# RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: ITS CONFIRMATION AND VIOLATION DURING THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

_In memoriam_, Professor Juha Seppo (1939-2018)

Conference at the University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, 22-27 February 2018

Address: Yliopistokatu 4, Joensuu

## THURSDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2018

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>14:30</td>
<td><strong>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS</strong></td>
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<td>Ilkka HUHTA (Head of School of Theology at the University of Eastern Finland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td><strong>PANEL I: GENERAL CONCEPTS</strong></td>
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<td>Chair: Katarzyna STOŁKOSA (University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Ringo RINGVEE (Religious Affairs Department, Tallinn): “Securitization of Religion - From Real Threats to Imagined Ones”</td>
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<td>2. Ina MERDŽANOVA (Trinity College Dublin): “Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Society: The Case of Muslims in the Balkans”</td>
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<td>3. Patricia DUVAL (Attorney-at-Law, Paris): “Anti-sect Movements and State Neutrality, the Case of FECRIS (European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism)”</td>
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<td>4. Ilkka HUHTA (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu): “The Understanding of Religious Freedom between Lutheranism and Orthodoxy in Finland”</td>
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<tr>
<td>19:00</td>
<td><strong>DINNER</strong> at Theatre Restaurant (Rantakatu 20)</td>
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## FRIDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2018

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td><strong>PANEL II: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM &amp; THE EU I</strong></td>
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<td>Chair: Max WÖRNHARD (University of Bern)</td>
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<td>1. Willy FAUTRÉ (Human Rights without Frontiers, Brussels): “The contribution of the European Court to religious freedom in the EU space”</td>
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<td>2. Gerhard BESIER (Sigmund Neumann Institute, Berlin/Dresden/Flensburg): “The Co-operation Between Church and State in Germany”</td>
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<td>12:30</td>
<td><strong>LUNCH</strong> at Aura Restaurant (Aurora Building, UEF)</td>
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### PANEL III: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM & THE EU II
Chair: Hannu MUSTAKALLIO (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu)

2. Matti KOTIRANTA (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu): “Religious Freedom and the Legislative Framework of Tackling Radicalization and Extremism in Finland”

**19.00** DINNER at Torero (Siltakatu 8)

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### SATURDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2018
Room AT100 (School of Theology, Agora Building)

#### 10:00 PANEL IV: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN RUSSIA
Chair: Max WÖRHARD (University of Bern)

1. Michael BOURDEAUX (St. Edmund Hall/Keston College, Oxford/Moscow University): “Memory and Oblivion: An Aspect of the Historiography of the Russian Orthodox Church Today”
2. Heta HURSKAINEN (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu): “The Russian Orthodox Church’s Position on Religious Freedom before the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations”
3. Jeanne KORMINA (Higher School of Economics at St. Petersburg): “‘The Church Should Know Its Place’: Cultural Heritage, Social Protests and the Limits of Desecularisation in Russia”

**12:00** LUNCH at Carelia Restaurant (Carelia Building, UEF)

#### 13:00 PANEL V: NEW RELIGIONS
Chair: Katarzyna STOKŁOSA (University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg)

2. Sanja NILSSON (Dalarna University, Falun): New Religious Movements, Totalitarian Regimes, and Authoritarian Governments

**15:00** COFFEE BREAK at Carelia Restaurant (Carelia Building, UEF)

#### 15:30 PANEL VI: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM & JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES
Chair: Teuvo LAITILA (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu)

2. Wolfram SLUPINA (Jehovah’s Witnesses Central Europe Office, Selters): “Religious Freedom and Jehovah’s Witnesses in Putin’s Russia, Georgia and CIS”

**17:30** CLOSING WORDS
# SUNDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2018
Excursion to St. Petersburg, 25-27 February

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<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>DEPARTURE BY BUS FROM OUTSIDE THE HOTEL</td>
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<td>Lunch en route before crossing the border.</td>
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<td>18:00</td>
<td>ARRIVAL IN ST. PETERSBURG (approx.) Helvetia Hotel, Ulitsa Marata 11</td>
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<td>19:00</td>
<td>DINNER Marius restaurant (at hotel) TBC</td>
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# MONDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2018
St. Petersburg, Hotel Helvetia, Ulitsa Marata 11

