8. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, THE RELIGIOUS MARKET, AND SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN RUSSIA AFTER 1997

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In 1990, in an effort to conform to global standards of human rights, both the USSR and the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) promulgated new laws on religious freedom that provided broad liberties for religious expression and proselytization.[1] But by 1997, alarmed by a large influx of foreign missionaries and the rise of new religious movements, the Russian Duma passed a more restrictive law designed to favor the "traditional" religions of the peoples of Russia, which were enumerated in the law's preamble as Orthodox Christianity, Christianity in general, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and "other religions."[2] Domestic and foreign critics predicted that the new law would result in a significant diminution of religious freedom, and although their worst fears were not realized, the legislation drastically transformed the Russian religious marketplace.

By identifying and favoring certain religious organizations as "traditional," the Russian state tried to choose the winners in the religious economy—just as it had chosen the winners in its privatization program, which sold public assets at favorable rates to well-connected and politically reliable "oligarchs."[3] The 1997 law likewise sought to leave religion in the dependable hands of well-connected institutions whose interests would be securely tied to the Russian homeland. Yet even as the new law created a highly regulated religious market, dedicated spiritual entrepreneurs from minority faiths nonetheless found and successfully exploited opportunities to build their religious institutions.[4] In doing so, they have had to contend with related laws—on land use (2001), nongovernmental and noncommercial organizations (2006), counterterrorism (2006), foreign finance (2012), and education (2012)—that have also tended to favor Russia's "traditional" religions. In July 2016 the Russian government further restricted religious liberty by adopting the "Iarovaia" counterterrorism laws (named for the conservative parliamentary deputy, Irina Iarovaia, who sponsored them), which severely limited missionary activity, especially for unregistered groups. A state campaign in 2016 and 2017 to ban the Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist organization illustrated the increasingly narrow vision of religious freedom held by Russian policymakers.[5]

The four groups examined in this essay—two Buddhist denominations, the growing Presbyterian movement, and a new religion called the Ortho-

dox Church of the Sovereign Mother of God (OCSMG)—illustrate the entrepreneurial strategies that minority religions have used to survive in Russia's spiritual marketplace. These four religious communities each sought, more or less successfully, to adapt to the conditions set out by the 1997 law, which, first of all, promoted the traditional religions of Russia, including both the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church (Table 1) and the traditional faiths of ethnic minorities, such as the Buddhism of the Buriats and Kalmyks. The law (and subsequent registration procedures) also discouraged "foreign" faiths; only Russian citizens can form religious associations, which must submit annual financial reports to the Ministry of Justice detailing all funds received from abroad. Finally, the law sought to decrease the influence of new, nontraditional religious movements, which Orthodox heresiologists often denigrated as "totalitarian destructive cults"—a term borrowed from the anticult movement in Western Europe and North America.[6]

In response to this new legal framework, minority religions portrayed themselves as "traditional," emphasized their ties to the Russian homeland, and downplayed innovations in doctrine or organization. Presbyterian churches that had been established by South Korean missionaries, for example, published histories of Reformed Christianity in Russia, sought alliances with more established Protestant groups, championed traditional heterosexual marriage, condemned homosexuality, and issued patriotic proclamations on national holidays. Likewise, the Westernized Karma Kagyu Buddhist movement, led by the Danish lama Ole Nydahl, secured support from ethnic Kalmyk politicians and scholars who officially declared it to be a traditional faith of the Kalmyk people. In 1997 the dominant Soviet-era Buddhist denomination, the Central Buddhist Spiritual Directorate, adopted a new name that emphasized its traditional character—the Buddhist Traditional Sangha of Russia—and engaged in a vigorous campaign of recovering autochthonous relics and restoring holy places on Russian territory. Even the Orthodox Church of the Sovereign Mother of God, a new religious movement led by a Marian seer who published a series of novel revelations, increasingly styled itself as "traditional" in the wake of the 1997 law. The new legislation certainly reshaped Russia's spiritual marketplace, but the leaders of minority religions adapted to its requirements as best they could—by presenting their movements as traditional, patriotic, and tied to the motherland.

From "Confessional State" to Official Atheism and Back

The 1997 law moved the Russian Federation closer toward its prerevolutionary heritage as a "confessional state" (to use Robert Crews's helpful

Table 1: Registered Religious Organizations of the Russian Orthodox Church--Moscow Patriarchate in the Russian Federation, 1991–2014

Year (as of 1 Jan.)	Centers or Centralized Religious Organizations	Local Religious Organizations	Educational institutions	Monasteries	Other institutions*	Total ROC-MP
1991	-	-	-	-	-	3451
1992	-	-	-	-	-	2880
1993	-	-	-	-	-	4566
1994	-	-	-	-	-	5559
1995	-	-	-	-	-	6414
1996	68	6709	31	264	123	7195
1997	74	7440	38	309	141	8002
1998	77	8061	38	329	148	8653
1999	77	8278	42	335	147	8897
2000	78	8556	43	374	147	9236
2001	78	10188	46	374	226	10912
2002	72	10395	41	378	79	10965
2003	89	10586	47	499	78	11299
2004	82	10767	49	354	237	11525
2005	83	11072	49	366	267	11837
2006	84	11464	50	391	225	12214
2007	85	11726	52	398	238	12499
2008	83	11807	51	404	241	12586
2009	7	11957	34	389	48	12435
2010	78	12158	57	424	224	12941
2011	79	12471	59	429	229	13265
2012	100	13119	59	429	236	13943
2013	127	13628	58	440	269	14522
2014	152	14206	58	453	327	15196

All registered religious organizations	ROC-MP organizatons as a percentage of all registered religious organizations	Source
5502	62.72	A.P. Torshin et al., Istoriia gosudarstvennoi politiki SSSR i Rossii v otnoshenii religioznykh organizatsii (Moscow: OLMA Media Grupp, 2010), 89.
4846	59.43	Torshin et al., Istoriia, 89, 129.
8612	53.02	Torshin et al., Istoriia, 89, 129.
11088	50.14	Torshin et al., Istoriia, 89, 129.
11532	55.62	Torshin et al., Istoriia, 129.
13073	55.04	Sotsial'naia sfera Rossii, No. 1, 1996, p. 194.
14688	54.48	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 1997 p. 314.
16017	54.02	Rossiia v tsifrakh, 1998 p. 17-18.
16749	53.12	Rossiia v tsifrakh, 1999, p. 35
17427	53.00	Rossiia v tsifrakh 2000, Table 2.6, p. 49
20215	53.98	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 2001, Table 12.3, p. 365-66
20441	53.64	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 2002, Table 12.3, p. 365
21450	52.68	Rossiia v tsifrakh 2003, table 2.7, p. 49
21664	53.20	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 2004, Table 12.3, p. 418
22144	53.45	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 2005, Table 12.3, p. 411
22513	54.25	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 2006, Table 12.3, p. 309
22956	54.45	Rossiia v tsifrakh 2007, Table 2.7, p. 61
22866	55.04	Rossiia v tsifrakh 2008, Table 2.8, p. 65
22507	55.25	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 2009, Table 12.3, p. 401
23494	55.08	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 2010, Table 12.3, p. 400.
23848	55.62	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 2011
24624	56.62	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 2012, Table 12.5, p. 248
25541	56.86	Sotsial'noe polozhenie i uroven' zhizni naseleniia Rossii 2013,
26442	57.47	Rossiia v tsifrakh 2014, Table 2.7, p. 67

