for the first time gave religious minorities the right to hold services openly and to build churches".²

The statement *A Word of Solidarity* of the United States (Roman) Catholic Conference (USCC) from 1988 analysed the then-current situation country by country, and made some general proposals for the whole region. But then it happened that the Religious Freedom Act in 1997 in Russia unfortunately replaced the more democratic act of 1990.

After more or less closing the issue of the return of Church property, the three most acute problems and crucial questions around religious liberty in the region according to some are enlisted as follows: bureaucracy, the interplay between religion and nationalism, and restrictions on "foreign" religious bodies, on proselytising (sheep-stealing) and on so-called religious "sects".³

Some in-depth analyses of an important Russian legal case (YAKUNIN versus DWORKIN) are offered in the literature, concerning the feelings of some Orthodox leaders against the presence and actions of new religious movements (NRM).⁴ It is important to emphasise, though, that some of these so-called "new" movements are of course a thousand years older not only than Oriental and Eastern Orthodoxy, but than Christianity as a whole.

According to some, religious freedom in the region is determined by the "dominant ethnicification of politics and by the politicisation of culture, required by the prevailing politics of identity".⁵ We can define *ethnicification* by some of its discerning characteristics: first, following this strategy, "ethnic identities of persons and groups are the most important quality". Then, second, rights and status are given mostly according to ethnic belonging; the state promotes the prosperity of one ethnic community, and thus "ethnic categories are cogent".

Ethnic marks are the "most efficient levers for political mobilisation"; they create a "zero-sum-game with no easy mediation", and

2 BUDKINA Irina, *Religious Freedom since 1905: Any Progress in Russia?* Religion in Eastern Europe 2006/2. 24–27. <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/budkina.pdf>. 24.

3 POWERS Gerard F., *Religious Liberty: The State Church and Minority Faiths. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.* Religion in Eastern Europe 1996/1. 2–3.

4 SHTERIN Marat S. – RICHARDSON James T., *The Yakunin versus Dworkin Trial and the Emerging Religious Pluralism in Russia.* Religion in Eastern Europe 2002/1. 1–39. <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/yarkvsdwork.doc>.

5 VRCAN Srdjan, *Proselytism, Religion, and Ethnicification of Politics: A Sociological Analysis.* Religion in Eastern Europe 1997/5. 5. <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/VRCAN2.PRO.doc>.

1 FILIPOVYCH Lyudmyla – KOLODNY Anatoly, *Theology and Religious Studies in Post-Communist Ukraine: Historical Sources, Modern Status, and Perspectives of Cooperation.* Religion in Eastern Europe 2003/6. 1–20. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/2003_lyudmyla236.pdf.

thus the state promotes and protects a “specific national culture and identity”.⁶ A significant malfunction of the secular state in general can be *nationalism*, which according to some means “ethnic identity identified with political power”.⁷ Indeed, the Church of Jesus Christ and the authentic message of the Gospel in essence is “*transnational*: it places cultures in a context; and it relativises them as well as legitimises them”.⁸

2. Religious Revival and Diseases of Growth

The *individual* and spiritual dimension of religious freedom involves our interior life of heart, mind and conscience. Indeed, the legal and integrative side of religious freedom is just one part of the whole picture. It is rather up to the inner maturity, strength, spirituality and wisdom of each individual believer to really make religious freedom a part of the larger society’s living practice. When speaking about *religious revival* in Russia and in other post-Soviet countries, people usually mean cultural, institutional, personal or individualistic revival. We can read some recent sociological surveys on the latter two issues;⁹ and we can conclude based on these surveys that while institutional growth in numbers can indeed be largely detected, there is no development within the country as for personal church attendance.

Apart from the big metropolises and cities, the rest of Russia remains very resistant to democratic progress in religious life. This phenomenon can be attributed to the following four reasons. In Russia, there were rather “weak religious traditions and activity of the Church during the Soviet period; a small religious community consisting [...] of elderly people, without a real influence on the local authority and [...] intelligentsia; [...] isolation of parish churches from the real life and needs of local residents; local leadership consisting [...] of genuine old Communists coming to power by the [...] ladder for nomenclature”.¹⁰

⁶ OFFE Claus, *Der Tunnel am Ende des Lichts* (The Tunnel at the End of the Lights). Frankfurt – New York, 1994.

⁷ WEST Charles, *The Role of Faith in the Midst of Transformed Societies*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2007/4. 2. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/West_Role_Faith.pdf.

⁸ WEST Charles, *The Role of Faith in the Midst of Transformed Societies*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2007/4. 4. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/West_Role_Faith.pdf.

⁹ LINZEY Sharon – KROTOV Iakov, *The Future of Religion and Religious Freedom in Russia*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2001/5. 1–15. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Linsey_The%20Future_Oct%202001.pdf.

¹⁰ SKURATOVSKAYA Larisa, *Freedom of Religion and the Legal Status of Religion in Russia*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1997/2. 8. <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/SKURATOV.RUS.doc>.

