Individual Papers

The Evolution of Protestantism in Post-Soviet Russia and the Impact of South Korean Missionaries[1]

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Abstract

This article explores the revival, scale, and success of Protestantism as the result of Korean missionary activity in post-Soviet Russia. The authors argue that the post-Soviet religious rebirth and subsequent revival of Russia's Protestantism, especially in the Far Eastern region of the country, has largely been the product of the activity of South Korean Protestant religious organizations. The pioneering analysis of the Korean missions' work in Russia shows that their proselytizing works on a grassroots level. The authors elucidate the societal role and status that Protestantism has historically had in Russia and explore the inter-confessional dialogue between contemporary Orthodoxy and Protestantism. They argue that despite the existing negative stereotypes and civilizational challenges, the post-Soviet version of Protestantism has become an inseparable part of Russia's religious tapestry. For the first time, the authors collected a sample of Russia's Protestant churches created under the auspices of Korean missionaries. Additionally, the research also presents a contemporary statistical overview of Russia's Protestant churches. Finally, this article emphasizes a consistent duality of the Russian state's attitude toward Protestantism evident throughout its consecutive historical periods.

Keywords: Protestantism, Korean missionaries, Orthodoxy, Russia, Republic of Korea, proselytism

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Introduction

This article investigates the history of Protestantism in Russia and its evolution. Unlike the alien Eurocentric cultural-religious phenomenon that was artificially introduced in Russia by the will of the Russian tsars, contemporary Protestantism is a popular and accepted religion across all the regions of post-communist Russia. At the same time, the authors of this paper emphasize the historical duality of Russia's state policies toward Protestantism. On the one hand, traditionally, Russia has encouraged the influx of Protestants into the country for a variety of political and economic reasons. On the other hand, the Russian state has always been suspicious of Protestantism. This "alarmist" attitude toward Protestantism and its adherents can be traced through the Imperial, Soviet, and contemporary periods.

This article argues that Korean Presbyterian and Methodist Protestant missionaries were among the main actors responsible for the revival, advancement, and promotion of Protestantism in Russia since the 1990s. The results of this study may help to elucidate the current role and societal niche that Protestantism occupies in the post-Soviet Russian societal milieu against the backdrop of historically complex inter-confessional relations between the Russian state, the Russian Orthodox Church, and Protestantism.

The turbulent period encompassing the policy of Perestroika, the Soviet collapse, and the creation of the new Russian Federation fundamentally changed Russia and ushered in a raft of liberal reforms. Ideologically, Soviet realism could not accommodate religion. The Soviet collapse changed this paradigm, meaning that the cultural life of Russian society in the first quarter of the twenty-first century has been dramatically different from the preceding Soviet decades. One of the triumphs of Gorbachev's policy of Glasnost was the passing of the Law "On the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" on 25 October 1990.[4] Laws and norms providing for the freedom of conscience and religious expression were legislatively spelled out for the first time in the history of modern Russia. The spiritual void caused by the sudden collapse of the Soviet communist ideology was eventually replaced by Russia's current multi-confessional religious tapestry. Today, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) is definitely the major religious player in Russia, actively engaging in charitable, cultural, educational, and other societal projects and whose authority and influence have been steadily growing since the 1990s.

The ascendancy of the Orthodox Church has not, however, gone completely unchallenged. The law has opened Russia's gates to missionaries of all creeds, including Protestants. Starting in 1991, missionaries from South Korea inundated Russia. At the same time, a number of religious organizations sprung up on the

territory of the former USSR that openly condoned terrorism, political extremism, and acts of bodily and psychological harm threatening individuals, their psyche, families, and society. To combat the influx of undesirable religious organizations, the Russian government passed a revised Federal Law on 26 September 1997—N 125-FZ "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations"[5]—which was aimed at controlling and restricting the emergence and activity of religious sects.

Not all foreign religious organizations are welcome in Russia. Some researchers argue that the religious networks' global activity has the potential to spark ethnic, ethno-religious, and geopolitical conflicts.[6] According to our conclusions, this thesis can hardly be applied to the Protestant organizations' work in Russia. These churches have been uniting Russian society through a love of God and enjoy the love and affection of the second generation of ethnic Russian parishioners. Protestantism has become an integral and vibrant part of post-Soviet Russia. The question of the extent to which the Russian national identity has transformed owing to this Protestant religious renaissance remains open as we are observing an evolutionary process, not a monocausal event.

Eurocentric roots of Protestantism in Russia

According to Dostoevsky, "To be a Russian is to be an Orthodox." The development of a unified Russian culture and national self-awareness took centuries, and this was a process that went hand-in-glove with the growth of the Russian Orthodox Church. Before the Revolution of 1917, the history of Russia was the history of the establishment and preservation of Orthodox identity. Inevitably, Russian national consciousness sacralized this history. Russia's culture, including the secular culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was perceived—both consciously and unconsciously—as a derivative of Orthodox religiosity.[7]

For centuries, Russia's elites cultivated the mono-confessional nature of the Russian state. The subjects of the Russian monarch ought to have been Orthodox. However, the realities of life forced the Russian rulers to introduce certain changes. During the reigns of Peter the Great (1682–1725) and Catherine the Great (1762–1796), some Russian subjects were permitted to follow Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. However, an ethnic Russian could only be an Orthodox follower, and changing religion was a crime against the state, sometimes punishable by death.[8] Russia's so-called Orthodox nationalism, which has long been shaped by historical forces, is alive to this day.

The origins of Russia's protestant communities are inextricably linked to early European migration into this country toward the end of the sixteenth century. Under Catherine the Great, Lutheran protestant colonists from Germany arrived to

populate Russia's southern provinces. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Siberia absorbed waves of European Methodist protestant settlers who occupied various positions in the government, or served and worked as doctors, architects, engineers, and other professionals. Baptism enjoyed increasing popularity among the Russian nobility who frequented Saint Petersburg's salons.[9]

At the same time, it is important to point out that historically, both in Tsarist and Soviet times, the Russian Orthodox Church and Russia's authorities often treated the Protestants with disdain and did not bother with theological nuances, using the blanket name "Protestant" for any believer, irrespective of which church they belonged to. Thus, the story of post-Soviet Protestantism in Russia is mainly about the struggle for the recognition and acceptance of all Protestant churches.

Russia's state authorities have always remained cautious when it comes to Protestantism. During Russia's numerous geopolitical crises, so-called unreliable ethnic and religious groups, including the Protestants, were often deported to Siberia. According to Peggy Lewitt, "cultural diasporas, which incorporate religious experiences, are groups that reject the identity categories and social structures that nation states impose on them."[10] It is not surprising that the authorities of the Russian state viewed transnational Protestantism with suspicion.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, the Protestant communities in Siberia appeared not because of missionary activity, but as exile or voluntary settlements.[11] The fact that successive Russian governments maintained paternalistic policies concerning the Protestant churches is explained by the "skilled migrant status" that Protestants from Europe and the Baltic could offer Russia. The Empire desperately needed their services and expertise to satisfy its voracious administrative, military, educational, and fiscal appetites. Besides, owing to a very long history of hostilities with the Catholic West, especially the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian rulers were naturally inclined to choose their foreign experts from the Protestant West.[12]