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>GUIDED CITY TOUR OF ST. PETERSBURG - guide Tatjana Pavlova</td>
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<td>11.00</td>
<td>Visit to the St. Petersburg Jewish Community/ Great Choral Synagogue</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>LUNCH Polotsov Mansion restaurant, Bolshaia Morskaia ulitsa 52</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.30</td>
<td>St. Petersburg Mosque (TBC)</td>
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<td>15.00</td>
<td>Piskarevskoe Memorial Cemetery</td>
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<td>20:00</td>
<td>DINNER (TBC)</td>
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# TUESDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2018
Hotel Helvetia, Ulitsa Marata 11/ Joensuu

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<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>DEPARTURE BY BUS FROM OUTSIDE THE HOTEL</td>
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<td>Taxis will be arranged for participants departing by train or plane.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>ARRIVAL IN JOENSUU (approx.)</td>
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<td>Arriving at the Sokos Hotel Vaakuna, Torikatu 20</td>
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## Important phone numbers:
- Taxi Joensuu +358 601 10100
- Prof. Gerhard Besier +49 172 588 7992
- Dr. Paul Fryer +358 40 547 3429
- Dr. Jussi Laine +358 50 433 8252
- Sokos Hotel Vaakuna +358 10 7823 100
- Cumulus Hotel: +358 200 48118
- Emergency number: 112

## Maps
- [Printable campus map](pdf)
- [Printable city map of Joensuu](pdf)
- [Joensuu on Google maps](pdf)

## Suggested restaurants in Joensuu:
- Local Bistro, Koskikatu 9 (Regional)
- Kielo, Suvantokatu 12 (Regional)
- Torero, Siltakatu 8 (Spanish)
- Rosso, Siltakatu 8 (Italian)
- Amarillo, Torikatu 20 (Tex-Mex)
- Martina, Kirikkokatu 20 (Southern European)
- Mount Ganesh, Kauppakatu 23A (Nepalese)
- Hyve&Pahe, Kauppakatu 27 (Fusion)
- Roihu, Yläsatamakatu 9 (Pizza)
- Jecika, Kirikkokatu 25 (Indian)
- Kerubi, Siltakatu 1 (pub and music)
- Kreeta, Rantakatu 32 (Greek)
The conference is held in the **Agora building** of the Joensuu campus of the University of Eastern Finland (UEF). It takes approximately 15 minutes on foot to the University from the city centre.

UEF Joensuu Campus is compact, easy to reach and accessible. The campus is home to nearly 8000 degree students. The campus is located right by the city centre.
ARRIVING IN JOENSUU
Joensuu airport is located in the municipality of Liperi about 11 kilometres from Joensuu city centre.

Bus transportation from Joensuu airport to the city centre is available after every arriving flight. The bus waits for the passengers outside the terminal building. The bus fare is between 3 and 5 euro (CASH ONLY), depending on the time of the day. Please note that there is no ATM at Joensuu airport. Should you need to take out cash, please do so at Helsinki airport.

The bus stop in the city centre on Siltakatu Street (by the Market Square) is the closest one to both the Sokos Hotel Vaakuna and the Cumulus Hotel.

Taxis operating in the Joensuu region are on call at the taxi stand in front of the airport during the scheduled arrival times. Note that the number of taxis on call at the airport is limited and they operate on a first come, first served basis. To request an additional taxi to the airport, please call: 0601 10100.

JOENSUU CLIMATE
Joensuu has a sub-Arctic continental climate. The effect of the Gulfstream, which warms most of Finland, is felt less in Joensuu than in southern and western Finland since Joensuu is relatively far from the coast. Temperatures in Joensuu are affected by continuing cold weather from inland Russia. In comparison with Finnish coastal areas Joensuu has considerably more snow in winter.

For the current weather: please click here
HISTORY

The city of Joensuu was founded by Tsar Nicholas I of Russia in 1848 and has grown to become the regional capital of North Karelia. During the 19th century Joensuu was a city of manufacture and commerce. Starting in 1860 local sawmills started to grow and prosper as the city received commercial rights and restrictions against industrial activities were lifted. An important centre of the glass industry developed in Utra neighbourhood – it had a considerable foreign population of about 11%. There was even a Swedish language school in those days.