Four *diseases of growth* connected to the liberalisation of religious life can be discerned. The first is the “*persistence of the old, rigid, centralised system*”: naturally, it remains very resistant to democratic changes, personal enterprise and diversity. The second sickness is that the central religious leadership and élite seeks to solve many problems and difficulties simply by a “*monopoly in faith, unification, standardisation, and homogenisation*”. The third important illness is that each religious community is “*obsessed with its own interests and mentality*”. And fourth, this movement leads to “*separatism and struggle for properties, historical and museum treasures, buildings, bunkers, and political influence*”¹¹

3. Anti-Ecumenical Trends

The *intramural* and communitarian dimension of religious freedom deals with the human rights of expression and dissent within a particular church, ecclesiastical or religious body and institution. At the same time, the *ecumenical* dimension of religious freedom calls the participants to encounter, cooperate with, be recognised by and participate in the life and activity of other Christian communions. Unfortunately, we cannot say that the ecumenical movement, aiming for the visible unity of the Christian Church, would be well-accepted among all Orthodox churches and believers, and of course there are reasons for that.

Among the important Orthodox reservations concerning the current ecumenical movement, we can enlist proselytism, moral and ethical confusion, ecclesiological difficulties with a conciliar movement, and the centrality of post-Reformation Western debates dominating the common agenda.¹² As a consequence, the *Basic Principles* of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), dating from the year 2000, emphasise bearing witness to non-Orthodox Christians as the primary and leading motive for any Orthodox involvement in the ecumenical movement.¹³

There is at least one thing in common among the so-called “in-

Eastern Europe 1997/2. 8. <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/SKURATOV.RUS.doc>.

¹¹ SKURATOVSKAYA Larisa, *Freedom of Religion and the Legal Status of Religion in Russia*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1997/2. 10. <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/SKURATOV.RUS.doc>.

¹² KISHKOVSKY Leonid, *Orthodoxy and Ecumenism in Eastern Europe Today*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2000/3. 9., 11. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Kishkovsky_Orthodoxy_June%202000.pdf.

¹³ SAWATSKY Walter, *Russian Orthodoxy Faces Issues of the Day and of the Century: Church and Society, Religious Pluralism, Martyrs and Mission*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2002/2. 9. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/sawatsky_rof.doc.

vading sectarians”, meaning this time the relative newcomer Protestant churches, and the dominant religious institutions in Russia: they both engage in “mutual anti-ecumenical demonisation”.¹⁴ In the depth of all these behaviours a deeply rooted feeling of insecurity lies, of course from both parts. But societies should be more and more aware that they, “at whatever scale or level, must achieve both stability and diversity, if they are to be tolerant”.¹⁵

Furthermore, the *interreligious* or interfaith dimension of religious freedom would mean a willingness to discover and to respect truth and holiness in other religions as manifestations of the one God. In this last respect, religious communities must honestly and frankly examine their conscience on whether they would defend the liberty and freedom of other religions as earnestly as they would protect their own.

4. Church and State: Search for a New Social Contract

We can rightly recognise that the “inclusion of genuine freedom of religion in the Constitution and the creation of laws on religious liberty led to a change in the state–Church relationship”.¹⁶ The dangers of favouritising one religion or a given denomination over the others, and thus of binding together Church and state too much, are the “melting of both state and confessional structures, the takeover by the state of religious issues and state clericalism”.¹⁷

In the respect of separation of Church and state, we can urge the total and radical “demonopolisation of the religious market” as a necessary prerequisite for democracy and human rights.¹⁸ All these aims and goals also require a brand-new political theology developed, for example in Orthodoxy, concerning the “ecclesiasticism of

the state”.¹⁹ It can be done and achieved, for instance, by reworking some political categories such as the concepts of the nation or of the state, which have gained theological and ecclesiastic connotations during the course of history. In these political and national environments, situations and circumstances, the Christian Church must “map out its own terrain again and thoroughly”.²⁰

A (new) *social contract* can be defined, for example, as a general understanding within a society of the “need to institutionalise public policies to the benefit of this society as a whole: the common good”.²¹ The grave question for the various believers in connection with this hopefully emerging new social contract is how to integrate themselves and other people who are similar to them into the existing social community. In order to achieve this, they must follow its orientation, motivation, regulatory and legal norms, while not destroying the integrity and autonomy of their faith.²²

II. Questions of Proselytism in Ukraine and Poland

1. Historical Background for Religious Conflicts in the Region

Let us now have a look at another post-Soviet state, namely Ukraine. The historical background for the present-day religious conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe is important to get to know in order to understand better the problems of our age; thus the five crucial historical dates concerning Ukraine and Poland are the following. First, the union of Brest-Litovsk (1596), then the three partitions of Poland (1772, 1792 and 1795), the role of Lviv in Ukrainian nationalism, the Second World War (1939–1945) and the Council of Lvov (1946), and finally, the papacy of the ethnic Pole pope, JOHN PAUL II (1978–2005).

¹⁴ MOJZES Paul, *Ecumenism, Evangelism, and Religious Liberty*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1996/2. 3. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Mojzes_Ecumenism_April%201996.pdf.

