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Protestant women in the late Soviet era: gender, authority, and dissent

Nadezhda Beliakova^a and Miriam Dobson^b

^aCentre for Religion and Church Studies, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences and National Research Nuclear University MEPhI, Moscow, Russia; ^bDepartment of History Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

ABSTRACT

At the peak of the anti-religious campaigns under Nikita Khrushchev, communist propaganda depicted women believers as either naïve dupes, tricked by the clergy, or as depraved fanatics; the Protestant “sektantka” (female sectarian) was a particularly prominent folk-devil. In fact, as this article shows, women’s position within Protestant communities was far more complex than either of these mythical figures would have one believe. The authors explore four important, but contested, female roles: women as leaders of worship, particularly in remote congregations where female believers vastly outnumbered their male counterparts; women as unofficial prophetesses, primarily within Pentecostal groups; women as mothers, replenishing congregations through high birth rates and commitment to their children’s religious upbringing; and women as political actors in the defence of religious rights. Using a wide range of sources, which include reports written by state officials, articles in the church journal, letters from church members to their ecclesiastical leaders in Moscow, *samizdat* texts, and oral history accounts, the authors probe women’s relationship with authority, in terms of both the authority of the (male) ministry within the church, and the authority of the Soviet state.

RÉSUMÉ

Au point culminant des campagnes antireligieuses sous Nikita Khrouchtchev, la propagande communiste décrivait les croyantes soit comme des dupes naïves, trompées par le clergé, soit comme des fanatiques dépravées ; la « sektantka » protestante (féminine sectaire) était une diablesse folklorique particulièrement marquante. En fait, comme le montre cet article, la position des femmes au sein des communautés protestantes était bien plus complexe que l’une ou l’autre de ces figures mythiques nous donnerait à croire. Les auteures étudient quatre rôles féminins importants, mais disputés : les femmes en tant que meneuses de culte, surtout dans des assemblées des fidèles reculées où les croyantes étaient infiniment plus nombreuses que leurs homologues masculins ; les femmes en tant que mères, réapprovisionnant les assemblées à cause d’un taux de natalité élevé et grâce à leur engagement envers l’éducation religieuse de leurs enfants ; et les femmes en tant qu’actrices politiques à la défense des droits religieux. Avec une gamme considérable de sources, y compris des rapports écrits par des fonctionnaires de l’état, des articles

KEYWORDS

religion; USSR; Protestants; Baptists; gender; dissent; women

dans la revue ecclésiastique, des lettres de la part des membres à leurs dirigeants ecclésiastiques à Moscou, textes *samizdat*, et des récits d'histoire orale, les auteures explorent la relation des femmes avec l'autorité, celle du saint ministère (masculin) dans l'Église, ainsi que celle de l'état soviétique.

The Bolshevik Revolution was meant to liberate women from the darkness of the past, bringing them out from the shadow of the Church towards the light of atheism. One civil-war era poster titled "Religion and the Woman" portrayed the recent past as being one in which women endured "submissive slavery," brutally controlled by the Church, the clergy, bullying husbands, and domestic drudgery.¹ Yet in the wake of the Second World War, Soviet officials were forced to recognize their failure to "free" women from religion's hold. One state report from 1950 began: "It would not be an exaggeration to say that all religious organizations [...] are using women as their main material and even ideological base."² By the time the anti-religious campaigns of the Khrushchev era were launched, two competing images of women believers coexisted, both negative: sometimes women were portrayed as entirely submissive and naïve, duped by the controlling behaviour of the male minister (be he the Orthodox priest, the Imam, or the Protestant pastor); or else they could be depicted as wild, depraved fanatics themselves. This was particularly true of Protestant women: the *sektantka* – or female sectarian – was frequently labelled a "fiend" and even charged with heinous crimes such as ritual child murder.³ In reality, the role played by women within Protestant communities was far more complex than either of these mythical figures suggests.

One striking feature of post-war Protestant congregations was that women made up a very significant majority of their members: reports produced by state officials frequently placed the proportion of women at between 70 and 80%, and sometimes even higher.⁴ This gender imbalance was not unique to Protestants, of course, as indicated by the 1950 report cited above, it was something which affected all religious organizations. Indeed it has become a commonplace in scholarly writing on religion in the late USSR, particularly Orthodoxy, to note the predominance of women within religious communities. In a recent chapter reviewing "The Russian Orthodox Church in 1990," Nikolai Mitrokhin opens his description of parish life by saying: "By 1990, the mainstay of the Church for three decades had been the *babushki*, elderly female pensioners in the countryside or who had moved to the cities. They made up more than 80 per cent (in many places a full 100 per cent) of regular churchgoers."⁵ Recollections and memoirs of the Soviet period also emphasize the key role of women, particularly the older generation. The following example from the Iaroslavl' region could be found in any corner of the Soviet Union: "When the Zakobiakinskii church was left without a priest in the post-war era, Taisiia took on responsibility for parish administration. She assiduously paid all the taxes due and on major holidays sent for a priest from Iaroslavl' to come."⁶ Likewise, in his *Notes of a Rural Priest*, Georgii Edel'shtein describes how the church to which he was assigned in the 1970s had been saved from closure by one elderly woman, the "simple, illiterate, but tenacious *babka* Mart'ianikha," whose deeds were frequently remembered by local parishioners.⁷

Although the feminization of religion in the USSR has been the subject of particular commentary, it was a more dramatic example of developments elsewhere in the industrialized world. Many studies have suggested that Christianity became increasingly feminized in Western Europe and North America from the late eighteenth century onwards, with women outnumbering men in many church congregations by the turn of the twentieth century.⁸ In seeking to explain this radical shift from the medieval and early modern period, when piety was characterized as inherently masculine, historians have developed various explanatory models.⁹ Some have explored the way in which women and men related to the emerging democratic cultures, suggesting that women were encouraged to take responsibility for the family's moral and spiritual health; this can be viewed either as a means to restrict women's participation in the public sphere by limiting them to family roles, or alternatively as a means by which women were able to carve out space in the public sphere (through charitable, or even preaching, activity).¹⁰ Other interpretations stress the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the status of women and their relationship to the church. According to sociologist Linda Woodhead, theories of secularization explain most effectively male disaffiliation from religion: whilst both men and women left the village during the industrial revolution, men entered the "impersonal structures" of modern, urban life much more fully than women; thus it was men who abandoned the "sacred canopy," and women, remaining more tied to the home even after migration to the city, carried "tradition into the modern context."¹¹

In the Soviet Union, urbanization and industrialization were an intense, disorienting experience: government campaigns, begun in the 1930s and relaunched in the post-war years, led to the fragmentation of traditional rural communities where male/female ratios had been more even.¹² Here, the atheist context was also instrumental: if anti-religious propaganda depicted believers as either wild fanatics or benighted women, manipulated by male pastors, affiliation no doubt became a less attractive proposition for men. Men were perhaps particularly attuned to the fact that identification as a believer would block their opportunities for career advancement. In the USSR, the impact of the war on both gender relations and religious life was unusually significant. Firstly, it had a demographic effect: men represented the majority of the armed forces and therefore of the population losses, adding to those already killed in the purges (which also hit men disproportionately). Although demographic imbalance itself cannot explain ratios of almost 4:1 within some congregations – men still numbered 43% of the general population – the suffering of the war has also been identified as a cause of the increasing religious affiliation of women.¹³ One oral history interviewee remembered moving to Novosibirsk in 1945 where he encountered what he called an "awakening" [*probuzhdenie*]:

In Novosibirsk we immediately went to a service and for all of us, or at least for me, it was a jolt to the soul, a heavenly jolt [...] Now I came to a service where there were tears. The post-war period, women are crying about their husbands who have died, about their overall unhappiness, everything has been lost, everything has fallen apart, there are no children, no husbands, no fathers. At this service, there were such prayers, oi! So I'd say I never again saw anything quite like the Novosibirsk church.¹⁴

The notion that war brought grief to women, and therefore heightened their religiosity, was also regularly found in official reports: for many years, the war served as a helpful explanation for loyal commentators (including both state officials and atheist scholars) keen to justify the fact that faith had not yet died out.¹⁵ With older people, amongst whom women were even more predominant, the regime conceded it might be hard for them to shed their religious convictions, meaning that pressure was less intense than it was on young people.