There were about 4,000 Lutheran Protestants in Siberia at the start of the twentieth century, and this number saw considerable growth in the years that followed. By 1908, that number almost doubled to 7,500 Protestants. During the First World War, the number of Protestants in Siberia experienced another wave of growth when Lutheran and Baptist German colonists and the Protestant clergy who dwelled in Moldova and Ukraine were deported to the east, swelling the Protestants' numbers to 11,000 registered parishioners. Initially, Protestant migrants who came to Siberia were Europeans, but this changed toward the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the influx of Korean Protestant Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist migrants.[13]

In summing up Russia's initial period of acquaintance with Protestantism, it is important to point out that Protestantism arrived in Russia as the result of the European Reformation and as an artificially implanted Eurocentric cultural-religious phenomenon. At the end of the nineteenth century, ethnic Korean Protestant migrants started to arrive in large numbers in the Far Eastern provinces of the Russian Empire, drastically altering the ethnic makeup of Russia's Protestants. At the start of the twentieth century, Protestant communities in Russia were already part of Russia's ethnic, social, religious, and economic fabric. Protestant churches steadily grew in numbers and influence, especially in Siberia. It is equally important to remember that before 1905, some of Russia's Protestants were not just discriminated against, but often severely repressed. The Tsarist law of 1905 on the strengthening of religious tolerance presented Russia's religious minorities, including the Protestants, with a chance to become part of national societal life. The latter's goal was to reform Russia in accordance with evangelical principles.

During the tragic period of repression in the USSR that started shortly after the Revolution, all religions were affected by the state's anti-religion policies. Hundreds of religious figures, including Orthodox priests, Islamic clergy, Protestant pastors, and representatives of other religions were ruthlessly persecuted. Many of them were executed, and the rest ended up jailed. The reasons for the purposeful persecution by the state were manyfold. One of them was that after the Revolution occurred, the authority of the Russian Orthodox and other traditional churches remained very high in the society at large. The Bolsheviks were naturally afraid of the Church's moral authority and its potential to mobilize. At the same time, the Russian Orthodox Church was extremely wealthy.

Plundering the Church's vast riches was one of the imperatives specifically articulated by the budding, but already increasingly aggressive and repressive Soviet regime, and Lenin himself. Massive, forced extractions of the Church's wealth and property ensued. Despite the assistance of the pro-Bolshevik "red" priests and the politically contained position of the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, most of the Orthodox laymen and laity were against the expropriations. More than 1,000 bloody clashes occurred across all of Russia.[14] The very first judicial process against the so-called "counter-revolutionaries in church clothes" unfolded between 26 April 1922 and 7 May 1922 in Moscow. Out of forty-eight accused, eleven were sentenced to execution and five were executed. Patriarch Tikhon was also arrested,[15] but released on 27 June, apparently after his "sincere repentance."[16]

In Petrograd (formerly Saint Petersburg), a group of religious figures and laity were arrested on charges that they initiated disorder in March–April 1922 during

the extraction of the Church's wealth. Even though their fault could not be proven, four of the accused, including metropolitan Veniamin (V. Kazanskii) were executed, over 50 were sentenced to jail and forced labor, and more than 20 were released.[17] The communist hold on religion lasted for over seventy years and soviet society was continuously subjected to thorough state-controlled atheist propaganda.

Paradoxically, in the long run, this relentless ideological drive became a continuous source of structural weakness that eventually doomed the USSR. Reverend Canon Michael Bourdeaux was among a few who predicted the Soviet collapse before it happened. Bordeaux foresaw that Soviet nationalism was going to destroy the USSR, pointing out that the USSR was "an empire in the process of decay because there's no binding loyalty which will keep it together."[18] He felt justified that "the successive pronouncements of Lenin and Stalin, backed by the might of the law and the secret police, had been powerless to eradicate Christianity."[19] Bourdeaux was the editor of a series of books published in Russia as an outcome of extensive research focused on Russia's contemporary religious life and conducted in 1997–2002 under the auspices of Keston Institute, the UK. He pointed out that even a temporary democratization of the totalitarian society, i.e., the so-called Khrushchev Thaw, resulted in an immediate warming of the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the churches of the West. The thaw also opened up limited possibilities for foreign students to study in the Soviet Union.[20] Bourdeaux was one of them.

The infamous Soviet anti-religious campaign of the 1920s-1930s was so vicious that it almost destroyed, or at least severely harmed all of Russia's religious denominations. Orthodox Christianity and Islam, which were heavily rooted in Russian society, sustained severe blows that nearly incapacitated both religions. Russia's Protestantism was a younger religion, but it managed to sustain itself, absorbing and weathering all the fluctuations of the long Soviet reign.

Korean Protestant missionaries in Russia

Academic scholarship researching the phenomenon of Korean Protestantism in Russia is scarce owing to a relatively short time span after the fall of Communism and the economic turmoil of the 1990s and the early 2000s. The available evidence points to the unique features of Russia's so-called Korean Protestantism and its historical proselytizing tactics in Russia's Asian and European parts from the standpoint of maintaining macro-regional, ethno-confessional, and ethno-social stability.[21]

Here, a transnational perspective, which argues that a global or world religion is a threat to the existing nation-state and security interest status quo as it forms

transnational links that operate beyond the reach of a nation-state, may help to elucidate the existential challenges that Protestants from both Europe and Asia have traditionally encountered in Russia.[22] For instance, both the Russian state and the Orthodox Church fear that what is perceived as "Korean Protestantism" might create a new Protestant identity that surpasses the Russian ethnic component, hollowing out the cultural uniqueness of Russia's peoples,[23] thus replicating Russian *sonderweg*, or dependency path where the state authorities continue to exhibit traditionally alarmist views when it comes to Protestantism. In addition, Protestantism has always provided "additional glue that reinforces diasporic consciousness,"[24] which was a source of constant headaches for Russia's successive governments bent on establishing some sort of common religious identity based on the Russian-speaking version of either Orthodoxy, Marxism, or sovereign democracy. Henceforth, the repeatedly occurring pattern of misunderstanding between the authoritative Russian state and "alien" Protestantism can be viewed as a natural phenomenon against Russia's authoritative historical background. It is important to point out that the government passed laws allowing for religious freedoms in 1905 and 1991 and, on both occasions, it provided windows of opportunity for the organic and successful development of other religions, including Protestantism.

For instance, under the last Tsar of Russia, Nicholas II, local Imperial Russian administrations, authorities, and communities were tolerant toward non-Orthodox populations. Pyŏngcho Yi wrote about the challenges that Korean Protestants experienced in the Russian Far East at the start of the twentieth century.[25] He researched the inter-relationship between Russia's Imperial authorities and Korean missionaries in the Far East, focusing on the missionary activity of Presbyterian pastor Ch'oe Gwan-hŭl. Using a plethora of Russian archival evidence, Pyŏng-cho Yi argues that the Russian Orthodox Church still resisted the advancement of Protestantism in the Far East despite the 1905 law on religious tolerance. For instance, on 17 October 1906, the Department of Spiritual Affairs issued an edict whereby the authorities prohibited the creation of a local Korean Protestant Presbyterian community, but allowed them to conduct Church services in Korean, albeit under police surveillance. Pyŏng-cho I also shows that the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church was weak in comparison with the energetic proselytizing efforts of Protestant missionaries. Obviously, this dichotomy led to the emergence of multiple conflict situations with Orthodoxy that were additionally magnified by the growing popularity and societal acceptance of Korean missionaries.