¹⁵ PEACHEY Paul, *Intolerance and Tolerance are Historical Phenomena*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1990/2. 1. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Peachey_Intolerance.pdf.

¹⁶ FÖLDÉSI Tamás, *The Main Problems of Religious Freedom in Eastern Europe*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1994/5. 7. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Foldesi_Main%20Problems.pdf.

¹⁷ GIRARD Christine, *Amendments to the Russian Religious Freedom Law and the Rule of Law in Russia (in 1990)*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1990/6. 10. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Girard_Amendments.pdf.

¹⁸ SLAVKOVSKÝ Adrián: *Credit Cards of the Holy and Dirty Money of Faith: The Shapes of Religion in Contemporary Society*. In NAGYPÁL Szabolcs – BLOCKSOME Rebecca – ŠAJDA Peter (eds.), *Dreaming our Neighbour: The Shoah and the Utopiae of Yesterday. Ecumenical Anthology V of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Central European Subregion*. Warszawa, 2006. 124. <http://www.koed.hu/neighbour/adrian.pdf>.

¹⁹ DJURIĆ Marko P., *From Religious Tolerance to Mutual Cooperation in the Balkans*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1999/2. 14. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Djuric_From%20Religious_April%201999.pdf.

²⁰ HROMÁDKA Josef, *Church-State Relationship in a Changing Society*. Religion in Eastern Europe, Volume X, Number 4, October 1990. 4. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Hromadka_Church-State.pdf.

²¹ RIJNIERSE Elly: *Effective Participation of Minorities and Peoples: Cases from Central and Eastern Europe. From 'Government' to 'Governance': From a National Social Contract to a Global Social Contract*. In VERGOUWE Suzanna – ŠAJDA Peter – NAGYPÁL Szabolcs (eds.), *The River Book: Identity, Culture and Responsibility. Ecumenical Anthology II of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Central European Subregion*. Białystok, 2003. 45. <http://www.koed.hu/river/elly.pdf>.

²² ŽIVKOVIC Gordana, *Is Religious Freedom Possible?* (tr. STOJIĐEVIĐ Jelena). Religion in Eastern Europe, 2004/2. 3. <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/2004/zivkovic.pdf>.

Between 988 and 1686 Orthodoxy in Ukraine was carried on under the auspices of Constantinople; then this responsibility was transferred to Moscow. It was the mentioned union of *Brest-Litovsk* in 1596 that finally established the Greek Catholic Church in this region by causing a part of the Orthodox Church to join Rome. It was followed by similar church unions in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1646, in Transylvania in 1698, in Armenia in 1742, in Syria in 1742 and finally in Egypt in 1895.

Poland was divided among her greedy neighbours, the empires of Russia, Prussia and Austria, in three successive *partitions* (1772, 1792 and 1795). In the part belonging to Russia, in addition to the ethnic conflict, the antagonism took the shape of an Orthodox – Roman Catholic conflict as well.

In the XIXth century, the region around the city of *Lviv* (Львів, Lvov, Львов, Lemberg, Leopolis) became the breeding ground of a new Ukrainian patriotism and nationalism: its people spoke predominantly Ukrainian. They were also very religious, as well as loyal to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Even though their whole liturgy was still in Church Slavonic language, they nevertheless rightly “counted themselves among the Vatican’s most loyal subjects”.²³

After the Second World War (1939–1945), by drawing new borders and re-mapping the region, the Soviet Union incorporated a great swathe of what had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and then (after 1918) of Poland. Brest-Litovsk was (temporarily) rescinded in 1946 by the ruling communist power in an Orthodox reunion synod, the so-called *Council of Lvov*. Similar events happened in Poland, where, interestingly and because of the different circumstances, most Greek (Byzantine) Catholic properties went to the majority Latin-rite Roman Catholic Church.²⁴

When the Roman Catholic Church in 1978 surprisingly elected one of the Polish bishops, Karol Józef WOJTYŁA, to be the next bishop of Rome, thus making him the first non-Italian pope for centuries, it was interpreted by many Poles as a sign of a renewed Roman Catholic mission in the region. And indeed, in the statements of Pope JOHN PAUL II the vitality of the Polish Church was often depicted as opposing the crisis of the other Western churches, and it was expected that Poland would serve as a source of inspiration for the second (or re-) evangelisation of the continent of Europe.

²³ BOURDEAUX Michael, *The Christian Voice in Ukrainian Elections*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2005/1. 3. <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/2005/bourdeaux.pdf>.

²⁴ LOYA Joseph A. OSA, *Intercurch Relations in Post-Perestroika (Central and) Eastern Europe: A Short History of an Ecumenical Meltdown*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1992/1. 7. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Loya_Interchurch.pdf.

2. Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in Poland

It should be emphasised that the very “idea that only one confession could exist in one state was not native to the Central European countries; it was inflamed by external political conflict”²⁵ In one view, the Poles sometimes have not been exempt from the temptation of attributing to themselves a *messianic mission* in history,²⁶ thus such a theology and spirituality might many times well be a prop for intolerance and even discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities.