Whilst the phenomenon of the predominance of women in post-war congregations appears to have crossed denominational boundaries, certain features of Protestant history in this period are distinctive. As discussed in more detail below, the wartime creation of new organizational structures for the country's major confessions had significant consequences for evangelical life: previously dispersed, isolated congregations were now incorporated into a single, centralized body covering the whole USSR – the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB). In introducing such reforms, the state formed something akin to an episcopal system, which was at odds with the tradition of free churches on which the evangelical church was built. The state's goal was to reduce evangelical activity and to concentrate authority in the hands of formally registered "professional servants of the cult" [*professional'nye sluzhiteli kul'ta*], whose membership it could influence and manipulate. Such a transformation was not universally welcomed. In the early 1960s, Khrushchev's church reforms, imposed with relative success on the Orthodox parishes, met with stiff opposition within the evangelical tradition, where believers' anger was directed as much at their own church leaders' increased authority as at the regime's persecution of religion. Despite such protest, the state continued with the same approach until perestroika. State bodies responsible for controlling religious life in the USSR believed that in order to curb Orthodox religious life it was simply necessary to close church buildings and de-register local priests, but they acknowledged that such policies did not work with the Protestant minority. In contrast to its policy of refusing registration to Orthodox and Catholic churches, the state attempted to establish control over Protestant life by fostering a church hierarchy and supervising its composition through official registration.¹⁶

Throughout the post-war decades, therefore, one effect of the regime's attempts to ensure its control over Protestant life was the greatly enhanced authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, based in Moscow. Constituted of ordained pastors, this leadership was exclusively male. The result was a paradoxical situation: women significantly outnumbered their male counterparts in the pews of Soviet Protestant churches, but the new hierarchical structure of the post-war church increased the authority of the ordained pastors and decreased opportunities for lay worshippers.

What roles, then, were women to play? What did the church leaders expect, and what happened in practice? In 1945, in only its third issue, *Bratskii vestnik* (*Fraternal Messenger*), a bi-monthly publication written and published by the AUCECB with state sanction (and censorship), offered an article titled "On the Ministry of Women in the Church." It began by noting that many people held a quite restricted view of female roles, believing that in youth, women's duty was to get married, bear children, and care for the home, and then, with age, to dress properly, refrain from gossip, avoid drunkenness, teach good deeds, and guide younger women in becoming loving wives and

mothers. Yet, *Bratskii vestnik* opined, women's ministry did not need to limit itself to the family and the home. Not only were many women in fact widows without a family to care for, but some might possess special gifts. Using scripture, the author of the article laid out four areas in which women could be active: charitable work; ministry as deaconesses; preaching and prophecy; and singing (as soloists, members of choirs, or as leaders of choirs).¹⁷

The fact that the editors of *Bratskii vestnik* decided to address the question of women's ministry suggests that there was some uncertainty, or divergence of opinion, on the issue. In this article we argue that negotiation over the role female believers could play within church life continued throughout the late Soviet period. Our focus is particularly on the period from the mid-1960s to the beginning of perestroika. Using a wide range of sources, which include reports composed by state officials, articles written and published in *Bratskii vestnik*, letters from church members to ecclesiastical leaders in Moscow, *samizdat* texts, and oral history accounts, we probe women's relationship with authority, in terms of both the authority of the (male) ministry within the church, and the authority of the Soviet state, which had too readily dismissed them as naïve dupes or dangerous hysterics.

In doing so, we explore four areas of female activity: first, church roles open to women, including as deaconesses and "stop-gap" pastors; second, informal positions as prophetesses; third, as mothers of large families, challenging the societal trend towards one- or two-child families; and fourth as defenders of Christian mothers' right to raise their children, and of believers' rights more broadly. In some regards, women failed to fulfil the roles *Bratskii vestnik* had laid out for them: there were diminishing numbers of deaconesses and female prophetesses faced growing criticism, including from other women. But in other respects, they went further than the authors of the 1945 article could have imagined, becoming vocal spokeswomen for their right to worship and to raise their children as Christians. A minority of Protestant women thus articulated a position that was on the one hand traditional (for they identified themselves primarily in terms of their familial relationships, as mothers and wives), and on the other quite subversive: they became authors, publishers, and disseminators of texts that combined committed evangelism with important critiques of the Soviet regime.

Who were the Soviet Protestants?

Before exploring these dynamics further, a brief history of evangelical Protestantism in this region is warranted. Evangelical Christian and Baptist (ECB) congregations appeared in the Russian Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century as the result of a convergence of factors. In the final decades of tsarist rule, Russia and Ukraine experienced a period of religious dynamism, one manifestation of which was the establishment of small groups devoted to Bible study. Into this mix came missionary German Baptists (in Ukraine, southern Russia, and Transcaucasia), and to the capital, the English evangelical Lord Radstock, a member of the Plymouth Brethren.¹⁸ The nature of Russian Protestantism's relationship with Orthodox, Slavic traditions on the one hand and Western influences on the other remains a subject of debate amongst historians – receiving particular attention in Constantine Prokhorov's recent monograph – but it is clear these encounters were certainly important.¹⁹ From a plethora of different groups,

two traditions emerged, although they shared much common ground: the Evangelical Christians (initially originating with the St Petersburg circles) and the Baptists (stronger initially in the southern regions of the Empire).²⁰ By 1909, independent Baptist and Evangelical Christian unions had formed to co-ordinate the activities of both wings of this growing Protestant movement. Congregations retained a great deal of autonomy, however, and there was little appetite for a strong hierarchical structure, particularly amongst the Evangelical Christians who had a “looser approach to church formation.”²¹

In 1917, the persecution of the imperial era was lifted, and the Protestant communities seemed to flourish, but the toleration promised in the revolutionary period proved illusory and the repressions of the 1930s had a devastating impact on church life, with many arrests and church closures; by the second half of the decade the Baptist Union was shut and the Union of Evangelical Christians existed only on paper.²² As is well known, the Second World War saw fundamental changes to church–state relations, with a lifting of the pre-war persecution.²³ Whilst the Russian Orthodox Church was the most visible beneficiary, non-Orthodox religious groups also experienced new opportunities.²⁴ In May 1944, the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (formed the previous year) was used as a model to fashion a new state body to oversee all other confessions in the country: the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (hereafter CARC). Over the next few years the registration of many congregations was approved.²⁵ In October of the same year, a new Protestant “centre” (in the jargon of the CARC) was formed: the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists brought together the Evangelical Christians and the Baptists under a single roof. The AUCECB had a hierarchical, centralized structure, and, as already suggested, one of its purposes was to allow greater oversight over the patchwork of small, autonomous worship communities which had surfaced during the war. One CARC official commented explicitly in 1947:

Compared to the past, the new structure has increased the importance of the ministerial personnel [*presviteriskii sostav*], making them leaders not only of the congregations’ spiritual life, but of its entire life [...] The current structure entirely liquidates the sect’s hazy “democratism” [*rasplyvchatyi “demokratizm”*] when it comes to issues of leadership.²⁶

Whilst these new infrastructures – CARC and the AUCECB – allowed for a renewal of Protestant life, compared with the church’s earlier history they signified a significant increase in control from Moscow, both from the state and from the church leadership.