Water traffic improved with the building of the Saimaa Canal in 1856. This made possible lively trade between the regions of North Karelia, St. Petersburg and Central Europe. At the beginning of the 20th century Joensuu was one of the largest port cities in Finland.

The River Pielisjoki has always been the heart of Joensuu. Throughout the centuries Karelian traders have travelled along the river and the canals that were completed at the end of 1870 and increased river traffic. Thousands of steamboats, barges and logging boats sailed along the river during this golden age of river traffic. The River Pielisjoki also has been an important route for log-floating and has provided wood to sawmills and the entire lumber industry.
In recent decades, the small agrarian town has developed into the vital centre of the North Karelia region. Joensuu had a population of 24,000 in 1954. Since 1960 economic growth in Finland has been strong and that decade saw the beginning of the urbanisation process. In the 1960s the population of North Karelia province decreased by more than 8% while the population of Joensuu grew by 28%. In 1960, an administrative region for North Karelia was also established and Joensuu became the capital of the region. In the 1970s, the kindergarten and comprehensive school systems were created and many improvements were made in the field of social benefits.

The establishment of the University of Joensuu in 1969 (now University of Eastern Finland after merging with the University of Kuopio in 2010) and the further growth of the university have been crucial to the development of the city. Currently, the Joensuu campus comprises three faculties and several independent research and teaching units and has close to 8000 full-time students. The university's diversified international co-operation in science, industry and commerce benefits the whole region.

The proximity of the eastern border has been an important factor throughout the history of the city. The Republic of Karelia in Russia has become – once again – a significant area for cross-border co-operation. The border station Värtšilä – Niirala is about an hour's drive from Joensuu. It was opened in 1991 and nowadays 1.5 million people cross the border annually. Export companies in Joensuu continue the traditions of past centuries in foreign trade. The cultural life also flourishes and gains new influences and reflections from the cultural diversity along the border.

LIST OF ABSTRACTS

Securitization of Religion - From Real Threats to Imagined Ones
Ringo RINGVEE

Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Society: The Case of Muslims in the Balkans
Ina MERDŽANOVA

After 1989, Islam reappeared as an important social and political factor in the Balkans. With the newly-emerged religious freedom, and in the context of multiple structural and cultural post-communist transitions, Muslim communities underwent remarkable transformations. They sought to renegotiate their place in formally secular legal and normative environments, mostly as minorities in majority-Christian societies. They reclaimed their Islamic faith, practices and identities in a complex geopolitical situation dominated by anti-Muslim sentiments, particularly after 9/11, which mapped upon already existing national and regional apprehension of Islam related to the legacies of the five centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. Post-communism created conditions for a rising political and cultural awareness of Muslims, which was frequently expressed by recourse to two frames of reference: the national and the transnational. Despite a certain level of tension between those two perspectives, they were closely intertwined. Generally, it can be argued that transnational Islamic influences in the region often reinforced Muslim ethno-national identities rather than prompting a radical redefinition of religious allegiances in the key of a “universalist” Islam.
Anti-sect Movements and State Neutrality, the Case of FECRIS (European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism)
Patricia DUVAL

The European Federation of Centers of Information and Research against Sectarianism (FECRIS) was created in France in 1994 by the French anti-sect movement, nearly entirely financed by the French State, with the intent to reach and influence the European and international scene in order to export the “French anti-sect model” abroad. In spite of its public financing, FECRIS has a Russian Vice-President, Alexander Dvorkin, who belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church and has devoted to fight against religious minorities seen as competitors to the Orthodox faith. Dvorkin and the FECRIS Russian chapter have been engaged in hate speech and disparagement against so-called “sects” for over twenty years, fueling suspicion and prejudice that lead to repression such as banning and imprisonment, not to mention incitement of hatred that lead to physical violence, threats, vandalism and similar aggression. Most of the centers under the Russian chapter of FECRIS are “rehabilitation centers” where followers of minority religions are induced under pressure to recant their faith and return to the Orthodox fold. Dvorkin is also the deputy head of the Expert Religious Studies Council whose role is to advise the Russian Ministry of Justice about which groups should be permitted to register as religious organizations. This situation is of great concern and it infringes the duty of neutrality of States in religious matters under the international human rights instruments that France and Russia have committed to.