The Roman Catholic Church in Poland, not unlike many other churches and denominations in the region, is presently undergoing what is perhaps the “deepest crisis in its thousand-year history”.²⁷ The ever more diminishing social support for the Roman Catholic Church in Poland might stem from the “failure of the Church to fulfil its implicit functions”.²⁸ It seems that many times the Church does not meet the requirements of the changing contemporary socio-political situation in Poland.

Since Poland regained its freedom, approximately eighty percent of the Ukrainians in Poland now belong to the Byzantine-rite Roman Catholic Church and to the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church.²⁹ Despite initial protests from some groups of parishioners, the Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Church have been recognised by the authorities and finally both have been granted official legal status.

The latter church obtained its first bishop, Jan MARTYNIAK, in 1989, who became at the same time one of the auxiliary bishops to the Primate of Poland.³⁰ Thus the position to which the smaller

²⁵ WILSON Kate: *Klejnot swobodnego sumnienia – the Jewel of Freedom of Conscience: Churches together in Central Europe after the Reformation*. In NAGYPÁL Szabolcs – ŠAJDA Peter (eds.), *A Pentatonic Landscape: Central Europe, Ecology, Ecumenism. Ecumenical Anthology I of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Central European Subregion*. Budapest, 2002. 147. <http://www.koed.hu/penta/kate.pdf>.

²⁶ CHROSTOWSKI Waldemar, *The Suffering, Chosenness and Mission of the Polish Nation*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1994/1. 1. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Chrostowski_Suffering.pdf.

²⁷ SZCZYPIORSKI Andrzej, *A Roman Catholic Fortress (Katolicki Pevnost)* (tr. SATTERWHITE James). Religion in Eastern Europe 1992/1. 1. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Szczypiorski_Catholic%20Fortress.pdf.

²⁸ GRZYMALA-MOSZCZYNKA Halina, *Factors Affecting Unconditional Acceptance of the Institution of the Church in Poland*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1991/1. 1. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Moszczynska_Factors%20Affecting.pdf.

²⁹ MIRONOWICZ Antoni, *National Minorities in Poland Today*. In NAGYPÁL Szabolcs – ŠAJDA Peter (eds.), *A Pentatonic Landscape: Central Europe, Ecology, Ecumenism. Ecumenical Anthology I of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Central European Subregion*. Budapest, 2002. 118. <http://www.koed.hu/penta/antoni.pdf>.

³⁰ PATER Dobrosław Karol, *Grandiose Visions: Changes in the Roman Catholic Church in Poland after*

churches – including the various Protestant ones – aspire is slowly to be an “insider in spite of being different”.³¹ But in fact the rule of political symmetry hardly applies to them at all. In the press, indeed, there are sometimes complaints from Orthodox members that they feel heavily discriminated against.³²

3. Current Schisms in the Ukrainian Church

The Ukrainian church, perhaps even more than in most other countries in the region, must always keep in mind that it lives in the power triad of Rome, Constantinople and Moscow.³³ At the moment there are three Orthodox churches in Ukraine: first, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC–KP); then, the Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Church (UOAC); and finally, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC–MP). In addition there is one Byzantine Catholic Church, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC).

The schism of Philaret DENYSENKO (1929–) in the early 1990s was supported by political forces as well, especially by then-President Leonid Makarovich KRAVCHUK (Леонід Макарович КРАВЧУК, 1934–); this fact allowed it to acquire significant numbers. The next political administration, however, under the leadership of Leonid Danylovych KUCHMA (Леонід Данилович КУЧМА, 1938–) decided to support the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC–MP).³⁴

The fierce opposition of the two powerful political forces led to the so-called *Black Tuesday* on 18 July 1995, when police units beat participants in the funeral procession of Patriarch Volodymyr (ROMANIUK) (1925–1995). When describing the immensely tragic schisms in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, we should emphasise here that compared to the group headed by Patriarch Philaret (DENYSENKO),

³¹ 1989. Religion in Eastern Europe 1992/1. 3–4. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Pater_Grandiose.pdf.

³² GRZYMALA-MOSZCZYNSKA Halina, *Established Religion versus New Religions: Social Perception and Legal Consequences*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1996/2. 3. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Grzymala_Established_April%201996.pdf.

³³ GORNIK-KOCIKOWSKA Krystyna, *Tensions in Poland over Ecumenical Dialogue*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2008/1. 9. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Tensions%20in%20Poland_Gornik-Kocikowska.pdf.

³⁴ CAVA Ralph DELLA, *Assessing Pope John Paul II's Visit to Ukraine in 2001*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2001/5. 6. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/DellaCava_Assessing.pdf.