expression).[7] The law helped articulate a hierarchy of religions similar to the prerevolutionary order that was developed over the course of the nineteenth century. As revised in 1857 and in subsequent editions, the Code of Laws included rules governing the recognized "foreign faiths" of the empire, which were administered by the Department of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions.[8] In the legal hierarchy of faiths embedded in the code Orthodox Christianity, the "predominant and ruling" religion of the state, stood at the summit of the list of legally recognized confessions.[9] Just below Orthodox Christianity stood the recognized heterodox Christian confessions (known in Russian as *inoslavie*), including Roman Catholicism, Protestantism (most notably the Evangelical Lutheran Church), and the Armenian Gregorian Church. Below Christianity stood *inoverie*, the recognized non-Christian religions of Judaism (in both its rabbinic and Karaite forms), Islam, Lamaism (i.e., Tibetan Buddhism), and "paganism," the traditional religions practiced by certain ethnic groups, especially in Siberia and the Volga-Kama region. Recognizing the contribution that established religious communities could make (especially in regulating marriage, promoting morality, and educating the faithful), the prerevolutionary Russian state became a patron of the recognized religious faiths and shaped their ecclesiastical organizations to fulfill civic roles. Heresies, schisms, and sects in all traditions stood outside this carefully constructed hierarchy and threatened it; they were categorized according to the political harm that they represented and prosecuted accordingly.[10] After the 1905 revolution Russian reformers like Petr Stolypin (1862–1911) tried to extend the legal hierarchy and to incorporate the Old Believers and some sectarian groups within it, but the basic hierarchical scheme, with its guarantee of Orthodox Christian supremacy, remained intact until 1917.[11]

The 1917 Bolshevik revolution created the first officially atheistic state in history, and the new communist regime quickly separated church from state. Initially the new rulers of Russia engaged in antireligious policies that targeted primarily the Russian Orthodox Church, the favored religion of the old regime. Although Soviet authorities allowed Buddhist, Muslims, Baptists, and Spiritual Christians to hold national councils and conferences in the 1920s, the Russian Orthodox Church was granted such permission only in 1943. By 1929, however, the Bolshevik regime initiated a particularly brutal campaign against all religious belief and institutions. In April of that year the Central Executive Committee adopted a harsh law on religious associations that sharply limited the scope of their licit activities. The new law, which remained in effect until 1990, required religious organizations to register with the local state organs, while at the same time it made such

registration more difficult. In the decade that followed adoption of the new legislation, the government destroyed or nationalized tens of thousands of churches, monasteries, mosques, temples, synagogues, and chapels. Of the 39,530 Orthodox churches that were open in 1917 within the 1936 territorial boundaries of the USSR, only 950 were still functioning in 1940. The continuous workweek, introduced in the fall of 1929, directly challenged the religious significance of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (the holy days of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, respectively); the new calendar made every day of the week an ordinary workday for most citizens. On 15 May 1932 the Soviet government initiated the "godless" five-year plan, which aimed to eliminate religion altogether by 1937. The plan failed, for in the 1937 census 56 percent of the Soviet population identified themselves as believers. Iosif Stalin, the general secretary of the Communist Party and the effective dictator of the USSR, suppressed these disappointing results and had many of the census workers arrested and executed.[12]

Soviet antireligious policy extracted a terrible human cost. In the five years from 1937 to 1941 alone, approximately 175,800 Orthodox clergy were arrested, of whom 110,700 were executed.[13] Other denominations also suffered. In 1930 Petr Smidovich, a member of the All-Union Central Executive Committee, reported that ten thousand out of twelve thousand mosques had been closed and at least 90 percent of mullahs and muezzins had no means of conducting religious services.[14] Between 1932 and 1935 the number of Buddhist clergy in the Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) dropped from 7,619 to 1,200, and by 1940 not a single legal religious institution existed in the entire republic.[15]

The most brutal phase of the Soviet antireligious campaign ended only with the German invasion of 1941. Unlike Stalin, who made no public statement for ten days after the offensive began on 22 June, Metropolitan Sergii (Ivan Stragorodskii, 1867–1944), the acting patriarch (and one of the four Russian Orthodox bishops still at liberty), immediately issued a call to resist the invaders.[16] In an effort to unite and mobilize all Soviet citizens against the enemy, Stalin allowed limited legal religious expression by creating a handful of centralized, hierarchical religious boards that the state could monitor closely. In the eighteenth century Catherine the Great had created similar centralized directorates for fractious religious minorities, including Muslims and Buddhists; Stalin drew on this historical experience to exercise more effective control over religion. Two new central government agencies became responsible for implementing religious policy: the Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs (1943) and the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (1944). In 1943 the Russian Orthodox Church was finally

permitted to convene a council and elect a patriarch. At the same time, the government allowed Muslims to open a spiritual directorate in Ufa. In 1944 Protestants formed the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (AUCECB). A Buddhist spiritual directorate opened in 1946, as did the All-Union Council of Seventh-Day Adventists.

Under the new paradigm of church-state relations, which lasted until the late 1980s, religion was permitted very limited public expression. Registration of individual congregations and parishes remained difficult, and large areas of the USSR had no legal religious communities. Nevertheless, certain favored religions were allowed to have their own spiritual administrations, educational institutions, and publications. Religious leaders, who were carefully vetted by the state, served as Soviet diplomats, attending international peace conferences and actively espousing the government's positions on a range of foreign policy issues. The new modus vivendi did not end religious persecution, however, and Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet premier from 1958 to 1964, launched a major antireligious campaign. Under these difficult conditions much religious activity was driven underground, and believers who sought greater religious freedom joined together to resist Soviet antireligious restrictions and censorship. The Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian-Baptists, the True and Free Seventh-Day Adventists, and various groups of Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, and Buddhist and other believers rejected the Soviet laws on religion and were pursued and prosecuted for their principled stand.[17]

Only in the late 1980s under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, general secretary of the Communist Party from 1985 to 1991, did the state end its hostility to religion. As part of his effort to restructure and democratize the Soviet system, Gorbachev helped end the ideological monopoly of the Communist Party and invited greater religious liberty. In 1990 the Soviet and the Russian legislatures adopted laws that abolished the restrictive Stalinist registration requirements of 1929 and allowed believers wide freedom to worship and propagate their convictions. After the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, the Russian Federation adopted a strictly secular constitution in 1993 that guaranteed the equality of all religions before the law.[18]

Anxiety over foreign missionaries and new religious movements, however, led to calls for greater regulation of the religious marketplace. The 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations, while claiming to be true to Russia's constitution, suggested that the state should reestablish a hierarchy among religious communities. In its preamble, which recognized "the special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia's spirituality and culture"

and offered "respect" for "Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and other religions that constitute an inseparable part of the historical heritage of Russia's peoples."[19] While Orthodox Christianity was singled out for its unique contribution to Russian culture, other religions owed their special legal recognition to their relationship with one or more of the ethnic groups within Russia. By this criterion Islam, which is an "inseparable part of the historical heritage" of approximately fourteen million people who belong to traditionally Muslim ethnic groups, has a much more important ranking in the new legal hierarchy than it did in the old imperial system. Protestant and Catholic Christianity, in contrast, are the traditional religions of much smaller ethnic minorities, and so are correspondingly less significant—and on a much lower rank than they were in the prerevolutionary period.

Subsequent interpretations of the law have affirmed the "traditional" status of the four religious traditions that are specifically named in the preamble: Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. In December 2007, when an interviewer from *Time* magazine pointed out that Russia is a secular state, President Vladimir Putin interrupted: "No, no, that's not true. In our law it is written that we have four traditional religions, four. Our American partners criticize us for this, but that's what our legislators have decided. These four traditional Russian religions are Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism."[20] Remarkably, Putin not only ignored the precise words of the law's preamble, which clearly states that the traditional religions of Russia include non-Orthodox Christianity as well as other religions that have contributed to the history and culture of the peoples of Russia, he also denied article 14 of the Russian constitution, which unambiguously declares Russia to be a secular state. At the highest levels of government the idea that Russia's "traditional" religions should be afforded special treatment and that their number is limited to those four specifically named in the preface to the 1997 law has clearly taken hold.

