

Liberty

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Documented from Soviet Sources—
**THE TRUTH ABOUT RELIGIOUS
LIBERTY IN THE U.S.S.R.**
**WHAT COMMUNISTS SAY
ABOUT CHRISTIANS**

BY PATRICIA GLENN

JUNK-FOO *Religion*



Our teachers called them "opening devotionals," but we knew that what we were doing was neither praying nor worshipping.

When I was in high school, my homeroom teacher handed out assignments for "opening devotionals." Each student, on his or her day, was to read a passage of Scripture and offer a prayer. Readings, chosen by each student, ranged from "Jesus wept" (chosen for its brevity) to long passages from the Song of Solomon (chosen for their embarrassment potential). I have no memory of passages chosen for their devotional impact.

According to the rules of the "game," any student could opt out of participating, but peer pressure, if nothing else, propelled us dutifully forward. Not that we really wanted to pray, but neither did any of us want to be the one who refused. I think we all recognized, without being able to define our feelings, that what we were doing was neither praying nor worshipping, but mocking.

We were aware of the Catholic school across town and of the fundamentalist Protestant school a few blocks away. Some of us had relatives who attended parochial schools. We knew that students in Christian schools attended chapel at least once a day and that they studied religion in addition to courses like ours.

We were in a public school. That, we understood, was different. We got our religion at home and in church if we got it at all. Some of us had family devotionals and prayer at home, some didn't. But what we got of religion, we got because our parents wanted us to have it. And we knew that different parents had different ideas about religion. Some of us went to church on Sunday. Some—not many—went to church, or synagogue, on Saturday.

I remember glancing at a Jewish classmate during our devotionals and seeing his discomfort as a student read New Testament passages and prayed "in Jesus' name." I wasn't the only one who glanced at him; and to many of us, as the days went by, he began to seem more and more—different. He went to school with us, he participated in sports with us, he laughed with us, but he wasn't one of us. We didn't learn that during science class or phys. ed. or English lit. We learned that during the devotionals.

There was a girl who was different too. So different that she didn't even stay in the room for the devotionals. She was a Jehovah's Witness. Whatever that was, we decided, it couldn't be Christian. Christians weren't all alike, we knew; but all of them stayed in the room. Even our foreign exchange student, who read the Koran, stayed in the room. Jehovah's Witnesses had to be something else. Very much something else.

While the devotionals were primarily a source of humor or embarrassment, I think all of us prayed sometime during the day—at least during test week. We asked God to help us with

the geometry test, Latin declensions, and history dates. Some undoubtedly prayed while doing homework, and even over family problems, dating, acne, and other monumental teen-age concerns. Maybe we were kind of afraid of God, or at least didn't know Him very well, but we got pretty intimate with Him when we really felt the need. I don't recall worrying much about my grammar; I just talked to Him. Sincerely. One-to-one. In the privacy of my room usually. Certainly not in the circus atmosphere of the "voluntary" devotionals.

When I remember the school prayers and compare them with the prayers that meant something to me, I chuckle a bit over politicians attempting to write a "nondenominational" or "voluntary" prayer for use in public schools. School prayer, at best, is "fast-food religion." Or, more precisely, "junk-food religion." A serving up of cardboard fries and sawdust burgers. Empty calories. Indigestible and indefensible.

There's something else I remember. In history class, between memorizing dates and battles, we learned that our country was founded on the principle of religious freedom. We learned that many of the first colonists fled persecution under one church-state alliance or another. They braved the perils of a new land rather than compromise conscience under the state-mandated religion of the old.

They were not, in the main, agnostics or atheists. They were believers. Believers in God. Believers in prayer. But believers, too, in the iniquity of state-sanctioned religion. They *knew* what resulted when the state dictated religious preference. They *knew* what it meant to be forced to pray in a manner offensive to conscience. And so they wrote the First Amendment. And, later, as immigrants of many faiths arrived, each to pursue his or her vision of truth and opportunity, our forefathers established the public school system. There students of all religions and of no religion were to become Americans—Methodists, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Presbyterians, Seventh-day Adventists, Roman Catholics, Moslems, Jews, agnostics, atheists—but Americans all.

My high school classmates are scattered all over this great country. They are rearing their own families now. Their children come home from their own schools to tell of assignments in their own homerooms. Not many come with stories of assigned devotionals and of classmates who are different. Not many are faced with the choice of praying or leaving the room. Most probably get closest to God during test week, when the history date won't come to mind or the missed homework exacts its own penalties. And most probably get closest to God over the same teen-age problems that once drove their parents to their knees. They find God, not in a text scribbled on a blackboard, not in a hastily mumbled prayer written by politicians seeking to stay in office, but in the privacy of a need shared with God. Full of spiritual calories. Digestible, defensible, and Constitutional.

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What effect would President Reagan's proposed School Prayer Amendment have on the First Amendment's religion clauses, which prohibit an establishment of religion and guarantee its free exercise?

asked its legal adviser, Robert W. Nixon, to interview Professor Van Alstyne.

LIBERTY: Even some opponents of the School Prayer Amendment seem to believe it is legislation that would have little effect on First Amendment case law in areas apart from prayer. Do you subscribe to this view?

does so. The Supreme Court decisions that the Analysis itself declares are meant to be overruled by the amendment include devotional readings of Scripture, and not merely "prayers" in some narrowly defined sense. The Analysis also unequivocally states that readings from the Bible and other forms of sectarian liturgy would be authorized.

LIBERTY: Since the late 1940s the Supreme Court has denied direct federal and state financial assistance to elementary and secondary schools for religious uses. Would the proposed prayer amendment affect decisions in this area of church-state law?

VAN ALSTYNE: Your question recognizes what most people do not: To the extent the proposed amendment authorizes religious devotional services in public schools, necessarily and implicitly it also authorizes the appropriation of public revenue for the direct support of religion in those schools. For example, if 1 percent of each school day is given over to teacher-directed "voluntary" prayers or other devotional exercises, 1 percent of that day's school budget is effectively and directly expended in support of that activity. The amendment does not require, but presumably would allow, a substantial amount of such activity—opening each class with five minutes of such "voluntary" activity, for instance, rather than merely a few minutes of the first class each day.

In this respect, as your question implies, the School Prayer Amendment is inconsistent with the First Amendment. In brief, the proposed amendment introduces a specific inconsistency between its own theory of "appropriate" religious uses of public funds and our current First Amendment practice forbidding such appropriations.

LIBERTY: If that inconsistency is enshrined in the Constitution, would not even broader court-approved expenditures be likely?

VAN ALSTYNE: I don't know the answer to that question, but the effect could be profound. Given that the direct use of public money to support devotional exercises is permissible, would the Supreme Court be content to construe the First Amendment in a manner generally inconsistent with the "new" principle implicit in the School Prayer Amendment? Or would the Court attempt to reconcile the two amendments? Certainly the latter course is possible. The Court could do so simply by holding that, in light of the new amendment, it will no longer interpret the First Amendment itself as foreclosing direct financial expenditures from state or local tax revenues for the encouragement and subsidy of religious practice.

This possible "interpretative" effect is what I meant in saying that approval of this



IF THE SCHOOL PRAYER AMENDMENT BECOMES LAW



A legal scholar points to consequences that transcend prayer and Bible reading in public schools.



The proposed amendment seems simple, direct, and uncompromising: "Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any state to participate in prayer."

But one constitutional scholar, William W. Van Alstyne, professor of law at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, believes the amendment might adversely affect future First Amendment decisions.

Since media reports of the debate over the proposed amendment have not focused on its impact on church-state law, LIBERTY

VAN ALSTYNE: No, I do not. The amendment embraces a constitutional theory of religious practice backed by government power that may necessarily affect First Amendment interpretations in matters additional to prayer and scriptural recitations in public institutions.

LIBERTY: The goal of the proposed prayer amendment seems to be only to return prayer to public-school classrooms. Why do you mention scriptural recitations?

VAN ALSTYNE: I do so because the 34-page White House Analysis that accompanied the proposed amendment plainly

amendment may necessarily affect Supreme Court interpretations of the First Amendment in matters additional to prayer and scriptural interpretations in public institutions.

LIBERTY: What effect do you think the proposed amendment would have on government financial aid to church-related colleges and universities?

VAN ALSTYNE: Again, the effects are uncertain. Currently, government financial aid to church-related colleges and universities stops short of facilities or programs that involve religious activities. But insofar as the proposed amendment would directly authorize religious services even in public universities and colleges, the distinction that now restricts public aid to religious schools must necessarily become awkward to maintain.

To put it another way, if it is unobjectionable that a class conducted in the state's own community colleges may be commenced each day with a prayer to be recited by the instructor for the benefit of all students "voluntarily" participating, it makes no sense to suppose that a similar class two blocks away and different only in that the prayer being conducted is in a church-related college somehow makes that college constitutionally ineligible to receive merely the same financial assistance that the community college is receiving.

In the case we're imagining, the prayers recited in both sets of classrooms could well be identical, just as the selections from Scripture might be the same. By amending the Constitution as proposed in the prayer amendment, "the people" may declare that they now think it constitutionally appropriate to expend tax funds in support of religious exercises even within public institutions. In such a case, it would certainly become increasingly hard for the Supreme Court to "explain" why the First Amendment itself continues to forbid assisting church-related colleges that are "merely" doing the same thing.

Once one collapses the wall of separation within the public school, there may be no wall left to distinguish the public school from the church-related school. The only difference would be who prescribes the content of the religious service—the government in the public school, the church in the private school.

LIBERTY: What effect might passage of the School Prayer Amendment have on the radical-right drive to reverse Supreme Court rulings that apply the Bill of Rights to the states?

VAN ALSTYNE: The amendment has no necessary consequences of this kind. It is not limited to the states. It allows the federal government equally to provide for "volun-

tary" prayer or related religious exercises in any public place—schools and office buildings being only two. The amendment is not simply a "federalism" measure, more or less permitting each state to determine its own statewide policy in respect to "voluntary" prayers in public institutions. The merger of religion and secular activity in the operations of both national and state government is provided for by this proposed amendment.

LIBERTY: As you view the proposed amendment, how would the prayer be chosen for use in a public school?

VAN ALSTYNE: The Analysis accompanying the proposed amendment addresses this question squarely. The character and content of the "voluntary" devotional exercise is to be determined by the government unit having jurisdiction over the public facility in which the religious exercises are to be conducted. Presumably, a local school board would be that unit for public schools within its district. A city council would be the unit in respect to the town hall, the civic auditorium, or city office buildings.

Content of the authorized prayer would be determined by the majority controlling the local government. Accordingly, it might be a strictly Protestant prayer if that view prevailed after competition, debate, and vote. Elsewhere it might be a Catholic prayer, an Islamic prayer, or a Mormon prayer, as the local majority might determine.

Commendable in its candor, the Analysis recognizes that there is literally no such thing as a nondenominational prayer. With hundreds of religions in the United States, some monotheistic, some not, some trinitarian, others finding such an ascription blasphemous, the notion of nonsectarianism in religious liturgy is implausible, and the proposed amendment does not require it.

Judging by past practice, what one might expect typically would be a "compromised" prayer—a government-approved prayer combining watered-down elements of Protestantism, Catholicism, and, perhaps, Judaism. Presumably, too, one might expect Bible readings sometimes from the New Testament, sometimes from the Old, sometimes from the King James Version, sometimes from another.

Problems may arise when a statewide majority chooses what a community may not prefer. Though a given city or school district may prescribe "X" prayer for exclusive use in its schools, the state's selection of "Y" prayer may prevail. It is not true, therefore, that only local religious minorities may find themselves estranged within the school systems their children must attend. Even local religious majorities

may find themselves religious strangers in their own schools, if the statewide majority has a different view.

LIBERTY: What if a state mandates school prayers and a community says, "No prayers in our schools," or just the opposite?

VAN ALSTYNE: Presumably, in keeping with the Analysis provided by the White House, in the first instance the answer to your question would be determined according to each state's own law. A state legislature might provide that a community need not make provision for religious exercises. On the other hand, presumably it may require every community to do so and also prescribe precisely the content of the religious exercise that must be provided.

While the proposed amendment will exempt any person from forced participation, it does not exempt communities from complying with state laws that would require them to provide for a prescribed form of prayer or other devotional exercises. Thus, it is entirely possible that a dominant religious majority at the state legislative level might mandate an exclusive form of religious practice to be used in each community, regardless of that community's own strong preference against the state's prescribed form of prayer or other religious exercise.

Actually, the overall situation is potentially even more fraught with conflict. Insofar as Congress approves bills of expenditures to assist the states in the operation of their schools and other public institutions, it is possible under the proposed amendment that Congress might be able to condition the availability of such federal assistance to such states and communities as will provide for prayers and other religious exercises. In brief, Congressional power to spend money "with strings attached" may escalate divisiveness and conflicts from the federal level to the smallest community.

Such is the prospect once the Constitution is amended to return the divisiveness of religious controversy as a legitimate subject for purely political resolution. Each of us will then be called upon to compete for the due recognition of his or her religion in public places, lest other people's religion be entrenched to the exclusion of our own.

It was to avoid this competition, as well as other problems, that Madison and Jefferson struggled to separate church and state. Many people cannot seem to remember that controversy or are supremely confident of their own premises. As Santayana noted, those who cannot learn from history are condemned to repeat it. Should the Prayer Amendment pass, we shall be condemned to repeat a great deal of history.

Despite court decisions guaranteeing the religious neutrality of the public school system and ensuring parents' rights to control the spiritual upbringing of their children, some religious groups are seeking converts in the nation's public schools.

The groups range from well-established denominations and evangelical youth organizations to controversial new religions and even radical political parties.

Critics of such practices cite recent incidents to prove this point.