³⁵ PLOKHY Serhii, *Church, State and Nation in Ukraine (between 1991 and 1996)* (tr. YURKEVICH Myroslav). Religion in Eastern Europe 1999/5. 17–24. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Plokhy_Church_Oct%201999.pdf.

the Ukrainian autocephalists are significantly weaker as well as smaller in number.³⁵

An important factor in the future may be that in general “monastics in Ukraine, nuns and monks, remained loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate; not passing over to the Kiev Patriarchate, the Autocephalists or even the Greek Catholics”.³⁶ Thus the several Roman Catholic monasteries scattered across the country had to invite and settle citizens of various other countries, mostly Poles, in the territory of Ukraine.

Apart from the Greek Catholic rite, Catholicism is also present in Ukraine in its Latin form, resulting in an ever-growing presence of Polish Catholic priests in the country. This phenomenon, together with the “setting up of parallel Roman Catholic ecclesiastical structures”, just increases the tension between these two branches of Catholicism.³⁷

After centuries of separation, in 1965 the mutual lifting of the anathemas or excommunications dating back to the year 1054 finally happened, followed by the establishment of a joint theological commission in 1979. This made it possible that official Orthodox and Roman Catholic representatives could declare in Balamand, Lebanon, in 1993 that uniatism was a method of union of the past.

As such, it was deemed an obstacle to the full communion of these two branches of Christianity. All this, however, suscited great worries among Greek Catholics that they would be betrayed and left alone by the Vatican. The much-expected papal visit of Pope JOHN PAUL II to Ukraine in the year 2001, however, eased many of these fears and widespread negative feelings from the Greek Catholic side.

While retaining religious freedom, most of these churches would desire a “preferential option” from the state.³⁸ But it is clear from the above that Ukraine cannot and does not have a state church. In many post-Soviet countries, but especially in Russia itself, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) continues to exhibit an “atavistic suspicion

³⁶ ALFAYEV Hilarion (Bishop), *Orthodoxy in a New Europe: Problems and Perspectives*. Europaica 2004/35. 5.; and Religion in Eastern Europe 2004/3. 5. <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/2004/hilarion.pdf>.

³⁷ DAVIS Nathaniel, *Hard Data on Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2000/6. 10. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Davis_Hard%20Data.pdf.

³⁸ ROBERSON Ronald G., *The Roman Catholic Church and Reconciliation with the Orthodox in Central and Eastern Europe*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1998/3. 1. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Roberson_The%20Catholic_June%201998.pdf.

³⁹ KRAWCHUK Andrii, *Religious Life in Ukraine: Continuity and Change*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1996/3. 4. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Krawchuk_Religious_June%201996.pdf.

of the Roman Catholic Church, and an exaggerated fear of Eastern (Greek) Catholics".³⁹

There is especially the suspicion and even fear in some circles that perhaps the Polish Roman Catholic Church is exporting its difficulties to other neighbouring countries. Another worry is that, together with the Protestant churches, at the same time they are transferring native Western competitive struggles of various Christian faiths onto Ukrainian soil.

4. Protestantism in Eastern Europe

Let us focus now on the Protestant perspective as far as the situation in Ukraine is concerned.⁴⁰ One of the reasons for the tremendous success of the growth of Protestantism in Ukraine is the described tripartite division of the Orthodox Church.⁴¹ According to some estimates, there were approximately seven to fourteen million Orthodox, four to five million Greek Catholics and three to six million Protestants among the fifty-two-million population of Ukraine in the year 1992, just after the long-awaited dissolution of the Soviet Union.⁴²

The freedom after 1990 caused a culture shock to many of the Central and Eastern European citizens. One of the characteristics of *culture shock* (as described by OGDEN in 1960) is the following: in general, culture shock means the "mutual rejection of newcomers by traditional culture, and rejection of old traditional culture by newcomers with attendant feelings of discomfort, disgust, and anxiety".⁴³

According to some, Orthodoxy might not be totally ready for theological competition either: with its central task in preserving religious tradition, a developmental gap or theological lag has been created when encountering a competitive situation in modernity. First, we have to deeply understand and thoroughly analyse *tradition*: it is