By creating religious “centres” such as the AUCECB the Soviet government hoped to increase centralized control and to merge once-discrete denominations.²⁷ The goal of uniformity proved elusive, however. Pentecostals represented one of the biggest groups to later officially join the AUCECB, but this merger was always problematic because the August 1945 agreement that sealed it required key Pentecostal practices such as speaking in tongues and foot-washing to take place outside the prayer house.²⁸ Autonomous Pentecostal groups were formally registered by the 1970s.²⁹ Another division emerged as the compromises made by the AUCECB leadership became intolerable for a growing number of church members, particularly at the height of Nikita Khrushchev’s anti-religious campaigns. In 1961 an “initiative group” was formed that repeatedly condemned the actions of the Moscow leadership and demanded a nationwide congress of Evangelical Christians and Baptists, something that had not happened since the founding event of 1944.³⁰ Dissatisfied with the response of the AUCECB, the

Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (hereafter CCECB) was formed in 1965, with the aim of bringing together all the country's unregistered congregations; it took a much more confrontational attitude to state interference in church life. The main brunt of state repression was now directed against the leaders of the unregistered movement, whilst AUCECB congregations were, on the whole, less harassed. But the effects of the split cut deeply and the new divisions that emerged within once tight-knit communities were painful for all involved. AUCECB leaders tried to enforce unity, and the state supported their efforts, but the evangelical community was in fact increasingly splintered. As we shall see, the experiences of women, and the opportunities open to them, varied significantly depending upon both the geographical location and the legal status of the congregation to which they belonged.

Women and church leadership: deaconesses and “stop-gap” pastors

As suggested above, the Evangelical Christians and Baptists experienced something of a revival in the 1920s.³¹ Although, as Andrei Savin notes, the concept of a golden age can be exaggerated, the NEP years certainly saw greater opportunities for evangelism and charitable work than had been the case before, or would be later.³² ECB congregations grew as a result.³³ Women's groups met for Bible-reading and worship, and women took an active role in charitable work, organizing canteens and laundry services for the homeless, for example.³⁴ A small number were able to participate in the Bible courses set up by both denominations in the mid-1920s.³⁵ In a decade when the “women's question” was hotly debated in secular society, Christians also discussed the status of women within the church: this is true for both the Russian Orthodox Church and ECB congregations.³⁶ Heather Coleman describes a small conference held in Moscow in 1926, organized by a “sisters' initiative group” at which the role of female Baptists in both family and church life was discussed. They reached the conclusion that “the only limit to women's spiritual equality with men was that they could not aspire to be presbyters.”³⁷ In the same year, the pages of the journal *Baptist* included discussion of whether women should wear headscarves and the meaning of Apostle Paul's injunction that women should keep quiet in church.³⁸

By the post-Stalin years, the situation had changed radically, both in terms of the kind of debate that was possible within the church, and the status of women – or at least this was how some of the older generation saw it. In 1978 Antonina Dubrovskaja, one of the women who had completed the Bible course in 1927–28, wrote to Aleksei Bychkov, general secretary of the AUCECB, laying out her concerns regarding the changes she had witnessed over her lifetime. She observed that although women dominated numerically within the ECB congregations, they were not represented at AUCECB congresses and that there was no systematic preparation of women for the roles of preacher or deaconess. She suggested re-establishing the earlier commitment to women's education. Writing about her own experiences she said: “I turned to God when I was twelve years old, the only one in the family. I was baptized when I was sixteen and began preaching. The brothers in my home Izhevsk church taught me, encouraged me. [...]” She suggested that at the next AUCECB congress there should be discussion of how to give “young sisters” the opportunity to “grow, to enrol on Bible courses (as was the case

from 1918 to the 1930s.” She hoped for an end to the assumption that “wives in church should be quiet” and hoped for the work of deaconesses to be renewed.³⁹

The following year, Mariia Motorina also wrote a short treatise on the position of women and, like Dubrovskaiia, suggested that Paul’s instruction to the Corinthians regarding women’s silence in church was being used too freely, and inappropriately. Motorina lamented the fact that nowadays women’s role in worship had declined even though they were a numerical majority: too few served as deaconesses, although there were many examples from the scripture of women working alongside men in this role. She suggested that some brothers were resistant to the idea that women could have spiritual gifts: “One brother said that women don’t have the gift or ability to witness to the Lord. Some zealously say that women have no place speaking in church. Yes they should come to church, but let them busy themselves with domestic tasks.”⁴⁰ She compared such attitudes unfavourably with those she had experienced in her youth when women completed Bible courses and contributed more fully to church life.

This picture of women’s declining role within the church was not entirely universal, however. In some rural and remote congregations, there were simply insufficient men. Sometimes there were no men at all: in 1952, a CARC report from Ukraine describing rural congregations noted that in the village of Khomintsy, for instance, there were 40 believers, with no men at all; in the hamlet of Iarmolinet, only one man worshipped together with 59 women.⁴¹ In such communities women took on leadership roles by default. In Tambov oblast, for example, the rural congregation of Rasskazovo was led by women because of the absence of men.⁴² In the post-war period, a widow, Antonina Terekhova, acted as the Rasskazovo pastor for a number of years. Attitudes to her role seem mixed: in 1959 a report by an AUCECB representative from Moscow expressed approval for the way she led the congregation;⁴³ in contrast, a local pastor noted with opprobrium that whilst she was no longer in an official leadership role by 1962, she nonetheless conducted baptisms of young workers from Tambov, without any kind of official sanction.⁴⁴ Anna Zheltova, another elderly widow who took over from Terekhova, was perhaps more restrained: she preached, but did not baptize.⁴⁵

In a 1973 letter to the AUCECB leadership, the senior pastor for Orel oblast, Aleksei Krainii, addressed the problem rural communities faced very explicitly, noting that in his region at least ten groups were led by a woman. He described in some detail the roles carried out by two of the presiding women [*sestry-predsedateli*]. In the first case, he said that sister Marfa Poniatkova “fulfilled” the role of pastor for a small congregation of 30 members before asking rhetorically: “Of what did this consist?” He went on to explain:

She led church services, preached the word of God. She has a special gift for speaking, prayer, talking with people and has success: souls, especially women, turn to the Lord. Spiritual rites: she did not baptize or give communion.

Instead these rites were conducted from time to time by a visiting pastor. In another congregation, leadership had passed to sister Olga Minaeva when the previous pastor had died. Either the senior pastor, or a brother delegated by him, came to lead communion, although it was Minaeva who distributed the bread and glass of wine. In the congregation, there was only one male member, who was elderly and lived far

away.⁴⁶ Krainiii went on to offer some interpretation. He noted that members of at least one group had repeatedly asked him whether a sister could herself celebrate communion. At one point he noted: "We are quite convinced that the prophetic words 'The Lord gives the Word: The women bearing the tidings are a great host' are now being put into practice by our Lord" (Psalm 68:11). He suggested that these issues needed to be decided at the all-Union level; like Dubrovskaiia and Motorina, he felt that women's role in the church should be explicitly addressed.

The letters of Dubrovskaiia, Motorina, and Krainii did not succeed in bringing about a wide-ranging discussion of women's status. Women's leadership seems to have been accepted primarily as an interim measure where men were lacking. An oral history interviewee from Tambov concluded her discussion of the Rasskazovo community by saying of Zheltova: "We should give her her due. When some brothers did appear, she immediately gave it all up, without any fuss, with pleasure."⁴⁷ Another interviewee (a member of an autonomous congregation) told us: "There were cases, in villages where there were only women, no men, brothers, where women preached, of course. But we don't do this. No [...] We are against women pastors, as this is not in accordance with the scriptures."⁴⁸ The interviewees were reacting in part to post-perestroika discussions about the role of women in the church, but as with the contemporaneous sources they suggest that women in leadership positions were a concession born of necessity – a sign of the depredations the atheist state had inflicted on their church by robbing it of their menfolk.⁴⁹

On the margins: prophetesses and Pentecostalism

The 1945 *Bratskii vestnik* article discussing women's spiritual gifts had referred to prophecy alongside preaching, citing various biblical references to women prophesying. The AUCECB church hierarchy was increasingly concerned about this rather unpredictable practice, however, particularly in the wake of the problematic merger with the Pentecostals. Frequently returning to the problem of Pentecostal practices, the AUCECB leaders insisted on the importance of educating their members and spoke of their "struggle" with both prophecy and glossolalia (speaking in tongues).⁵⁰ Thus, although identified as an arena of female activity by the *Bratskii vestnik* authors in 1945, prophecy was increasingly marginalized within AUCECB-registered congregations.