The Understanding of Religious Freedom between Lutheranism and Orthodoxy in Finland
Ilkka HUHTA

Finland’s position between East and West has for a long time brought special characteristics not only to the country’s religious policy decisions but also to the interpretations of freedom of religion. My paper demonstrates how the understanding of religious freedom of two state churches, Lutheran and Orthodox, have been influenced by the historical situations and political contexts of Finland. When explaining the interpretations of freedom of religion formulated by churches, it manifests that historical context has a higher effect than church traditions or doctrines. The analysis focuses on the discussions of the Freedom of Religion Acts 1923 & 2003 and the statements made by churches during these legislative processes. The contexts of the Freedom of Religion Act 1923 and the Freedom of Religion Act 2003 were immensely different. Only the fall of Russian central authority followed by the independence of Finland in 1917 created the political conditions necessary for the independent enactment of Finland’s own law. This enactment paved the way for Freedom of Religion Act 1923. The background of Finland’s latest Freedom of Religion Act was in the reform of basic rights in the ‘90s after the collapse of Soviet Union. The intention was to formulate new regulations on the most important economic, social and cultural rights and to identify clearly and broaden the current constitutional rights. International human rights agreements were also taken into account in the Freedom of Religion Act reform. I question in my paper how the Orthodox and Lutherans understood the concept of freedom of religion and how their interpretation differed from each other. Finland’s location between eastern and western cultures and its unique model of two state churches offers an exceptionally interesting context for this kind of comparative analysis.

The Contribution of the European Court to Religious Freedom in the EU Space
Willy FAUTRÉ

The Co-operation Between Church and State in Germany
Gerhard BESIER

The German Weimar Reich Constitution of August 11th, 1919 involved an increase of people’s rights by fixing the basic rights in the Constitution, and by rendering possible the people’s participation in politics through petitions and referenda. The Protestant state church ceased to exist. The Constitution contained a provision for the separation of state and church. Still, both mainline churches, Protestants as well as Catholics, kept many of their privileges and were protected by the state against small religious communities who now could proselytize freely. Even though numerous smaller religious communities were able to gain a foothold alongside the privileged official churches, the apologetic nature and activity of the mainstream churches and the state’s critical stance ensured that these smaller congregations remained largely marginal occurrences. Not even the discussions that were frequently generated by the churches regarding the right of “so called sects and psycho-groups or cults” to exist had the power to
unsettle the established state-church relationship in the Federal Republic of Germany. In spite of the fact that most of these smaller religious communities belong to the broad field of Christianity and only have some separate doctrines the reservations in the society against them are raked by the mainline churches until today.

Against this background it is noteworthy that the mainline churches behaved in a completely different way when confronted with the world religion Islam. In an effort to keep alive the current Church-State-constellations in Germany, the churches advocated for the development of a third pillar. This pillar would manifestly be represented in Centres for Islamic Theology that would be established in the form of state theological faculties, and be integrated into or administered alongside the current Christian theology faculties in order to offer a solid academic training to the Islamic clergy. In this way, or so it was assumed, an impact could be made on the Muslim communities’ faith life, which would, in turn, come closer to the needs of the general population. This German project of making Islam into a “church like institution” – which can be seen more at some German universities – is still in its very early stages and suffers from the fact that the Muslim communities in Germany are not unified. The question is, why behave the mainline churches so different, faced with religious competitors?

The European Court of Human Rights: Changes and Challenges in the Social Construction of Religious freedom
James T. RICHARDSON

Enforcement mechanisms for the European Convention on Human Rights have undergone many changes over its nearly seven decades of existence. This presentation will highlight some of the major changes that have occurred, including the establishment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR or the Court) and several significant protocols that have embellished the operation of the Court. In recent times the Court seems to be seeking to function more as a “Supreme Court” for the 47 member nations, with the concept of “pilot judgments” paying a crucial role in this evolution. The Court has also undergone significant changes in how it handles the many thousands of cases that have been submitted for adjudication. Included in the new approach has been a willingness to allow intervention by NGOs in major areas of case law, including those dealing with religion. In spite of the many modifications in how cases are dealt with by the Court, there are substantive issues that should be examined in the jurisprudential pattern being developed by the court regarding religious matters. Although there have been significant rulings in recent decades that seemingly defend and expand religious freedom, there are significant lacunae and inconsistencies in this area of the Court’s jurisprudence. Especially concerning are some decisions involving individual religious freedom for Muslim women within European region.