According to Vertovec, "religious dynamics evolve differently when migrants are characterized by minority status, when they form part of religious diasporas,

or when they engage in transnational practices."[26] It is important to point out that early Korean migrants in Russia fit the suggested categories as they were characterized by minority status, formed religious diasporas, and engaged in transnational activities, for instance, in the resistance to the Japanese occupation of Korea. The latter became especially pronounced during the first years after the Russian Revolution. In addition, the Protestant identities of Korean migrants were often confusing to the local Russian populace who traditionally identified Protestantism with Europeans.

The story of the Korean missionary Gwan-hŭl Ch'oe is instructive in this respect. Ch'oe was the first ethnic Korean Presbyterian Protestant cleric to have received official permission to conduct a scope of religious activities in the Russian Far East from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Empire in November 1909.[27] This was the start of a wider Protestant proselytizing movement, which eventually represented a broad range of confessions, including Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists. In 1911, there were about 300 parishioners in Vladivostok's Presbyterian Church, 100 parishioners in Nikol'sk-Ussuriisk, 200 parishioners in Kharbin, and another 200 parishioners across various villages of the region.[28]

In 1909, Ch'oe graduated from Pyeongyang's presbyterian school. After he became a pastor, Ch'oe was sent as a missionary to the Russian Far East to stimulate the spread of Presbyterianism among his fellow ethnic Koreans. Ch'oe's activities were a source of annoyance for local Orthodox Church functionaries as Presbyterianism rapidly spread through the Far East. In addition, Ch'oe conducted his service in Korean, attracting more followers.[29]

Against all odds, Ch'oe succeeded in the construction of the first Presbyterian church in Vladivostok in 1910.[30] This was also the first Korean Presbyterian Church registered in the Imperial rostrum of Russia's Ministry of Justice. Just a year later, the church was in ashes. Ch'oe did not give up and collected enough donations to build another church. However, he continued experiencing financial difficulties. To tackle these challenges, Ch'oe adopted a new strategy of uniting the efforts and resources of Presbyterian and Methodist churches in Vladivostok to pursue common strategies and goals. This strategy, however, ruffled feathers in Korea, where Ch'oe's Presbyterian supervisors were unhappy with his free-thinking and ordered his immediate return.

Ch'oe did not comply with the order given by his superiors and stayed in Russia. Russian primary sources state that "Ch'oe was an outstanding presbyter of the American church," and that "because of his preaching, a multitude of new Presbyterian converts appeared."[31] Eventually, Ch'oe met Fafather Vasilii Ogai, also an ethnic Korean and an Orthodox priest. Their theological debates made

Choi reconsider his religious beliefs, and in late December 1912, he converted to Orthodoxy and took the name Innocent. Allegedly, Ch'oe's conversion was complete when he observed the service at one of the local Orthodox churches.[32]

According to Pyŏng-cho I, the period between 1909 and 1912 was characterized by a massive influx of Korean immigrants. Local Imperial Russian authorities viewed them with suspicion and strongly encouraged them to accept Orthodoxy. Hence, it is difficult to judge how genuine Ch'oe's conversion was. Moreover, under the duress of the anti-religious campaign that was rapidly unfolding in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s, Ch'oe returned to his religious cradle and converted back to Protestantism. The existing theory arguing in favor of Ch'oe's imprisonment in the USSR does not specify why and when he was arrested. Besides, there are no archival sources supporting this assumption.[33]

Similar tolerant attitudes toward Protestantism survived into the early years of Soviet power. In 1918, the Soviets published a decree separating Church from State, and School from Church. This decree triggered the growth of Protestant communities in Siberia. Some of the Protestant communities attempted to adjust the religious canons and dogmas in accordance with the new and changing political reality by adopting new slogans that fit well with the Bolshevik regime. They, in turn, found some toleration, albeit temporary, by the Bolshevik government. The budding Soviet regime identified non-Orthodox groups, including Protestants, as sectarians, but the Bolsheviks also appreciated the Protestant appeal to collectivism, equality, and the poor.

Remarkably, the first ten years of the Soviet period were marked by the rapid growth of Protestantism in Siberia and the Far East. In 1916, there were 100 communities and 100 churches serviced by 150 local and traveling pastors. In 1927, these numbers grew to 150 communities and 130 churches serviced by 610 clerics.[34] New slogans, such as "Help the Poor" or "Brotherhood and peace of the Peoples" appeared and were synonymous with a new era and Russia's Bolshevik political regime. In addition, in 1919, thousands of Korean immigrants, including Protestants, escaped to the Russian Far East after the Japanese occupation authorities brutally suppressed a peaceful demonstration on 1 March in Seoul.[35]

In May 1920, the Korean Methodist assembly sent three missionaries to Harbin, Vladivostok, and Nikol'sk-Ussuriysk. In 1921, the so-called Siberian Synod was created in the Far Eastern region under the auspices of the Korean Methodist missionaries, who oversaw the activities of all Methodist communities. On 20 July 1921, an Assembly of Siberian missionaries gathered in Nikol'sk-Ussuriisk under the guidance of Korean Methodist Protestant pastors Yŏng-hak Kim, Tae-t'aek Chŏn, and T'aek-su Kim.[36] In just one year, Korean missionaries succeeded in founding 30 Methodist churches in the region. According to the data of the Synod,

in 1923, there were 107 Methodist communities in Primor'e with 3,464 parishioners. Four pastors and 18 preachers performed the service. Seven preachers were female. There were also 145 leaders of domestic groups who also assisted in performing the service and 23 leaders of the sisters' service. The latter were mainly engaged in charity. See Table 1 for a list of communities, pastors, and parishioners belonging to Methodist churches of the Vladivostok and Nikol'sk-Ussuriisk regions in Primor'e.[37]

In the Far East region of the USSR, Presbyterians primarily populated Vladivostok, Nikol'sk-Ussuriisk, Iman, and Khabarovsk. There was also a sizable Presbyterian community in Kharbin, the Russian zone of the Chinese-Eastern Railroad. Local Korean and Russian Baptists assisted the Korean Methodist and Presbyterian communities when it came to registering with the local authorities and provided financial and material assistance to their brethren.

The General Assembly of Korean Presbyterianism, which oversaw the churches of those Koreans who populated the Far Eastern Region of the USSR, collected a statistical overview of these churches during field research inspections conducted in the period between 1922 and 1924. Their goal was the creation of a lucid statistical account of the actual spread of Presbyterianism among the local Korean diaspora. The report was delivered on 10 September 1922, in Seoul during the eleventh session of the General Assembly of Korean Presbyterianism, which was dedicated to the results of inspections carried out in Vladivostok, Partizansk, Nakhodka, Artoym, and Nikol'sk-Ussuriysk. Overall, 95 churches were inspected in the Primor'e Region and three in Khabarovsk, mostly established after the Revolution of 1917.[38]

Pastor O Hyŏn-sun represented Valdivostok's presbyterian communities assisted by four pastors from Canada. Pastor O Hyŏn-sun oversaw five churches with four presbyters, 11 deacons, 16 evangelists, and four preachers with 533 parishioners. The second missionary working in Primor'e, Kim Hyŏng-chŏng, was responsible for evangelization in Partizansk, which housed 18 churches with 663 parishioners. Two presbyters, two pastor assistants, and 19 deacons were responsible for this region.[39]

