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THIRTY YEARS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN RUSSIA: THE CASE OF EKATERINBURG

By Elena Glavatskaya

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Keywords: Religious landscape, Russia, Soviet Union, Revolution, Russian Orthodox Church, religious communities, religious renaissance

Prologue

In 1991, I came to know OPREE, which was then REE, the journal of *Religion in Eastern Europe*. It was like a miracle, as Ekaterinburg—which was called Sverdlovsk at the time—had for decades been a closed city to foreigners due to its military industry, which had been evacuated from the western territories of the Soviet Union after it was occupied by Nazis during WWII. Due to political changes in the late 1980s, we slowly started to open up to the world and we personally became more open as a result. Ural Federal University, then Ural State University, launched an international conference on religious studies since it had an established group studying the Old Believers'¹ culture. While religious studies in the Soviet Union were limited, research focusing on the Russian Orthodox Church's opponents was possible, for their opposition was often interpreted as an expression of social protest against oppression. Indigenous people' religions were also warrantable research topics.

¹ A religious stream that split from the Russian Orthodox Church in protests against the reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon of Moscow in the late 17th century. They consider the state authorities the devil's servants and maintained pre-reform ways in worship and lifestyle. The state persecuted the Old Believers, who went underground and escaped to remote areas, the Urals included.

For the first time in the university's history, several western scholars were invited. Among them was Profesor Paul Mojzes, the editor of REE and a professor of religious studies at Rosemont College in the United States. At the time, I was completing my PhD dissertation on the Siberian indigenous people, which contained substantial information on indigenous religions and Christian missions in the 17th century. I did not present a paper at the conference, but I did participate actively in the discussions. Before the conference, our dean asked me to teach a course on the 'History of Religion' with the Department of History, which turned out to be quite a challenge. The only course on religion I studied at the university was 'Scientific Atheism,' taught by a former KGB colonel, whose duty was to monitor religions within the region. It was one of my favorite classes for I was very interested in ethnology and religions, even if I was not a believer myself. During my field research as a student, I met Old Believers, and while travelling with parents and friends, I visited Catholic churches in Lithuania, accumulating a collection of neck crosses from different churches. The lecturer-colonel provided us with information based on his experiences and disputes with believers, and whether it was his intention or not, all the religions he taught us about were perceived not just as alien ideologies to me, but with a human emphasis, as he provided stories and destinies of real people.

Thanks to this, for me, international conference, I got the unique opportunity to meet with representatives of different branches of Christianity, where I received information about them firsthand. Moreover, the foreign conference participants did everything possible to provide me with textbooks for use in my classes. I also received regular parcels with new REE issues. Therefore, we have all the grounds to say that since the 1990s, REE/OPREE played a crucial role in molding religious studies at Ural Federal University. A decade later, when I had the privilege of teaching several courses in the US, I borrowed methods Professor Mojzes used in his classes on religion—like church visits—which I immediately introduced in Ekaterinburg upon my return.² This has since become a part of the curriculum in almost every university. The topic of how 'Scientific Atheism' was turned into 'Religious Studies' in Russia deserves more extensive

² The students' reports we recently displayed at the university webpages as sources that can be used to monitor the city's religious situation evolution. <https://idun.urfu.ru/ru/pro/id12998/ehlektronnyi-arkhiv-religioznye-soobshchestva-ekaterinburga/polevye-materialy/>. We already used reports on Buddhist temple visits in the paper: E. Glavatskaya and T. Babkina "Буддизм алмазного пути в религиозном ландшафте Урала: опыт историко-антропологического исследования" [Diamond Path Buddhism in the Urals religious landscape: the experience of historical and anthropological research] in *"Буддизм Ваджраяны в России: исторический дискурс и сопредельные культуры* [Buddhism of the Vajrayana in Russia: historical discourse and adjacent cultures]. Ed. E.V. Leontyeva (Moskva: "Алмазный путь", 2013), pp. 144-150.

reflection; here, I just want to present the necessary context where OPREE and the topic of this issue came into play in this particular location.

Introduction

The religious revival, which began nationwide during the USSR's last decade, affected all religious denominations, including the so-called "traditional" religions, which had deep roots in Imperial Russia's history, and new religions that appeared after the collapse of Soviet ideology. The religious renaissance manifested itself through the rapidly increasing number of religious communities, religion's fast penetration into social and political life, and the church buildings that mushroomed all over the country. This article focuses on the history of the religious landscape in Russia since 1989, using the city of Ekaterinburg as a case study. We use the *religious landscape* concept to analyze the representation of different religions in the city, which manifested themselves through the buildings designed and used for public worship—the main elements and markers of religious life in the city. This research is based on contemporary statistics and narratives about Ekaterinburg's religious institutions, as well as field observations.

Regrettably, religious affiliation was not monitored nationwide either in the USSR or in modern Russia, except by the failed 1937 census.³ Scholars interested in the religious composition of the Russian population cannot rely on comparative statistics. We may, however, study religious associations and institutions and analyze changes in the religious landscape. The religious landscape, in our understanding, is a religious situation that developed at a certain place and time, and one of its main markers are religious institutions, which became the religious presence in the public sphere. The religious landscape is the product of the dominant group in a society and serves as one of the means by which it retains its power. As Robertson and Richards point out, landscape is one of the principal ways through which the powerful in a society maintain their dominance.⁴ First the monarchy, then the Bolsheviks, imposed their views on the majority through the landscape they created: by dominance of the Orthodox Church until 1917 and by atheism until the late 1980s. Contemporary Russian leaders introduced religious freedom

³ That was the only Soviet census with a question on religious affiliation in its forms; however, the forms were destroyed as soon as the leaders realized that the results did not match their expectations.