Putin's discourse reflects a long-standing Russian view that religious freedom is a collective rather than an individual right. If religion is largely understood as beliefs or doctrines that are held by individuals, religious freedom is consequently an individual right; each person has the power to decide what he or she will believe. The Russian 1997 law, in contrast, emphasizes the function of religion rather than its content. Like the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who posited that religions create moral communities, the 1997 law values religions because of what they contribute to ethnic cultures.[21] Such an approach naturally raises the historiographical stakes for competing religious communities, which must demonstrate their historical contribution to the peoples of Russia. Would-be spiritual leaders

compete to represent the legitimate tradition of their ethnic and religious communities.

This new legal hierarchy of religions was put into practice through a process of registration overseen by local branches of the Ministry of Justice. The law divided religious organizations into three categories: (1) unregistered "religious groups" that had no rights of juridical personhood but might seek registration; (2) registered "local religious organizations," consisting of at least ten adults; and (3) "centralized religious organizations" that included at least three "local religious organizations" as members. To enjoy the full benefits of juridical personhood, registered individual congregations had either to have existed legally for at least fifteen years or to belong to a national centralized religious organization that had similar tenure. Many of the new churches that had been founded in the 1990s naturally had difficulty meeting such a requirement, but without registration a church could not purchase real estate, rent a building, or publish religious literature. The fifteen-year rule clearly favored those few religious denominations and congregations that had had a legal existence in 1982 under the officially atheist Soviet regime: the Russian Orthodox Church, the two Muslim muftiates of Ufa and Makhachkala, the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Central Buddhist Spiritual Directorate in Ulan-Ude, and a handful of independently registered religious communities. After nearly two decades of controversy over this requirement, the Russian parliament abolished the fifteen-year rule only in July 2015.[22]

Two Buddhist Paths: The Traditional Sangha and the Diamond Way

Buddhism illustrates some of the difficulties facing policymakers who want to support "traditional" religions. A minority with no more than about five hundred thousand adherents, Russian Buddhism is also quite diverse, including many rival schools. The two most successful Buddhist religious organizations have followed distinct strategies to ensure their share of the religious market. The Buddhist Traditional Sangha of Russia (BTSR), the successor to the Soviet-era Central Spiritual Directorate of Buddhists, has sought to monopolize its position as the traditional confession of the Buriat people with autochthonous relics that solidly link it to the Russian soil. Sticking strictly to the Gelug "Yellow Hat" school of Tibetan Buddhism, the Pandito Khambo Lama Damba Aiusheev has used his position to promote Buriat language and culture, to build Buddhist monasteries, to speak for Buddhists in Russian state councils, and to control the most important Buddhist theological institutions in Russia. By contrast, the Russian Association of Buddhists of the Diamond Way Karma Kagyu Tradition, founded by

the Danish lama Ole Nydahl, pursued a different strategy to gain acceptance for its Westernized version of Tibetan Buddhism. Despite its foreign origins, the association has established seventy-nine meditation centers across the Russian Federation, of which at least fifty are registered.[23] Rather than building monasteries only in traditionally Buddhist regions, Nydahl and his Russian followers have opened meditation centers designed to attract lay people in many of Russia's major cities.[24]

Like many other religious minorities (including Jews, Catholics, and Muslims), Buddhists became part of the Russian Empire as it expanded. In the seventeenth century Tibetan Buddhist lamas had established a foothold among the nomadic Kalmyks, the Tuvans, and the Buriats. As Russia expanded into Siberia, its rulers sought to co-opt the Buddhist clergy. In 1741 Empress Elizabeth officially declared Buddhism a permitted religion and registered 150 lamas.[25] Similarly, Catherine II created an official Buddhist religious establishment, including the office of Pandito Khambo Lama, twenty-three years later. By the end of the old regime a Buriat diaspora had spread as far as the capital of St. Petersburg, where in 1915 a new temple was consecrated.[26]

In its revolutionary zeal to create a godless society, the Soviet government launched an anti-Buddhist campaign in 1925, and by 1939 all the Buddhist monasteries had been closed. Soviet propagandists portrayed Buddhism not only as a backward and oppressive religion but as a front for pro-Japanese forces.[27] In 1945–1946, as part of a broader rapprochement with religion, the Soviet state once again legalized Buddhism, allowed two monasteries to open, and created an official Central Spiritual Directorate of Buddhists to oversee and train Buddhist temples and lamas and to represent the USSR to the Buddhist world abroad.[28]

In the post-Soviet period the Central Directorate of Buddhists, like the other official Soviet religious organizations, faced internal schism, as it suddenly lost its legal monopoly over Buddhist institutions. After the death of the widely respected head of the directorate, Pandito Khambo Lama Munko Tsybikov (1909–1992), who had spent many years in Stalinist prison camps for his faith, several ambitious lamas struggled to succeed him; three years later, the young and vigorous Damba (Vasilii) Aiusheev (b. 1962) was elected. He instituted a series of reforms designed to centralize authority in the directorate, which was renamed and adopted a new charter. Since 1995 Aiusheev has been reelected several times and is fully in control of the BTSR, which unites thirty-four registered monasteries (*datsans*) under its aegis.[29]

Aiusheev has achieved this success by vigorous institution building, focused on opening or reopening datsans and training cadres to run them.

He has also, in contrast to his rivals, Danzan-Khaibzun (Fedor) Samaev (1954–2005), Nimazhap Iliukhinov, and Choi-Dorje Budaev (who have each founded competing Buddhist centralized religious organizations), positioned himself as the leader of *traditional Buriat* Buddhism in *Russia*.[30] He dismisses all forms of Buddhism other than the Gelug "Yellow Hat" school of Tibetan Buddhism as nontraditional; he promotes the use of the Buriat language (rather than Russian or Tibetan); and he emphasizes the autochthonous nature of Buriat Buddhism—most notably expressed in the veneration of the uncorrupted body of the twelfth Pandito Khambo Lama Dashi-Dorzho Itigelov (1852–1927).

During Putin's first year in office as president, Aiusheev stressed the lack of international help that distinguished his movement from all others: "We place special hope in Putin, because the president's personality has an enormous role in Russia. We always place our hope only in Russia. We do not receive any help from abroad. At the same time, Russian-speaking Buddhists [non-Lamaists—notes the newspaper reporter] receive a lot of international aid."[31]

Aiusheev also sharply distinguishes traditional Buddhism from its rivals:

> There is in fact no exchange of views or experience between the traditional Buddhists of Russia and the representatives of new Buddhist movements. This is because the new Buddhist movements, such as Zen Buddhism, are not sufficiently open for dialogue. Many of them have not yet reached knowledge of the essence of Buddhism. Preachers who come from abroad, as a rule, return back home after a month. They leave behind disciples and followers who in fact are not familiar with Buddhist practice and do not constitute a serious force for the spread of Buddhism in Russia. Therefore, we do not conduct a serious dialogue with the representatives of these movements.[32]

As the leader of a traditional confession, Aiusheev considers the leaders of the other recognized confessions as "brothers in the spiritual service of Russian citizens." Together, they face the common task of "opposing new totalitarian cults of any type."[33]

Aiusheev's devotion to a form of Buddhism that is traditional and directly connected to the Russian land is perhaps best expressed in the veneration of the body of Dashi-Dorzho Itigelov. In 1927 Itigelov called his disciples together and began to chant his own funeral service. By the end of the service he had died while seated in a position of meditation. His uncorrupted body was exhumed in 2002 and now is regularly brought out in religious

FIGURE 8.1. The Moscow office of the representative of the Buddhist Traditional Sangha of Russia (located in the Vsevolozhskii mansion, ul. Ostozhenko 49). Photograph © J. Eugene Clay.

processions several times a year. Housed in a special temple in Ivolginskii Datsan, the headquarters of the BTSR, the body attracts many pilgrims and curiosity seekers from across Russia.[34]

Aiusheev has succeeded in maintaining a monopoly on the official representation of Buddhism in state structures. Since its creation by Russian President Boris Yeltsin in 1995, Aiusheev has served continuously on the presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations.[35] Likewise, he has continuously served as the sole Buddhist representative on the Interreligious Council of Russia (a body chaired by the patriarch of Moscow that includes the leaders of the "traditional" confessions of Russia), founded in 1998.[36] President Putin chose Aiusheev to serve on the first and second convocations of the Civic Chamber, the consultative body created in 2005 to represent civil society. Later convocations have always included a delegate from the BTSR, as of 2017 Sanzhai Lama Andrei Bal'zhirov (b. 1968), the permanent representative of the BTSR in Moscow.[37] The BTSR also controls the two registered Buddhist institutions for theological education in Russia: the Dashi Choinkhorlin Buddhist University named for Damba Darzha Zaiev (the first Pandito Khambo Lama) and the Aginsk Buddhist

Academy. The BTSR has also successfully pursued state funding for many of its projects.