In 1920, 100 Baptist churches appeared in the Far East: 15 churches in the Enchu region with 1,500 parishioners, five in the Vladivostok region with 520 parishioners, 18 churches in the Suchansk region with 1,600 parishioners, and four churches in the Dobino region.[40] Every Korean village in the Far East had a Protestant church, sometimes more than one. Between 1917 and 1922, there were 45 Baptist, three Methodist, and 59 Presbyterian churches in the Primor'e region. The Methodist Church congregation had four pastors, 19 evangelists, 107 churches, and 3,464 parishioners. The Presbyterian Church congregation had one

pastor, seven elders, 21 preachers, 59 churches, and 2,970 parishioners. Overall, there were 10,054 parishioners and 209 churches in 1923 with over 100,000 ethnic Koreans living in the Soviet Far East. The missionaries concluded that 10% of the entire Korean population was evangelized.[41] In Manuel Castells' words, these churches operated as a transnational "network society—decentralized, flexible yet connected networks that provided customized services."[42]

Ethnic Korean migration to Russia only stopped toward the end of the 1920s because of forced restrictions imposed by the Soviet government. Some restrictions were implemented as part of the wider Soviet program of political and religious repression, and others owing to the diplomatic pressure imposed by Japan.[43] Active anti-religious propaganda led to the systematic and violent uprooting of communities from all denominations, and Protestantism was no exception. The result of these policies was that by late 1920, most Korean missionaries emigrated from the region. Korean pastors who decided to stay in the USSR were eventually arrested and exiled to the gulags. In 1928, Stalin launched collectivization and a campaign of "militant atheism." Soviet repressions gradually gained strength in the 1930s culminating in the Great Terror (1937–1938), which saw the eventual elimination of nearly all religious activities in the USSR. When Soviet authorities arrested Methodist pastor Yŏng-hak Kim, the Korean Missionary Assembly decided to halt its missionary activity in the USSR.[44]

However, there is more to Kim's story. The martyrology of ethnic Koreans that fell victim to the Stalinist regime does not contain his name. South Korean publications point out that Kim worked as a missionary in Soviet Russia, starting in 1921. However, another Korean source points to 1922 as the date of his arrival. Yŏng-hak Kim migrated to Russia as a missionary after he served a prison sentence in Korea. According to Korean sources, he fought against the Japanese occupation as part of Korea's patriotic resistance, was later arrested in Siberia in the 1930s, and died there. After 80 years of oblivion, Yŏng-hak Kim has resurfaced in South Korea as a martyr who fell protecting his people and fighting the communist oppression in the USSR. The Methodist Church Yanyan in Kanwondo, where he served in 1919, staged a service dedicated to the 80-year anniversary of Yŏng-hak Kim's martyrdom on 29 November 2012. Kim's fate deserves further investigation as it is unclear what really happened to him in the 1930s in Stalinist Russia.[45]

Bourdeaux argued that all churches suffered equally under the Soviet ideological yoke regardless of their denomination. However, Bourdeaux also pointed at Stalin's revival of the churches during the Second World War when "its leaders were able to utilize a period of stability to re-establish foundations which had been destroyed during the purges of the 1920s and 1930s."[46]

It is beyond doubt that Korean migrants and missionaries succeeded in establishing Protestantism in the Far East of the Russian Empire and augmenting the previously Eurocentric phenomenon. However, Koreans lived under double duress, whereby they were not entirely trusted by the Russian authorities, while also being wanted by the Empire of Japan as its subjects. Russian Imperial authorities strove to create adequate living conditions for the incoming Korean migrants. However, owing to the complexity of Russia's relations with Japan, the former constantly demanded displays of loyalty from Koreans and was wary of Protestantism. Without taking the Russo-Japanese relationship aspect into account, the story of Korean missionary activity and migration in the Russian Far East is incomplete.

Korean missionary activity in Russia in the post-Soviet period

A new page in the history of Russia's Protestantism was opened with the introduction of the law "On the Freedom of Conscience and Religion," which in 1990 legalized the activity of all Protestant organizations in the USSR. In the past 30 years, Korean Protestant missionaries have established their offices and representations in 170 countries and sent tens of thousands of missionaries around the world. Historically, Korea was the recipient of European and American Protestantism. Today, the modernized version of Korean Protestantism has become a chief exporter to other Asian national communities where Korean missionary activities are very successful.[47] Kŭn-pong Ch'oe argues that in the next 20 years, South Korea will overtake the United States of America as the world leader in the export of missionaries.[48] According to South Korea's 25-year plan, scheduled to finish in 2030, Korean missionary activity will have encompassed over 460,000 Korean missionaries working worldwide.[49] Korea's contemporary Protestant religious organizations have been instrumental in re-establishing Protestantism in the post-Soviet space, including Russia, forging a variety of political, economic, and cultural links between the countries. Contemporary Korean Protestant missionaries target ethnic and urban strata, including youth, migrants, marginalized urban populations, and indigenous peoples of Russia.

Soviet (Russian) Koreans acted as a pillar of support for newly arriving missionaries who worked on a grassroots level. The first Presbyterian Church in the USSR established its presence in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in 1990. Originally, most of its parishioners were ethnic Koreans owing to the existence of a sizable Korean ethnic enclave in the area. Soon thereafter, Korean missionaries began to arrive in Russia in groups and with families to evangelize. When these missionaries came

to Russia, many of them already had expert knowledge of the fall of communism, Russian history, and Russia's current spiritual crisis. They organized over 100 Korean protestant churches, predominantly Baptist and Pentecostal, in Moscow in the 1990s.[50]

The Protestant Presbyterian commune numbering 26 parishioners appeared in December 1991 among Sakhalin Koreans who practiced Protestantism even before their ancestors were exiled from Korea to Sakhalin by the Japanese as slave laborers. By 1996, there were 27 churches in Sakhalin and a spiritual seminary with 40 ethnic Korean students attending. In a short span of time, local Koreans had replaced missionaries from Korea. According to missionary U Tong-su, about 20% of the entire Sakhalin population was Presbyterian in 1997. According to missioner Cho Tong-sŏk, "They [the Russians] are in such a state due to their environment that they can absorb any teaching or culture."[51]

In Vladivostok, the first Korean, predominantly Presbyterian missionaries appeared at the end of 1991, and in Khabarovsk in 1992. According to the official data, there are 179 registered Protestant organizations in Primor'e, making up 54% of the total regional religious structural framework in the area: of this, 46 are Protestant churches run by Koreans. They comprise 30% of the entire Protestant regional organizational framework and 17% of the entire regional rostrum of registered religious organizations, including 30 Presbyterian churches, nine Methodist churches, two Sunbokŭm churches,[52] three churches belonging to Christians of Evangelical Faith, one Evangelical Christian church, and one Pentecostal church.[53] All of these churches are included in the rostrum of transnational religious organizations and many have their offices in South Korea. Ethnic Koreans often represent US-based transnational religious organizations.[54] Sometimes Korean Protestant organizations' activities transform traditional ethno-confessional landscapes in the Far East and Siberia (See Table 2). Some of the Russian parishioners who are keen to continue their Christian Protestant education are sent by their respective churches to the Republic of Korea.[55] Upon their graduation from Christian tertiary institutions, these Russian citizens return home and open new churches.[56]