Religious Persecution, Refugees, and the Right of Asylum: A European Perspective
Rosita SORYTE

International conventions and both United Nations and European Union guidelines establish general principles about religion-based refugee claims. They clarify that “religion” should be broadly interpreted, and that it is not necessary for the asylum seekers to prove that they have been individually persecuted. Membership in a persecuted group and a reasonable “fear of persecution” are enough. Proving that the asylum seeker is deeply conversant with the theology of the persecuted group is also not required. However, these general principles are rarely applied by states. The paper discussed the case of The Church of Almighty God, whose members are often denied refugee status in South Korea and Europe, based both on an incorrect interpretation of the international conventions and on inaccurate information about their Church.

Laïcité – The French Model of Religious Freedom
Régis DERICQUEBOURG

Religious Freedom and the Legislative Framework of Tackling Radicalization and Extremism In Finland
Matti KOTIRANTA

Although Finland, compared to many European countries, has been saved from violent terrorism, the terrorist strikes of September 11th, 2001, woke up Finland to a new reality. The events became a watershed and initiated new thinking on security issues also in Finland. Since 2001 and after several terrorist attacks in Belgium, France, Germany and in the United Kingdom (2014–2017), Finland has
introduced a wide range of legal and policy measures to prevent terrorism, extremism and radicalisation. As a member of the international community, Finland participates also actively in counter-terrorism activities. New emphasis has been placed on terrorism in the Government Report on Security and Defence Policy, submitted to Parliament in September 2004. For Finland, the most important frameworks in counter-terrorism activities are the EU, the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other international organisations. The UN continues to play the key role as provider of international norms. When it comes to practical matters, the European Union is the central frame of reference for Finland.

Several authorities participate in counter-terrorism activities in Finland: The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and its subordinate authorities (specifically the Finnish Security Intelligence Service (Supo) and the Frontier Guard), the Ministry of Justice, the Government Secretariat for EU affairs, the Office of the Prosecutor General, Financial Supervision, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Defence, and the Defence Forces. At the same time, the attention has also extended from terrorism to radicalization and extremism. The brief look at the Finnish legislation gives the impression that the legislator doesn’t have any interest of getting into conflict with the constitutional norm of religious freedom while fighting against extremism and (religiously motivated) terrorism. The reasons for prohibitions don’t touch the religious beliefs but only the criminal violation of law.

Different Denominations Living Together in an Egalitarian Multicultural Society – Sweden as a Model for Europe?
Martin NYKVIST

Even though Sweden has a long history of politics regarding religious pluralism, it can be argued that it remained a religiously unitary society until the 1960s. Immigration during the latter part of the twentieth century caused a change in the religious demography, and for the first time since the Reformation, Sweden had a considerable minority of non-Protestant confessors. Simultaneously, many new religious movements were established and consolidated in the country; together with the so-called immigrant religions, they created a religious manifoldness without precedent in Sweden. By accounting for legislative aspects of religious freedom and providing examples of how it is implemented, this paper wants to contribute to the understanding of religious plurality in Sweden. The paper will give an outline of the development of religious freedom in Sweden, from the early-modern emphasis on religious unity to contemporary debates on and implementation of freedom of religion. Since the law on freedom of religion came into effect in 1952, it has frequently been discussed whether it should be interpreted as securing the right to or from religion. In light of this, the paper will also discuss initiatives to abolish the legislation on freedom of religion.