Some Pentecostal communities had resisted merger with the AUCECB, and here these charismatic practices continued, and – according to some observers – allowed women a prominent role. In Leningrad, a clandestine group of Pentecostals was formed by the male pastor I. A. Borovkov in the late 1940s but, as Tat'iana Nikol'skaia notes, women played a significant role as prophetesses.⁵¹ Writing about Pentecostals in Molotov oblast in the same period, Aleksei Glushaev also notes the role played by women, citing the example of "Zheniia," a female preacher recently released from the camps who inspired a small following.⁵² In 1958, at a meeting held in Kyiv for leaders of the former (Pentecostal) Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith, Ivan Pan'ko, pastor of the registered Minsk congregation, reported on his contact with members of an unregistered group of Pentecostals based at one of the city's factories: "At their meetings, all the power resides with prophetesses-women, especially young gypsy women, and the older brothers for some reason hold back and let the sisters speak. These sisters lead the

group to all kinds of abnormal [*urodlivye*] and negative phenomena.⁵³ Frustratingly for the historian, Pan'ko does not elaborate on the nature of these transgressive practices. For him, evidently, affiliation to the AUCECB meant curbing outspoken prophetesses.

Within registered communities, charismatic worship – outlawed from the church service itself – was pushed to the margins, occurring primarily in unofficial gatherings. Three letters from Odesa, briefly discussed in *Bratskii vestnik* in 1971, illustrate some of these gender dynamics and can serve as a case study.⁵⁴ Composed by women over the course of 1970 and dispatched to AUCECB leaders in Moscow, the original letters are preserved in the Union's archive and offer rare first-hand insight into the activities of small, female worship groups, normally only accessible to us through the sensationalist accounts provided by the Soviet press. In their letters, all three women were highly critical of the charismatic worship encouraged by Pentecostals within their communities, particularly the influence of prophetesses.

In her letter to the AUCECB, Elena Gogonenko began with her own life story: having experienced many difficulties, she often prayed to God in tears until, in 1969, at the age of 60, she found she needed contact with "God's children" [*deti bozh'ie*]. Soon women she met in the Odesa ECB congregation introduced her to a "powerful prophetess," and she began to attend gatherings in a certain Tat'iana's home. "Her customary greeting," Gogonenko explained, "was 'Oh, Christ walks with you and brings you a gift,' gesturing [to indicate] that in the corner of her room was a dove, but instead of a dove all I could see there was a load of cats."⁵⁵ Her failure to experience the bestowal of spiritual gifts is a recurrent theme in the letter. Although Gogonenko was put on to Tat'iana's list as the 39th person to receive "foreign tongues," her three long visits – during which, on her knees, she repeated "Purify me, purify me" [*Ochisti, ochisti*] – in fact produced no spiritual epiphany; and ultimately, under the shaking hands of the prophetess, she faked it.⁵⁶ Gogonenko then went on to break the secrecy the women imposed on themselves and, clearly distressed, spoke to the pastor. She found herself ostracized as a result: "When I came to the service, all the 'spiritual sisters' [...] pointed at me, calling me a traitor."⁵⁷ She came close to suicide. Another woman, Anna Kapitonova, also wrote to church leaders about the prophetess Tat'iana who had wanted to baptize her too, but Kapitonova found she could not fast sufficiently and did not receive the gift of tongues.⁵⁸ A third, unsigned, letter was unequivocal: the author was opposed to the introduction of Pentecostal practices into ECB worship and argued that those who disagreed with the conditions stipulated in the August agreement of 1945 should leave their congregation. She noted that at Pentecost the Galileans came to believe in Christ as a result of speaking in foreign tongues which they perfectly understood – not the case with the sounds her co-congregants made: "even frogs in a swamp wouldn't understand *kry, kry, kry* or *tyki, tyki, tyki* and so on."⁵⁹

For this third writer, the problem lay in part with ministers who shared the women's disposition to prophecy. She was disappointed with "our brothers" who, despite knowing the scripture well, could take such "nonsensical babble" [*bredovoi lepet*] as a sign of the Holy Spirit. But she also noted the subversive attitude of women like the prophetess Tat'iana. When one congregant threatened to report her to the pastor, Tat'iana had answered: "But what is the pastor to me? Even though he has higher education, to God I am first."⁶⁰ Taking their mandate directly from God, prophetesses appeared impervious to those vested with power through the

institution of the church, or through education. According to this letter-writer: “No exhortations or instruction [*vospitanie*] can influence them because how can those who have been spiritually baptized by the Holy Spirit – those who are the first to God – take instruction from pastors and preachers of the flesh who before God are nothing?”⁶¹ Faced with what they now considered the dangerous practices of the “spiritual sisters,” all three of these letter-writers rejected the power of the female prophetess and sought to re-establish the authority of the male pastors, ordained by the church. However, their texts also testify to the existence of women who articulated an alternative authority able to rival that of the ordained church leaders.

In terms of their roles in prophecy, preaching, and church leadership, therefore, the archival record occasionally leaves tantalizing traces of women who challenged the existing hierarchy, but these challenges appear scattered and marginalized, surfacing in remote areas, in unregistered congregations, or outside of the registered congregation’s formal worship. It seems so far as if the feminization of religion in the context of post-war Soviet society primarily entailed growing numerical representation of women within ECB congregations, but that opportunities for prophecy, preaching, ministry as deaconess – all activities encouraged by the editors of *Bratskii vestnik* in 1945 – were more circumscribed, or at least contentious. As we shall see in the following section, however, the identification with women primarily as mothers could, and did, take on unprecedented significance in the post-war period, and led some women to adopt more public and politicized roles, particularly as the new divisions within the ECB church opened up.

Protestant mothers and the politics of childhood

A 1973 article in the major newspaper *Izvestiia* (*News*) recounted how a young Pentecostal girl was able to leave the “sect” because of strong support from her co-workers, but it began by introducing her family as being “a big family by today’s standards: six children.”⁶² As the Soviet state was only too aware, single-child families were now the norm, not least because of small apartments and the shortage of nursery places.⁶³ Faced with a demographic crisis, the Soviet state encouraged women to greater reproductive efforts, but the rewards offered to large families by the 1944 Family Code became a point of contestation between Protestants and the local authorities.⁶⁴ Take the case of one Moscow believer: after giving birth to her sixth child in 1968, the mother had been awarded a Motherhood Medal (first degree), but the district executive committee [*ispolkom*] had decided that as a Baptist (and indeed a member of the unregistered CCECB) she did not deserve such recognition; in 1976, at the birth of her seventh child, she in turn refused to accept a second-degree Motherhood Medal, reasoning that she did not yet have the first.⁶⁵

The reluctance of state authorities to recognize Protestant women as heroine-mothers is perhaps unsurprising. After all, it was high birth rates that were sustaining ECB congregations. Children were the main source of new members, often becoming stalwarts of the youth groups that were such a feature of the late Soviet period. Officials and researchers frequently commented on the striking size of Protestant families. In Ukraine a 1983–84 study of the social-demographic make-up of evangelical communities confirmed this pattern. In Rivne oblast, for example, 152 groups were recorded, with a

combined membership of more than 19,000 believers. “Each year,” the report noted, “about 500 people are baptized. Here there is a concentration of Christian families with numerous children and this is the main factor in the active production of believers [*aktivnogo vosproizvodstva veruiushchikh*].”⁶⁶ In Poltava oblast 76 large “sectarian” families were identified, with a total of 317 children between them.⁶⁷