Protestant Korean churches have also been undertaking missionary activity among local populations in Russia over the past 30 years. As a result, seven multinational Protestant Russian Korean churches were formed in Russia. Moscow's Russian-American-Korean Methodist Church Association was established in 1991. In 1994, it became the United Methodist Church in Eurasia with over 100 communities spread across the post-Soviet space serviced by 70 pastors from various ethnic backgrounds. In 1992, the United Russian-Korean Presbyterian church was founded in Moscow, and the Presbyterian church *Khaptong* was established

in Moscow in 1992–1994. The Russian–Korean Church of Evangelical Christians was founded in 1994, and the Central Russian-Korean Church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists was founded in Moscow in 1995. The Russian-Korean Youth Student Church of Free Evangelization was established in 1998, and its Church Council is located at Moscow's State University.[57]

In 1998, in Moscow, the Association of Churches of Evangelical Christians was established under the auspices of the Christian Biblical Centre "The Word of Christ," and the Evangelical Church "The Word of Christ." This organization was supposed to evolve into an inter-confessional entity within the broad evangelical framework, but prioritizing Calvinism. It also served another purpose, namely helping those communities that did not have the required 15-year duration required by the 1997 Law for registration with the Ministry of Justice.[58] One of the association's founders was a Korean-run presbyterian church under the leadership of Hwang Sang-ho. Eventually, most Korean-run Presbyterian churches joined this association.[59]

The Mission of Christians of Evangelical Faith "Grace" is another successful example of Protestantism assimilating in Russia. Officially, the mission is part of the Union of Christians of Evangelical Pentecostal Faith. However, Mission "Grace" belongs to the Korean Presbyterian movement and uses "water" and "fire" baptisms in its service. Russia's Presbyterian community is very hierarchical and well-organized. The figure of the pastor is an undisputed spiritual leader of a commune. Every commune has a leader-pastor, whose activities are overseen by an ethnic Korean spiritual supervisor from either the United States or South Korea. Leader-pastors are mostly Koreans. The mission is thoroughly "Korean" in terms of culture and maintains close ties with South Korea and Russia's Korean-run churches and national communities. The mission's active proselytizing has attracted many ethnic Russians, primarily students and intelligentsia. Most of the mission's junior pastors are ethnic Russians. Its charity work is primarily confined to hospices, children's orphanages, and hospitals. One of the mission's pastors has remarked that for him, it is "much easier to work in Russia than Europe as Koreans are more respected in Russia."[60]

Today, Russia's ethnic Korean Protestants take a proactive stance when it comes to missionary work. Ethnic Korean Protestant churches across Russia include 83 Presbyterian, 11 Evangelical Christian, 27 Pentecostal, 11 Methodist, two Adventist, and two Baptist churches. Of a total of 131 churches, 103 are registered in Moscow and the Moscow region. There are 89 pastors from the Republic of Korea and 45 pastors are Russian Koreans.[61] In Russia, Korean missionary practices have been very effective owing to the flow of missionary and financial assistance from donor countries, strict hierarchical discipline, the "theology of prosperity," shared Asian

identity, and an accessible and comprehensible style of sermon accompanied by music and dance.

Shared Asian identity has helped Korean missionaries to organize and set up churches in Russia's Republics of Altai, Tyva, and Buriatia. Up to 80–100% of their parishioners are indigenous people. There are four Presbyterian churches in Buriatiia and ten groups of the Yeouido Full Gospel Church. This church is present in Tyva and has been operating in the city of Kyzyl for 15 years.[62] A congregation of the Full Gospel Church was established in Khabarovsk in 1992. The church offers comprehensive language and computer education to local youth. The Full Gospel Church runs the only children's church in Khabarovsk.[63] In 1994, Saint Paul's Spiritual Academy was created in Novosibirsk; it has educated 600 persons and bestowed the rank of pastor on 43 ethnic Russians in the past 25 years. The church sponsored the construction of 14 narcological drug and substance misuse rehabilitation centers and 30 churches across Siberia.[64]

Starting from 1995, the Praise Church from the city of Tomsk, Seoul Daechi Full Gospel Church, and Russia's United Union of Pentecostals have been organizing an annual forum with 800 attendees from 40 Siberian churches.[65] According to Py-ŏl Han, a pastor of the Daechi Full Gospel Church, Russians are passionately following the Bible and the Russian Church will head the revival of European and world missions. As Py-ŏl Han puts it, "I thought that as a catalyst for the revival in Europe, the missions in [former] socialist countries, and the areas that Koreans could not enter, Russians could easily enter and assimilate."[66] Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Seoul Daechi Full Gospel Church conducted annual three-day conferences with Russia's churches. Last year, Seoul Daechi Full Gospel Church launched Internet-based prayer ceremonies and sermons. Thirty Russian churches, 100 Russian pastors, the Saint Paul Seminary members, and 200 members of Seoul Daechi Full Gospel Church prayed together.[67] The Korean Methodist Church is also very active in the Russian Far Eastern region. There are 85 officially registered organizations; 11 out of them are run by Koreans with six South Korean pastors and five Russian Korean pastors.[68]

Historically, the interests of the Korean missionaries in the Russian Far East were determined by the large numbers of ethnic Koreans living in the region, the ethno-confessional tolerance of Russia's state authorities, and the ease of crossing of Russian-Chinese state border.[69] It is important to point out that the rebirth of contemporary Protestantism on a national level in Russia would have been impossible without the active involvement and participation of ethnic Koreans, at both the individual and national levels. As Vertovec argues, "diasporas arise from some form of migration … all transnational communities comprise diasporas."[70] In this respect, the role of Russia's first Korean diasporas was crucial

in disseminating the ideas of Protestantism across the Empire's Far East, and in the eventual success of the Protestant revival in post-Soviet Russia. These diasporas arose from migration and acted as the centers of protestant proselytizing before the Revolution. Following the Soviet collapse, they welcomed pastors from Korea and formed the very first Protestant churches in the USSR, acting as transnational communities.

Summing it up, it is important to point to the indispensable role of ethnic Korean missionaries in spreading Protestantism in Russia. First, they came en masse, disregarding a very complex, dangerous, and economically depressed environment. Most came with families and stayed. Second, the continuity of their work in Russia cannot be overlooked. Korean Protestant missionaries have ensured that ordinary Russians, through close acquaintance with the Korean language, culture, and Protestantism became drawn to the Korean-run churches. Third, Russia's contemporary Protestant Korean-run churches serve broad swaths of local Russian and indigenous populations, even though originally their responsibility was to serve local ethnic Korean communities. More importantly, these churches are becoming Russified as more Russians flock to them, both as parishioners and clergy. Overall, Korean Protestant missionaries oversaw an evolution of Protestantism in Russia on a grassroots level and ensured its assimilation into Russian society.