From Repressed Religious Group to Official Denomination: Jehovah’s Witnesses and Religious Freedom in Post-Communist Romania
Corneliu PINTILESCU

The paper analyzes how the interaction between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Romanian authorities (1989-2007) shaped the patterns of state-church relations in post-communist Romania. It argues that the endeavors of Jehovah's Witnesses to acquire the status of official religious denomination in post-communist Romania had a strong impact on the process of creating a new legal framework which regulates the relations between the state and the religious denominations. These endeavors were marked by several tense moments between the state authorities and Jehovah's Witnesses, that revealed the limits of religious freedom in post-communist Romania and the strong links between the state and the Romanian Orthodox Church, the dominant church in the country. It will be argued that the process of acquiring the status of official religious denomination by Jehovah's Witnesses and the improvement of the situation with respect to religious freedom in Romania were heavily influenced by an external factor: the pressure exerted by Western entities on Romanian authorities to comply with several standards with respect to religious freedom during the process of the country's accession to NATO and European Union.

Memory and Oblivion: An Aspect of the Historiography of the Russian Orthodox Church Today
Michael BOURDEAUX

Following the concessions Stalin offered to the Russian Orthodox Church after World War Two, the sharp deterioration in religious liberty under the Khrushchev regime from 1959 shocked the leadership of the Orthodox Church and of the Baptists into making new concessions to the political power. However, in contrast to the persecution of the 1920s and '30s, this time there was significant open opposition
among the ranks of believers. The Orthodox priests Fr Gleb Yakunin and Nikolai Eshliman propounded a reasoned response to the new restrictions, as did Pastor Georgi Vins for the Baptists.

Beginning in the 1960s and strengthening over the next two decades, there was a religious revival of significant proportions. A growing number of individuals were prepared to sign their names to documents claiming the rights, even under Soviet law, to religious freedom. This presentation will cite some of the key names, men and women who were prepared to sacrifice education, careers, often their liberty and sometimes their lives, in defence of their faith. They often criticised the leadership of their own Church for being only too willing to collaborate with the regime in its reduction of the space for religious liberty.

Focussing on the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church, this presentation notes that, in circumstances of freedom, the Moscow Patriarchate has systematically failed to give due credit to the heroes of the previous 30 years, who never gained support from the hierarchy of their Church. Officially, the Patriarchate cites the persecution under Stalin and glorifies the martyrs of those early years, while completely ignoring the sacrifices of the more recent period. The late Metropolitan Anthony Bloom recommended a Russian equivalent of the South African “Truth and Reconciliation Commission”, but this never happened, consigning those who deserve memory to oblivion and weakening the moral standing of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The Russian Orthodox Church’s Position on Religious Freedom before the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations
Heta HURSKAINEN

The primary aim of this presentation is to describe the Russian Orthodox Church’s motives and theological reasoning during the discussion about religious freedom that took place before the passage of the Russian 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations. The 1997 law set a new standard for religious freedom in Russia. It gave a special position to the Russian Orthodox Church and other traditional religions compared to other religions and religious movements in Russia. Thus the 1997 law on the one hand implicitly included the element of inequality between religions and on the other hand promised religious equality to all. The issue of tension is a starting point for the presentation’s analysis of the position taken by the Russian Orthodox Church preceding the law, with the view of answering these questions: In what ways did the Russian Orthodox Church support and justify the conditions of equality and inequality between religions before the 1997 law? To what degree was religious freedom understood as an indispensable part of Human Rights in the arguments put forward by the Russian Orthodox Church? What kind of theological reasoning was given for the Church’s understanding of religious freedom?

The Church Should Know Its Place: Cultural Heritage, Social Protests and the Limits of Desecularisation in Russia
Jeanne KORMINA

Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Society: The Case of Muslims in the Balkans
Eileen BARKER

After 1989, Islam reappeared as an important social and political factor in the Balkans. With the newly-emerged religious freedom, and in the context of multiple structural and cultural post-communist transitions, Muslim communities underwent remarkable transformations. They sought to renegotiate their place in formally secular legal and normative environments, mostly as minorities in majority-Christian societies. They reclaimed their Islamic faith, practices and identities in a complex geopolitical situation dominated by anti-Muslim sentiments, particularly after 9/11, which mapped upon already existing national and regional apprehension of Islam related to the legacies of the five centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans.