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes frequently appears at high schools as part of its religious mission. A student at Parker High School in Jacksonville, Florida, complained that at a November assembly the FCA followed a film on the national Football League with a Baltimore Oriole pitcher's testimony of his personal experiences with Christ.

"I have no argument with the beliefs of this group," said student Jill Houston. "I am a member of my church youth group. I do, however, feel the public school system is an inappropriate place for their expression."

In Washington State, school officials found themselves involved in controversy over a speech by Seattle Seahawks punter Herman Weaver at Pullman High School. The high school coach had invited the professional sports figure, hoping he would address the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Instead, Weaver talked mostly about his Christian experience. Visits by Seahawks players to Seattle high schools last year prompted the city's board of education to issue strict guidelines on the promotion of religion in the schools.

School officials in Madison, Wisconsin, last September canceled the last part of a speaking tour by evangelist David Story after he promoted his religious rallies during speeches on drug abuse and youth violence. Story was sponsored in Madison by the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, a charismatic Christian organization.

"We agreed to let him speak because he received good recommendations from other schools," Lafollete High School principal Bob Reif said. "We agreed that there was to be no mention of religion, and there wasn't." But Story told the students he could give more answers to their questions at his evangelistic meeting.

High School youth groups with specific religious emphasis, such as Young Life, frequently pay adult representatives to promote the clubs at high schools.

Roanoke Valley Young Life director Bill Provo told a meeting there that four high schools in the area had been organized with the clubs, and a fifth was targeted. Provo, a former teacher and coach at one of the schools, said a core of parents and teachers must be developed at school before a Young Life chapter is organized.

A similar group called Youth Alive is promoted by the Assemblies of God, a fast-growing Pentecostal denomination. The church's magazine, *Pentecostal Evangel*, reported that Youth Minister Irby McKnight organized a Youth Alive chapter at Lufkin, Texas, Intermediate School after he convinced the school superintendent that the group could help with a student drug problem. McKnight said 350 students have since "accepted Christ as Saviour through the meetings."

Learning of McKnight's success, Assemblies of God

youth minister Don Brazile set up a Youth Alive chapter in a junior high school in Texarkana, Texas. He told about his successes in the *Evangel*.

"I didn't want to start a ministry on a campus that already had one, because it would just turn out to be competition," said Brazile. "Since each high school in Texarkana had a Fellowship of Christian Athletes, I looked to junior high schools. They had no campus ministries."

Brazile said he chose Liberty-Eylau Junior High across town from his church because "God had opened a door" there.

"I didn't know all the rules and regulations," the youth minister said. "I just went to the campus and talked to the principal. I told him God had put a desire in my heart to reach out to the students at his school and asked him to think about it. Two months later I started my first meeting."

"Approximately 475 seventh- and eighth-grade students attend Liberty-Eylau," he continued. "The meetings began in a classroom, and 40 students came to the first one. Every time we met the group grew, and soon we had to move to the gym because so many young people were coming out. During the spring of 1981 attendance was 200 or more."

"At each of the meetings, if I speak or an evangelist or preacher speaks, we give an altar call," Brazile said. "Those who respond do more than just stand up and say a prayer. Each one has to come forward and give his name, address, and phone number. Anyone not willing to do this doesn't mean business in the first place."

"That's a good way to separate the halfhearted ones from those that are totally ready to give their hearts to Jesus. If they will say a sinner's prayer with you, come down out of the bleachers, and give you this information, they mean business, and those young people need to be followed up."

"I provide 'salvation packages' of follow-up materials that show them how to continue their walk with Jesus on a daily basis. I write each student's name on one, and Mrs. Garrett and Coach Allen, the sponsors from the school, go to the microphone before the next meeting starts and ask these students to come down and pick up their salvation packages."

"I think it's important to have sponsors from the school staff," he added. "I know that our campus ministry would not be successful without them."

"Do I have the right to go on campus and start a Christian organization?" Brazile asked rhetorically. "I'm glad I was ignorant of the fact that a lot of principals don't want preachers on campus. This would have hindered me if I had known it. I went on campus like, 'Hey, it's no big deal. Sure principals want campus ministries.' That's the attitude I went with, and that's what happened."

Brazile said he is confident of the support of School Principal, Elmer White, should local parents complain about his mission work.

"I don't even think that way," he said. "I believe that if the Youth Alive ministry I have at Liberty-Eylau is of men, if it's just of Don Brazile, or just of the Assemblies of God, it's going to crumble. But if it's of God (and I know it is), then no man, no Supreme Court, no army can overthrow it. So I walk on the campus at ease."

Brazile urged others to develop similar programs at public high schools.

BY JOSEPH L. CONN

TARGETING The Schools

Charismatics, cultists, evangelical youth groups, controversial new religions, even political propagandists are seeking converts in the public schools.



"It's time we quit asking God, 'Is it Your will for me to go out on the campus?' and get on the campuses and start working for God. That's where the lost souls are," he said. "The people who said it wouldn't benefit my youth group (at church) were right—it has helped my youth group none at all. But it's helped the Kingdom a whole lot—more than 250 people have been born into the kingdom of God."

Far from concerned about the church-state legal implications of Brazile's actions, the Texarkana Bar Association presented Brazile its Liberty Bell Award, given to a local person each year for leadership and contribution to the community, and strengthening "the effectiveness of the American system of freedom and liberty under law."

At the award ceremony, School Principal White commended Brazile for improving the overall atmosphere of the school. Chairman of the event Ida Lee Hawkins said, "I hope this award will serve as a reminder to you and perhaps also a source of strength for you to know that your work, your ideals, and your aspirations to spread Youth Alive to all of the schools in all of our school systems, Texas and Arkansas, are recognized, endorsed, and supported by the lawyers and judges of Texarkana, Texas, and Texarkana, Arkansas—the Texarkana Bar Association."

While some evangelical Christians might approve of allowing Brazile to use the public schools to spread his Pentecostal message, they probably would take alarm at other more controversial groups accused of similar activities.

For instance, The Way, International, a religious sect based in New Knoxville, Ohio, has two rock bands that play in cities across the country. The bands, called Takit and Joyful Noise, seek performances on college and high school campuses.

Norristown, Pennsylvania, high school principal William McCain said one of the bands performed at his school in 1980. The musicians allegedly did not reveal their religious character until the performance was underway.

In 1981, Denver public school officials denied one of the bands permission to play in their district.

The Way is a tongues-speaking group founded by Victor Paul Wierwille, called The Teacher by his followers. Among The Way's more controversial tenets and practices are denial of the divinity of Jesus and a training program in the use of guns at one of the group's camps.

Followers of Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church and the Church of Scientology and even advocates of EST therapy, a much-criticized self-improvement regimen, have been accused of attempting to gain entry to public schools through volunteer programs.

Proselytizing on school campuses may extend beyond religious mission work to political propaganda. *Newsweek* reported in its December 6 issue that two members of the Progressive Labor Party, a small political group, allegedly attempted to convert high school students to atheistic Communism. One of the teachers, Leonard Dick, of New York City, boasted that he transferred from one school to another "because I wanted to recruit the students."


Joseph L. Conn is editor of *Church & State*, the monthly magazine of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Reprinted with permission.



BY WALLACE GRAVES

CLOSET CHRISTIAN

I've received only one letter from Natasha since returning to the States. It had no return address.



I met Natasha Dyakova while teaching American literature for a year at a university in Bulgaria. Petite and pretty, she inspired her students to master the English language in a classroom down the hall. She has traveled abroad and shares her socialist friends' prejudice against capitalism.

Yet Natasha is fearful for her job, discreet with friends, and chary of her students. In a society that considers religion the opiate of the masses, Natasha is a closet Christian.

Of the two thousand students at the university, few are Christian. None are Moslem. One is Jewish. Students and teachers are much like their American counterparts in attitudes toward sex and art. Promiscuity is standard, pregnancy among the unmarried not uncommon, abortions available. Hollywood movies and American rock dominate their leisure.

But religion? They refuse to talk of it personally. They point out that the Bulgarian Constitution of 1944, Article 78, guarantees "freedom of conscience and creed, and the right to perform religious ceremonies." When asked about the drop in Jewish population through emigration, Turkish segregation, and the absence of Jews and Moslems in their university, they say it is not the state that excluded them. These people have excluded themselves.

A teacher proudly informed me that Bulgaria is the only European country that did not condemn a single Jew to die in Hitler's holocaust. Yet its Jewish population has dropped from 40,000 in the late 1940s to 4,000 today. The synagogue in Sofia, the national capital, is a virtual tomb. A lone rabbi hovers there protectively like a caretaker in an abandoned relic. Most Turkish Moslems live in ghettos. They do not share proportionately in state-supported jobs. If you insist on being Moslem or a Jew, I was told, you must suffer the consequence of state neglect.

"And Christians?"

"Christians are tolerated in Bulgaria."

"Are any of you Christian?"

No one responds.

After class, two girls confess an attraction to religion and point out another classmate, Zita, who is a Jew. But they reveal this more as proof of Bulgarian tolerance than confession of their faith. It is not incriminating to whisper this to the American teacher. He will soon be gone and leave no waves.

When I asked the professors their viewpoints on religion, reason prevailed, as one would expect among pedagogues. True,

religious impulse is common to man. But religion has no relevance today and deserves no state support.

"Do churches enjoy tax-exempt status?"

"There are no taxes."

"What about state welfare for the monks?"

"Unacceptable. They must work or live from donations."

"Are there any Christians among you?"

The men go for more vodka, and Natasha blushes. It is no secret that she periodically disappears from her nearby flat on unannounced errands. Once, on a dark side street, she was seen conversing with one of the town's two or three monks, in his threadbare robe and high-crowned black hat. She takes unusual interest in religious art and her flat is decorated with icon reproductions imported from the Soviet Union.

Natasha's behavior is regarded more as a personal malady than a rational human right, and her influence on her students is watched. The local monks, considered harmless, are allowed to stay in their historic monasteries and open their doors to tourists. But they are kept poor and few.


In Sofia religion is practiced more boldly. The nation's grandest religious edifice, the Alexander Nevski Memorial Cathedral, holds occasional masses. In the vast golden and marble nave built to shelter thousands beneath its Roman arches and high white dome, a hundred worshippers gather.

The atmosphere within is one of guarded daring; eyes do not willingly meet eyes. The chanting priests, feel renegade. The great church is not theirs. It is a state monument.

Built in 1912, the cathedral is dedicated to the Russian saint and advertised as a "monument to the fraternal Russian people, the liberators of Bulgaria." Its mass is blessed with magnificent Bulgarian voices in this land of Orpheus.

On the night I was there the air was filled with irony. The brilliance of candles and song was dimmed, then finally overwhelmed, by fireworks celebrating the October, 1917, Revolution, which was to abolish church and religion.

I've received only one letter from Natasha since returning to the States. It had no return address. Not that my letters would be dangerous. Nor her acquaintance with me. Nor even her religion. But together, they make her worth watching.

Natasha's religion is tolerated, but she pays the price. She welcomes few to her flat. She shops modestly and remains unmarried. She steps furtively, her warm coat raised against the chill. 

Wallace Graves, recently retired from California State University, Northridge, after more than twenty years as professor of English, has traveled extensively throughout his teaching career. This article is based on experiences during his term as visiting lecturer in Bulgaria.



Museum of Religion and Atheism: painting entitled *Freedom*.

WHAT COMMUNISTS SAY ABOUT CHRISTIANS

BY CARSTEN JOHNSEN

Indictments against the church by Marxists tempt one to agree with Nietzsche—the last Christian died on the cross!



Museum of Religion and Atheism: model of a monk's shop with numerous relics of superstitious characters.

The way the story goes, an American tourist in Moscow chides a Soviet acquaintance about his country's lack of freedom. "Why, in America," he says, "I can stand in front of the Capitol and shout, 'Send Ronald Reagan back to Hollywood!' and nothing will happen to me."

"That's nothing," responds the Russian. "I can stand in front of the Kremlin and shout, 'Send Ronald Reagan back to Hollywood!' and nothing will happen to me, either!"

Undoubtedly, variations of this story have featured every American president since Woodrow Wilson. And since Lenin, himself, a succession of Soviet leaders has contributed to the image of a totalitarian state that denies basic human rights, including freedom of religion. Is the image the reality? I'm reminded of the Soviet Christian who told me, "We have full religious freedom in our country!"—and then, after a cautious look around, whispered, "But we want *more*!" Western Christians, in the main, would insist that repression rather than freedom is the keynote of church-state relations in the Communist world.

But the Western world also has an image. Freedom of speech? Maybe, says the Communist, but words cannot fill an empty stomach—though, as the saying has it, words must at times be eaten. And when freedom of speech means pornography, when the freedom to bear arms means hourly homicides, when freedom of religion means sanctified disregard of justice—repression does have its attraction! No one who has visited the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism in Leningrad will dismiss the Marxist image of the church out of hand. Communists can make a persuasive case against the Christian Church. A case that tempts one to agree with Nietzsche—the last Christian *did* die on the cross!

Recently, and on a limited scale, Communist dialecticians and Christian theologians have sat together to explore and compare "images," to the distress of the "righteous" on both sides. (One remembers that Christ Himself was attacked by the "righteous" for eating with tax collectors and other sinners.) But in this nuclear age it surely is better to talk together than to die

others it is all too accurate. The image is based primarily on six charges.

1. The church is always on the side of established authority. It defends the status quo, no matter how unchristian the status quo may be. Russian Orthodoxy sustained the cause, corruption, and oppression of the Czar. Roman Catholicism supports repressive governments. Dictatorships of the right are supported by both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Alliances with the bourgeois are legion.