By contrast, the Westernized Tibetan Buddhism of the Russian Association of Buddhists of the Diamond Way Karma Kagyu Tradition has remained on the fringes of the religious establishment. It has no representation in the Civic Chamber or the other expert councils that advise the president and legislature on religious matters. The association's Buddhist university, a branch of the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute, which opened with great fanfare in 1995 in Elista, the capital of the Kalmyk Republic, is no longer functioning.[38] Russian officials sometimes regarded the association with disdain; for example, a 1998 handbook on religion published by the Russian Academy of State Service dismissed Karma Kagyu as "one of the pseudo-Oriental, neo-Buddhist organizations that has appeared in Russia in recent years."[39] Nevertheless, by refusing to limit itself to the relatively small ethnic minorities that traditionally practiced Buddhism, by cultivating important political patrons, by exploiting its global network, and by persistently promoting the Karma Kagyu school, the association has established nearly eighty centers across Russia.[40]

The association's success owes much to its Danish leader, Ole Nydahl, who undertakes an annual lecture tour of Russia every winter. Converted to the Karma Kagyu school (one of four traditional sects of Tibetan Buddhism) during trips to South Asia in the late 1960s, Nydahl gave up illegal drugs to spread the Buddhist message to the West. In 1972 the sixteenth Karmapa (spiritual leader of the Karma Kagyu lineage) Rangjung Rigpe Dorje (1924–1981) sent Nydahl back to Denmark to promote Buddhism to a modern, Western lay audience. In a sharp break with traditional Tibetan practice, which requires years of asceticism and study to master Buddhist philosophy, Nydahl and his wife, Hannah, began to organize dharma and meditation centers designed for the laity who remained fully engaged in the world. Far from practicing celibacy, Nydahl enthusiastically embraced sexuality; in the 1970s and 1980s he was openly promiscuous, sleeping with many of his female students—a practice that he curtailed only with the AIDS crisis. At the same time, he remained happily married to Hannah until her death in 2007, even as he took another disciple, Cathrin (Caty) Hartung, as a lover from 1990 to 2004.[41] Needless to say, Nydahl makes no claim to being a monk but does brandish his credentials as a lama, or Buddhist teacher; nevertheless, Russian journalists are often shocked by his apparent hedonism.[42]

In 1989 Nydahl first visited Russia and gave lectures in Leningrad and Moscow, where he opened his talk by sharing a bottle of Armenian cognac

with the small crowd that had come to hear him.[43] In the early 1990s Nydahl regularly returned to Russia and helped organize meditation centers in fifty major cities across the Federation.[44] He integrated these new centers with his international network of some 650 Diamond Way centers, and in 1993 his followers formally registered the International Association of Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu School, which included centers in Ukraine as well as Russia.[45] During these early years he cultivated important contacts with the eccentric and authoritarian president of the Republic of Kalmykia, Kirsan Iliumzhinov (b. 1962), who believed that his government had a significant role to play in the religious revival and provided significant resources to construct Orthodox and Catholic churches, Protestant prayer houses, and Buddhist temples. Soviet repression of religion had been especially brutal in Kalmykia. In 1931 Soviet authorities arrested the Shajin Lama (the chief Kalmyk Buddhist cleric) Luvsan-Sharap Tepkin (1875–1948).[46] Within ten years all Buddhist institutions (which had numbered over one hundred before the revolution) had been closed, and in December 1943 the Council of People's Commissars dissolved the Kalmyk ASSR and deported all Kalmyks to Siberia. They were allowed to return to their homeland only in 1957.[47] For the next three decades Buddhism remained an underground religion; only in 1988 was a Buddhist community permitted to register legally. To help restore religion to the republic, in 1993 President Iliumzhinov created a Department of Religious Affairs, co-chaired by the chief Buddhist and Orthodox clerics of the republic.[48] Iliumzhinov was sympathetic to Nydahl's Karma Kagyu movement, and Nydahl in turn helped raise funds for the many Buddhist construction projects that the president undertook. In 1995 Nydahl opened a branch of the Karmapa International Buddhist Institute in Elista, and his international network provided substantial financial support for the Stupa of Enlightenment (completed in 1999) and the vast temple complex "the Golden Home of the Buddha Shakyamuni," which opened in 2005.[49]

After the passage of the 1997 law Ole Nydahl's organization seemed to be particularly vulnerable. As a foreign charismatic spiritual teacher with unusual sexual practices who demanded and received his followers' loyalty, Nydahl appeared to be a perfect target for the new law. Indeed, Orthodox Christians, politicians, and local journalists often attacked Diamond Way Buddhism as a destructive cult.[50] Nevertheless, Nydahl and his movement enjoy several significant advantages that aid the growth of the Diamond Way. First, because he promotes Buddhism, Nydahl can legitimately claim to represent a traditional Russian religion; official Russian statistics do not distinguish among different Buddhist sects but lump them all together (Ta-

ble 2). Second, he has bolstered this claim through the support of President Iliumzhinov, whose government quickly provided attestations of the traditional character of the Diamond Way. Third, Nydahl's sympathizers include members of Russia's academic elite, who have skillfully defended the Karma Kagyu movement against its detractors. For example, the physicist Aleksandr Koibagarov (b. 1953), who serves as the president of the Russian Association of Buddhists of the Diamond Way Karma Kagyu Tradition, has proved to be an articulate spokesman for Buddhism.[51] The association has also claimed the valuable Internet address buddhism.ru and propagates its teacher's lectures via a YouTube channel. Fourth, Nydahl's seemingly inexhaustible energy has also played in the success of his movement—he crisscrosses the Russian Federation every year, delivering lectures, and several of his books have become Russian bestsellers.[52] Fifth, since the two religious leaders officially met in 2009, Nydahl has achieved a modus vivendi with the most important Russian Buddhist leader, Pandito Khambo Lama Aiusheev, who clearly does not regard him as a threat; Nydahl's target audience is not primarily the Buriat ethnos.[53] Finally, as a representative of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, Nydahl provides an alternative to the Gelug school led by the Dalai Lama, who has not been granted a Russian visa since 2004. Wary of antagonizing the People's Republic of China, which regards the Dalai Lama as a dangerous separatist, the Russian Federation officials may welcome a version of Tibetan Buddhism that follows a different leader.[54]

Nydahl's success may yet prove to be ephemeral. He is aging, and his strong supporter Iliumzhinov is no longer president of Kalmykia. From 2014 to 2017 the number of Diamond Way meditation centers listed on buddhism.ru dropped from eighty-seven to seventy-four. Nevertheless, Nydahl has clearly succeeded, in spite of all the apparent obstacles created by the 1997 law, in laying a foundation for an impressive network of registered and unregistered religious organizations that stretches from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok. His activity and the success of his organization show the possibilities for religious innovation and development that exist despite the restrictive dimensions of the 1997 law.