Contemporary Protestantism in Russia

According to official statistics, most of Russia's population (74%) identify as Orthodox and only 1–2% as Protestant.[71] Despite being a clear-cut religious minority, Protestants are a very active faction in Russia's religious tapestry. Russian Protestants are over-represented in leading positions in a significant number of registered religious organizations following the Russian Orthodox Church. Russia's Protestant educational network is sophisticated and widespread and is the third largest in the country.[72] Large Russian metropolises are the most representative when it comes to the selection of various Protestant institutions. For example, in 2012, there were 408 various religious organizations in Saint Petersburg, and over a quarter of them were Protestant.[73] Protestantism is also enjoying growing popularity among Russia's ethnic groups (see Table 2). The number of officially registered Protestant religious organizations in Russia steadily grew between 1993 and 2015 (see Table 3). It is beyond any doubt that the spread of Protestantism across Russia has grown as Protestant churches have become increasingly frequented by ethnic Russians.[74]

The rapid spread and growth of Protestant communities was already visible in 1995: Protestant denominations started to numerically prevail in several of Russia's Federal regions' religious structures.[75] Sociologists confirm the growing popularity of Protestantism in Russia's regions.[76] The Republics of Tyva and Udmurtiia occupy the leading positions among Russia's regions where 1.8% and 1.6% of the population respectively follow Protestantism. Sakhalin, Altai, Kamchatka, Khakassia, and North Ossetia follow with 1% of the population being Protestant. This is a group of Russia's regions where the so-called non-Orthodox Christians, or Protestants, have formed a visible presence. Some researchers argue that large numbers of "non-traditional" churches scattered across Siberia and the Far East are the product of Russia's historical development, and the Russian Orthodox Church is naturally less "active" and "visible" here.[77] However, Orthodoxy came to Siberia before Protestantism. It is not coincidental that Protestantism in Russia is most successful in economically depressed regions in which over 40% of the population has low socio-economic status.[78] Overall, there are 7,428 Protestant churches and organizations in Russia.[79] According to the project ARENa (*Atlas of Religions and Nationalities*), the breakdown of Russia's Protestant believers according to nationality is as follows: Russians—79.3%, Germans—4.3%, Udmurt—2.5%, Bashkir—1.7%, Ukrainian—1.5%, Korean—1 %, Ossetian—0.9%, Azerbaijani—0.6%, Chuvash—0.5%, Mari—0.5%.[80]

In 1997, the Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religion underwent changes that imposed restrictions on the registration process for religious organizations. Korean-run churches yearned for the elusive registered status, and as a result, many Presbyterian churches joined the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and the Association of Churches of Evangelical Christians. Mission "Grace" joined the traditional Pentecostal Union.

Russia's Methodist churches also opted for the creation of a centralized Russian United Methodist Church established in 1992. This church is currently a member of the World Methodist Council. In Russia, independent Methodist churches are united regionally and supervised by an elected superintendent. The church is represented in six regions, namely Moscow, North-West, Mid-Volga, Urals, Southern, and Central-Black Earth. Methodism is broadly represented across Russia. Methodism's "soft power" approach and the flexibility of its ideological principles have created an atmosphere infused with the "spirit of freedom," and it is no accident that Methodism attracts well-educated Russians. Methodism's religious freedom is expressed in the equality of all its members before God and society. Its churches, of course, have hierarchical structures, but pastors and bishops are there to serve alongside the rest of the community.[81] The same principle is applied to gender; the Russian United Methodist Church became the

first church in Russia to have female pastors. Currently, about half of its pastors are female. This is also the only church in Russia that exhibits some tolerance of homosexuality. Russia's Methodists do not approve of homosexuality, but do not see it as a reason for excommunication. Homosexuals can attend church, but they cannot be ordained. Finally, a union of homosexuals cannot be blessed.[82]

The Methodist doctrine *Tserkvi Khrista* (the Churches of Christ) sees all Christian creeds as parts of one whole. Russia's Methodism is open to Orthodoxy and acknowledges the bonding spirit between the two religions as the two churches cooperate in charity. Nearly all of Russia's Methodist churches follow the Orthodox Church calendar. However, not all Methodists are happy with this proximity to Orthodoxy. The former superintendent of the Moscow region Dimitry Lee points out that Methodism is a natural religious habitat for parishioners who are not happy with Orthodoxy. In his words, it is beyond doubt that the Russian Orthodox Church is the traditional bearer of Russia's religious tradition, but it is equally instructive to remember that it is traditionally hostile to other Christian churches. Instead of becoming a "kind elephant" capable of uniting and protecting others, the Russian Orthodox Church became "an evil and dangerous crocodile."[83] Bourdeaux specifically warned the Russian Orthodox Church and its leaders in the period of its rapid ascendancy, arguing that "the greatest danger and challenge of all, however, is that the Russian Orthodox Church will be tempted, once again after 74 years, to claim the position of the state religion, along with all the triumphalism and intolerance which that implies."[84]

Owing to the restrictive nature of the law, many Protestant churches lost their registration statuses. Some started operating "off the grid." These developments further obscured the already complicated analysis of the available statistical data. According to chairman of Russia's Union of Pentecostals and co-chair of the Consultation Council of the Heads of Russia's Protestant Churches Sergey Riakhovskii, "officially, there about 5,000 religious Protestant organizations registered in the Ministry of Justice. Then, there are also 5,000–7,000 additional communities that haven't registered for various reasons. There are more than 2 million actively practicing Protestants in Russia, and about a third of them are the Pentecostals."[85]

By comparison, the number of "self-identified" Orthodox snowballed throughout the post-Soviet decades. In 1997 only 33% of Russia's population was Orthodox,[86] but by 1998 this number increased to 48.1%.[87] In May 2016, during his visit to Greece, President Vladimir Putin stated that in Russia, with its population of 145 million, the overwhelming majority, about 130 million people, are Orthodox Christians. However, there is a flip side to this otherwise very inspiring statistical account. According to Nikolai Mitrokhin, only 2%–4% of all Russia's Orthodox

regularly follow the required rites, go to churches, perform church communions, and fast.[88] There were 3–15 million actively practicing Orthodox Christians in Russia in 2005, constituting 2% to –10% of Russia's population, and over 1.5 million actively practicing Protestants in Russia. In their analysis, the researchers relied on so-called religious activity, i.e., the frequency of parishioners' Church visits.[89] Hence, there is a level field when it comes to comparing Russia's actively practicing Orthodox and Protestant believers.

The collapse of the USSR and its communist ideology intensified the search for identity across the post-Soviet space, and this search also extended into the religious dimension. As a result of the collapse, Russian society, including Russia's Koreans, became divided into three main groups: those who follow Orthodoxy, those who seek alternative answers in other creeds, denominations and religions, and atheists. Historical, linguistic, and religious ties to their ethnic Motherland and new economic opportunities became decisive for many Russian Koreans when choosing Protestantism.

There are several positive and negative factors that affect the choices that Russians make, either leading to the acceptance of Protestantism or its rejection. Protestantism is a Christian religion and Russian parishioners appreciate the communal spirit of Protestantism. It is congruent with Russia's historical cultural tradition, suits the traditional value mindset of Russia's population, and does not require a radical religious change. Social and humanitarian assistance provided by Protestant churches is a crucial factor in attracting the Russians to Protestantism. The cons include historically rooted societal prejudices whereby some Russians perceive Protestantism as sectarian and alien. The issue of the church tithe is also a negative factor,[90] resulting in the outflow from Protestant churches of parishioners from low socio-economic backgrounds.[91]

Protestants have become part of Russia's civic and religious elite in the post-Soviet period, but this unique status is not matched by legal acceptance. Already toward the mid-1990s, the Russian Orthodox Church and secular authorities negatively perceived the unrestricted spread of Protestantism across Russia. Articles frequently appeared in the press warning of the dangerous influences that the "totalitarian-destructive sects" allegedly exert. At the same time, local and regional administrations often obstructed Protestant religious activities, and Russia's Orthodox Church opened a range of "anti-cult" centers and "centers dedicated to the rehabilitation of victims of totalitarian religious organizations."

The Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Cyril stated that "the protestant churches were always in the channel of secularism, influenced by secular authorities. Today, the liberal tendencies in their theology are the result of the influence of secular concepts, human rights, and those freedoms that suggest the gender

fluidity and support of same-sex marriage I do not see any real progress in the foreseeable future, and this is not the fault of the Orthodox [believers]."[92] The Patriarch insisted that there is an obvious capitulation of underlying Christian principles before the liberal philosophical approaches to human individualism in the West. The Patriarch concluded that a multicultural communication process among various religious organizations could be beneficial as there are plenty of humanitarian and cultural aspects where the religions could act together despite the many differences among them.[93]

Humanitarian aspects aside, Protestant organizations' extensive international connections and ties have been a constant worry and a source of suspicion for Russia's government. In the late 1990s early 2000s, Russia's authorities attempted to regulate the flow of inter-confessional processes and missionary work of international organizations. Unfortunately, the lacunas in Russia's legislative base and the lack of competent and well-trained professionals did not allow the state to become an effective mediator in Russia's Protestant space.

Certainly not befriended and sometimes even ostracized by both Russia's state and church, Protestantism as a concept often remains alien to broad swaths of Russia's population adhering to the so-called Eurasian Eastern Orthodox mind. Protestants are often seen as "sectarians," "Western agents," and a fifth column who preach Western ideology and rationalism. For instance, in a study conducted in 2017, 33.3% of respondents said that Protestant communities resemble sectarians, 43.2% thought that Protestants interpret the Bible too loosely, 23.3% pointed out that Protestants do not yield sufficient societal capital, and 10% argued that Protestants do not participate in Russia's societal life. At the same time, 26.3% of the respondents appreciated the Protestants' flexible attitude to modernity and their lifestyle, 35.3% pointed to the cheerfulness and high spirits that are unusual among the Orthodox, 21.1% welcomed the Protestants' openness and kindness, 15.8% appreciated the Protestants' ability not to impose their opinions, and 10.5% liked the Protestants' capability to enjoy life and appreciate time.[94]

Even today, some Russian journalists, politicians, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, and patriotic and xenophobic community members routinely berate the Protestants. Remarkably, the Lutherans and Conservative Baptists are excluded from the list of Russia's "civilizational enemies" as these confessions came to Russia about 300 years ago and assimilated into Russian society, but other forms of Protestantism, for instance Jehovah's Witnesses, are considered inherently evil and the growth of their influence is seen as a threat.[95]

Despite the state's persistent negative attitude to some forms of Protestantism, Russia's academy has a different opinion. In December 2021, the members of the editorial board of the upcoming encyclopedia project *Protestantism* were mired

in a debate on the classification criteria applied to Russia's Protestant communities regarding their historical background.[96] The debate was centered around the issue of whether some "Protestant denominations," i.e., Jehovah's Witnesses should have an article exclusively dedicated to them in the encyclopedia's list of Russia's Protestant religions. Their Protestant "identity" is disputed in Russia by the state and Jehovah's Witnesses are forbidden to undertake any religious activity in Russia. However, the academic consensus was that the current set of criteria is too rigid as it discriminates against religions that have evolved in the recent past, and that Jehovah's Witnesses is a young religion that must be included in the encyclopedia. The corresponding article on Jehovah's Witnesses in the upcoming encyclopedia should be aimed at explaining their "historical-genetic link to Christianity" elucidating its many specifics, which explain its often "controversial identification" with Protestantism.[97]

At the same time, Protestants in Russia are actively attempting to launch a dialogue with the state even though Protestantism has not been recognized as one of Russia's "traditional religions." In 1995, the Council on Cooperation with Religious Entities was established at the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation. It includes representatives of various Protestant organizations: the Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists, the Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 2002, the Consultation Council of the Heads of Russia's Protestant Churches was created owing to organizational consolidation among Protestants. The Council represents the largest Protestant churches uniting up to 85% of all Russia's Baptists, including Russia's Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists numbering over 100,000 members in 922 registered communities, the Adventists with 620 communities, and the Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith with about 200,000 members and 2,000 communities: out of them, 1,000 communities have been registered.[98]

Following the Protestant practice worldwide, Russia's Protestants are actively involved in regional charity work across Russia. Protestant missionary practices have long been inseparable from social programs both in Russia and abroad. Protestant teaching brings psychological comfort that assists parishioners in reaching their personal, social, or business targets. Thirty years after the Soviet collapse, Russia's Protestants continue to spiritually assist and economically support vulnerable societal elements negatively affected by the breakdown of the traditional society which has resulted in the largest material inequality gap in the world.

Russia's Korean-run Protestant churches particularly focus on youth and children when it comes to charitable activities. Both education and cultural exchange are important, so young Russians attending these churches often get

to study in missionary centers in South Korea and the United States. Many Russian students who attend Presbyterian and Methodist seminaries do not hide the fact that they purposefully joined a religious organization to get a job, obtain competitive education, and live in either South Korea or the United States. Some turn to Protestantism to avoid the state draft and escape the service in the Russian Armed Forces.[99] The numerical increase of Russia's Protestant communities, as well as their active engagement and participation in Russia's political, societal-cultural, and economic life,[100] allows for forecasts that Protestantism will become one of the leading forces in Russia's public life in the future.[101]

Contemporary Russia is engaged in the inter-confessional dialogue between the Orthodox Church and Russia's Protestant organizations. The goal of this dialogue is not to unify the churches as Russia's famous religious philosopher Vladimir Solov'yov envisioned,[102] but to work out an acknowledged set of civilized forms of interaction. The dialogue is aimed at national Christian unity that does not pursue the conversion of all Christians into either Orthodoxy or Protestantism, but instead overcomes inter-confessional schisms and contradictions, and counters mutual false stereotypes. A Korean Protestant pastor from Krasnodar and a Korean Orthodox priest from Moscow agreed to provide their insights on the topic of inter-confessional relations between Russia's Orthodoxy and Protestantism.[103] According to them, representatives of both denominations treat each other with a lot of respect and leave inter-confessional differences aside. At the same time, both Russia's Protestant and Orthodox followers view each other through the prism of religious righteousness. Many Protestants see Orthodox Christians as having erred in their choice of faith; the truth is concealed from them. Orthodox believers often view the Protestants as sectarians and heretics. The fact that Protestantism is a Western religious movement also impacts this view.

The Orthodox priest argued that the collapse of the Soviet ideology created a void that was rapidly filled. The Russian Orthodox Church was weakened by 70 years of repression and did not have any resources to influence this situation. Well-prepared Protestant missionary cadres, proven methodologies, and the financial backing of the Russian Protestant missionary network allowed Protestantism to rapidly gain ground in Russia. The Protestant pastor added that energetic Protestant missionary activity coupled with the people's spiritual hunger in post-Perestroika times ensured the successful spread of Russia's Protestantism.

Concerning the future of Protestantism in Russia, the Orthodox priest pointed out that Protestantism is not one of Russia's traditional religions. Protestantism is also very secular, tolerant of homosexual marriage unions, and female priesthood. However, Protestantism has also carved out a niche in Russia's religious landscape

with the second generation of Russian Protestants, as Protestantism's rationale, simplicity, easy accessibility, and modernity attract the youth. The Protestant pastor commented that the existing legislative framework restricts the Protestants' proselytizing, thus obscuring its future. Today, the Orthodox parishioners value the Protestants' well-developed missionary activity, technologies, drive, and honed indoctrination mechanism, as well as the unity of parishioners who study the word of God and are well-versed in Scripture. Russia's Protestants value the Orthodox ritual, its complexity, and its meaningfulness, i.e., those features that have never been the strong side of Protestantism. Also, Orthodox aesthetics, architecture, monumental paintings, ancient status, and the beauty of choral singing play a huge role. One Korean, a businessman and public figure, was invited to a Protestant religious service. He said the vibe was like being at a Communist Party meeting.