Post-communism created conditions for a rising political and cultural awareness of Muslims, which was frequently expressed by recourse to two frames of reference: the national and the transnational. Despite a certain level of tension between those two perspectives, they were closely intertwined. Generally, it can be argued that transnational Islamic influences in the region often reinforced Muslim ethno-national identities rather than prompting a radical redefinition of religious allegiances in the key of a “universalist” Islam.

New Religious Movements, Totalitarian Regimes, and Authoritarian Governments
Sanja NILSSON
The concept new religious movements defines groups that rose out of the counter culture in the Western world in the latter half of the twentieth century. Some were founded on Christian belief, but broke with the established churches and added new doctrines and practices to their belief system. Others were imports from other cultures, predominantly Asian, that took on a new form when exported to the West. Still others were syncretistic, blending a variety of beliefs into new forms. Included in the concept new religious movements is often “older” new religions, consisting of groups that emerged during the nineteenth century, which have persisted and kept their uniqueness and tension in relation to society.

Many of the new religious movements reached beyond the Western world, including nations characterized by authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. Engaging in religious activities in countries that, in theory, embrace religious freedom but in practice severely punish opponents can indeed pose a risk with implications differing from doing the same in a democracy. This paper investigates the experiences of a few new religious movements with authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, exemplified by the histories of the Jehovah’s Witnesses in Singapore, Falun Gong in China, the Bahá’ís in Iran, and The Children of God (now The Family International) in the Philippines. Each case is summarized, highlighting the means of restrictions and grounds for persecution, in order to enhance understanding of the sacrifices on the part of the members who choose to hold on to their faith regardless of the consequences.

Religious Freedom Problems in Russia and Hungary: A Case Study of the Church of Scientology
Massimo INTROVIGNE

In 2017, the Supreme Court in Russia confirmed the “liquidation” of the Jehovah’s Witnesses as an “extremist” group (Arnold 2017a). Steps were taken towards a similar “liquidation” as “extremist” of the Watch Tower Society, whose churches were raided and whose leaders in St. Petersburg were arrested. “Extremism” is a broad notion in Russia. Based on anti-cult propaganda, the prosecutor in Tomsk asked a local court to ban an ISKCON Russian translation of the Bhagavad Gita as “extremist.” The case caused widespread protest in India, which the Russian ambassador to India tried to placate describing those trying to ban the Gita as irrelevant “madmen” (Corley 2012). Although the prosecutor lost the first-degree case in 2011 and the appeal in 2012, accusations of extremism against the Bhagavad Gita are still heard in Russia (Corley 2012). Banned in Russia as “extremist” were also the works of renowned Turkish Islamic theologian Said Nursi (1878-1960), including his famous Risale-i Nur (Arnold 2016a). Nursi’s books are also quoted by some Muslim fundamentalists, but so is the Quran, and most of Nursi’s followers are certainly not radical (Vahide 2005, Markham and Pirim 2011). On July 14, 2017, the District Court of Sochi also banned as “extremist” the book Forced to Convert by the German rabbi Marcus Lehmann (1831-1890), on forced conversions of Jews to Christianity in Poland and Lithuania in the Middle Ages. The decision was strongly condemned by Boruch Gorin, the spokesperson for the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia (Arnold 2017c). In 2016, as part of the so called Yarovaya laws, Russia introduced provisions prohibiting proselytization on behalf of religious minorities outside of religious buildings.

Be Not Conformed – A Historical Survey of the Watch Tower Society’s Relationships with Society
George D. CHRYSSESIDES

The proposed presentation explores the causes and consequences of the religious freedom problems experienced by the Watch Tower Society, with particular reference to the West. From its inception, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (originally Zion’s Watch Tower Society) was already controversial, deriving from the 19th century Adventist movement in the US. Its focus on teachings rather than social endeavours attracted early criticism, as did the Society’s anti-clerical position. The Great War, and to a greater extent the Second World War, brought the Bible students (subsequently known as Jehovah’s Witnesses) into increased conflict with the US and European governments, as well as the mainstream churches, and their plight in Germany is particularly noteworthy. The post-war availability of blood transfusion, and the Society’s teaching that the practice is contrary to scripture, did much to increase antagonism towards the organisation. From the early 1950s, the Society subjected its members to more stringent judicial procedures, which again aroused public attention, and the introduction of its own New World Translation of the Bible provoked further criticism. The fact that the Society has maintained a high profile, with house-to-house evangelism, information marches, and – most recently – the use of literature carts in public places, has tended to reinforce public attitudes.