As Olena Panych has noted, children were “at the center of a political struggle.”⁶⁸ For the state, it was a struggle to ensure that the next generation was raised free from what were considered the dark superstitions and backwardness of the past. Typically, parents were charged with forbidding their children “to take part in the social life of the school, reading fiction, watching children’s films, joining the pioneers” and instead forcing them to “visit the prayer house of the Baptist sect and pray at home, which physically and spiritually damages the development of children.”⁶⁹ At the height of the anti-religious campaigns in the early 1960s, there were numerous cases of Protestant children being removed from their parental home.⁷⁰

With the state demanding that children be barred from church worship, congregations reacted in a variety of ways. In one sermon, preacher allegedly asked: “Why, sister, are you crying about the fact your children don’t believe in God? [...] How often did you bring your children to worship? You need to pray and pray and raise your children in a Christian manner [*vospityvat’ to’ko v dukhe bozh’em*].”⁷¹ But in some registered congregations, the church elders explicitly asked parents *not* to bring their children to services, and this was a central issue in the split which divided the AUCECB in the early 1960s. In an oral history interview, Liudmila Timchenko recounted her experiences in the early 1960s when she was the young mother of a four-year-old. As she waited for the service to begin, with her son next to her, she was approached by one of the deacons who said: “Sister, you will have to take your son outside. Let him play on the other side of the gate; there are grown-ups there, other children, and no cars come past. Let him play on the other side of the gate, but not in the courtyard. And you can be here for the service. And then afterwards you can pick him up, and take him home.” “Why?” she asked. “Well, because you can’t have children here you see, sister, it’s not allowed.”⁷² She took her son and left. After this, she became a member of another church; it was also a registered congregation, but further away from the city, and therefore more relaxed about official supervision.

Some women took up their pens to fight for their right to raise their children as Christians. Let us take an example from 1971–72. After her son was committed to a boarding school and the local court took away her parental rights, one mother wrote in horror to a number of high-ranking bodies about what she termed the “unprecedented lawlessness” [*neslykhanoe bezzakonie*] of the state’s actions. (She also copied her letter to the leadership of the CCECB and the Council of Prisoners’ Relatives, whose work is described below.) Not only did she invoke the country’s “legislative system” [*zakonodatel’nyi poriadok*], which claimed to defend believers’ freedom of conscience, she also spoke passionately in terms of universal rights that transcended history:

What can be compared with the grief of a mother whose child has been taken away, or the grief of a child who has been deprived of his mother? What kind of heart can a person have who denies the holy right of a mother, the right of parents, to raise their own children? This is an inhuman, cruel act, which could only be committed by people who have lost all sense

of justice. History shows that whenever slave-owners, serf-owners and other people separated children from their parents, history has covered them with shame.⁷³

Perhaps more alarming for the authorities, however, was the emerging practice of multi-authored petitions in defence of mothers' rights. The text of these letters was circulated to different churches and signatures were collected locally. In 1966, for example, a collective letter calling for the creation of an All-Union Council of Mothers to defend their children from exposure to atheism was composed in the name of Kursk "women-Baptists" [*zhenshchiny-baptisty*].⁷⁴ Three years later, 1453 believers across the length and breadth of the USSR signed a letter addressed to a host of Soviet dignitaries, including the chairmen of various branches of the criminal justice system, newspaper and magazine editors, and Leonid Brezhnev himself. Thirteen pages of text were followed by a further 40 covered in handwritten names; two of the pages came from Leningrad and Moscow (the exact identity of the churches is not given), while the majority were submitted by congregations in Belarus, Siberia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. As was the practice with Soviet petitions, the authors began by identifying themselves: "We, Christian mothers, living on the territory of the USSR, are forced to turn to you our leaders with the following." Although they later also described themselves as "peaceful citizens," they prioritized their identity as Christian mothers; the fact that they lived in the USSR was secondary. They went on to invoke the Soviet Constitution and the 1918 Decree on the Separation of Church and State to highlight the regime's failure to act in accordance with its own laws, before detailing a number of ways in which Christian children were mistreated, including forced removals from their parents, beatings, and interrogations.⁷⁵

A third letter from "Christian mothers," dating from 1977, carried 4031 signatures across 166 pages. It addressed many of the same issues as the earlier text, but it was now more strident in tone: pointed comparisons were made with the suffering of the early Christians (and Nero's throwing of children to the lions) and the fascists' merciless killing of children. The authors also now showed an interest in alerting international audiences to their plight, with copies sent to "All heads of government in the world" and "All Christians and People of Good Will."⁷⁶

What did it mean to sign a letter? According to the official from the Council of Religious Affairs (successor to CARC), who wrote a memo on the 1966 petition, the Kursk letter was in fact the handiwork of local CCECB pastors. When cross-examined, some of the female signatories defended the letter, with one explaining how important it was to protect their children from the influence of the "Godless" [*bezbozhniki*]: "I don't need a dissolute daughter!" Others, however, claimed never to have seen the document and cited their limited literacy.⁷⁷ A report made by officials in one district of Kyiv following the 1977 letter also suggested varying levels of awareness and commitment amongst the women who appeared as signatories. Following individual chats conducted with members of the church on General Pukhov street, officials concluded that a handful of women had attended a reading of the letter in one of the church's rooms, whereas the rest relied on hearsay; of these some were defiant, saying they fully supported the content of the letter, whilst others claimed that they had never signed the document.⁷⁸ The evidence in such reports is problematic, but we should not assume that all those whose names appear as signatories were equally committed to the cause of mothers'

rights.⁷⁹ Yet the very fact that these one-on-one meetings between officials and female believers took place at all suggests that women were gaining a voice.

A vocal minority, particularly within congregations associated with the CCECB, had thus become defiant of a state that denied their right to raise their children as Christians. A handful of these women became involved in a unique organization discussed below – the Council of Prisoners’ Relatives – which launched a sustained international campaign over many years. Meanwhile, as a significant wing of the Pentecostal community became convinced that appealing to the Soviet government to reform was futile, many of their applications for emigration also condemned the regime for failing to respect the rights of mothers.⁸⁰ In 1981, a group of female Pentecostals celebrated 8 March – International Women’s Day and a key date on the Soviet secular calendar – by demonstrating outside the USSR Supreme Soviet building in Moscow, armed with placards demanding they be allowed to leave the USSR for religious reasons.⁸¹ Implicit in their action was the charge that, for all its rhetoric about equality, the regime had failed to defend their rights as both believers and women.

The Council of Prisoners’ Relatives: a distinctive voice of protest

The Council of Prisoners’ Relatives (hereafter CPR) was formed in 1964. According to the official histories published by the CCECB in recent years, it was created at the instigation of the male leaders of the unregistered movement; its membership was entirely female, however.⁸² Many of the women involved were mothers of large families. According to profiles of the leading CPR women composed by state officials two decades later, Ul’iana Germaniuk had four children; Margarita Pugacheva had 10; Galina Rytikova, 11; Serafima Iudintseva, 13; and Aleksandra Kozorezova, 11.⁸³ Most were the wives of arrested CCECB pastors and it seems that it was this that gave them the status to act as leaders of the movement. (Where unmarried women were involved it seems to more commonly have been in working for the underground press rather than as members of the Council itself.)⁸⁴ Despite their heavy domestic responsibilities – exacerbated by the fact that their husbands were often absent, preaching, or in prison – the female activists found the time to travel regularly, collecting evidence about miscarriages of justice and attending meetings where they carried out editorial work on various *samizdat* publications. Many of the leading women were based in Ukraine, although members also hailed from other places, including Omsk, Smolensk, the Tula and Moscow regions, Bashkortostan, Ioshkar-Ola, Chişinău (Moldova), Tashkent and Semipalatinsk (Kazakhstan), and Brest (Belarus).⁸⁵