2. The church pacifies the poor with lullabies of future recompense in the Great Beyond; offers prayers for the dead and sentimental hymns in place of compassion and care for the living; in brief, dispenses those bromides of cheap escape from reality that Proudhon and Marx called "opium for the people."

3. Christianity is reactionary in principle. It puts the concrete injustice of earth beyond human reach by confining battles between right and wrong to a distant heaven. Injustice in the here and now is quietly countenanced because punishment is relegated to God, the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent One. Even in heaven, we are told, there is a hierarchy. And celestial inequality gives license to terrestrial inequality. God is said to grant His benediction to, and confer authority on, whatever government has usurped power at a given moment. It is authorized to wield the sword of injustice, whereas the poor are refused every right to defend themselves.

4. The church is reactionary because it turns a person from his real future, circumscribing him within the bounds of an alleged sinful nature. The symbol under which this resignation is preached is eloquent: It is the cross. Its ideal is the patience of the oppressed.

5. The church is reactionary because it proclaims the gospel of charity. But charity is the invention of the strong, who pose as just and gracious men, while in reality, remaining unjust and without pity. The employer who has enriched himself by the sweat of his employees permits himself the

together, and it should not be the Christians who discount the convicting power of the Spirit! Does not Scripture witness that in all ages there have been mighty ones among the heathen? Whatever the fallacies of Marxism—rooted as much in man's "bent" nature as in the dialectic—its message has proved so engaging that nothing save religion itself has produced effects of similar magnitude. And among Communists themselves is a concept of mission and a commitment that should cause many a Christian to review the meaning of discipleship.

The image of Christianity that emerges from Christian-Marxist dialog is not flattering. In some respects, it is not accurate. In

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luxury of generosity. He supports the charities of the church and thus basks in the flattering approval of priests and prelates. In reality, he is returning an infinitesimal portion of what he has stolen from the workers. Such gracious gifts have one effect and purpose: they perpetuate servile souls.

6. Though professing the ethic of agape love, the church has used physical, mental, and spiritual coercion to achieve its ends. Christian has slaughtered both Christian and heathen to thrust them into the loving embrace of God! States became instruments through which the church perpetuated injustice, and the church itself became a den of thieves.

Dismiss what charges we, with integrity, can, we are left with a residue of truth. We are being hit hard, and we should feel it. But Communists should know that every accusation hits us hard, not to the degree that we are consistent Christians, but to the degree that we are not. In fact, much the same charges are hurled against us in Holy Writ. The Bible does not justify the Pharisee but calls him to account. Here are three samples of rebuke as the forceful Phillips translates them:

"And now, you plutocrats, is the time for you to weep and moan because of the miseries in store for you. . . . You have made a fine pile in these last days, haven't you? But look, here is the pay of the reaper you hired and whom you cheated, and it is shouting out against you! And the cries of the other laborers you swindled are heard by the Lord of Hosts himself" (James 5:1-4).*

To the rich young ruler who said that he had kept all the commandments from his youth, Christ said:

"If you want to be perfect, go now and sell your property and give the money away to the poor—you will have riches in heaven." "A camel could more easily squeeze through the eye of a needle than a rich man get into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:21,24).

Of unjust religious leaders Christ spoke:

"You must not imitate their lives! For they preach but do not practice. They pile up back-breaking burdens and lay them on other men's shoulders—yet they themselves will not raise a finger to move them. . . . Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you utter frauds! For you pay your tithe on mint and aniseed and cummin, and neglect the things which carry far more weight in the Law—justice, mercy and good faith" (Matthew 23:3, 4, 23).

Are these indictments from Christ's mouth less severe than those from the Marxists? The difference is one not of degree but of target: while Marxists direct their charges against Christianity itself, Christ directs His against false disciples. Hearing the Communist attack against

Christianity, one feels like crying out, "But this is *not* Christianity!" This is the perversion, the counterfeit, the prostituted.

And what was Christ's judgment on the alliance of apostate church and oppressive state? Hear the words recorded by the Revelator:

"Come, and I will show you the judgement on the great whore, enthroned above the ocean. The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and on the wine of her fornication men all over the world have made themselves drunk.' In the Spirit he carried me away into the wilds, and there I saw a woman [the corrupted church] mounted on a scarlet beast [the corrupted state] which was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet and bedizened with gold and jewels and pearls. In her hand she held a gold cup, full of obscenities and the foulness of her fornication; and written on her forehead was a name with a secret meaning: 'Babylon the great, the mother of whores and of every obscenity on earth.' The woman, I saw, was drunk with the blood of God's people and with the blood of those who had borne their testimony to Jesus. . . .

"Then he [the angel messenger] said to me, 'The ocean you saw, where the great whore sat, is an ocean of peoples and populations, nations and languages. As for the ten horns you saw, they together with the beast will come to hate the whore; they will strip her naked and leave her desolate, they will batten on her flesh and burn her to ashes. . . . The woman you saw is the great city that holds sway over the kings of the earth.'

"After this . . . [another angel messenger] in a mighty voice . . . proclaimed, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, for every vile and loathsome bird. For all nations have drunk deep of the fierce wine of her fornication; the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and merchants the world over have grown rich on her bloated wealth.'

"Then I heard another voice from heaven that said: 'Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins and share in her plagues. For her sins are piled high as heaven, and God has not forgotten her crimes'" (Rev. 17:1-6, 15-18; 18:1-5; N.E.B.).†

Harsh as is the Communist indictment of Christianity, it does not equal this divine indictment of the fallen church. Students of church history—and in the Soviet context, Orthodox church history—cannot escape the conviction that the Marxist-oppressed church is reaping what it has sown.

The church has professed Christ while

defending antichristian doctrines and practices. Thus it bears responsibility for the appeal of Communism, and even for its emergence. Were churches more penitent, they would manifest greater self-scrutiny and self-criticism. At the very least the result would be less belligerence and self-righteousness.

These observations are not intended to obscure the real hardships that Christianity has suffered, and suffers still, under Communist regimes. To the Marxist, religion is either a tool to be used or an enemy to be destroyed—though some of the more liberal are willing to give the church license to destroy itself. Constitutional guarantees of the right to believe, embodied in most Marxist constitutions, do not entail the right to witness; only Communists may propagate their belief. Communism is not noted for offering a free market, whether in economics, politics, or religion.

It must be noted, however, that minority churches often enjoy greater freedom and equity under Communism than they had under church-dominated monarchies. State churches often have used civil government to persecute their smaller competitors. Now, deprived of privileged status, these former state churches often are first to cry persecution.

Sadly, Marxists have not learned the pitfalls of imposed conformity from their deposed predecessors of church and of state. How different things might have been had they truly separated church and state, rather than making the church the creature of the State! Perhaps the church, in the main, has learned the merits of allowing every man to go to hell in his own way; this wisdom the Marxists have not yet demonstrated.

It may be a long time before a Russian can stand in front of the Kremlin and shout. "Send Comrade Andropov back to the collective farm!" It may be a long time before a Russian Christian can pass out tracts even in a back alley. Freedoms do not come easily to the Marxist state. But we will remember that neither did they come easily to the Christian Church. The Communist charges against the church have merit. We who feel ashamed must go forth, with greater humility, to witness and suffer for the truth.



FOOTNOTES

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Documented from Soviet Sources—

THE TRUTH ABOUT RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN THE U.S.S.R.

Today some 400 Christians* are imprisoned in the Soviet Union for what they would describe as witnessing. Soviet authorities speak instead of "hooliganism," "malicious slander," and "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda." The Soviet citizen, we are told, has religious freedom; the Soviet Constitution separates church and state. Christian delegations to the United States and other countries also speak of religious freedom. But do they really have it? What is religious freedom to the Soviet citizen? to the Soviet authorities?

The following interview with Dr. Albert J. Boiter, a well-known political scientist with a 35-year-career in research, writing, and teaching in Soviet studies, answers these and other questions with facts—Soviet law, Soviet documents, Soviet spokesmen. Other articles in this issue add to information on the Christian's lot in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe as well. A copy of a secret letter by Lenin, describing early Soviet intentions toward the Russian Orthodox Church, and, by extension, to religion as a whole, appears here, for the first time in a general-circulation American periodical. (See page 18.) Here too are disquieting reminders of the case the Communist makes against the church. When you've finished reading these articles—and in particular, Dr. Boiter's responses to my questions—I think you'll know more about religious liberty in the Soviet Union than most Americans, and all but a handful of Soviet citizens themselves! Dr. Boiter explains why even Soviet citizens know so little.—R.R.H.

Q. Let's begin with a question that puzzles me. The Soviet Union pro-

claims separation of church and state as a basic principle of its system of government, yet the state issues numerous laws regulating religious activities and church life. Is this not a contradiction?

A. Not from the Soviet viewpoint. Americans would think so because the separation principle incorporated into the First Amendment is the denominator of church-state affairs in the United States. For about 200 years, rules of religious liberty have been decided almost exclusively by Supreme Court interpretations of constitutional law. The Soviet Union, along with other nations, arrives by other routes at the legal guarantees that make up religious liberty.

Q. I'm understanding you to say that separation of church and state means one thing to the Soviets and another thing to Americans.

A. In an even broader sense, it means different things in almost every nation espousing it. And even within a nation, the concept changes. For example, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political philosophers Locke and Montesquieu used the phrase to emphasize good civil government freed from undue constraints or controls of the church and religion. In the nineteenth century, influenced by the American example, European emphasis shifted more to limiting the power of government to interfere with the autonomy of religious institutions, and expanding the rights of individual conscience. Separation of church and state is only one formula, and an old-fashioned one at that, for expressing in political shorthand all the considerations that religious liberty includes. No single law, declaration, or slogan can settle all possible questions involving religious liberty for all time.

Q. Are you saying that Soviet separation of church and state is not one of the guiding principles of government?

A. Soviet officials *claim* separation of church and state to be one of the guiding principles. The phrase was used in the title of the first Soviet law dealing with religion adopted a few weeks after the Bolshevik seizure of power. It has been included in all Soviet constitutions, including the Stalin Constitution of 1936 (Art. 124) and the present constitution, adopted in 1977 (Art. 52). That first Soviet law on religion, drafted personally by Lenin and approved on January 23, 1918, was a radical and wholesale application (in a revolutionary spirit) of the eighteenth-century emphasis on the separation doctrine. Underscoring the cardinal importance attached to the atheistic goals that had become part of communist ideology in the nineteenth century was another of its provisions, which separated the school from the church.

Q. What specifically was the impact of the 1918 law on the church?

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* Compiled by Keston College, Keston, Kent, England BR2 6BA. *Sparks*, January-March, 1983 (vol. 8, No. 1).

A. Its 13 short articles covered a lot of ground. Among other things, all existing property of churches and religious societies was declared "people's property"—that is to say, confiscated (Art. 13). The right of churches to own property (that is, the status of juridical person) was denied (Art. 12). This provision meant the end of church-run hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the aged, as well as liquidation of thousands of monasteries and convents. Religious instruction was banned in all general-education schools, whether state, public, or private (Art. 10). This article foreshadowed abolition of church-run schools, which at the time accounted for about half the pupils in Russia's education system. The law also voided regulations that discriminated against, or benefited, any citizen because of his religious affiliation or lack thereof (Art. 3) and forbade local authorities to issue laws or ordinances based on a citizen's religion (Art. 2). Other provisions eliminated all religious emblems, oaths, and ceremonies from official documents and buildings and denied citizens any right to avoid a civic obligation on grounds of religious conviction (Arts. 4, 6, and 7). To give two examples, seventh-day Sabbathkeepers might be ordered to harvest crops on their sabbath, and conscientious objectors must serve in the army and bear arms.

Q. V. A. Kuroyedov, present head of the Council for Matters of Religion under the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers, blames these measures on church officials and clergymen "counter-revolutionaries" who opposed the Soviet government during the civil war that lasted until 1921. Is his argument tenable?

A. It is completely untenable. During the two periods in which the Soviet state launched its most vigorous effort to close churches and curtail the influence of religion (in the 1930s and the early 1960s) the church offered little opposition and posed no threat to Soviet power. Mr. Kuroyedov's propaganda booklet, republished yearly for foreign readers, does not mention these periods at all.

Q. Does not the Soviet system have some self-imposed legal restraints, whether in the Constitution or other laws, on the powers of the state in relation to church and religion?

A. No, none whatsoever. On the contrary, the very concept of the state precludes such limitations. The Soviet state is conceived as possessor of unlimited power to achieve its historic purpose. Here is how the Constitution of 1977 puts it:

• "The supreme goal of the Soviet state is the building of a classless communist

society in which there will be public, communist self-government. The main aims of the people's socialist state are: . . . to mould the citizen of the communist society (Preamble).

• "All power in the USSR belongs to the people. The people exercise state power through Soviets of People's Deputies, which constitute the political foundation of the USSR" (Art. 2).

• "The leading and guiding force of Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organizations and public organizations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (Art. 6).

Soviet attitudes toward the role of law are often ambivalent, depending on circumstances, but in all cases the sanctity of law is subordinate to party-state political purposes. Lenin stated the underlying concept this way in his book *The State and Revolution*, written shortly before the 1917 Revolution: "Soviet power cannot be bound by any laws, including its own."

Q. So the U.S.S.R. is not one of the rule-of-law countries, but does not the Soviet Constitution guarantee freedom of conscience to all?

A. Yes, in a narrowly defined sense. Article 52 of the 1977 U.S.S.R. Constitution reads: "Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess or not to profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or atheistic propaganda." This "guarantee" sounds reasonable and fair at first glance, but one must look closer. The "right to profess or not to profess" refers to what an individual feels or believes in the private forum of his conscience, and no earthly power could forbid or even know what those beliefs and feelings are as long as they are kept private. So this part of the guarantee is really irrelevant. Only when one begins to conform external conduct to the dictates of conscience, to live faith publicly and in community, does freedom of conscience become an issue. And here the quoted passage grants believers only the right to attend worship services (which under current law may be held only within the four walls of a state-registered church or house of worship), whereas nonbelievers may propagate atheism in the society at large. Article 52 actually restricts believer rights.