The antipathy towards the Watch Tower Society has had various repercussions for religious freedom: issues relating to government recognition and registration, threat of discriminatory legislation, and problems entailed by refusing military service. Some of the religious freedom problems are incurred
by minority religions more widely, while other issues (such as blood and conscription) are directly related to Jehovah’s Witnesses’ distinctive teachings. It is concluded that there are little signs of change regarding the situation of Jehovah’s Witnesses, either in governmental attitudes, or in the Society’s own position. Indeed, Jehovah’s Witnesses perceive opposition as being predicted in scripture, and as evidence that humankind is living in the last days.

**Religious Freedom and Jehovah’s Witnesses in Putin’s Russia, Georgia and CIS**

*Wolfram SLUPINA*

This analysis explores the rise of human rights violations on religious minorities with the focus on Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia and its former Soviet republics. The application of laws initially meant to protect its citizens, has in fact led to the restriction or outright ban of freedom of religion—a basic right. In 1991 the Russian Federation legally recognised Jehovah’s Witnesses and other former Soviet republics followed the same path. With the backing of the Russian Orthodox Church the Law on Religion of 1990 was amended in 1997. This revision greatly compromised the status of Jehovah’s Witnesses and other religious groups to receive full rights. It made it virtually impossible for them to keep a legal standing even though, between 1990 and 1997, they had enjoyed full recognition under the previous liberal Russian law. This amendment stated that in order for a religious minority group to be recognised, it needed to be operating in Russia for at least 15 years. Only then would it be possible to re-register with the government and receive full privileges. This posed a problem since only the religious organisations and churches that had previously cooperated with the Communist regime during Soviet era met this requirement. The Law on Religion unwittingly would facilitate how the state authorities handled the activities of the Witnesses. In the following years other laws would be enacted that would impact all facets of this religious community in Russia. Misapplication of these laws has led to unjustified restrictions, unlawful imprisonment, putting the publications of Jehovah’s Witnesses on the extremist list, including the “New World Translation” Bible and their official Websites, only to finally ban and liquidate the religious organisation and the activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses in all of Russia again in April 2017. Several ECHR rulings in favour of Jehovah’s Witnesses and international protests were not helpful. The entire property of the 395 local religious communities—including their church buildings—was seized. This verdict has impacted the lives of 170,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia. Even the peaceful exercise of their faith, such as praying and conducting religious meetings leads to prosecution.

Similar laws have been adopted in some CIS countries and autonomous regions which has led to restrictions and bans. Due to their unwavering faith thousands of Jehovah’s Witnesses suffered for decades under the former Soviet regime in prisons, labour camps and Siberian special settlements; many even lost their lives. With the collapse of communism, it was hoped that a more tolerant era would usher in greater religious freedom. It seems that with the increasing violations of religious freedom and human rights Putin’s Russia, the CIS nations and autonomous regions are on the path of “forward into the past.”

**The Origins of Conscientious Objection in the Watch Tower Organisation**

*Zoe KNOX*

In July 1917, the International Bible Students Association (IBSA) published *The Finished Mystery*, the seventh and final volume of the *Studies in the Scriptures* series. A short section of *The Finished Mystery* criticised the position of the United States government on World War I, discouraged Bible Students from taking up arms, and argued that patriotism was an ‘untruth’ spread by Satan. In 1918, eight leaders of IBSA (including Joseph Rutherford, the president) were convicted under the United States Espionage Act for undermining national security. The trial, held in Brooklyn, New York, where the organisation was based, centred on *The Finished Mystery*, a book IBSA leaders repeatedly stated was religious rather than political. This paper will identify the origins of the Bible Students’ opposition to war, consider why *The Finished Mystery* proved so controversial, and examine the legal trial against the men. Finally, it will argue that the case had a profound influence on the Watch Tower organisation, one which continues to shape its beliefs and practices to the present day.