Over the course of its existence between 1964 and the late 1980s, the CPR published 141 editions of the *Bulletin of the Council of Prisoners’ Relatives*, journals of up to thirty pages and more, which were mimeographed on underground presses and then disseminated amongst unregistered congregations and smuggled abroad.⁸⁶ CPR publications protested against the mistreatment of Christian children; they fought for the liberation of imprisoned believers; and they tried to let the outside world know of the plight their church faced. In the petitions they wrote – intended not only for the government figures addressed but also for wider circulation within the USSR and abroad – they frequently cited Soviet law. Following the first “All-Union Conference of

the Relatives of ECB Prisoners” held on 23 February 1964, the CPR agreed on the following statement, widely disseminated in *samizdat*:

In the Holy Scripture and according to the laws of our country ECB believers have the right to raise their children in a religious manner. This is written into the 1918 decree on the separation of the Church and state, article 9: “Citizens may give and receive religious instruction in a private manner” and in articles 5 and 6 of the “Convention on the Struggle with Discrimination in Education,” ratified by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 2 July 1962 and coming into force on 1 November 1962: “Parents, and in the relevant cases, legal guardians must have the possibility to provide religious and moral education to their children in accordance with their own convictions.”⁸⁷

As with the collective letters described above, the rights of parents was an absolutely fundamental theme in many of the CPR texts.

Very soon, the CPR expanded its critique of Soviet legality with a pioneering appeal to human rights. Thus, in an open letter circulated three years later, the notion of mothers’ rights was again a key component. Once more the CPR authors descried violations of parental rights, as well as the mistreatment of believers in prison and other miscarriages of justice. As was the case with other dissidents, the CPR used the Soviet state’s conception of legality to denounce it, noting the many times the regime had failed to live up to its own promises.⁸⁸ But they also went further than many dissidents; in addition to condemning the regime’s failure to implement its own legislation, they also noted and condemned inconsistencies between different Soviet laws and decrees. They included a long treatise on the contradictions between the 1918 Decree on the Separation of Church and State and the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights – ratified by the Soviet government – on the one hand, and the 1929 Decree “On Religious Organizations” on the other.⁸⁹ Most striking is the fact that even as early as this 1967 text, the CPR had fully adopted the concept of human rights: this open letter was addressed to the UN Commission for Human Rights, and in its very first line reminded its readers of the UN’s commitment to “defend basic human rights regards of nationality, race, or religious belief.”⁹⁰ In a 6000-word document, the word *pravo* [right] appeared over thirty times. We thus find a very early articulation of the language of human rights, which, as Samuel Moyn has argued, became so central not only to the broader dissident movement in the USSR but also to a powerful international movement as the 1970s progressed.⁹¹

In recent work on *samizdat*, Ann Komaromi has suggested that Baptist texts were characterized by their personal and emotional tone.⁹² The CPR texts were certainly emotive, but they also adopted a rather assertive attitude which perhaps distinguished them most from other *samizdat* appeals, whether secular or religious. Some within the CCECB itself even felt the CPR tone was too peremptory. In an oral history interview given in the 1990s, Mikhail Shaptala (by then the pastor of an autonomous congregation in the city of Khartsyzsk) recounted: “She [Lidiia Vins, a leading figure in the CPR] said that the letters needed to have teeth, teeth, so that those who read it felt they had been bitten.”⁹³ According to Shaptala, “it got to the point that the CPR started to dictate conditions to the government. Report to such-and-such address, take measures and so on.” The “strong-willed” [*volevoi*] women of the CPR – as Shaptala referred to them – believed that God required them to actively fight against the persecution of the faith, and did so in a manner which at least some of the brothers found inflammatory.⁹⁴ And

although the CCECB leadership today appears keen to commemorate the work of the CPR, it is worth noting that prominent pastors may have shared Shaptala's reservations at the time. In November 1969, as part of a series of meetings to discuss the possibilities of reconciliation, the AUCECB Chairman, Il'ia Ivanov, met with Gennadii Kriuchkov, leader of the CCECB. One of the demands made of the CCECB was that it curtail the actions of the CPR. "You're asking," said Kriuchkov, "for us to condemn the actions of the Council of Prisoners' Relatives! How can we do this? Who will listen to us? They will just say: 'What, are you frightened?' and they'll just push us aside." The leaders did not want the appeals sent abroad, he explained, but there were certain "hotheads" who were, he implied, out of their control.⁹⁵

The CPR texts were thus both typical of the emerging *samizdat* movement in their frequent appeals to both Soviet law and to the universal concept of human rights and also distinctive in their assertive tone. But they stood out in another, perhaps more important, way: their many appeals and open letters also had a missionary quality to them. Take for example, a 1975 issue of the *Biulleten'*, which included an appeal to "All Christians of the USSR and the Whole World" from five women who had been convicted as a result of their work for the underground press "Christian." Recently released from prison, they thanked readers for their prayers, saying: "On the great day, when He will appear in glory, all the people will gather before him, and then the Lord will say 'I was naked, and you dressed Me, I was ill and you visited Me, I was in prison, and you came to Me'" (Matthew 25:36). It called on readers to pray again, this time for their brothers who were still behind bars.⁹⁶

This missionary quality was not limited to dialogue with other Christians, but also included in appeals to the atheist Soviet state. CPR texts were thus characterized by a certain hybridity: full of references to rights and laws, both Soviet and universal, they also placed their conflict with the communist regime within a Christian framework, reminding their readers (both those addressed directly and the wider *samizdat* audience) that human actions are judged by God. One 1970 CPR appeal, for example, told its intended readers (who included state and party leaders such as Brezhnev, Aleksei Kosygin, and Nikolai Podgorny: "The Lord will recover your sight so that you can see the hand of God raised on high to take revenge for this lawlessness [*bezzakoniia*]. Orphans' tears are precious in the eyes of the Almighty!"⁹⁷ A telegram written in 1981 to describe the breaking-up of prayer meetings in Ukraine also exemplifies the hybridity of CPR texts which included frequent references to the law and lawfulness, with threats of divine judgement:

Physical force is used to break up meetings, with policemen and their volunteer brigades [*druzhinniki*] beating up believers and then shamelessly holding the victims themselves accountable for the disorder [*bezzakonie*]. Then the very policemen who should be tried as criminals are the ones called as witnesses. In the republic, God has entrusted power to you comrade Brezhnev and comrade Shcherbitskii. You are to a large degree responsible for the disastrous state of God's people in the country [...] The fact that you reject God does not stop his existence. Stop the policy that has been adopted in this country of destroying Christians, don't take a pro forma approach to the senseless documents the local authorities send us. These responses will be additional crimes when it comes to God's final judgement.⁹⁸

The country's top leaders were thus urged not only to reinstate legal order but also to consider their own fate on Judgement Day.

Practices (such as appealing to international bodies) and tactics (condemning the regime's infringements of its own laws and invoking human rights) which were to become the cornerstone of the more well-known dissident movement were thus also present in the writings of the CPR, which could be considered an early pioneer for later developments in the mainstream. Yet to subsume the CPR wholly into the broader history of dissent is to misrepresent its character and purpose. The CPR's existence created opportunities for the women involved not only to condemn the government for its failure to act in accordance with the law (both domestic and international), but also to exhort believers and non-believers alike to live in accordance with Holy Scripture. As such, they found their own evangelical voice and their own spiritual authority, without formally transcending the supportive roles that women fulfilled within their church tradition.