Q. In other words, Article 52, contrary to Soviet profession, denies equal treatment to all citizens?

A. Yes. Modern democracies protect the civil rights of atheists (though they did not always do so), and modern jurisprudence requires the state to observe strict neutrality between religion and irrel-

gion. Individuals can believe whatever they wish and must be free to act on the basis of their beliefs by exercising all their other constitutional liberties (speech, press, assembly, et cetera). The Soviet state, by granting atheists greater freedom of action, actually has retrogressed from the ideal of equal treatment of citizens. Cardinal Koenig, of Vienna, has likened the Soviet system in this regard to the typical "confessional" state of the Middle Ages, with atheism substituted for an official faith.

Q. I'd like to ask now about some of the specific laws that regulate churches and religious life.

A. Allow me, before we leave the U.S.S.R. Constitution, to make two observations that I consider important. The first concerns the nature of the Constitution itself. Although it is described on its title page as "fundamental law" (in parentheses under the word *Constitution*), the Soviet Constitution is intended to be a descriptive summary of the social, economic, political, and legal attributes of the Soviet system at a given stage on the road to building communism. It is only marginally a source of law or legal principles as is the U.S. Constitution. No citizen could get a Soviet court to act on a complaint that his constitutional rights have been violated; courts deal only with specific codes of law. There is no judicial or other state organ empowered to review and pass on the constitutionality of any legislative or administrative enactment. There has been talk about creation of a constitutional court (as in Yugoslavia and other European countries), but nothing has been done. Soviet law schools do not even teach a subject called constitutional law; the nearest equivalent is state law, but this does not deal with historical or comparative legal precepts, merely with current Soviet statutes about the organization and functioning of the Soviet government.

The second observation concerns the Soviet view about the rights of the individual. The Soviet world view rejects the notion that people are endowed with inalienable rights merely by virtue of birth, whether derived from natural-law doctrine or some historical development. Their materialistic approach sees rights invested primarily in groups or collectives, so an individual's rights are always bestowed or granted. And because they are granted, rights can be withdrawn, even including the citizenship of a native-born person. Furthermore, the Soviet Constitution imposes conditions on the enjoyment of one's rights and freedoms. For example, the guarantee of "freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly, meetings, street processions and demonstrations" is introduced by the phrase: "In accordance with the interests of



In a small chapel in Zagorsk, worship is permitted at all times.

the people and in order to strengthen and develop the socialist system" (Art. 50). A more embracing qualification is the provision "Citizens' exercise of their rights and freedoms is inseparable from the performance of their duties and obligations" (Art. 59). Ten articles follow, describing these duties and obligations. A citizen is required not only to obey Soviet laws, but also to "comply with the standards of socialist conduct, and uphold the honor and dignity



LIBERTY editor Roland R. Hegstad delivers a Sabbath sermon in the Moscow SDA church.

of Soviet citizenship" (Art. 59). As for children, citizens "are obliged . . . to raise them as worthy members of socialist society" (Art. 66), implying, of course, also as atheists.

A. What of the Helsinki Agreement of 1975? Did that document modify Soviet law and practice in any way toward religion? And, in particular, has it brought any benefits to churches and religious believers in the Soviet Union?

Q. The answer to both questions, unfortunately, is No. A curious thing happened in the summer of 1975 just prior to the signing of the Helsinki Agreement. On June 23, 1975, a new law was adopted in Moscow containing a long list of textual revisions to an old law, "On Religious Associations," that had been enacted on April 8, 1929. This was the first time in more than 40 years that a general law regulating churches and religious practices had been openly published, including the 1929 law itself. Many laws affecting religion had been adopted in those years, but the texts were kept secret, that is to say, not openly published.

When specialists examined the 1975 amendments, they found few innovations. Most changes had been made 12 years

earlier by a secret law (dated December 19, 1962), when Khrushchev was in the midst of a big antireligious campaign designed to close more than 10,000 operating churches and to impose stricter controls over those that remained. The law of 1975, therefore, seems to have been motivated by a desire to get the existing Soviet laws on the public record before the signing of the Helsinki Agreement five weeks later. Moscow seemed to be saying to the 34 other signatory states: "This is our system; this is what we mean by the right of religious freedom, no matter what is written in the Helsinki document we are about to sign."

Q. What specifically did the Helsinki Agreement affirm concerning religious freedom?

A. The Helsinki Agreement reaffirmed the following statement from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

"Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching."

The Soviet Union ratified this UN Covenant in September 1973 as well as signing the Helsinki Agreement. Yet one searches in Soviet law in vain for most attributes of what Americans for 200 years have called the "free exercise" of religion.

Q. You said the Soviet Union has many "secret" laws concerning church and religion. If they are secret, how do you know what the laws say?

A. In many cases we don't. That is, we may know a certain legal decision exists but do not have a full text. For the most important laws, however, the Soviet government has to print a for-official-use-only edition for the information of state agencies responsible for enforcing those laws. One of these volumes is almost sure to get into unauthorized hands and find its way abroad. With duplicating equipment available, it is no problem for any specialist to make a copy of this volume for his own library. The so-called secret laws I refer to are in my photocopy of a 336-page collection of *Legislation on Religious Cults*, published in 1971. Incidentally, the law of December, 1962, I just mentioned, which was also a set of amendments to the 1929 law, was not published in this 1971 volume, although it is mentioned several times. Apparently some religious legislation is too secret even for officials. But an updated version of the 1929 law is printed and it shows the substantive changes made by the



The Leningrad Baptist church holds Sunday services for 3,000 believers.

1962 law in 40 of the 1929 law's original 68 articles.

Q. Let me come back to my question about specific laws on religion. I gather that the 1975 law (or do you call it the 1929 law?) is very basic. What does it say?

A. I like to call it the Religion Act of 1975 because, although it amends a 1929 law, it is a legal code valid at present on religious associations—a phrase in Rus-



The main door of the mosque in Lenin-grad remains closed, but a courtyard gate is open for Friday services.

sian, by the way, that includes church, mosque, synagogue, congregation, parish, episcopate, or any way one refers to organized believers. Also, the 1975 version contains some provisions even harsher than those of 1929, thus it is instructive to compare the two as if they were two separate documents. In both cases we are talking about a law with more than 60 very detailed paragraphs, so I can mention only a few main points.

Both versions contain the same narrow definition of what a church is—a "local body of believing citizens" at least 18 years of age and numbering 20 or more (Art. 2); both lay down the rule that a church may not begin to function until notified of its "registration" by the appropriate state authorities (Art. 3); both define how a church is to be governed—by a three-man committee of lay members acceptable to the local government and subject to dismissal by it at any time (Arts. 13 and 14); and both have the same list of things any church is

forbidden to do—group instruction of religion, operating reading rooms and recreation facilities, providing excursions for children, et cetera (Art. 17). The rules on the contract a church group must negotiate with the local government's executive committee in order to get custody of a building for worship (Arts. 28-32), and the duty to keep records and report to the government all income, expenditures, and property acquisitions (Arts. 55-56) are also identical in both.

Q. In what ways is the 1975 law stricter than the 1929 law?

A. First, religious services or rites may be held in the home or apartment of a believer only with advance permission of the local government (Art. 59). (In the 1929 law such religious rites were permitted without official authorization, and an instruction about application of that law issued on January 16, 1931 [Art. 26], stated this explicitly.) In fact, permission is rarely given. The only legal exception to this rule is that priests may visit a dying believer who requests last rites in his home or even in a hospital or penal institution without advance authorization. Second, funeral services could be held anywhere without special permits in the 1929 law (Arts. 58-59), but this leniency has disappeared completely in the 1975 version. Lithuanian Catholics have protested repeatedly about authorities who tried to break up funeral processions and cemetery services.

The 1929 law allowed local governments to break their contract and take away the church building from a congregation, but it gave the members the right to appeal against this action to the government in Moscow (Arts. 37 and 44). This right of appeal no longer exists; it has been replaced by only the requirement that the church be notified of the decision to take away its building, without even the necessity for citing any grounds or reasons. Churches had the right under the 1929 law to solicit donations from their members outside the church, but the new version says that funds may be collected from members only inside the church building and only for a short list of specified purposes (Art. 54). If a church was in violation of the laws on religious association, the 1929 law threatened only that its building could be taken away (Art. 43), but the 1975 version says that its state registration can be canceled by the central authorities in Moscow, which means the building would be taken away almost automatically.

Q. It would seem from what you have said that the legal situation of church and religion has grown constantly worse from 1918 to the present. Yet we see

that the main religious centers have been able to expand their international contacts, organize major congresses, publish religious journals and books, build a few new churches, and so forth. Are there not some bright spots in the gloomy picture? Is the legal noose still being tightened around the necks of Soviet believers?

A. That's a good question because it calls for perspective. It was not my intention by a recitation of facts to suggest that Soviet policy toward religion has been all downhill. We know that Stalin reversed that policy almost completely during World War II. The 1929 law was actually put on the shelf, not enforced at all, although not repealed, until it was resurrected and given new teeth under Khrushchev in the early 1960s. As I said earlier, the amendments published in 1975 had been made already in secret laws under Khrushchev many years before. So the main conclusion from my comparison of the 1929 and 1975 versions of the law on religious associations is merely that none of the tougher provisions instituted under Khrushchev were voided under Brezhnev. What happened under Brezhnev (from 1965 onward) was a centralization of decision-making and state control over religious affairs down to the local level in the hands of a single agency in Moscow, and this is fully reflected in the 1975 law, but I do not have space to go into detail. There are some bright spots, but if any Soviet leader is to get credit for them, it probably would have to be Stalin.

For example, the 1975 law gives religious centers and even local churches the right to acquire means of transportation, to buy and sell certain articles, and to build, buy, or lease buildings needed for religious purposes. These economic rights actually were first extended by Stalin in a decree of the Council of People's Commissars on August 22, 1945. The privileges were not revoked under Khrushchev, and thus remained valid under Brezhnev in 1975 and up to the present day. But this does not alter Lenin's dictum that churches may not own property. Should a church or denominational center be liquidated under the various legal provisions that make this possible, many laws specify how its property shall revert to various state bodies for disposal or conversion to cash for the state treasury (e.g., Art. 40 of the 1975 law).

Lenin's dictum that churches do not have the right of "juridical person" (Art. 12 of the 1918 law) also has been modified. It was still in the 1929 law (Art. 22), but special exceptions were made later, beginning with a decision on August 24, 1944, that allowed the State Bank to open an account in the name of the Moscow Patriarchate. But a religious association still does not have the

full right of juridical person, merely a limited right covering special exceptions.

On the other hand, two "rights" in Lenin's 1918 law were revoked long ago. Churches in that law (Art. 10) were legally put under the general statutory rules for private societies and groups. This situation was changed by a decree of June 10, 1928, and churches have been subject since the 1929 law to a more restrictive set of laws applying specifically to them. The 1918 law also said, "Citizens [meaning adults, not children] may teach and be taught religion by private means"—Article 9. Under present law, instruction in religion is confined "exclusively" to authorized theological institutions training future clergymen (Art. 18 of the 1975 law).

Q. We hear about "religious prisoners" in the U.S.S.R. I know that Soviet officials claim there are no religious or political prisoners, only law violators. But does the Soviet penal code mention religion at all?

A. There are two such crimes. The first, "violation of laws on separation of church and state and of church and school," is punishable by up to three-years imprisonment (Art. 142 of the RSFSR Criminal Code). The second, "infringement of the person or rights of citizens under the guise of performing religious ceremonies," carries a penalty of up to five years imprisonment or exile, with the added proviso that the violator's property may be confiscated (Art. 227). Both crimes are defined so generally that the charge can be applied to almost any behavior the state prosecutor wishes. But most religious prisoners are not tried under one of these articles. Many are tried for "parasitism" (Art. 209.1), "hooliganism" (Art. 206), "spreading malicious slander damaging to the Soviet state and social structure" (Art. 190.1) or, severest of all, "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" (Art. 70). The last is one of the so-called "state crimes" and is punishable by imprisonment of three to ten years, plus exile for two to five years.

Q. A final question. Does Soviet law provide for punishment of an official who violates citizens' religious rights?

A. There is one such paragraph in the RSFSR Criminal Code (Art. 143). It makes it a crime to "obstruct the performance of religious rights if they do not violate public order or infringe the rights of citizens," but the punishment for this crime is very small, a maximum of six months "correctional tasks" (meaning a temporary reduction of wages) or a public reprimand. It obviously is not a very serious offense in the U.S.S.R. to hinder a religious service or ceremony.

SECRET LENIN LETTER ATTACKS CHURCH

Lenin himself insisted that no copy be made of the following letter. Dated March 19, 1922, it is not included in Lenin's *Complete Works* and has appeared in only three Western publications.¹ The letter's contents, which reveal his plan to provoke the Russian Orthodox Church's resistance and to use it to his own ends, explain its "top-secret" designation.

After the civil war of 1917-1921 Russia faced famine and economic chaos. In both August and December, 1921, Patriarch Tikhon, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, appealed to the churches for aid to help the starving. On January 2, 1922, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) authorized confiscation of museum treasures, and on February 16 all church valuables except those used for the liturgy. Tikhon publically encouraged Orthodox parishes to donate valuable, but un consecrated, items. On February 23 VTsIK changed its policy, demanding that all church valuables, including consecrated objects, be confiscated. The government knew that the church could not accept such a demand. It is clear from Lenin's letter that he intended to capitalize on the church's refusal.