Both parties argued that the existing competitive spirit often precludes cooperation between Orthodoxy and Protestantism in Russia. However, there are numerous examples of the parishioners of both faiths working together during national holidays, and on social and ecological projects. For the Orthodox, the avenues of cooperation with the traditional and conservatively minded Protestants include resistance to modern liberal totalitarianism, transhumanism, and satanism. Constant contacts between church hierarchies and dialogues between various Orthodox and Protestant communes inspire hope for the future, as do mutual church visits by the parishioners of both faiths, and in-person and online interactions between them.

This article argues that Russia's Protestantism has not evolved and developed to its highest point yet. At one point, Patriarch Cyril remarked that the Russian Orthodox Church "erects three temples per day." Russia's Orthodox Church certainly stands out with a plethora of its brand new and restored temples. The problem is with church attendance. Many Russians go to church once a year, over 30% never attend church, and over 60% do not take part in church communions.[104]

The authors of this paper believe that Protestantism in Russia has always been a transnational phenomenon with its diasporic grassroots organization and missionary drive. The post-communist revival of Protestantism in Russia would have been impossible without the establishment of transnational links with the Republic of Korea and the activity of both Korean missionaries and Korean diasporas in the late USSR and post-Soviet Russia. The transnational approach also helps to elucidate the historical duality of the Russian state during its contacts with Protestantism. On the one hand, the state welcomed Protestant migrants from both Europe and Asia owing to a range of socio-economic factors. On the

other hand, both the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church have always feared Protestantism, its societal influence, and global networks that go beyond any state control.

Currently, Protestantism's austerity, rationale, and accessibility make it a serious civilizational competitor when it comes to the challenges of modernity that Russia faces. It is also important to bear in mind that Russian culture is communal-based. Henceforth, the Protestant collective communal spirit and grassroots organization will continue to appeal to ordinary Russians. Finally, the concept of the Protestant work ethic, based on principles of self-empowerment and financial independence, will continue gaining acceptance and popularity among wide swaths of the Russian youth raised in a competitive and dynamic capitalist environment. Bourdeaux foresaw the transnational global future "where the Christian faith is allowed to play a genuine and positive role. If ever there was an issue to unite the world churches, this should be it."[105]

Conclusion

Russia's Korean Protestants started to arrive en masse at the end of the nineteenth century in the Russian Far East, and within a very short period succeeded in establishing thriving Protestant churches and communities across the region. These churches and communities survived despite the rapidly changing historical formations in Russia that saw a transition from the Empire to Communism in 1917, and to the new democratic Russia in 1991. Some Protestant churches that existed prior to the October Revolution of 1917 were destroyed in its aftermath. As a result of Russia's religious reforms of the 1990s, the Protestant community has undergone substantial changes, revival, and renewal in the past 30 years. Following the post-Soviet collapse, the Republic of Korea educated, financed, and sent hundreds of Korean missionaries to Russia. In turn, Korean missionaries educated hundreds of Protestant pastors from the multinational milieu of the Russian Federation. Their selfless work has been instrumental in revitalizing Russia's Protestantism. Over time, many churches initially established by foreign missionaries altered their ethnic composition and became Russified. Contemporary Russia's Protestantism is a dynamically developing multinational and multicultural cultural-religious phenomenon. Russia's Protestant movements have changed their historically based marginalized mindset of persecuted believers to a proactive societal stance. The fact that Protestants are represented among nearly all of Russia's peoples is evidence of its success. Further research directions may include the range and scale of charitable activities performed by Russia's Korean Protestant churches. Individual "agency" stories of Korean

Table 1 Protestant Methodist communities, pastors, and parishioners of the Vladivostok region (1923–1929)

Region	Vladivostok		Nikol'sk-Ussuriysk		Novokievsk		Total		
Year	1923	1925	1923	1925	1923	1925	1923	1925	1928
Pastors	2	2	1	1	1	1	4	4	–
Preachers	5	4	4	3	5	4	14	11	8
Female preachers	2	3	2	2	1	2	5	7	6
Leaders of the sisters' service	6	4	5	6	12	9	23	19	–
Domestic group leaders	43	34	43	28	59	45	145	107	–
Churches	36	24	21	18	50	30	107	72	6
Parishioners	1,418	639	754	378	1,292	793	3,464	1,810	1,011
Donations	1,786	853	2,479	1,261	1,786	1,402	6,052	3,516	3,449

Source: *Kolichestvo obshchin, pastorov i veryushchikh metodistskikh tserkvei Vladivostokskogo i Nikol'sk-Ussuriiskogo uezdov Primorskoi gubernii v 1923–1929 godakh* (Количество общин, пасторов и верующих методистских церквей Владивостокского и Никольск-Уссурийского уездов Приморской губернии в 1923–1929 годах. Communities, pastors, and believers of the Methodist churches in Vladivostok and Nikolsko-Ussuri districts of the Primorsky province in 1923–1929); Dudarenok and Vladimirov, "'Koreyskiye' religioznyye obshchiny i gruppy Primor'ya v 1917–1929 godakh," 52.

Table 2 Russia's Orthodox and Protestant communities

Region	Russian Orthodox Church communities in 1995	Protestant communities in 1995
Buriatiia	17	21
Tuva	3	4
Kareliia	37	41
Komi	17	27
Iakutiia	9	22
Khakasiia	3	11
Primorskii Krai	30	50
Khabarovskii Krai	24	43
Amurskaia Oblast'	15	23

Table 2 (continued)

Region	Russian Orthodox Church communities in 1995	Protestant communities in 1995
Irkutskaia Oblast'	34	42
Sakhalinskaia Oblast'	26	42
Iamalo-Nenetskii Okrug	8	10

Source: *Gosudarstvenno-tserkovnye otnosheniia v ~~N~~(Rossii~~N~~* (Государственно-церковные отношения в России, State-Church Relations in Russia) Moscow: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Gosudarstvennoy Sluzhby, 1996, 246–248.

Table 3 Russia's registered Orthodox and Protestant religious organizations (1993–2015)

Name	1993	1996	2004	2015
Russian Orthodox Church at Moscow's Patriarchate	4,566	7,195	11,525	16,076
Lutherans	75	141	219	222
Methodists	14	48	105	100
The Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists of RF	433	677	979	831
The Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians	37	248	698	712
Christians of evangelical faith Pentecostals	114	351	1,467	1,228
Adventists of the 7th Day	114	222	646	575
Presbyterian Church	30	129	176	194
New Apostolic Church	24	61	81	48
Jehovah's Witnesses	44	129	386	385

Source: *Svodnaya Tablitsa, Gosudarstvenno-tserkovnye otnosheniya v Rossii* (Сводная таблица, Государственно-церковные отношения в России, State-Church Relations in Russia), 1996, pp. 246–248. An authors' excerpt of the registered religious organizations on 11 January 2015 from the registry of the Ministry of Justice of Russian Federation, https://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b15_11/IssWWW.exe/Stg/d01/11-03.htm.

Protestant missionaries and the difficulties they encountered in their work in post-Soviet Russia of the 1990s is another promising research venue.

Notes

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