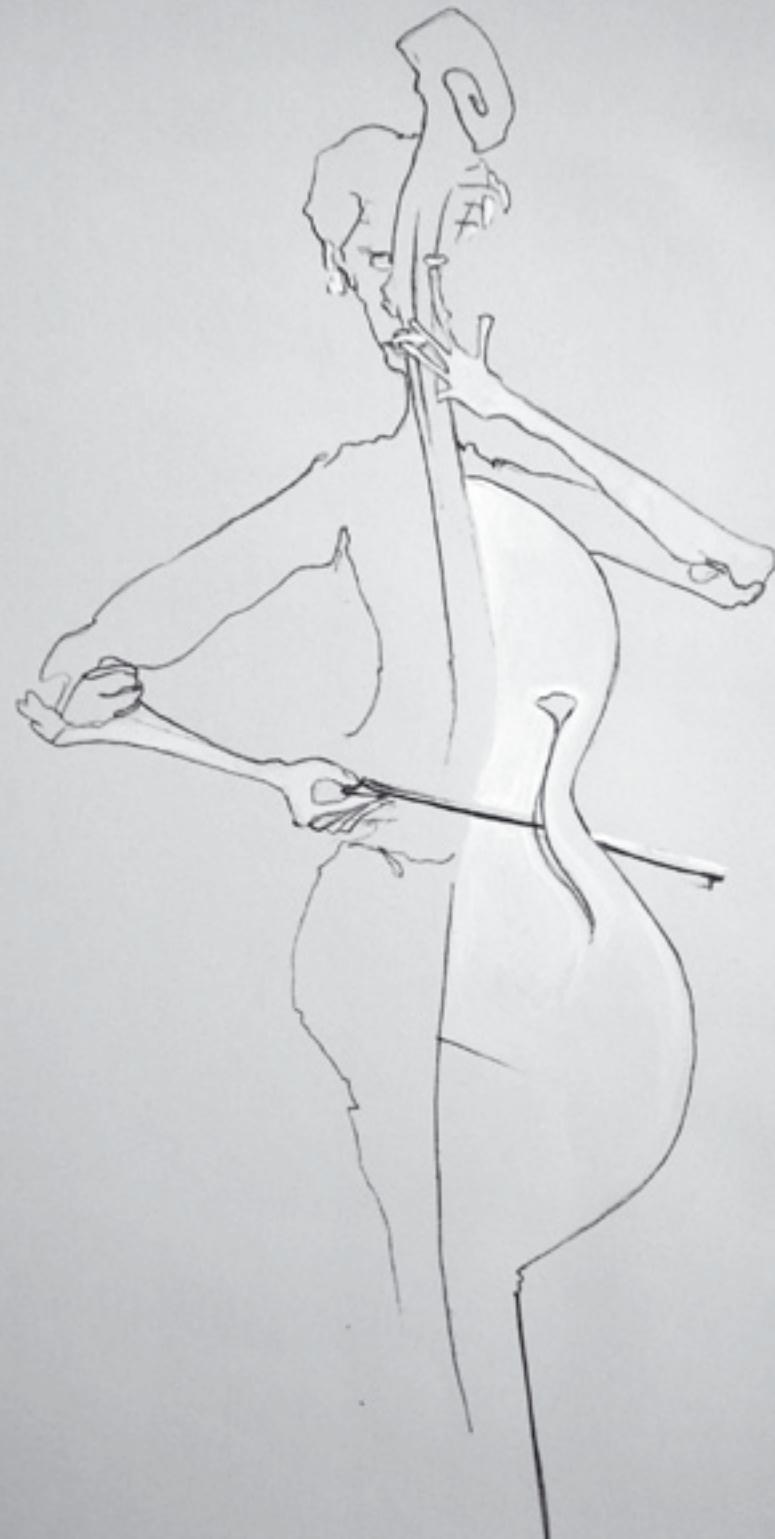
³⁹ LOYA Joseph A. OSA, *Report on the Roman Catholic Church in Eastern Europe*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1997/2. 1. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Loya_Report_April%201997.pdf.

⁴⁰ SAWATSKY Walter, *Impressions from Travelling in Russia, Ukraine and Central Asia in Spring 1999. Religion in Eastern Europe 1999/4. 1–11.* http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Sawatsky_Impressions_Aug%201999.pdf.

⁴¹ HERLIHY Patricia, *Crisis in Society and Religion in Ukraine*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1992/1. 4. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Herlihy_Crisis.pdf.

⁴² HERLIHY Patricia, *Crisis in Society and Religion in Ukraine*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1992/1. 3. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Herlihy_Crisis.pdf.

⁴³ GRZYMALA-MOSZCZYNsKA Halina, *Poland as Cross-cultural Context: Theology and Economics in Transition from the Communist to the Post-Communist Era*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1990/1. 1. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Moszczynska_Poland.pdf.



most of all a socio-cultural transmission to preserve, reproduce and develop culture.⁴⁴

Its aim is to socialise new generations and stabilise social relations and cohesion. It forms a collective character with a high level of consistency, while codifying the life experience of human groups. According to some, further reasons for losing the battle include dependence on the protection of the state and damages suffered during Communism.⁴⁵ Other reasons may be the lack of proper theological response to the phenomena of democracy and human rights, and the low level of theological education coupled with Christian illiteracy among believers, as well as financial and social difficulties.

Proselytism is at the same time carried out at the level of the emerging lay and civil society, as well as in the world of our everyday experience.⁴⁶ In order to finally and firmly avoid any kind of mutual proselytism, some have called for adopting “joint commissions, which will examine the passage of faithful from one church to another, guided by the principles of respect for freedom of conscience, transparency, respect and acknowledgment of the other tradition, and which would deal with each case with pastoral consideration and prudence”.⁴⁷

III. Proselytism and Religious Freedom

1. Corruption of Witness

After the thorough analysis of the Russian, Ukrainian and Polish situation, the important term to consider here in a deeper and more systematic way is the concept of *proselytism*, which has changed its meaning quite a lot, almost from one point to its complete opposite. In Biblical times (coming from the Greek phrase *who comes towards*) it basically meant a person who became a member of the Jewish community by believing in YHWH and respecting the Law of Moses.