As the Soviet government anticipated, Patriarch Tikhon refused, on February 28, to surrender consecrated objects to the state. Orthodox faithful who complied with Tikhon's orders were brutally suppressed. In Shuya, a town northeast of Moscow, on March 15, 1922, four people were killed, ten seriously wounded, and many arrested when authorities sought to confiscate the church's property. Eleven of 54 defendants were executed, and the rest, including a number of priests, imprisoned. In Russia as a whole, Lenin's attack on the church cost many lives. One source reports that during 1922 alone, 2,691 secular priests, 1,962 monks, and 3,447 nuns were liquidated.²

The letter follows:

TOP SECRET

To Comrade Molotov,
for Members of the Politburo:

I request that under no circumstances a copy be made, and that each member of the Politburo (including Comrade Kalinin) make his comments on the document itself.

On the matter of the incident in Shuya, which has already been debated in the Politburo, I consider it vital to take a firm decision immediately about the overall policy for the struggle in this area. As I doubt that I shall manage to be personally present at the meeting of the Politburo on 20 March, I am therefore expressing my point of view in writing.

The Shuya incident must be considered in relation to the information which Rosta confidentially passed on recently to journalists: that members of the Black Hundreds³ [i.e., "reactionary" clergy and laity—Ed.] in Petrograd are preparing to resist the decree on the confiscation of church valuables. If one compares this fact with what the papers say about the clergy's attitude to the decree, and also with what we know of the illegal appeal of Patriarch Tikhon, then it is completely clear that the ultrareactionary clergy [lit., Black Hundreds—Ed.], in league with their leader, are carrying out a well-thought-out plan of waging a decisive battle against us at this very time.

It is clear that this plan has been thought out and accepted sufficiently firmly at secret meetings of the most influential group of ultrareactionary clergy. The events in Shuya are but one of the manifestations and applications of this general plan.

As I see it, our enemy is making a grave mistake here by attempting to draw us into a decisive battle at a time when such a battle is especially hopeless and disadvantageous for him. For us, on the contrary, this moment namely not only is exceptionally advantageous but is in general the only moment

when we can be 99-100 percent sure of complete success in knocking out the enemy and securing for ourselves a position which is essential to us for many decades. Now and only now, when in the famine-stricken areas people are eating people, when there are hundreds if not thousands of dead bodies lying by the roadside, can we (and therefore must we) carry out the confiscation of church valuables with stupendous and merciless energy, not stopping at repressing any sort of resistance. Now and only now the overwhelming majority of the peasant masses either will be for us or, at all events, will not be in a position to support in any decisive way that handful of ultrareactionary priests and bourgeois reactionaries who can and want to try out a policy of violent resistance to the Soviet decree.

Whatever happens, we must carry out the confiscation of church valuables in the quickest and most decisive manner. Thereby we can secure for ourselves a fund of a few hundred million gold rubles (one must remember the gigantic riches of some monasteries). Without such a fund, any government work in general, any economic construction in particular, and especially any establishing of our position in Genoa is unthinkable. Whatever happens we must seize this fund of a few hundred million (or perhaps even a few billion) gold rubles. And this can only be done successfully now. All considerations indicate that later we would not succeed, for no other moment except that of desperate famine will give us such a mood amongst the peasant masses which either will gain us their sympathy or at any rate will neutralize them in the sense that the victory in the struggle over confiscating the valuables will be undoubtedly and completely ours.

A clever writer on political matters rightly said that if, in order to achieve a known political goal, it is essential to use a series of harsh measures, then this must be done in the most energetic way and in the shortest time, because the masses will not endure such harsh measures if they last too long. This consideration is also supported particularly by the fact that as regards Russia's international position, we may find in all likelihood that after Genoa harsh measures against the reactionary clergy will be politically unwise and perhaps even too dangerous. At the moment the victory over the reactionary clergy is completely assured. Furthermore, most of our opponents abroad among Russian émigrés, i.e., the SRs and followers of Miliukov, will find it difficult to fight against us if, at this

particular time of famine, we carry out with maximum speed and ruthlessness our attack on the reactionary clergy.

Therefore I have come to the firm conclusion that at this very moment we must ruthlessly give battle against the reactionary clergy and overcome their resistance with a harshness which they will not forget for a few decades. I envisage the actual plan of campaign as follows:

Only Comrade Kalinin should undertake officially any measures. Never and under no circumstances should Comrade Trotsky come out publicly in the press or in any other way.

The telegram which has already been sent in the name of the Politburo about the temporary halt on confiscating the valuables should not be countermanded. It is to our advantage, as it gives our enemy the impression that we are hesitating, that he has succeeded in frightening us (our enemy will of course soon learn about this secret telegram, for the very reason that it is secret).

One of the most energetic, intelligent, and capable members of the VTsIK or other representatives of the central power should be sent to Shuya (one person would be better than a few). He should be given oral instructions by one member of the Politburo. The gist of these instructions should be that he arrest in Shuya as many representatives of the local clergy, the petty bourgeoisie, and bourgeoisie as possible, no less than a few dozen, on suspicion of having participated directly or indirectly in forcibly resisting the VTsIK's decree on the confiscation of church valuables.

After this work he must at once come to Moscow and personally give a report to a full meeting of the Politburo or before two members of the Politburo delegated for this task. On the basis of this report, the Politburo will issue a detailed decree to the judicial authorities, also orally, that the trials of the Shuya rebels, who have resisted helping the starving, be carried out with maximum speed, culminating in the shooting of a large number of the most influential and dangerous Black Hundreds in the town of Shuya, and if possible not only in this town but in Moscow and a few other spiritual centers.

I think it expedient not to touch Patriarch Tikhon himself, although he undoubtedly stands at the head of this revolt of slave owners. In relation to him a secret directive should be given to the GPU [secret police] so that at this particular juncture all the contacts of this activist are observed and

exposed as accurately and in as great detail as possible. Dzerzhinsky and Unschlicht are to be instructed to make weekly reports personally to the Politburo.

At the Party Congress a secret conference on this should be held, to include all or nearly all delegates with the leading members of the GPU, NKYU [People's Commissariat of Justice], and the Revolutionary Tribunal. At this conference a secret decision of the congress should be taken to the effect that the confiscation of valuables, particularly those of the richest monasteries and churches, should be carried out with ruthless decisiveness stopping at nothing, and in as short a time as possible. The more representatives of the reactionary bourgeoisie and the reactionary clergy that we manage to shoot, the better. Now is the time to teach the public such a lesson that for many decades they will not dare even to think of any sort of resistance.

So as to supervise the execution of these measures in the quickest and most successful way, a special commission must be appointed at the congress, i.e., at its secret conference. The participation of Comrade Trotsky and Comrade Kalinin is essential. This commission must not be publicized so that the subordination of all operations to it is ensured and is done not in the name of the commission, but according to all-soviet and all-party procedure. The best and most reliable workers must be appointed to execute these measures in the richest monasteries and churches.

LENIN

I request that Comrade Molotov try to send this letter round to all members of the Politburo this very evening (without making a copy) and to ask them to return it at once to the Secretary after reading it, with a brief note as to whether each member of the Politburo agrees with it or whether the letter provokes any disagreement.

LENIN

FOOTNOTES

¹ *Vestnik RSKhD*, No. 98 (1970); *Russkaya Mysl*, No. 2836, April 1, 1971 (the two are Russian émigré publications); and *Religion in Communist Lands*, pp. 46-48 (a publication of Keston College, Heathfield Road, Keston, Kent, England BR2 6BA).

² *Christians in Contemporary Russia* (London: Harvill Press, 1967), p. 38.

³ The Black Hundreds was the name given to a reactionary organization that was set up in Russia after the liberalizing reforms of 1905 and that became known for its anti-Jewish pogroms. Lenin uses this term figuratively.—Ed.

CHRISTIANS IN EASTERN EUROPE

The antinuclear movement, the Polish crisis, and the death of Tito are having repercussions on believers throughout the bloc.

BY JANICE BROWN

By most definitions of religious liberty, Eastern Bloc Christians don't enjoy it fully.¹ Few Westerners, however, understand the extent and nature of persecution. Many fail to distinguish between the degree of repression in the U.S.S.R.² and Albania,³ the hardliners of Eastern Europe, and the other Socialist states. Historical and pragmatic circumstances dictate the manner in which Marxism is applied in each state. No Eastern Bloc country follows the Soviet example exactly.

After the Communists assumed power in Eastern Europe and until after Stalin's death, thousands of Christians were imprisoned, often in harsh conditions—except in the German Democratic Republic.⁴ Then, during the period of deStalinization, outright conflict between church and state gave way to uneasy accommodation, as governments realized they must modify their policies to gain support of a populace that nowhere had freely elected them to power.

Today the era of détente has passed. After decades of comparative stability in church-state relations and church life, tensions are rising. The death of Tito in 1980, the rapid growth of the peace movement in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and the Polish crisis are having repercussions on believers throughout the bloc.

Imprisonment

Conditions for believers are stable in Hungary⁵ and in Bulgaria, where relaxation has recently succeeded repression almost as severe as in the Soviet Union.⁶ In these countries all Christians in prison were sentenced for political rather than religious reasons. Only in Poland are more than a handful involved. In the GDR, as in

Hungary, a few are in prison for propagating pacifism. In Yugoslavia, suspicion of promoting nationalism, with its tragic and divisive history there, has led to long sentences for eight Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats.

Though churches and individuals face a worsening situation in Czechoslovakia and Romania, the number of believers in prison is low by Soviet standards—a few dozen—but higher than at any time since the Stalin era. Since the Helsinki Accords were signed, a significant human rights movement has developed in Czechoslovakia, with many Christians involved. In both Czechoslovakia and Romania revival fires have revitalized the witness of several churches, most notably the Catholic Church in rural Slovakia, Protestant Evangelical churches and the Romanian Orthodox "Lord's Army" in Romania. These developments have hardly been welcomed by the governments involved, and violence has escalated against members of these organizations, with deaths resulting.

Discrimination

While overt persecution is limited in the Eastern Bloc, illegal discrimination is widespread against believers, particularly in medicine, law, and education.⁷ In Romania entry to most university faculties is now barred to known Christians, and evangelicals are kept out of the professions. In Czechoslovakia, activists, dissidents, and other protesters—including priests and pastors—may be relegated to menial jobs, and their families discriminated against. In the GDR, teen-agers who refused to undergo a secular ceremony affirming loyalty to the state were penalized until the Protestant churches negotiated concessions in 1978.



Poland's proletariat: strikers at Lenin Shipyard

However, simultaneous introduction of compulsory military training in schools and suppression of the spontaneous peace movement means that many young East Germans, often Christians, still face exclusion from higher education.⁸

Legacy of Freedom

There is little tradition of religious or political freedom in Eastern Europe. Only Czechoslovakia has known a democratic government. The other states have been under autocratic regimes, a legacy that Communist rulers generally have exploited to their advantage. Central Europe was for centuries under Catholic Hapsburg domina-



ask. Inset: Premier Wojciech Jaruzelski and Pope John Paul II; the power struggle between church and state in Poland continues.

tion, and in the Balkans, Christians were second-class citizens under Turkish rule. The major churches—Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran—were closely allied with the state.

Church-State Relations

Churches are the only legal alternative organizations in the Communist state—free trade unions having had only their brief Polish existence. It is not surprising, therefore, that the state sees them as a potential focus of dissent. Thus, reasonable requests for greater religious freedom may be treated as if they are politically motivated and dangerous. Religious Affairs departments

administer ecclesiastical legislation, channel funds to religious groups, supervise their activities, and provide liaison between church and government. These agencies, following Soviet practice, work closely with the security police and the Party's antireligious specialists to infiltrate religious organizations and minimize their influence. Bloc Religious Affairs departments meet periodically to exchange experiences; countries thought to have made excessive concessions to religious liberty are criticized—unless the concessions are warranted by the situation and thus merely tactical. Concessions may reflect religion's declining status among an increasingly

secularized people, as in the GDR and, to a lesser extent, in Hungary and Bulgaria. Conditions differ radically in the two countries that left the Warsaw Pact: Albania went to one extreme, Yugoslavia to the other.

Yugoslavia is a decentralized federal state created out of several often antagonistic nationalities. Marxism is applied in a relatively liberal and economically flexible way. Despite the appallingly divisive role

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religious differences have played,⁹ Tito had the wisdom to permit churches to deal with their internal affairs, provided they kept out of politics. Since leaving the pact, Yugoslavia has had to look more to the West. Immigration and travel are permitted, and Christians therefore do not live in the isolation felt so acutely by many Eastern Bloc Christians.¹⁰

Albania is, on the surface, the world's most atheistic state. All places of worship were closed and all religious activity was banned in 1967. The Albanian Constitution of 1976 declares that religion should be eliminated as hostile to progress. But now there are some signs that Albania is seeking to break out of its self-imposed isolation.