Conclusions

Post-war Protestant congregations were dominated by women. This meant that in some more remote areas, where the shortage of men was most acute, women sometimes led worship. In other areas, where there *was* an established church hierarchy, they might create and lead small groups practising charismatic worship on the margins of the registered community, their spiritual gifts generating a kind of authority very different from that of the ordained pastors. Yet there was no sustained challenge to the authority of male clerics. In this regard, Soviet Protestants took a very different path from their Western counterparts for whom the period from 1960 represented a time of significant turbulence in terms of gender roles, including movements for the ordination of women.⁹⁹ Perhaps we should not expect parallels; as some recent Russian scholarship has been at pains to indicate, after all, Russian Protestantism had its own distinct history in Eastern Europe. Constantine Prokhorov has argued that in fact ECB practices and beliefs had important commonalities with the Russian Orthodox tradition, and that the enforced isolation of the Cold War period only served to strengthen these affinities.¹⁰⁰

And yet, women were highly active in the challenge to the Soviet state, particularly within the CCECB. Here some married women used their identity as mothers to challenge the state's anti-religious policies, in particular the limitations placed on children's Christian instruction. This protest took the form of both collective letters, with one signed by over four thousand believers, and in the sustained *samizdat* activity of the CPR. In its struggle against miscarriages of justice visited upon CCECB believers, the CPR was a unique example of a Soviet rights movement with an all-female leadership and offered one of the most prolonged protests against the Soviet criminal justice system.¹⁰¹ The women of the CPR retained a distinctive voice, offering their own acerbic critique of the regime and its repressive measures, but also composing texts which situated abuses of power within a powerful framework not only of this world, but also of the next.

Protestant women offer something of a paradox, therefore. If we return to the *Bratskii vestnik* article of 1945, it might almost seem as if the roles open to women became more rather than less limited as time went on. Within many congregations, the relatively low educational level of many believers hindered theological discussion and no doubt

limited the number of women who felt empowered to preach if there were men willing and able to lead worship. And although the question of women's current position within the church was raised by a number of high-status figures, like Krainii (senior pastor), Motorina (widow of an AUCECB leader), and Dubrovskiaia (widow of a leading preacher), the issue was never addressed at an all-church level. Yet the repressive actions of the Soviet state led some mothers and wives to become politically active, particularly within CCECB (and Pentecostal) congregations. In their struggle, these Protestant women used techniques which had much in common with the dissident movement (including circulating *samizdat* both at home and abroad). Their texts remain something unique: they were a challenge to the secular state to act in a lawful manner, but they were also a form of Christian missionary work. In this manner, they contributed to the emerging *samizdat* tradition first and foremost as Christians and mothers, adding a distinctive voice to the mainstream discourse of dissent, without challenging the supportive roles women traditionally played within the church.

Notes

1. Young, *Power and the Sacred*, 127–128.
2. Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob'iednan' Ukrainy (hereafter TsDAHOU), f. 1, op. 24, d. 12, ll. 291–294.
3. Dobson, “Child Sacrifice.”
4. For the figure of 70–80% see, for example, TsDAHOU f. 1, op. 23, d. 4556, l. 115 (1947). A CARC report, also for 1947, contains the suggestion that female predominance could be as high as 80–90%: see Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) f. 17, op. 125, d. 506, l. 33. Reports from 1962 suggest this gender profile continued: in the city of Chernivtsy in Ukraine, for example, 69% of members were women, and in Moscow, 86%. See Derzhavnyi arkhiv Chernivets'koi oblasti f. 1, op. 22, d. 184, ll. 68–74; Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv g. Moskv (TsGAM) f. 3004, op. 1, d. 93, l. 32.
5. Mitrokhin, “The Russian Orthodox Church,” 335–336. See also Davis, *A Long Walk*, 198–199.
6. “Babushki tserkvi.”
7. Edel'shtein, *Zapiski*.
8. For an overview of the changing patterns of church attendance in Western Europe, see McLeod, *Religion and the People*, 28–35. On Britain, see Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 156–161.
9. Callum Brown writes: “Until 1800, masculinity lay at the core of representations of piety, whilst femininity lacked exemplars and was constructed as a religious problematic.” There was then a remarkable shift “around 1800,” with piety becoming seen as a female quality. See Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 58.
10. For a helpful introduction to the scholarship on the feminization of religiosity, see Ford, *Divided Houses*, 1–16. On women's preaching in early nineteenth-century Britain, Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*.
11. Woodhead, “Gendering Secularization Theory,” 190. See also Vincett, Sharma, and Aune, “Introduction.”
12. Coleman suggests that there were “roughly equal numbers of men and women in evangelical congregations” during the pre-Revolutionary period. Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, 38.
13. The figure of 43% is for the RSFSR and comes from Zhiromskaia, *Zhiznennyi potentsial*, 47.
14. Interview with V. (Moscow). Interview conducted by Miriam Dobson on 2 April 2012 as part of the project “Protestants behind the Iron Curtain: Religious Belief, Identity, and Narrative in Russia and Ukraine since 1945,” funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. (Interview reference AHRC AH/I025883/1/14).

15. For a typical example of a CARC report which identified the war as a time of religious resurgence, see Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii f. 6991, op. 3, d. 47, ll. 224–243 (7 July 1947). For later published works which stress the importance of the war, see Klivanov, *Religioznoe sektantstvo*; Mandrygin, *Vnutrennyi mir veruiushchego*.
16. Beliakova, "Iz istorii registratsii."
17. "O sluzhenii zhenshchin." It is curious that *Bratskii vestnik*, a publication which advised believers to act in accordance with Soviet law, encouraged charitable work as this was considered subversive by the authorities.
18. For fuller accounts of this history, see Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, 13–18; Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation*; Nikol'skaia, *Russkii protestantizm*; Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*; Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov*, Tom 1.
19. Prokhorov, *Russian Baptists and Orthodoxy*.
20. Nesyolov, "Evangelical Sectarianism in Russia."
21. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Orthodoxy*, 44–45.
22. Savin, "Repressii," 310; Savin, "Infernalnyi vrag"; Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov*, Tom 2, 123–131; Potapova, *Evangel'sko-baptistskoe dvizhenie*, 120–148.
23. Miner, *Stalin's Holy War*.
24. Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*; Vasil'eva, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*; Beglov, *V poiskakh "bezgreznykh katakomb"*; Odintsov, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*.
25. In 1945, for example, no ECB churches were closed, whilst 356 existing prayer buildings were registered and 25 new ones opened. GARF f. 6991, op 4, d. 194, l. 1.
26. See also RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 506, l. 40.
27. Nikol'skaia, "Avgustovskoe soglashenie."
28. In August 1945, leading Pentecostal figures also agreed to bring their congregations into the AUCECB fold; a second Pentecostal group, sometimes known as the *edinstvenniki* or *smorodintsy*, followed suit in 1947. Nikol'skaia, "Avgustovskoe soglashenie."
29. Nikol'skaia, *Russkii protestantizm*, 248–249.
30. *Ibid.*, 201–215; Nevolin, *Raskol evangel'sko-baptistskogo dvizheniia*.
31. Coleman, *Russian Baptists*.
32. Savin, "Repressii," 310.
33. Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov*, Tom 2, 46–47; Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, 154–155; Nikol'skaia, *Russkii protestantizm*, 75.
34. Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, 171.
35. Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov*, Tom 2, 106–108; Nikol'skaia, *Russkii protestantizm*, 73; Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, 168.
36. On Orthodoxy, see Beliakova and Beliakova, "Diskussii o pravovom statuse"; Beliakova and Beliakova, "Obsuzhdenie polozheniia zhenshchin."
37. Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, 172.
38. *Ibid.*, 173.
39. Archive of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (hereafter Archive of the RUECB) (2 August 1978).
40. Archive of the RUECB (20 November 1979).
41. TsDAHO f. 1, op. 24, d. 1572, ll. 233–237 (l. 233).
42. Interview with T. M. Nogotkova. Interview conducted by N. A. Beliakova on 27 April 2014. (Interview reference AHRC AH/1025883/1/29).
43. A report written by an AUCECB representative, 1959, Archive of the RUECB, Box 8, File 2, 1–4.
44. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tambovskoi oblasti f. 5220, op. 1, d. 311, l. 67.
45. Interview with T. M. Nogotkova. Interview conducted by N. A. Beliakova on 27 April 2014. (Interview reference AHRC AH/1025883/1/29); Interview with G. S. Mukin. Interview conducted by N. A. Beliakova on 27 April 2014. (Interview reference AHRC AH/1025883/1/28).
46. Archive of the RUECB, Box 2, File 4 (29 March 1973).
47. Interview with T. M. Nogotkova. Interview conducted by N. A. Beliakova on 27 April 2014. (Interview reference AHRC AH/1025883/1/29).