The word itself occurs only four times in the New Testament,

⁴⁴ KOLODNIY Anatoly, *Traditional Faiths in Ukraine and Missionary Activity*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2000/1. 1. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Kolodny_Traditional_Feb%202000.pdf.

⁴⁵ MARYNOVITCH Myroslav, *Toward Religious Freedom in Ukraine: Indigenous Churches and Foreign Missionaries*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1990/5. 7., 11. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Marynovitch_Toward_Oct%202000.pdf.

⁴⁶ VRCAN Srdjan, *Proselytism, Religion, and Ethnicification of Politics: A Sociological Analysis*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1997/5. 4. <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/VRCAN2.PRO.doc>.

⁴⁷ (Jubilee) Velehrad Congress, *A Communiqué: Towards a Deeper Solidarity among Christians in Europe (on 1 July, 2007)*. Religion in Eastern Europe 2007/3. 2. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/2007/congress_communique.pdf.

once in Matthew and thrice in the Acts of the Apostles. Among others, *proselytes* were present at the event of Pentecost.⁴⁸ Jesus Christ condemns the Pharisees, and when enlisting their sins, he mentions that they cross sea and land to make a single *proselyte*, but then they make this new convert twice as much a child of hell as themselves.⁴⁹

When the first Apostles selected seven persons of good standing, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom they appointed, by laying their hands on them, to the task of waiting on tables, one of them was Nicolaus, a *proselyte* from the city of Antioch.⁵⁰ Finally, it is mentioned that many Jews and also many devout *proselytes* followed the apostles Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue their life in the grace of God.⁵¹

The *Early Church* continued to use the term, but gave it another meaning, parallel with the extension of the phrase *people of God* from Jews, the people and nation of Israel, to all Christians. In those times, *proselytism* started to mean a person of another faith who converted to Christianity by changing her or his religion, turning towards and joining Christianity.

Some centuries later, in the Christian *ecumenical movement*, the term gradually received a very different meaning, close to the one of *sheep-stealing*.⁵² In contemporary vocabulary we are not speaking anymore about individuals marked by the name *proselyte*, but rather processes of churches, denoting their activity, with the suffix *-ism*.

The *Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty* (CWPRL, 1961) document defines the term *proselytism* as the corruption of witness, specifically in its purpose, motive and spirit.⁵³ This is quite a broad and lax definition, embracing all kinds of false witnesses. The meaning of the term is slightly narrowed by the later *Common Witness and Proselytism* (CWP, 1970) document. It circumscribes the word as a conglomerate of different kinds of improper attitudes, mentalities and behaviours.⁵⁴ What connects them is that they fundamentally violate the right of the human being, either Christian or

⁴⁸ Acts 2,10.

⁴⁹ Matthew 23,15.

⁵⁰ Acts 6,5.

⁵¹ Acts 13,43.

⁵² HORNER Norman A., *The Problem of Intra-Christian Proselytism*. International Review of Mission (IRM) 1981/3. 304–313.

⁵³ *Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty* (CWPRL, 1961). In FRY Franklin Clark (ed.), *Evanston to New Delhi (1954–1961): Report of the Central Committee to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC)*. Genève, 1961. 239–245.

⁵⁴ *Common Witness and Proselytism* (CWP, 1970). The Ecumenical Review 1971/1. 9–20.

non-Christian, to be free from external coercion in various religious matters.

It is obvious that in this stage proselytism is understood as the opposite of religious freedom. Especially remarkable is the fact that it includes non-Christians as well, using for them the contemporary term *people of other living faiths*. Of course it does not exclude, forbid or even discourage mission as such, but calls forth the responsibility of believers to conduct it in a fair and honest manner, free of coercion on others.

The *Common Witness* (CW, 1982) document keeps and reiterates this meaning, with some alterations: proselytism also violates the right to be free not just from mainly external coercion, but also from moral restraint, as well as from different psychical and psychological pressures.⁵⁵ The first document to sharpen the term for Christians is *The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness* (CPCCW, 1996), stating that proselytism is the collective noun for all conscious efforts of Christians with the intent to win adherents from other Christian communities.⁵⁶ This is also the very first place to use the word conversely to *common witness*.

The most elaborate and accurate definition of this concept is to be found in the ecumenical document *Towards Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism* (TCW, 1997). It uses the word to denote the encouragement of Christians to change their denominational allegiance.⁵⁷ But it applies only when this happens through certain ways and means that strongly contradict the spirit of Christian love and charity, violate the freedom of the human being, and greatly diminish trust in the Christian witness of the Church of Jesus Christ.

In this broader sense, proselytism is in fundamental opposition to ecumenism, to the ecumenical movement and thinking, to religious freedom and liberty, and also to the common and therefore Christian witness in Russia, in Ukraine, in Poland, or elsewhere in the world.

⁵⁵ *Common Witness* (CW, 1982). The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity–Information Service 1982/3–4. 142–162.