Church Buildings

Circumstances dictate that Soviet satellites not follow Soviet religious restrictions in their entirety. The most important difference is that East European governments allow religious groups property rights. Though the state may restrict construction of new churches¹¹ and refuse permission to repair damaged ones,¹² it does not own the buildings and cannot close functioning churches against the wishes of their members, as often happens in the U.S.S.R.¹³ As a result, Eastern Europe has many churches, whereas in the Soviet Union, millions live out of range of a state-registered church or, in the larger cities, are rationed to two or three only. The unregistered congregations, numerous in the U.S.S.R., are not a feature of Eastern Bloc life. However, new congregations, particularly those of denominations frowned on by the authorities, may find that they cannot obtain registration.¹⁴

Christian Schooling

Though subject to strict regulation, Eastern Bloc Christians are allowed to provide organized religious education, unlike in the U.S.S.R., where instructing under-18s (outside a registered seminary) in religion is a punishable offense. A handful of denominational schools and institutions are permitted in Poland,¹⁵ Hungary,¹⁶ and Yugoslavia; but generally the provision is minimal. Loss of denominational schooling is felt most acutely by the Roman Catholic Church, because of the emphasis the church has historically put on it. In Poland and Yugoslavia religious education can be given only on premises owned by the church. The situation appears more free in the GDR, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, where optional religious instruction is allowed after school hours in the schools. But except in the GDR, parents are warned that taking advantage of this concession may cost children their higher education and access to good careers.¹⁷

Some instruction on church premises is

allowed in Romania, but with restrictions calculated to make it ineffectual.¹⁸ In Bulgaria, churches were reminded in 1982 that the religious education of under-16s is constitutionally banned.¹⁹

Congregational Activities

Constitutionally, East European churches are not restricted to services (as in the U.S.S.R.), except in Romania and Bulgaria. In the other countries some congregational activity is allowed. Charitable outreach, forbidden to Soviet churches, is allowed in Poland, Yugoslavia, and to a lesser extent, Hungary, though the state ensures that it is channeled to those members of society whom it considers superfluous, the handicapped and the aged in particular. Churches in the GDR are allowed to provide social, hospital, and welfare services to an extent not found elsewhere in Eastern Europe, partly because the work is heavily subsidized by West German churches and brings in valuable West German currency.

In other respects, whatever the constitution may say about the separation of church and state, the state in fact assumes the right to interfere in, and place limitations on, church life. The degree of interference, however, varies, and the churches in Yugoslavia and the GDR usually are free to regulate their own internal affairs. The relative freedom of the Polish Catholic Church stems from its own strength and unity.

Training for the Ministry

Churches are allowed seminaries to train their clergy. However, where the state subsidizes these, as in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria, it also assumes the right to decide who may or may not attend them, and its assessment of candidates is often not in the interest of the church! Mediocre men, likely to compromise with the state, are preferred to those of high spiritual and moral caliber. The seminaries are also infiltrated; attempts are made to compromise and blackmail students. Those who stand firm may be expelled.

Tight restrictions on numbers, added to dismissals of clergy, are used to starve whole churches of future pastors. In Hungary, for example, the average age of Catholic clergy is 67. About a hundred die each year; only 40 are ordained.

In Czechoslovakia one third of Catholic parishes are vacant, yet 90 percent of candidates for the priesthood are rejected. In Romania, where the Baptist Church has expanded dramatically to 1,000 churches during the past decade, a limit of 170 pastors is rigorously maintained, and only 15 candidates are in training. Poland alone

has a surplus of clergy; some volunteer for work in Third World missions.

Control of the Clergy

Except in the GDR and Yugoslavia, state interference is not limited to selecting future clergy. The councils for religious affairs are involved also in their appointment, transfer, and dismissal. In Poland the Catholic Church has been powerful enough to prevent state interference but may not be able to continue to do so under martial law. Outspoken bishops and priests already have been the target of attack in the media. State approval is needed for church appointments in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. In the latter, vacancies must be filled within 30 days; failing this, the state may make "appropriate" moves. Since 1969 the Husak regime has relied on this law to purge both Catholic and Protestant churches of supporters of Dubcek and Charter 77. It is common both in Czechoslovakia and Hungary to transfer to remote parishes or even remove licenses of clergy critical of state interference. Many seminarians have been ordained, allowed to say their first mass, and then refused licenses; an unlicensed priest saying mass even privately is liable to imprisonment. Over 500 priests, as well as some leading Protestant pastors, are in other jobs.²⁰

The Peace Clergy

Hungary and Czechoslovakia sponsor "peace" organizations, to which most clergy belong. Members receive material benefits in return for, at the least, acquiescence to state policies. Romanian and Czechoslovak law even provides state salaries for "recognized" and "loyal" clergy according to rank and "efficiency." It is difficult to find church leaders who are not compromised, and Hungarian and Czechoslovak Catholics are unhappy about the majority of their bishops, even those appointed with Rome's approval. In the GDR, Poland, and Yugoslavia, on the other hand, clergy can be critical of state policies without endangering themselves.

Rewards for "loyalty" include visits to the West or attendance at international church gatherings and especially peace conferences, which have long been a front for Communist propaganda. Statements made by Eastern Bloc clergy about freedom in their churches should not be taken at face value; there are careerist collaborators among them, but more are prepared to voice government clichés for the sake of having contact and fellowship with Christians from the non-Communist world.

Finance

Financial independence is closely tied to freedom. In return for state subsidies,

churches in Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary have to submit their annual budgets and financial reports for government approval. Thus their continued existence becomes dependent on their fulfillment of state laws and directives.²¹ Only Yugoslav churches get no state assistance.

The Religious Life

Monasticism is vital to the life of Catholic and Orthodox churches; German Protestants too have their orders of deaconesses under life vows.²² Only in Poland, Yugoslavia, and the GDR is this vocation unrestricted. In Romania only Orthodox may become monks and nuns, and they must be involved in "productive" work—collective farming. Since 1971 religious orders in Czechoslovakia have been forbidden to take novices.²³ During the '40s and '50s thousands of imprisoned monks and nuns won great respect in Romania and Czechoslovakia by their witness in labor camps.

Bibles and Christian Literature

East European Christians are kept short of basic literature—Bibles, hymnbooks, and catechisms in particular. Religious literature, except in Hungary and Yugoslavia, is censored. Obtaining Christian literature is not a major problem in Poland, Hungary, or the GDR; in Romania, most inconsistently, the favored Orthodox Church is allowed to publish excellent and learned theological journals, while people are sent to prison for importing Bibles without government permission.²⁴

Shortages are acute in Bulgaria, Romania, and Czechoslovakia, where the official Catholic press printed only two books in 1981. In addition, except in Yugoslavia, circulation and content of religious journals is limited. Even in Poland, where demand is immense, the church is never allowed enough paper to meet it. At one extreme is the Catholic press in Yugoslavia, well-informed, critical, independent; at the other, the Czechoslovak press, where content has deteriorated so much and is so packed with government propaganda that enterprising Catholics have gone underground to produce their own books and journals.²⁵

Illegal Churches and Religious Groups

Largest church to be banned is the Eastern Rite Catholic Church in Romania, forcibly incorporated into the Orthodox Church in 1948,²⁶ the year in which Stalin did the same in the U.S.S.R. The Romanian Church is still very much alive; officially Orthodox congregations are still loyal to Rome. Bishops and priests, in secular employment, minister in secret. Pope John Paul II has made it quite clear that he expects the Romanian government to right

this wrong. The other major banned religious group, also Romanian, is the rapidly expanding "Lord's Army" (estimated at one-half million), a revival movement within the Orthodox Church.

Conclusion

Apart from Albania, Eastern European Christians have considerably more liberty than those in the Soviet Union. But the basic attitude of Communist governments remains the same. Even the most tolerant regard religious organizations as rivals. Communist parties are never neutral towards religion, although for tactical reasons they may make considerable concessions. Such religious liberty as there is in Eastern Europe is a fragile commodity.



FOOTNOTES

¹ In their protest letters they themselves usually refer to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and to the Helsinki Accords.

² Distorted ideas tend to be fostered by certain Western Iron Curtain missions; Keston College (Bromley, Kent, England), does systematic study, and its news service and journal *Religion in Communist Lands* provide accurate information. The best over-all survey of Eastern Europe is to be found in *Discretion and Valour* by Trevor Beeson (Collins, Glasgow, £2.95—published 1972).

³ See article on Albania in *Liberty*, March 1982, for information on conditions there.

⁴ Partly because Christians and Communists had suffered together in Nazi prisons; partly because Christianity there wasn't strong and was, correctly, expected to decline in influence through increasing secularization; and most of all because the churches bridged the artificial East-West border and West German good will and cash were needed.

⁵ The Soviet Union allows Hungary considerable freedom in its internal policy in return for total support for its foreign policy. Thus Hungarians enjoy a flourishing mixed economy, have considerable freedom to criticize the government, and can have contacts with the West. They are pragmatic in outlook and would not now dream of endangering their prosperity by a second revolution.

⁶ Bulgaria has been the Soviet Union's most loyal ally and imitator and has benefited economically to such an extent that it is becoming secularized.

⁷ In Czechoslovakia Christians are being systematically forced out of medicine, a sinister precedent.

⁸ They are being backed, however, by the Protestant Evangelical Church, which combines loyalty to the government with outspoken criticism where it is felt to be appropriate.

⁹ During the 1939-45 War, Croat Catholics in a puppet fascist state rose against Orthodox Serbs, who had previously held the upper hand, and massacred them by the thousands.

¹⁰ Except to a certain extent, Hungarians and, until martial law, the Poles.

¹¹ Even in Poland there have been difficulties; no allowance was made by the government for a

church in the new steel town of Nova Huta, but Catholics united and made great sacrifices, and through their solidarity built a magnificent building. The German churches, however, have been permitted to build 50 new buildings where most needed.

¹² As in Romania, where thousands of churches were damaged in the 1977 earthquake.

¹³ Romania has provided some recent exceptions to this; e.g., the flourishing Mihai Bra Baptist congregation is losing its church because of the members' constant criticism of government policies.

¹⁴ This is happening to the expanding Pentecostal churches in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania, and their leaders are under threat—two were already arrested in Czechoslovakia.

¹⁵ Eight high schools, two trade schools, and the flourishing Catholic University in Lublin.

¹⁶ One Protestant and eight Catholic high schools run by religious orders, so highly esteemed that even Party members send their children to them!

¹⁷ This is so effective a deterrent in Hungary that in some city parishes no children are receiving religious education.

¹⁸ Catholic priests complain that they are not allowed the use even of a blackboard, nor may their students take any notes!

¹⁹ This implies that despite strict surveillance it was actually happening.

²⁰ If the Czech authorities are now deeply disturbed that an underground Catholic Church is flourishing, led by priests who have been deprived of their licenses or secretly ordained, and by secret religions, they have only themselves to blame!

²¹ Orthodox clergy in Romania are at times compelled to instruct their congregations to attend Sunday morning Party meetings!

²² Dedicated work in church hospitals and institutions is done by over 100 deaconesses.

²³ As a result, the religious orders have gone underground. They are trained and take their vows in secret and continue in their secular employment. They play a vital role in organizing unofficial church life, but if discovered, face imprisonment.

²⁴ Poland is exceptional here; currently the churches are allowed to import as many Bibles as the West can supply. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that until recently the Polish Catholic hierarchy frowned on the Bible, and the state hopes to strengthen the Protestants at their expense!

²⁵ Over 700 titles have now been published.

²⁶ Eastern Rite Catholics are members of formerly Orthodox Churches, which for various reasons, usually political, submitted to Rome at some time in the past but were allowed to keep their own liturgies and other customs, e.g., a married priesthood.

The author wishes to acknowledge her indebtedness to Bohdan Bokiurkiw's excellent survey of the legal situation of religion in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. in the "Hearings before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe" on the implementation of the Helsinki Accords. Vol. XIV, May 21, 1980. (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., pp. 3-24).

On Learning to Fly Without An
AIRPLANE
BY RONN BRACKIN



Seven

Whatever happened to the Maharishi and meditation?



Maharishi International University (MIU) sits on 185 acres of land in the Hawkeye State. Its more than 70 buildings house a modern learning center, a massive library, laboratories, classrooms, even a stadium and fieldhouse.

MIU has been accredited in Iowa for more than a year. It offers the usual variety of arts and science degrees along with graduate programs in education and higher-education administration. Tuition runs about \$600 a month.

Campus discussions center on things like "optimum brain functioning," and beneath the university's Golden Dome of Pure Knowledge, students talk about how they are learning to fly (without an airplane). Every student takes time out at least twice a day to practice transcendental meditation (TM).

TM, brought to the United States in the late 1950s by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, (former guru of the Beatles), is still flourishing. Teachers describe it as a "relaxation technique." After its introduction in the West, TM appeared destined to become a part of the standard fare of nearly every elementary school, high school, and college in the nation. That dream, however, was interrupted in 1977.

A man named Alan Malnak of New Jersey scratched the "science" of TM, and beneath the charts, graphs, and EEG machines, he found religion. A federal judge agreed and ruled that teaching TM in public schools violates the First Amendment. Nevertheless, even now those involved in the movement swear that there is nothing religious about transcendental meditation. But consider the facts.

For \$200 one may take the three-day course and become a meditator, but only if one brings gifts for sacrifice at the end of the lessons. No one gets his or her mantra without participation in the *puja*.

A mantra is described by TM teachers as a "meaningless sound" used merely as a vehicle to carry the initiate to an altered state of consciousness. One such mantra is pronounced "she-ring." Former meditators, however, claim that these mantras are actually invocations of ancient East Indian deities.

Each candidate is told to bring sacrifices to initiation: fresh fruit, freshly cut flowers,

and a clean, white handkerchief. The student gives the sacrifices to an assistant, who cleans them and arranges them in a wicker basket. The candidate then takes the basket, removes his shoes, and enters the initiation room.

The sacrifices are placed on an altar, above which hangs a large color portrait of Maharishi's spiritual master Brahmanada Sarasvati (Guru Dev). Incense is burning on the altar. The candidate sits, and the teacher begins chanting in Sanskrit. The candidate is told the chanting is unimportant. He is told it is nothing more than a reminder of tradition for the teacher. He is told there is nothing religious about it. He is told a lie.

Within the official transcript of *Malnak vs. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi* is a translation of the *puja*, or initiation ritual, which had been entered into evidence. A few excerpts reveal the truth:

"To LORD NARAYANA, to lotus-born BRAHMA the Creator, to VASHISHTHA, to SHAKTI and his son PARASHAR . . . And TROTAKACHARYA and VARTIKA-KARA, to others, to the tradition of our Masters, I bow down." (Capitalization in the quotation is identical to the exhibit provided by the defendants.)