48. Interview with L. (Kyiv). Interview conducted by Miriam Dobson on 6 June 2013. (Interview reference AHRC AH/I025883/1/15).
49. The main argument for women acting as a support to pastors rather than being ordained themselves remains the absence of such examples in the Bible; scripture is instead used to encourage women to fulfil primarily supportive roles. For a discussion of women's supportive role in the ECB church, see "Zhenskoe sluzhenie na osnove Biblii." On the way the Russian Orthodox Church has treated the challenge of feminism since perestroika, see Kizenko, "The Feminization of Patriarchy?"; Beliakova, Beliakova, and Emchenko, *Zhenshchina v pravoslavii*, 469–506.
50. Pastor N. V. Kuz'menko, himself a Pentecostal but wedded to the notion of unity, spoke of these issues when AUCECB and Pentecostal representatives met in January 1957. See Mitskevich, *Istoriia evangeľskikh khrisitan-baptistov*, 313–314.
51. Nikol'skaia, "Avgustovskoe soglashenie," 129.
52. Glushaev, "Protestantskie obshchiny."
53. GARF f. 6991, op. 4, d. 94, l. 70.
54. "Plenum vsesoiuznogo soveta."
55. Archive of the RUECB, box 8, file 9, document 7. Names in this section have been changed.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Archive of the RUECB, box 8, file 9, document 9.
59. Archive of the RUECB, box 8, file 9, document 8.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. "Kogda riadom chutkie liudi," *Izvestiia*, May 16, 1973: 6. Other pieces made less explicit reference to children appearing "one after another" within Protestant families: "Neinteresnyi paren'." *Izvestiia*, 20 October 1970: 4.
63. Kelly, *Children's World*, 396.
64. Nakachi, "Population, Politics and Reproduction."
65. GARF f. 6991, op. 6, d. 1192, ll. 21–22. On this case, see also Kondrashina, "Uchastie zhenshchin."
66. Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vldy ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TsDAVO) f. 4648, op. 7, d. 311, l. 145.
67. TsDAVO f. 4648, op. 7, d. 200, l. 124.
68. Panych, "Children and Childhood," 172.
69. This description of parents' "offences" is taken from a 1962 case heard in the city of Smolensk. See the Archive of the RUECB, box 5, file 7.
70. See, for example, GARF f. 6991, op. 6, d. 472, ll. 73–74; GARF f. 6991, op. 6, d. 173, ll. 28–29.
71. TsGAM f. 3004, op. 1, d. 93, l. 38.
72. Interview with L. M. Timchenko. Interview conducted by N. A. Beliakova on 23 April 2013. (Interview reference AHRC AH/I025883/1/12).
73. GARF f. 6991, op. 6, d. 472, l. 73.
74. A report on the letter was submitted by the Kursk plenipotentiary for the Council for Religious Affairs, the successor to CARC. GARF f. 6991, op. 6, d. 13, ll. 302–305.
75. Boiter and Dornan, *Sobranie dokumentov samizdata*, vol. 4, AS 256.
76. GARF f. 6991, op. 6, d. 1121, ll. 41–44.
77. GARF f. 6991, op. 6, d. 13, ll. 302–305.
78. Derzhavnyi arkhiv m. Kyiva f. 1525, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 116–118.
79. The claim that within the mainstream dissident movement signatures were added to "open letters" without permission is made in some post-Soviet memoirs; see Nathans, "Talking Fish," 613–614.
80. See, for example, a number of the letters addressed to both the Soviet authorities and international bodies dating from the late 1970s and 1980s: The History of Dissent in the USSR Archive of the "Memorial" International Organization, f. 101, op. 2, d. 16.

81. TsGAM f. 3004, op. 1, d. 107, l. 283.
82. Looking back on the history of the CPR, a 2001 article in the CCECB journal *Vestnik istiny* notes: "the CPR came into existence because of the Orgkomitet ministers' fervent desire to put [...] the ministry of holy devotion on a healthy evangelical footing." (The *orgkomitet* was the successor to the "initiative group" formed in 1961 and forerunner to the CCECB, established in 1965.) "Sovet rodstvennikov uznikov" (2001).
83. GARF f. 6991, op. 6, d. 3127, ll. 1–10. For full biographical information (which in the case of Kozorezova differs slightly from the GARF report), see "Sovet rodstvennikov uznikov." *Fond podderzhki gonimyykh khristian Rossii i stran SNG*.
84. Interview with G. (Kyiv). Interview conducted by Miriam Dobson on June 6, 2013. (Interview reference AHRC AH/I025883/1/17).
85. The geographical spread of the CPR changed over the years as its membership evolved and as existing participants changed address. Biographical information, including place of residence, about the women is provided in GARF f. 6991, op. 6, d. 3127, ll. 1–10, in the CPR documents themselves, and in commemorative pieces published in *Vestnik istiny*: "Sovet rodstvennikov uznikov" (2001) and Germaniuk, "Ty byl ubezhishchem."
86. "Sovet rodstvennikov uznikov" (2009).
87. Boiter and Dornan, *Sobranie dokumentov samizdata*, vol. 14, AS778, 3.
88. Nathans, "The Dictatorship of Reason."
89. Boiter and Dornan, *Sobranie dokumentov samizdata*, vol. 14, AS515.
90. Ibid.
91. Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 134; Horvarth, "Breaking the Totalitarian Ice," 149.
92. Komaromi, "Samizdat."
93. Interview with M. T. Shaptala.
94. Ibid.
95. Archive of the RUECB, box 2, file 23, 15–18.
96. "Biulleten' soveta rodstvennikov uznikov."
97. Boiter and Dornan, *Sobranie dokumentov samizdata*, vol. 14, AS441.
98. GARF f. 6991, op. 6, d. 1998, ll. 171–172.
99. Chaves, *Ordaining Women*.
100. Prokhorov, *Russian Baptists and Orthodoxy*.
101. The appearance of the first independent feminist movement is usually associated with the first publication of the journal *Women and Russia* in 1979. Women were, of course, involved in other human rights groups. See Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*. Nadieszda Kizenko notes that whilst feminists existed within the dissident movement there was much greater focus on political freedoms. Kizenko, "The Feminization of Patriarchy?"

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Notes on contributors

Nadezhda Beliakova holds an MA and a PhD from the Faculty of History, Moscow State Lomonosov University. Since 2010 she has worked at the Centre for Religion and Church Studies at the Institute of World History (Russian Academy of Science) as a Scientific Researcher, then Senior Scientific Researcher. She is interested in the everyday life of religious communities in the late USSR. In 2011 she co-authored a book (together with E. V. Beliakova and E. B. Emchenko), *Zhenshchina v pravoslavii: Tserkovnoe pravo i rossiiskaia praktika* (Woman in Orthodoxy: Church Law and Russian Practice).

Miriam Dobson holds a BA from the University of Cambridge and an MA and PhD from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London. Since 2004 she has worked at the University of Sheffield, first as a Lecturer, then Senior Lecturer. In 2009 she published her monograph *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* with Cornell University Press, and has since co-authored a document collection on the experiences of Evangelical Christian-Baptist women in the USSR with Nadezhda Beliakova.

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