⁵⁶ *The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness* (CPCCW, 1996). The Ecumenical Review 1996/2. 212–221.

⁵⁷ *Towards Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism* (TCW, 1997). Genève, 1997.

2. Liberty and Responsibility

The widespread concept of *religious freedom* places the question of common witness in the communal context of the various world religions and the different Christian denominations, and on the other hand in the personal context of free will as well as of human individuality and one's own personality. There are at least six main facets of religious freedom that can be discerned: these phenomena are the legal or juridical, the integrative or integral, the individual or spiritual, the intramural or communitarian, the ecumenical or interdenominational, and finally the interreligious or interfaith dimensions.⁵⁸

From among these, the *legal* or juridical dimension of religious freedom and liberty is defined by law and regulation in constitutions and statutes, and advocated in international covenants and declarations, as well as in Church and ecclesial pronouncements and documents. The integral and *integrative* component of religious freedom is inextricably linked to some other basic and important human rights, and of course human responsibilities.

In its definition of religious freedom, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR, issued and ratified in 1948) was influenced by contemporary theological views, schools and movements. On the other hand, it also had a great impact on the later development of Christian self-understandings, for example on the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church. The paragraph to be quoted here in this respect is a beautifully elaborated and eloquent one, which goes as follows: “Everyone has the right to *freedom of thought, conscience and religion*. This right includes the freedom to *change* the religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private, to *manifest* this religion or belief, in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”⁵⁹

When the CWP (1970) document mentions this whole definition, it does not miss adding a very important phrase to the last sentence: everyone has the right to manifest religion also “*in social action*”. This addition signals the explicit turnover of the current theological way of thinking towards social (and sometimes political and sociological) issues as well, since they should be – and step by step they are indeed – on the agenda of every religion and denomination, according to the present understanding.

Every right, however, always has a counterpart, which is usually a

⁵⁸ GEYER Alan, *Pluralism and Religious Freedom*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1995/4. 3–9. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Geyer_Pluralism.pdf.

⁵⁹ LITTELL Franklin H., *A Response to the Decree on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humanae*, 1965). In ABBOTT Walter M. SI (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (1962–1965). New York, 1966. 697–700.

moral and ethical duty and *responsibility*. The Second Vatican Council explicitly formulated this responsibility when it dealt with human dignity. The main document in this respect is *Dignitatis Humanæ: Declaration on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious* (DH, 1965). According to this document, the other side of religious freedom in this setting is the common human responsibility to seek and search for the truth ceaselessly and without sparing any effort – especially since people have reason, they have conscience, and moreover they have free will.

The *Nairobi Statement* of the WCC from the year 1975 completes this picture, adding that people also have a common human responsibility to serve the whole community that they are members of and that they belong to either by blood, by history, by culture or by their own personal decision. In summary, we can say here that the ecumenical progress achieved thus far has been somewhat jeopardised by the freedom that was finally reached after the collapse of communist dictatorship. According to some insights, its ultimate result has been the “weakening of all three factors: ecumenism, evangelisation of the unchurched, and religious liberty”.⁶⁰

Holger LAHAYNE

Law and Responsibility from a Reformed Perspective

The rule of law is one of the cornerstones of a democratic society. If the law is not king, which means above those in government, there may be fair elections, but we do not have democracy in the truest sense. There is a broad consensus that laws are important and must be honoured. In this regard, people mostly think about the positive law of a state, passed by parliaments.

But what about the moral law, the law of God? Are we as citizens under the law of God? This is quite a controversial question, and usually this is denied, even by many Christians. Who are we that we dare to impose our moral thinking on other, non-believing, people? Is the moral law still valid, and for whom?

I. Law

First of all, we have to keep in mind an important distinction. The *Second Helvetic Confession* says: “For the sake of clarity we distinguish the moral law, which is contained in the Decalogue or two Tablets and expounded in the books of Moses; the ceremonial law, which determines the ceremonies and worship of God; and the judicial law, which is concerned with political and domestic matters.”¹

The ceremonial and judicial law are not binding anymore, but the moral law still exists. Concerning this, the confession confirms: “We teach that the will of God is explained for us in the law of God, what God wills or does not will us to do, what is good and just, or what is evil and unjust.”² The moral law defines what is good, evil, just or moral. The *Westminster Confession* calls it, therefore, a “perfect rule of righteousness”.³ There is a broad Biblical foundation for this claim, because the eternity of God’s moral law is confirmed many times.⁴

Especially the Calvinist-Reformed tradition emphasises that this

⁶⁰ MOJZES Paul, *Ecumenism, Evangelism, and Religious Liberty*. Religion in Eastern Europe 1996/2. 4. http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/Mojzes_Ecumenism_April%201996.pdf.

¹ *Second Helvetic Confession*. XII,1.

² *Second Helvetic Confession*. XII,2

³ *Westminster Confession*. 19,2.

⁴ See for example Ps 19,9–10; 105,8; 111,7–8; 119,98.111–112.142.144.151–125.160; Isa 30,8–9; Mt 5,18; Lk 16,17.