The *puja* continues in this fashion, leading ultimately to offering the "deity" of Guru Dev the sacrifices supplied by the candidate:

"Offering cloth to the lotus feet of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down . . . Offering a flower to the lotus feet of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down . . . Offering fruit to the lotus feet of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down."

The last word in the *puja* is the mantra. Before it is given, however, the teacher bows before the altar and invites the initiate to bow beside him. But having been told there is nothing religious involved, that it is all purely ceremonial, why should anyone decline?

The teacher chants the mantra. The candidate repeats it as the teacher makes certain pronunciation is correct. Softer and softer the initiate chants the mantra until he hears it only in his head. He is never again to speak it aloud. The candidate is told the mantra must remain pure and secret.

The secret, anonymously authored, and uncopyrighted handbook on the *puja*, which is used by the teachers, is called *The Holy Tradition*.

All this, the Maharishi's people claim, is science, not religion.

TM is far from a passing fad in the United States. The number of meditators has grown to more than one million. There are more than 300 TM centers.

Nearly a decade ago Maharishi inaugurated his "World Plan." In his own words: "There has not been and there will not be a place for the unfit. The fit will lead, and if the unfit are not coming around, there is no place for them. In the place where light dominates, there is not place for darkness."

"In the Age of Enlightenment there is not place for ignorant people. The ignorant will be made enlightened by a few orderly, enlightened people moving around. Nature will not allow ignorance to prevail. It just can't. Non-existence of the unfit has been the law of nature."

This theme should sound uncomfortably familiar to anyone, regardless of religious beliefs. To the Christian and the Jew, TM is doubly offensive, because it is idolatry. And to anyone who practices it, it can become dangerous.

The Holy Tradition describes the *puja* as specially designed in its tones and rhythm to produce an altered state of consciousness both in the teacher and in the candidate. The candidate, however, is never warned of this.

What really happens when a person meditates? The Maharishi's people say one becomes tranquil, peaceful, and more creative. They claim one's unused powers are released to bring the initiate into fulfillment.

Spiritual Counterfeits Project, on the other hand, quotes the testimony of a Christian woman in Berkeley, California, who was once a teacher of TM.

"As my consciousness expanded I began to become aware of the presence of spirit beings sitting on either side of me when I was meditating, and sometimes at night they would sit on my bed."

"In March, 1972, I attended a teacher-training course in Fiuggi, Italy, where I learned from Maharishi how to be a TM instructor. Along with about 1,000 others from all over the United States and the world, I spent three months meditating from three to ten hours a day."

"I had a vivid experience of demonic oppression while there, when in the night during sleep I woke with a sense of fear and apprehension, as pressure was being put all over my head and body by a spirit who was trying to enter my body. I commanded it to leave and resisted it until it left. Other supernatural experiences began to occur, such as clairvoyance, telepathy, and the beginnings of astral travel."

Fantasy? Hallucination? One is freely invited to inquire into MIU's TM-Sidhi Program.



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Perspective

The Hatfield "Equal Access" Bill: Is It a Desirable Alternative to the Prayer Amendment?

Out of the fog surrounding and generated by discussion of the proper place of religious activities in America's public schools has come a new approach. Both lawmakers and religious groups who had previously opposed constitutional amendments designed to return prayer to public schools are lining up in support of a bill, introduced by Senator Mark Hatfield and fourteen cosponsors, that would prohibit public secondary schools from barring student religious meetings if that school receives federal funding and normally permits other student meetings during noninstructional hours.

Whether this legislation is necessary depends to some degree on one's interpretation of two recent federal court decisions: *Lubbock Civil Liberties Union v. Lubbock Independent School District* and *Bender v. Williamsport Area School District*. In the widely read *Lubbock* case, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals (upheld by the Supreme Court by denial of certiorari) held, on the basis of the Establishment Clause, that a high school with a long history of conducting blatantly evangelistic Christian activities during school hours could not continue in-school religious activities, even though it had revised its policy to place religious groups on the same footing as other student organizations. In the lesser-known *Bender* case, the District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania held that Williamsport High School could not deny Petros, a genuinely student-initiated religious group, the same right to use school facilities during the school's activity period that was accorded to other, secular, student groups. The holding was based not on the religion clauses of the First Amendment, but on the Free-Speech Clause.

Holding that the plaintiffs in *Bender* lacked a valid free-exercise claim and had not shown that the state either conditioned receipt of an important benefit upon conduct proscribed by a religious faith or denied such a benefit because of conduct mandated by religious belief, Judge William G.

Nealon ruled for the school district on this point.

In dismissing the school's Establishment Clause defense, Nealon applied the three-pronged test of *Lemon v. Kurtzman*. A "secular legislative purpose" was found in that the avowed purpose of the school's policy in creating the activity period was to promote the intellectual, physical, and social development of its students; the "primary effect" test was met in that equal

"The Bender decision . . . will be thin comfort to those who really want to find a way for the country to return to the so-called 'good old days' when churches and parents used the public schools to help them instill religious values in their children."

treatment for Petros would confer on it only a "general benefit" rather than furthering its aims; and the "excessive entanglement" test was passed in that neither a *de minimis* expenditure of public funds to provide a meeting place nor provision for a staff member to be present only to ensure orderly meetings constituted "excessive entanglement" any more than would the provision of fire and police protection for a church.

Turning to the free-speech claims by the plaintiffs, the court found that the school's decision to create an activity period open to virtually all other types of student groups created a "limited public forum," and that a decision to exclude certain subject matter from such a forum would be justified only by a compelling public interest, which the school had not identified. Therefore Petros must be granted the same privileges accorded other student groups. To do otherwise would be to single out religious speech for a burden not placed on other categories of speech.

Is there a clear contradiction between *Lubbock* and *Bender*? Not really. In *Lubbock* the court held against government-initiated religious activities. In *Bender* the

court held in favor of student-initiated religious activities. In differentiating the two cases Judge Nealon said, "Although the policy in *Lubbock* was ostensibly designed to allow many groups to meet, when it is examined in the context of the total school policy, its nonsecular purpose becomes apparent. The *Lubbock* court's conclusion that a nonsecular purpose was present cannot be divorced from that school district's prior practices of lending vigorous support to religion."

The *Bender* decision will be hailed—and rightly so—by those who genuinely want to see religious student groups treated equally with others. It will be thin comfort to those who really want to find a way for the country to return to the so-called good old days when churches and parents used the public schools to help them instill religious values in their children. The former is perfectly proper; the latter absolutely not.

So if the courts are on the right track, why do we need legislation like the Hatfield bill? In his opinion, Judge Nealon warned that this issue "will not be free from doubt unless and until the Supreme Court clarifies two very important areas of the law: the extent to which there can be a 'forum' for students in our high schools and the status of prayer in those institutions when initiated by students acting independently." Although the school district declined to appeal the *Bender* case, an individual school board member and codefendant has done so. We would wish that the Supreme Court might use this case as a vehicle to make the needed clarifications, but that is far from a certainty.

Absent such judicial clarification, the Hatfield "Equal Access" bill serves a useful purpose. Many parents are legitimately concerned about what's happening in public education—concerned that education without human values is not only ineffective but downright dangerous. Students should be encouraged, not discouraged, to get together to talk about values. They alone, of course, should initiate and conduct the activities, with no role for administrators in determining either content or mode of conduct. Only that supervision necessary to maintain order should be allowed. Upon these conditions I approve secondary students' access to school facilities for religious activities on the same basis that access is allowed for secular activities.—M.A.T.

Issues

Catholic Bishops Link School-Prayer Backing to Church Religious Lessons

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Catholic hierarchy will not back the proposed school prayer amendment unless it provides for Roman Catholic religious instruction for Catholic children attending public schools, according to a church official.

Msgr. Daniel F. Hoyer, general secretary of the U.S. Catholic Conference, said the amendment "does not adequately and effectively assure the right of America's children to express their faith." The statement came in a letter to the Constitution panel of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is considering the amendment.

Although the church has traditionally linked its support for school prayer to religious instruction, the new position takes a tougher stand against any amendment that allows prayer in public schools without fuller religious teaching. The teaching advocated by the church would involve religious instruction by parochial school teachers on public school grounds, ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1948.

Objections raised by the Catholic Church come at a time when other traditional supporters of prayer in public schools are unhappy with the administration-proposed amendment as now written. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), a cosponsor, has expressed interest in changing some of its language to guard against denominational prayer in public school classrooms.

In his statement, Father Hoyer said the proposed amendment would have little more than symbolic value and might cause more harm to "religious minorities" than good to the overall population. He noted that two thirds of Catholic school-age children are enrolled in public schools.

"Prayer, without a framework of voluntary instruction in the child's religious instruction, is not sufficient fully to insure the individual's religious freedom," he said, expressing concern that a child could not understand the significance of prayer to

his or her own religious tradition without proper instruction.

"The present proposal would have mainly symbolic value and only minimal pedagogical value. As such, it is not of sufficient value to justify the problems it might create in terms of the American diversity of religious beliefs and traditions and the right of religious minorities in our pluralistic society," Father Hoyer said.

Religious instruction on public school grounds was declared unconstitutional in 1948, when Mrs. Vashti McCollum brought suit on behalf of her son against the Champaign, Illinois, board of education. Today James McCollum, now 48, is challenging a related practice by high schools in Monroe County, New York, this time as the attorney for a coalition of groups. The case in federal district court involves the legality of giving students academic credit for off-campus religious instruction.

Prayer in public schools itself was ruled unconstitutional in Supreme Court cases during the early 1960s, while the legality of "released time" for religious instruction off the school grounds has been upheld by the High Court.

Soviet Parents Remain Blocked From Taking Custody of Their Son

SPRINGFIELD, Ill.—The Illinois Supreme Court has ruled that 15-year-old Walter Polovchak's parents can have custody of their son if they come from the Soviet Union to get him.

But even then, the court ruled, Michael and Anna Polovchak are barred from taking their son forcibly to the Soviet Union until a suit on the departure issue is resolved. A lawsuit challenging a federal grant of religious asylum to Walter is pending in the U.S. district court in Chicago. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has also issued an order barring the boy's departure from this country.

The case began in 1980, when the boy, then 12, fled from his parents' home in Chicago rather than go back with them to the Soviet Union, and moved in with a relative. He was taken from his parents' custody by a court order, and the parents returned to the Ukraine without him.

Attorneys for the parents argued their "supreme right" to have custody of their children. The Illinois Court of Appeals

returned legal custody to the parents, saying the Cook County Circuit Court erred in placing the boy in the custody of the state.

This decision was appealed to the state supreme court, which ruled May 27 that the removal of Walter from his parents' custody was erroneous. Illinois juvenile laws were designed "to preserve and strengthen the minor's family ties whenever possible," the state's high court said. It also said Walter's attorneys failed to establish that he was a "runaway" and thus beyond control of his parents.

Michael Polovchak has charged that his son has been brainwashed by "Ukrainian nationalists, Baptists, and my cousin." The cousin, Walter Polovchak, 26, is seeking legal custody of the boy. The father holds that the younger Walter and his older sister, Natalie, became alienated from the parents after the cousin started taking them to restaurants and the Ukrainian Baptist Church. The children decided to join it, although the family had been members of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the father said in a court hearing last year. The cousin has charged that the father is involved with the KGB, and is also an unfit father.

Julian Kulas, one of Walter's lawyers, called the state supreme court's decision a "partial victory" because the justices put conditions on the boy's return to parental custody. If the parents don't return for him the boy should remain in the custody of the courts, said the 11-page opinion written by Justice Robert Underwood. The boy's lawyers had argued that he should be placed in the custody of juvenile authorities until he is 18.

The case will be returned to the juvenile court, which will retain jurisdiction over Walter until the legal battle ends. This could take years. Once Walter reaches 18 he will be able to make a legally binding decision on his own. He was granted asylum by the Carter Administration and has received permanent-resident status under the Reagan Administration.

U.S. Judge Sides With Indians

SAN FRANCISCO—A federal judge has barred the U.S. Forest Service from building a logging road through an area in northern California held sacred by several Indian tribes.

The ruling by District Judge Stanley A. Weigel was the first to protect a sacred Indian site.

Letters

Islam: Taking a Closer Look

I just recently read your May, 1982, issue featuring Islam. Thank you very much for such kindly articles and stories. I pray to God almighty to grant us tolerance and understanding of each other, and through this understanding make this world a place to live in peace with everyone.

The article by Linn Brasher is quite informative, but there are a few serious misconceptions which I would like to clear. This is in no way a criticism of the author nor of the magazine, but a duty on my part.

1. There are no saints in Islam. Muslims are to honor all of the prophets and messengers of God who have been in this world. All messengers are honored equally; Mohammed is not superior. The following verses from the holy Quran explain this:

Say: We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to God do we bow our will (in Islam) (3:84).

The same religion has He established for you as that which He has enjoined on Noah—which we have sent by inspiration to thee—and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in Religion, and make no divisions therein. To those who worship other things than God, hard is the (way) to which thou callest them. God chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him) (42:13).

There are many other verses referring to Muslims not making distinction between the prophets. God mentions in the Quran that he spoke to one prophet Moses (peace be upon him), and to Jesus the son of Mary (peace be upon Him); he gave clear signs and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit,

so he made prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) the last prophet.

2. Prophet Mohammed had only one son and four daughters, all born to his first wife Khadija. His daughter Fatima married his cousin Ali; but they did not in any way produce division in the religion. The holy Quran prohibits division in religion. Shiite Muslims emerged after the death of Hussain, who was protesting the establishment of the first monarchy in Islam. Followers of Hussain then called themselves Shiites and associated themselves with the parents of Hussain (Fatima and Ali, God's blessing be upon them).