The Presbyterians

While Aiusheev and Nydahl both successfully claimed to promote the traditional Russian religion of Buddhism—despite their radically different approaches—Presbyterians faced a greater challenge to their legitimacy. Even so, Presbyterian missionaries in post-Soviet Russia (many of whom are ethnic Koreans) have made significant progress in advancing their religion; al-

Table 2: Registered Buddhist Religious Organizations in the Russian Federation, 1996–2014

Year (as of 1 Jan.)	Centers or Centralized Religious Organizations	Local religious organizations	Seminaries, Theological Academies	Monasteries	Other institutions (missions, brotherhoods)	TOTAL
1996	7	113	1		3	124
1997	7	135	1	2	4	149
1998	8	145	1	2	4	160
1999	8	152	1	2	4	167
2000	8	161	1	2	4	176
2001	8	182	1		2	193
2002	11	188	3			202
2003	11	205	2			218
2004	10	180	2			192
2005	10	179	2		1	192
2006	10	184	2	1		197
2007	9	191	2	1		203
2008	9	188	2	1		200
2009	5	191	2			198
2010	9	196	3			208
2011	11	203	3			217
2012	11	207	3			221
2013	10	218	2			230
2014	11	228	2			241

though a much smaller and "nontraditional" faith, by the beginning of 2014 the Presbyterians had registered nearly as many organizations as had the much larger Buddhist community (194 to 241).[55] Faced with the challenges of the 1997 law, Presbyterians created strategic alliances with other Protestants, highlighted their historical connections with Russia, and emphasized their traditional and patriotic values, even as they also drew support from international Christian networks.

The 1997 law created substantial difficulties for Russian Protestants in general and significantly slowed the growth of their registered congregations (Table 3). Despite Russia's long history of Protestant peoples (including the Volga Germans and the Lutheran Karelians), the law's preamble did not specifically mention any Protestant confession as a "traditional" religion. In the Soviet Union the AUCECB, formed in 1944, had dominated the Protestant share of the religious marketplace; although other Protestant groups, such as the Lutherans and Seventh-Day Adventists, enjoyed limited legal recognition, the AUCECB was by far the largest and most active Soviet-era Protestant denomination. By 1997 most other Protestant groups were smaller and could not claim the fifteen years of legal existence that the Evangelical Christians and Baptists had enjoyed. For example, Pentecostals legally registered some independent individual congregations in the Soviet period but formed their own union only in May 1990. Likewise, by 1997 Presbyterian missionaries, primarily from the Republic of Korea, had successfully planted 153 religious organizations that had been registered with the Ministry of Justice; many others existed without juridical personhood.[56] The new legislation threatened all these fledgling communities; by the beginning of 2003 the number of registered Presbyterian organizations had fallen to 140 from a high of 192 two years earlier—a 27 percent decline. Over the past ten years, as they have learned to negotiate the bureaucratic maze required for registration, Russian Presbyterians have slowly recovered (Table 4).

Neither the Russian legislators nor the new Russian Presbyterians were completely aware of the rich history of Reformed Christianity on Russian soil. Dutch Calvinist merchants established trading posts in the Kholmogory region in the sixteenth century; by 1616 the Dutch in Moscow had built a wooden chapel, and they managed to hire a pastor thirteen years later.[57] In 1632 Dutch metallurgists settled in Tula at the tsar's invitation and soon constructed a Reformed church that received a permanent pastor from Holland in 1654. A generation later, in 1689, the regent Sophia issued an invitation to Huguenot refugees fleeing French persecution after Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes.[58] Anxious to attract Western specialists, Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725) also encouraged Calvinists to immigrate to

Table 3: Protestant Registered Religious Organizations, 1996–2014

Year (as of 1 Jan)	Centers or Centralized religious organizations	Local religious organizations	Seminaries and theological academies	Missions, fraternities and other religious organizations	Total	All rel. organizations	Protestant religious organizations as a % of all rel. orgs.
1996	67	1906	6	292	2271	13073	17.4
1997	86	2245	6	318	2655	14688	18.1
1998	91	2539	8	340	2978	16017	18.6
1999	91	2729	8	339	3167	16749	18.9
2000	93	2915	9	337	3354	17427	19.2
2001	207	3944	27	154	4332	20215	21.4
2002	197	4070	27	7	4301	20441	21.0
2003	216	4128	23	8	4377	21450	20.4
2004	206	4205	28	20	4459	21664	20.6
2005	206	4254	27	22	4509	22144	20.4
2006	220	4235	28	22	4505	22513	20.0
2007	227	4277	28	22	4554	22956	19.8
2008	227	4159	29	21	4436	22866	19.4
2009	104	4125	10	1	4240	22507	18.8
2010	217	4146	35	24	4422	23494	18.8
2011	221	4075	33	23	4382	23848	18.4
2012	219	4104	30	23	4376	24624	17.8
2013	231	4133	30	7	4401	25541	17.2
2014	235	4188	27	7	4457	26442	16.9

Table 4. Registered Presbyterian Religious Organizations in the Russian Federation, 1996–2014

Year (as of 1 Jan)	Centralized Religious Organizations	Local Religious Organizations	Seminaries	Missions/ Religious Foundations	Total
1996	2	124	0	3	129
1997	3	146		4	153
1998	3	159	-	4	166
1999	3	164		4	171
2000	3	178		4	185
2001	9	179	4	0	192
2002	7	130	4	0	141
2003	8	128	4	0	140
2004	9	161	6	0	176
2005	9	175	6	2	192
2006	10	169	6	2	187
2007	10	166	6	2	184
2008	10	162	5	2	179
2009	5	163	2	0	170
2010	7	167	3	0	177
2011	7	169	3	0	179
2012	7	179	3	0	189
2013	7	182	3	1	193
2014	7	183	3	1	194

Russia. The Dutch and the French Calvinists who came to the new capital of St. Petersburg each built Reformed churches in 1732.[59] Thirty years later, the newly enthroned Catherine II enticed German-speaking Reformed colonists to settle on the Volga River with promises of religious freedom and tax privileges; immigrants from Hesse, Switzerland, and the Palatinate created three large Reformed parishes there. Alexander I allowed Scottish Presbyterians and British evangelicals to labor in the frontier regions of Astrakhan and Lake Baikal.[60] American Presbyterian missionaries working in Persia and the Ottoman Empire regularly traveled to the Russian Caucasus, where they occasionally defied local authorities by preaching.[61] The Russian census of 1897 numbered 85,400 Reformed Christians.[62]

In the early twentieth century the first Korean Presbyterian missionaries began carrying their gospel to Russia, where thousands of Koreans had fled to escape an increasingly oppressive Japanese occupation. Americans had first brought Reformed Christianity to the "hermit kingdom" (as Korea was

known) in 1884, and a major revival in 1907 in Pyongyang helped spread and deepen the faith among the Korean population. During this "Great Revival," the young Presbyterian Choi Kwanheul committed himself to proselytizing among the Korean diaspora in Russia. From 1909 to 1913 he successfully started several Presbyterian churches with hundreds of members among the Koreans of Vladivostok and Siberia. Forced to convert to Orthodoxy in 1913, Choi returned to his Reformed faith after the revolution and led several Presbyterian churches in the 1920s.[63] The Stalinist antireligious campaigns of the 1930s destroyed this burgeoning Presbyterian movement, which remained forgotten until the turn of the twenty-first century.[64]