3. The Quran requires five daily prayers (not three):

And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night (11:114). Establish regular prayers—at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer (17:78). And celebrate the praises of thy Lord, before the rising of the sun, and before its setting; yea celebrate then for the part of the hours of the night and at the sides of the day: that thou mayest have spiritual joy (22:136). So (give) glory to God, when ye reach eventide and when ye rise in the morning; yea, to Him be praise, in the heavens and on earth; and in the late afternoon and when the day begins to decline (30:17-18).

4. The two sheets worn in pilgrimage are *unsewn*, white, and all cotton. This is to signify purity and simplicity. And there is no substitute for Hajj (pilgrimage). Visiting shrines, in the original sense, is prohibited in Islam. They are not to be worshiped or prayed to.

5. Muslims are forbidden to use any intoxicants.

O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (divination) by arrows are an abomination, of Satan's handiwork: Eschew such (abomination), that ye may prosper (5:93).

The description of heaven and hell in Quran is allegorical:

(Here is) a Parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised: In it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers

of honey pure and clear. In it there are for them all kinds of fruits; and Grace from their Lord (47:15). And their Lord will give to them to drink of a Wine Pure and Holy (76:21).

The Arabic word used in the above verse and translated as "wine" means any pleasurable drink. The important thing besides its allegorical nature is that this drink will not be intoxicating.

6. The selection of the first Khalifa, Abu Bakr, was done by consultation of an appointed commission. Aisha had nothing to do with it. An importance of this process was not to let the leadership of the religion be a monopoly of the prophet's family. And Ali was *not* an adopted son of the prophet.

7. Every Muslim, whether Shiite or Sunni, must conform to the law of the Quran. There is no compromise in the religion; and a Muslim must not adjust Islam to his convenience.

There are some other minor discrepancies, but I felt compelled to clarify these major points for the true understanding of Islam. I hope that no one will be offended by my writing, and I pray to God to give us strength and patience to truly understand each other. I humbly request that my comments be forwarded to Ms. Brasher. Please call on me if I could ever be of any assistance. God bless you and your publication.

M. WAHEED-UZ-ZAMAN RANA, Ph.D.
The Islamic Center of Greater St. Louis
St. Louis, Missouri

May I Respond

Thank you for your letter and particularly for the opportunity to respond to Dr. Rana's critique of my article, "Islam: Taking a Closer Look."

First, let me preface my response by saying that my interest in the study of comparative religion is genuine, and I am therefore always open to new information. At the same time, I feel that the sources from which I drew my data for the Islam article are impressive, and I can only point out that whether the subject be Islam or Christianity or any other belief system, religious scholars frequently find in such pursuit areas of disagreement.

In many cases, groups in various geographic locations or sects within a particular religion will maintain somewhat divergent

views or practices. Additionally, I have often found that research material available may often reflect the author's idealism and for this reason be a hindrance in the accurate reporting of the religion as it is practiced or appears to the mainstream of its followers. With this in mind, I tried to consult a number of different sources as a means of cross checking.

While time and space prohibit really detailed rebuttal of all of Dr. Rana's allegations, I shall try to cover them as adequately as possible.

Regarding saints, McCasland, Cairns, and Yu, in *Religions of the World*, indicate, "A cult of saints appeared in every Muslim land, usually manifesting itself at tombs of famous persons. People of the adjacent region assembled at these tombs in veneration of the spirit of the deceased, and many of these tombs have become such famous shrines that they are objects of pilgrimage."—Page 335.

They further tell us, "Although the cult of saints is not authorized by the Quran and has often been condemned by such zealous groups as the Wahhabis, of Arabia, it has quietly been accepted by the authorities of Islam. The flexible principle of the consensus has made this possible."—Page 337.

F. G. Herod, in *World Religions*, also refers to saints. "Today, pilgrimages are made to the tombs of the Sufis, who are regarded as saints, and their lives and teachings are studied."—Pages 68, 69.

Dr. Rana mentioned that Mohammed had only one son and also that the holy Quran prohibits division in religion. McCasland, Cairns, and Yu (*Religions of the World*) tell us that Khadijah "bore him one or more sons, all of whom died in infancy, as well as four daughters; but his daughter Fatima was the only child of that marriage who survived."—Page 314.

Continuing on the subject, we learn: "The problem of succession in Islam, however, has never been solved to the satisfaction of all Muslims, and this has been a cause of continuing weakness in Muslim states. The fact that Muhammad died without a son is the source of the problem. It is said that he adopted his cousin Ali, son of his uncle abu-Talib, with the intention of making him his successor, and, with that in mind, gave his daughter Fatima to his adopted son as his wife. But Muhammad's sudden death, before careful

preparation had been made, left a confused situation, and Ali lacked the ability to take immediate and decisive action. Aisha, Muhammad's favorite wife [after the death of Khadijah, Muhammad took up other wives, possibly in hopes of getting a male heir], who was a woman of strong will, easily pushed Ali aside and installed abu-Bakr, her father, as the first Caliph. But abu-Bakr was an old man, and he died within two years, A.D. 634. . . .

"This aggressive act of Aisha in displacing Ali in favor of abu-Bakr created a division in Islam that has never been overcome."—Page 324.

In answer to some other allegations made by Dr. Rana, F. G. Herod, in *World Religions*, indicates that "the Koran requires a minimum of three periods of prayer per day, but the usual practice is five." We learn further that "a pilgrim must dress in two white sheets sewn together" and that "nowadays, as Moslems are so widely scattered over the earth's surface, those who live thousands of miles from Mecca make visits to shrines and places nearer them. One famous shrine is in Jerusalem; the beautiful Dome of the Rock, covering the place from where, it is said, Muhammad made a journey to heaven."

I have not been able to further substantiate whether the sheets of the pilgrims are indeed sewn together, as I have run across only a few other discussions of the garment worn, and these did not discuss its construction.

Dr. Rana mentioned that the description of heaven and hell in the Quran is allegorical. My article read, in referring to the qualities the Muslim must have to reach heaven, "He must be upright and just, honor his parents, not drink alcohol (although the Koran describes heaven as having rivers of wine!), gamble, make idols, or possess more than four wives." Several of my sources make reference to this seeming paradox, and I mentioned it purely as a matter of possible interest and not in any derogatory way.

Lastly, Dr. Rana indicated that whether Shiite or Sunni, every Muslim must conform to the law of the Quran and that there is no compromise in the religion. My article read, "Islam does not require a believer to accept what he himself finds unconvincing. The Moslem's own mind is his last and only resort in religious matters." This closely

parallels Al-Faruqi's assessment in *The Great Asian Religions*.

He goes on to say, "In Islam, the highest state of religious certainty—inman—is not merely the act of believing, an 'act of faith,' but a state in which religious knowledge produces an intuition of its certainty as a result of the consideration and weighing of all possible alternatives."—Page 321.

Al-Faruqi further states, "Islam does not require him to believe except that which he himself, if capable of undertaking a fresh examination of it, will find convincing and worthy of acceptance, as rational, coherent, and corresponding to reality."

The Koran says, "Pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)."

To me, this was a fascinating aspect of the Islamic faith and one worthy of more attention. It is this personal responsibility and response which would add to Islam's dynamism. In *Islam Observed*, Clifford Geertz had this to say: "Religious faith, even when it is fed from a common source, is as much a particularizing force as a generalizing one, and indeed whatever universality a given religious tradition manages to attain arises from its ability to engage a widening set of individual, even idiosyncratic, conceptions of life and yet somehow sustain and elaborate them all."

I hope that the above information adequately covers the allegations Dr. Rana had mentioned in his letter. Above all, I hope it will provide the stimulation for your readers to do religious research of their own, not only of the Islamic faith, but of others as well. Obviously there is always room for more knowledge and understanding if we are to get along as a people. I would like to close with a statement made by Al-Faruqi: "Western study of Islam has been 'scientific' and 'empirical' to the point of missing the meaning of piety, ethicality, and sense of beauty that constitute the core of Islamic religiosity." This perhaps should be our most important consideration when we undertake the study of any religion . . . that we don't overlook these things. I hope that Dr. Rana understands that this, most sincerely, was my intention.

LINN BRASHER
Las Vegas, Nevada

"Section 200: God on Exhibit"

This letter is occasioned by your apologia for God in "Section 200: God on Exhibit."

How many times have we heard that it is not God's fault when persons who profess the "true religion" oppress those who do not believe as they believe? These people are characterized as having misrepresented God. God would never do what they do. God would never approve of their actions. God would never bring about the death, the misery, and the evils which they bring about.

Good is always God acting. Evil always a misrepresentation of God. We have had 2000 years now of Christian apologies for God. In 2000 years Christians, who controlled western civilization for much of that period, have been unable to turn their religion into a practical means of teaching a worthwhile ethical or moral behavior. Why should we believe that the next 2000 years will be any different? Is it not time to admit that there is nothing of much value in the teachings of those who profess the power and goodness of God? The plain truth is that the philosophy of the God sayers is bankrupt.

What, then, in its place? Your magazine is a perfect example. I detest the Seventh-day Adventists' practice of pestering people with their bankrupt religion, and yet I admire your magazine above all other publications. You rarely preach through it and demonstrate in it the highest virtues of the human race. Your dedication to liberty for all mankind is unquestioned. In your pages you inspire others to think loftily of the right of all people to follow their true beliefs and to be free from compulsion. You can go on believing, if you will, that it is God who inspires you to your dedication for the cause of human freedom, but I believe that you inspire yourself. I deny that God should take any credit. Never has that mythical power ever appeared to stay the hand of the oppressor.

In spite of your obstinate practice of crediting God with your accomplishments and in spite of my resolve to a more realistic appraisal, we are each resolved to uphold the course of liberty. We have arrived there by different paths, and I think this is proof enough that our conduct, and not God's, is what most concerns us.

G. MERLE BERGMAN
Los Angeles, California

I feel compelled to take issue with the "Editor's Desk" statement that I blame God for the atrocities cited in my essay "Section 200."

I simply do not feel that way, and I fail to understand how an objective reader could arrive at such an erroneous conclusion. I am a religious liberal and a deist. I read history as pointing the finger of condemnation at those who, over the ages, have presumed to speak for God.

Theological leaders have transformed and perverted the life-sustaining message of the power of love to the horrendous love of power. And they could not have accomplished this blasphemy without the cooperation and support of the state. The very same forces are today trying to destroy the First Amendment, the one document that protects us. Hand in hand, the current political evangelists and their cohorts in government can destroy those of us who sincerely believe in the power of love. That is my message. I do not blame Him. I blame the same hypocrites that He addressed in Matthew 6:5.

AARON HILLER
Nashville, Tennessee

It may be, indeed, that I misunderstood your thrust; certainly a number of our readers concluded that you blamed God for "Christian" atrocities. Perhaps the incident after your friend was killed on a raid was most convincing—though I can see that the chaplain's misguided comfort could well support the view that he, not God, was at fault.

At any rate, your article did just what I hoped it would do—it set some "Christian" teeth on edge. It sensitized consciences. It stung. Certainly it is only fair to let you say what you wished to say—without the obfuscation of an errant editor!—R.R.H.

Aaron Hiller's "Section 200" was an unfortunate philosophical eruption in the area of school prayer that did not even have the bad excuse of being original. His primary mistake, common to many, is his confusing voluntary prayer with history's treatment of mandatory prayer. As we are wise enough not to have mandatory prayer, his entire thesis falls to the ground.

Mr. Hiller may have had "history on his side," as the introduction to his article said, but he did not have logic. Considering what is being proposed in this country, his argument is a non sequitur. Considering what he did with his argument, I hope he's a farmer, for he's just built himself a straw man.

A pity that Mr. Hiller let passion run ahead of reality. A pity that you let him.

CRAIG SMITH
Milton, Wisconsin

"Even the form of prayer has cost untold numbers of lives," says Hiller. Does he really believe that God is responsible for those deaths? And Hitler's murders—the Lord's fault?

Anytime things go wrong, the thing to do is to blame the Lord. The President of the United States has some of the best economists in the country, but they are unable to solve our economic problems. Hey, don't blame these people for our problems, blame the Lord.

M. SLEPNIKOFF
Calistoga, California

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The Editor's Desk



Dr. Albert Boiter, adjunct research fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University.

All Pravda

The first time I met with Russian Christians I hardly knew what to ask about their freedom—or lack of freedom—of worship in their atheist homeland. In fact, I didn't even know what questions would be advisable to ask. I settled for asking them what they would like to ask me. It took more than a few private conversations in various parks even to begin to comprehend the complexity of religious "liberty" in the U.S.S.R.

That complexity is illustrated by the material in this issue on the Soviet Christian. The copy beginning on page 13, "The Truth About Religious Liberty in the U.S.S.R.," began as "All You Wanted to Know About Religious Liberty in the Soviet Union." I decided that you just might want to know more than we could reveal in a few pages, but we could see that what you read adhered to truth—a not inconsiderable task, as the interview will make clear. Despite the more modest target, however, "The Truth" contains more information than 20 Ameri-

can tourists in Moscow could come up with in 20 years. Albert Boiter's expertise in Soviet law is monumental. A Baptist and former director of Soviet research for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Munich, Boiter has all the answers. Had Billy Graham consulted Dr. Boiter he would not be haunted by an oversimplistic observation or two delivered to the world press from Moscow.

And there is more—on religious liberty in Eastern Europe as a whole, and even the Communist perspective on Christianity as practiced by its professors. And it's all *pravda*; but don't expect the editor of the Soviet newspaper by that name to admit it. Christians are not the only ones who fail to live up to their name.—R.R.H.

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