In the post-Soviet period Reformed Christianity again took root in Russia. After years of spiritual searching Evgenii Kashirskii independently turned to Calvinism and in 1992 formed the Union of Evangelical-Reformed Churches headquartered in his hometown of Tver'. Since then, however, the union has suffered schism and remained small and fractured; as of 2017, there are only four registered churches that identify themselves with the "Reformed" label.[65] Presbyterianism has had much greater success. Korean Presbyterian missionaries took full advantage of the new religious freedom in Russia, planting churches first among the Soviet Korean diaspora, then reaching beyond it. For example, in 1992 the South Korean Presbyterian businessman Li Heung-rae (b. 1941) arrived in Moscow to fulfill his adolescent vow to bring ten thousand people to Christ. By establishing one hundred churches with one hundred members each, Li calculated that he could accomplish the promise he had made to God.[66] Using his life savings, he founded the Moscow Christian Presbyterian Spiritual Academy in 1993 to train church planters; today it is one of only three registered Presbyterian educational institutions operating in Russia.[67] A 1993 Russian government handbook on religious organizations included a special section on Korean churches, which were notable for their missionary zeal among all ethnic groups.[68] Two years later, four Presbyterian congregations joined to form the Union of Christian Presbyterian Churches in Russia.[69] Korean Presbyterian missionaries were especially effective in Siberia, the island of Sakhalin (with its large Korean diaspora), and the Far Eastern Federal District, where they established dozens of new congregations in the 1990s.[70] By 1998 the Ministry of Justice had registered 166 Presbyterian religious organizations. Korean missionaries, who numbered at least 557 in 1996, had founded the majority of these new churches.[71]

To survive and thrive under the 1997 legislation, Presbyterians had to formulate creative strategies, allying themselves with like-minded, sympathetic Protestants—and especially the increasingly influential Pentecos-

FIGURE 8.2. The headquarters of the Union of Christian Presbyterian Churches in Moscow. Photograph © J. Eugene Clay.

tal movement, which first began registering autonomous congregations in 1968. For example, the new Union of Christian Presbyterian Churches, like many other small Protestant churches, entered the large Russian Pentecostal denomination, the Russian Associated Union of Christians of the Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals). Organized in 1996 by Sergei Riakhovskii (b. 1956), a moderate Pentecostal bishop, the union welcomed other evangelical Protestant churches threatened by the possible loss of their legal status after the passage of the 1997 law. Methodists, Presbyterians, charismatics, and Messianic Jews all found refuge in the new national denomination, whose statement of faith was intentionally broad enough to cover all its members.[72] Other Presbyterians also sought refuge within other recognized Protestant organizations: the Russian Church of Christians of the Evangelical Faith, a more conservative Pentecostal denomination than Riakhovskii's, includes a Presbyterian group headed by the Korean-Russian bishop Viktor Pak.[73]

The law encouraged Presbyterians to indigenize and consolidate their communities. For example, the Hope Christian Presbyterian Church, founded among the Korean diaspora in Blagoveshchensk in 1994, initially

was organized under the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Churches of South Korea, which provided a pastor, religious literature, and substantial material support. After the 1997 law was passed, the church joined a Russian centralized religious organization, the Association of Independent Churches of Christians of the Evangelical Faith, which in turn was part of Riakhovskii's Pentecostal denomination, the Russian Associated Union of Christians of the Evangelical Faith.[74] In 1997 the difficulties of registration forced two Korean Presbyterian missionaries in Ulan-Ude, each of whom had established a church in the city, to unite into a single congregation.[75] The resulting Ulan-Ude Christian Presbyterian Church was stronger than its predecessors and has since grown to three hundred members, even as it has started new congregations in nearby towns and villages. Although initially dependent on support from South Korea, the missionaries took care to train Russian and Buriat pastors (some of whom traveled to Moscow to study in the Presbyterian academy) to succeed them. When the missionaries departed around 2003, they left a thoroughly indigenized Presbyterian network that today includes nearly twenty-five churches.[76]

Presbyterians also formed several regional centralized religious organizations and succeeded in obtaining registration for these networks in Primorskii krai, Sakhalin, and Buriatia. Overall, however, Presbyterians have faced considerable obstacles to obtaining legal recognition for their communities. As of December 2017, 113 of 298 Presbyterian organizations had either lost or failed to obtain registration, a failure rate of about 38 percent—much higher than the approximately 9 percent failure rate of Ole Nydahl's Karma Kagyu movement.[77] Not acknowledged as a traditional religion of Russia, Presbyterianism is also a minority even among Russian Protestants. Only in 2010 did the president of the Union of Christian Presbyterian Churches gain a seat on the Consultative Council of the Heads of Protestant Churches of Russia, an organization created in 2002 by Pentecostals, Baptists, and Seventh-Day Adventists to provide a united Protestant voice on important social questions.[78]

The strategic alliance with Pentecostals has had a profound impact on Russian Presbyterianism. Although Reformed theology traditionally rejects speaking in tongues (a gift that ended in the apostolic age), some Russian Presbyterian churches (such as the Hope Church in Blagoveshchensk) practice glossolalia, the chief sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal thought. Others, however, decisively reject this practice yet, because of the constraints of the 1997 law, are forced to be part of centralized religious organizations that promote glossolalia. In Sakhalin, for example, traditional Korean Presbyterian churches have negotiated a compromise with their

Pentecostal bishop so that they can continue their traditional form of worship, including infant baptism. Baptists have been less flexible.[79]

By providing theological, material, and media resources, international Pentecostal networks have also significantly influenced Russian Presbyterianism. In 2006 the Ulan-Ude Christian Presbyterian Church became part of the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN, Teleradioset' blagikh novostei—lit. Good News TV and Radio) when it joined the Union of Christians Association of Christian Churches, a centralized religious organization consisting primarily of charismatic churches. Founded by the American Pentecostal evangelist Paul Crouch (1934–2013), TBN expanded into Russia in the early 1990s; the Russian branch is headquartered in St. Petersburg.[80] Because it has its own television studio, the Ulan-Ude church creates its own programs, as well as disseminating TBN's professionally produced evangelical Protestant content. Likewise, the Word of Life movement founded by the Swedish Pentecostal pastor Ulf Ekman (b. 1950) has provided substantial material support for Russian Presbyterians, organizing trips to Israel and offering educational seminars.[81]

With such contacts Presbyterians struggle against the perception that their religion is foreign. In 2002 Veniamin (Boris Pushkar', b. 1938), the Orthodox bishop of Vladivostok, urged the local government to restrict the rapidly growing Protestant churches in Primorskii krai: "The main danger of all these religious movements from abroad is that they are not patriotic. Will Americans, Koreans, and others really teach their flocks to love our motherland, our native country, Russia, to care for it, as does our Church, which has united the nation for centuries?"[82] Even the present pastor of the Ulan-Ude Christian Presbyterian Church, Viktor Kolmynin, a retired Russian military officer, recalls that before his conversion he considered all Protestants to be CIA agents, just as his political education instructors had taught him.[83] Presbyterians have responded to such perceptions with strong affirmations of their patriotism and their traditional values, calling on Russian Presbyterians "to serve our country, . . . to pray for it, for the president, and the government."[84] In 2011 the Union of Christian Presbyterian Churches strongly rebuked the Presbyterian Church (USA), the largest US Presbyterian denomination, for its decision to ordain sexually active gay clergy: "To our great sorrow, we must confess that the religious association calling itself 'the Presbyterian Church of the USA' cannot be regarded as a Christian organization." The union "openly condemns all agreement with the ideas of the Sodomites."[85] Russian Presbyterians note with sorrow that the United States is suffering from a "spiritual cancer" and is headed toward self-destruction, while President Putin champions traditional, civilized values.

The 1997 law had consequences that were probably not foreseen by the Russian legislators who fashioned it. Although the law did pose significant challenges for Presbyterians, they responded creatively by working with Pentecostals, who provided an umbrella organization that facilitated the process of registration. The law made such ecumenical cooperation necessary; unwittingly, the legislators encouraged a significant exchange of ideas, practices, and resources between Pentecostals and Presbyterians that would have been much less likely before 1997. Moreover, with its emphasis on tradition, the 1997 law pushed Presbyterians to explore and celebrate their history in Russia. The Presbyterians of Buriatia now celebrate the Protestant missionaries who labored in the Trans-Baikal region in the nineteenth century. The church has restored the graves of several of the missionaries, recovered and published their observations about life in the region, planned the construction of a monument memorializing their lives, and sponsored a historical monograph about their work and legacy. The church also publishes a journal of local history, *Barguzhin Takum*, and cooperates with the local historical museum.[86] Likewise, the 1997 law encouraged Chung Ho-Sang, a Korean pastor of a church in Vladivostok, to rediscover the history of Presbyterianism in Siberia at the beginning of the last century.[87] Russian Presbyterians can now make a better case that their religion, too, should be regarded as "traditional," respected for its contribution to the "historical heritage of Russia's peoples."

The Orthodox Church of the Sovereign Mother of God

The OCSMG was the kind of organization that the 1997 law especially targeted—a new religious movement with new revelations and a charismatic leader, Father Ioann (Veniamin Bereslavskii, b. 1946), who receives messages from divine figures, including the Virgin Mary. Ioann has proven to be a skilled spiritual entrepreneur, drawing inspiration from a variety of sources and tailoring his message to the changing conditions of post-Soviet society. In the 1980s he developed ties to one branch of the underground True Orthodox Church; in the 1990s he internationalized his movement, proselytized aggressively both domestically and abroad, and reached out to Marian visionaries across the globe, organizing large councils that included Catholic seers. After the 1997 law Ioann increasingly emphasized the traditional Russian Orthodox roots of his church, celebrating those places made holy by the sacrifice of the True Orthodox martyrs. Despite his efforts to carve out a niche for his church as one of Russia's traditional religions and to ingratiate himself with President Vladimir Putin, in late 2006 Ioann became the target of an antisectarian campaign launched by United Rus-

sia, Putin's party. This hostility ultimately drove him in 2009 to surrender administrative leadership of his church and emigrate to Spain, where he now pursues the spiritual revival of Catharism, a medieval dualistic movement that flourished in southern France in the twelfth century. In this latest phase of his evolution Ioann has largely given up on his earlier enthusiasm for Catholic Marian seers and expresses deep pessimism about traditional Christianity altogether.[88]

In 1989, as the Soviet Union became more tolerant of religion, Veniamin Bereslavskii emerged in public as one of several people who claimed to represent the underground True Orthodox Church, which had refused to compromise with the Soviet state—unlike the official Moscow Patriarchate. After Patriarch Tikhon (Vasilii Bellavin, 1865–1925) of Moscow died in prison, Metropolitan Sergii of Nizhnii Novgorod advocated a policy of cooperation with the Bolshevik rulers. As one of the few bishops who was not under arrest in July 1927, Sergii was serving as the deputy patriarchal locum tenens. In his effort to normalize ecclesiastical life and assure government authorities that the Church did not represent a security threat, Sergii, who himself had just been released from prison, issued a controversial declaration of loyalty to the Soviet Union on behalf of the Church. In a particularly contentious sentence, Sergii identified the interests of Orthodox believers with that of their atheist persecutors: "We want to be Orthodox and at the same time to recognize the Soviet Union as our civil motherland, whose joys and successes are our joys and successes, and whose failures are our failures."[89] For many of Sergii's fellow bishops, who had suffered imprisonment and witnessed the arrest and execution of their priests and parishioners, this policy was reprehensible: the Church could not declare its loyalty to an atheistic regime that actively persecuted Christians for their faith. Several bishops broke communion with Sergii and tried to organize the Church as an underground resistance movement that ultimately outlived the USSR. The True Orthodox Church, as this movement came to be known, split into many different branches, but all of them rejected Sergii's declaration of loyalty as a profound error.[90]

In the late 1980s Bereslavskii, a lifelong resident of Moscow, made two remarkable assertions: that he was a prophet of the Mother of God and a priest-monk of the True Orthodox Church. The Virgin Mary had begun sending him revelations in November 1984, and a few months later a secret metropolitan of the underground church ordained him and gave him the name Ioann.[91] In December 1990 Ioann convinced another bishop to raise him to the episcopate, so that he could take his place at the head of a new Orthodox jurisdiction, the Russian Autocephalous Orthodox Church,

which was soon renamed the Church of the Mother of God. About the same time, in April 1991, Ioann registered the Mother of God Center as a philanthropic and educational organization; despite the church's many subsequent name changes, Orthodox heresiologists continue to call the movement by that name.

Sharply critical of the Moscow Patriarchate, the new church initially preached an apocalyptic message of imminent divine judgment: in these last days Mary had appeared to deliver a third and final testament, calling on the world to fast, pray, and repent. Ioann presented himself as the latest Marian seer, the successor to the Roman Catholic apparitions of Lourdes, Fatima, and Medjugorje, Bosnia, all of which he accepted as authentic.[92] Ioann had a global vision; his movement would unite Eastern and Western Christianity under the Virgin's banner. He reached out to devotees of Mary around the world, adopted Catholic practices such as praying the rosary, and in 1995 organized a world congress of Marian visionaries in Moscow.[93] Between 1991 and 1998 the church held eighteen councils, with attendance that ranged from three hundred to four thousand.[94]

Faced with the requirements of the 1997 law, however, the church increasingly emphasized its traditional Russian roots, its connection to the True Orthodox Church, and its spiritual link to the Romanov dynasty. It adopted a new name: the Orthodox Church of the Sovereign Mother of God, a reference to the miracle-working "Sovereign" icon of the Theotokos, which a peasant visionary had mysteriously discovered on the very day that Tsar Nicholas II abdicated in 1917. Now housed in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior (the seat of the patriarch of Moscow), the icon depicts Mary with the symbols of sovereignty: a scepter in her right hand and an orb in her left. In 1997 the Moscow Patriarchate commissioned numerous copies of the holy image to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of its appearance.[95]

By incorporating the icon into the name of his religious organization, Ioann emphasized his connection to the Romanov dynasty and to the persecuted True Orthodox Church. Without abandoning his claim to be part of an international Marian movement, Ioann linked his church to the suffering church in the Gulag, and in particular to Emperor Nicholas II's brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich Romanov (1878–1918). Although Mikhail was killed by the Bolsheviks in 1918, some monarchists (including Ioann) insist that he miraculously escaped execution, took on the identity of the peasant Mikhail Pozdeev, and became the monk Serafim, who was then secretly consecrated a bishop by Patriarch Tikhon. As the successor to the legitimate patriarch, Serafim was the true spiritual leader of the underground church, spending his life pursued by atheistic persecutors.[96] Al-

Table 5: Registered Religious Organizations of the Orthodox Church of the Sovereign Mother of God, 1994–2013

Year (as of 1 January)	Centers or Centralized Religious Organizations	Local Religious Organizations	Monasteries	TOTAL
1994	-	3	-	3
1995	-	3	-	3
1996	-	4	-	4
1997	1	8	-	9
1998	1	15	-	16
1999	1	17	_	18
2000	1	19	-	20
2001	1	26	1	28
2002	1	28	1	30
2003	1	27	1	29
2004	1	26	-	27
2005	1	25	-	26
2006	1	26	-	27
2007	1	24	-	25
2008	1	22	-	23
2009	-	21		21
2010	1	19	-	20
2011	1	19		20
2012	1	18	-	19
2013	1	18	-	19
2014	1	18	-	19

though he did not invent this monarchist myth, Ioann adopted and popularized it in his many books and pamphlets that celebrated Serafim as the Victor of the Gulag and as Serafim Solovetskii.[97]

Even as he criticized the Soviet past, Ioann cultivated government officials, and in 2002 he declared that the Russian president was under the Virgin Mary's special protection.[98] Despite such overtures, Putin and his United Russia Party have proven unsympathetic to Ioann and his church. By 2002 the OCSMG had successfully registered thirty religious organizations, but at least fifty congregations remained unregistered; in subsequent years Russian officials have liquidated several congregations, so that by 2012 the church had only eighteen registered parishes (Table 5).[99] Moreover, as a matter of public policy, Putin has increasingly allied himself with the Moscow Patriarchate, which had long targeted Ioann and the OCSMG as a "totalitarian destructive cult."[100]

FIGURE 8.3. The headquarters of the Orthodox Church of the Sovereign Mother of God. Photograph © J. Eugene Clay.

In the year running up to the 2007 parliamentary elections, United Russia (Putin's party) portrayed itself as the defender of traditional Russian religious values against dangerous sectarians. In December 2006, when the OCSMG organized an exposition titled "Solovki—the Second Golgotha" in a storefront in the provincial town of Lipetsk, the Federal Security Service (FSB) shut it down and arrested several church members for allegedly causing "psychological harm" to seventeen high school students who had visited the exhibit. Significantly, the high school teacher who denounced the exhibit was a member of the United Russia Party. News reports emphasized that while local officials had ignored her concerns, the party responded quickly and effectively to protect the children from a "destructive cult." Ioann and his movement found themselves on the defensive in the national news over the next several months, even though none of the outlandish charges were ever proven.[101]

Extralegal pressure also created a hostile atmosphere for the church during the Putin era. A group of thugs who claimed to represent an Orthodox brotherhood attacked Ioann's Center for Russian Spirituality in Moscow

in 2005, and the church chronicled a series of similar disturbing incidents.[102] Defamed in his own country, Ioann began making longer and longer pilgrimages abroad. In May 2014 an OCSMG priest in Moscow complained of "silent persecution" (*neglasnoe presledovanie*); although the church continues to publish its books, maintain its headquarters, and operate its website, it no longer has access to the large venues, such as the Dinamo Stadium, that it had used for its councils in the 1990s.[103]

In the post-1997 religious market the OCSMG has survived, but it has not thrived for two major reasons. First, by claiming to be the True Orthodox Church, the OCSMG positioned itself as a rival to the powerful Moscow Patriarchate, the most important traditional religion in post-Soviet Russia. Second, because it is led by a charismatic virtuoso who is constantly receiving new divine revelations, the OCSMG challenges the conception of religion that undergirds Russian religious policy. The OCSMG is not the property of an ethnic group but an expression and outgrowth of Ioann's individual spiritual vision, which has changed radically over the last three decades. Today Ioann embraces Cathar dualism, rejects the Creator-God of Christianity as a mere demiurge, and promotes the veneration of a Buddhist maternal deity—not traditional Orthodox views by any measure.[104] The effort of the OCSMG to style itself as "traditional" has clearly failed.

The 1997 law (and the new laws, policies, and legal interpretations that followed it) transformed the religious marketplace. In the face of these new legal requirements the minority religious movements examined in this chapter sought legal registration for their communities, engaged in institution building, emphasized their traditional character, and made a case for their historical connection and loyalty to the Russian motherland. In every case these religious entrepreneurs have found creative ways to survive in the new regulatory environment. Even the OCSMG, the least successful of the four movements, still has nineteen registered organizations in Russia and continues to promote, publish, and sell the visionary works of its founder. All the other religions are larger and stronger than they were when the law was passed.

Certainly, the 1997 law placed limits on religious freedom, but the worst fears of its critics were not realized. Within three years of the law's adoption the Constitutional Court significantly liberalized its application by grandfathering religious entities that had been registered before 1997.[105] The absolute numbers and variety of religious associations continue to increase: since 1997 the number of registered religious organizations has practically doubled (Table 1). From an economic perspective the law has not created

insuperable obstacles to the spiritual entrepreneurs who create religious entities. Religion, even minority religion, remains a growing business in the Russian marketplace.

At the same time, the law revealed three significant tensions in Russia's religious market that complicate its regulation: first, the tension between Russia's constitutional guarantee of religious equality and its commitment to promoting traditional religion; second, the tension between the right of an ethnicity to preserve its collective religious heritage and the right of an individual to pursue a personal spiritual vision; and third, the tension between Russian policymakers' efforts to protect the domestic religious market and the ongoing globalization of that market. The law and its subsequent interpretations have not created a unified, coherent religious policy with a definite goal; it has instead created a religious field with multiple polarities that preachers and politicians (the producers of religious goods and their regulators) must negotiate.[106]

The framers of the 1997 law committed themselves to promote traditional religion in a multiconfessional state. In so doing, they made the term "traditional" contested territory. The Constitutional Court soon diluted the one concrete definition of "traditional" offered in the law: fifteen years of continuous legal existence in the province where registration was sought. In its stead, drawing on the vaguer, more subjective definition in the preamble, religious entrepreneurs contended that their religion had contributed to the history and culture of the peoples of Russia. Pandito Khambo Lama Damba Aiusheev, as the successor to the Buddhist ecclesiastical structures of tsarist Russia and the USSR and the guardian of Itigelov's body, successfully claimed that his form of Buddhism was traditional, but so did Ole Nydahl, who garnered crucial support from the Kalmyk president. To bolster their legitimacy, Presbyterians uncovered and promoted the history of Russian Protestantism and trumpeted their traditional family values, defended by the Russian president against the assaults of American apostates. Even a religious virtuoso like Father Ioann, who continually received new and surprising revelations, affirmed the traditional nature of his church, the true successor to the Apostle Andrew and the Orthodoxy of Kievan Rus'.

Russian policy clearly favors the view that religion is an expression of ethnic groups rather than a personal spiritual vision. The charismatic Father Ioann, who celebrates spontaneity and is highly critical of religious authority and ecclesiastical institutions, has been poorly served by the 1997 law; over the last ten years he has seen local authorities liquidate one OCSMG parish after another. To preserve their legal existence, Presbyterians have had to set aside parts of their theological vision and find common ground

with Pentecostals or other sympathetic Protestants. However, the maturation of the religious market raises questions about this relationship between religion and ethnicity. If Ole Nydahl attracts ethnic Russians rather than Buriats to Buddhism, is his movement still traditional? If Korean Russians continue to embrace Protestant Christianity, should Protestantism be regarded as a traditional religion of a people of Russia?

Russian policymakers also must contend with the global nature of religion in the twenty-first century. International religious networks are important for all the religious movements analyzed in this chapter, as they are for the whole of Russia, which has become increasingly integrated into a global legal system. Aiusheev, who is wary of Tibetan teachers, nevertheless honors the Dalai Lama; Presbyterians who criticize American sexual values still welcome TBN. Without his international contacts Nydahl would probably not have been able to win Iliumzhinov's support for his version of Karma Kagyu Buddhism. Likewise, by participating in the European Court of Human Rights, Russia recognizes the authority of this international body.

However, in 2016 the Russian government used counterterrorism measures to sharply restrict religious liberty. In March Deputy Prosecutor General Viktor Grin' issued a formal finding that the entire denomination of Jehovah's Witnesses was an extremist organization, because it believes itself to be the only true church. In this unprecedented action Grin' sought to have the courts liquidate a centralized religious organization, as well as all its daughter congregations. Despite the Witnesses' protests, the judiciary has consistently sided with the Ministry of Justice; on 20 April 2017 the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation ruled against the Witnesses, ordered them to immediately cease their activities, and approved state expropriation of all the denomination's property. The Witnesses lost their final appeal in Russian courts in July and promised to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights.[107]

The Iarovaia counterterrorism laws, adopted in July 2016, helped buttress the case against the Witnesses. The law prohibits missionary activity in residential areas and bans "extremist" groups from engaging in proselytizing at all. Registered religious organizations can conduct mission work on the property that they own or rent, but unregistered religious groups cannot legally own or rent property.[108]

These newest efforts to regulate religion may have the unintended consequence of weakening, rather than strengthening, the "traditional" religions of Russia. In their seminal 1993 article Roger Finke and Laurence Iannaccone argued that excessive regulation stifles religious innovation; religious institutions prosper when they have free access to the religious market-

place.[109] Having abandoned the free-market approach of the 1990 law, Russian legislators seem intent on restricting religious liberty in the interest of security. However, the dynamic tensions in the Russian religious field ensure that these policies will continue to change—and that savvy spiritual entrepreneurs will find ways to bring their religious goods to interested consumers.