⁴ Iain Robertson and Penny Richards, "Introduction" in *Studying Cultural Landscapes* / Ed. Robertson, I., Richards, (London, 2003), 4.

allowing the reestablishment of the ‘traditional’ religions’ (deeply rooted in Russia’s history), with the Russian Orthodox Church dominating the field. Other religions brought by missionaries from the East and West manifest the variety of Russia’s religious landscape. While reliable statistics on religious affiliation do not exist, the religious landscape carries encoded information regarding its religious situation that can be “read” and interpreted. Thus, the purpose of this study is to read and to interpret Ekaterinburg’s changing religious landscape from 1989 until today.

Old Ekaterinburg’s Religious Landscape

Russia, even if it is often perceived as a religiously homogeneous entity with the Russian Orthodox Church dominating the country, in reality, it has a long history of different coexisting religious traditions. The Ural region, located in the middle of the Eurasian continent, has always been multi-religious due to their ethnic crossroads and a long history of in-migration.

Pre-Revolutionary Ekaterinburg was an industrial city in the Middle Urals (at 56°5’ north / 60°4’ east), with a growing diversity in its ethnic and religious population, especially in the first quarter of the 20th century.⁵ While the majority belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church, there were communities of Old Believers, Muslims, Catholics, Lutherans, and Jews (see table 1).

Table 1. Religious denominations in Ekaterinburg 1897 (N, %)

Denomination	Men	Women	Sum	Percentage
Orthodox	18534	21211	39745	91.9
Old Believers	766	1024	1790	4.1
Muslims	386	292	678	1.6
Lutherans	167	176	343	0.8
Catholics	167	156	323	0.7

⁵ Elena Glavatskaya , “Religious Landscape in Post-revolutionary Russia. The Case of Ekaterinburg” in *Transylvanian Review* 2018 № 2, pp. 92-103.

Jews	150	153	303	0.7
Other	23	34	57	0.1
Total	20193	23046	43239	100

Source: 1897 Census aggregates

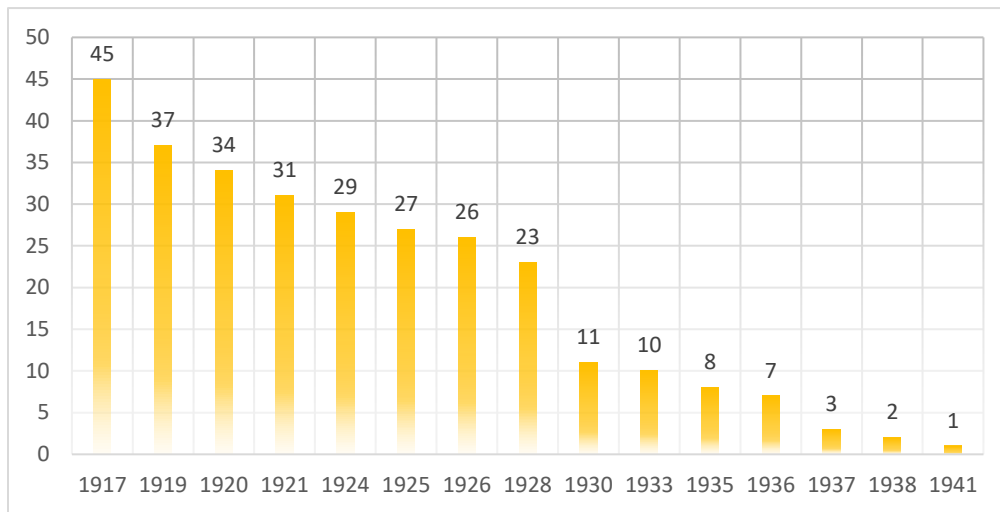
Naturally, the Russian Orthodox Church institutions, with all its church buildings, dominated Ekaterinburg's religious landscape until 1917. There were 45 Russian Orthodox Church buildings, including five parish churches, three cathedrals and a nunnery, which in itself contained five churches and a cathedral. In addition, there were two parishes of Old Believers: one with their own priests and another headed by lay religious leaders. The Imperial Russian religious landscape also included churches belonging to *Edinovertsy*, of which Ekaterinburg had three. These parishes of ethnic Russians consisted of former Old Believers and their descendants, who agreed to the compromise proposed by the state in the 18th century: they had to be subordinate to the diocesan bishops of the Orthodox Church but could still maintain the old (17th century pre-reform) liturgies and rituals.⁶ Overall, Ekaterinburg's Eastern Christianity landscape consisted of 10 parishes with their own churches or chapels.⁷

The city's non-Orthodox landscape consisted of four religious communities, with Catholic and Lutheran churches erected in the city's center in the late 19th century, and a synagogue and a mosque located in private houses. By 1917, the ratio of all Russian Orthodox Church buildings to non-Orthodox was nine to one.

The Bolsheviks started to close the Russian Orthodox churches and expropriate its buildings almost immediately after the Revolution. They conveyed the closed churches' buildings to secular institutions and blew up those that were centrally located. The destruction that started right after the Revolution lasted until 1941, and left only one cemetery church in the city (See Figure 1).

⁶ Alexander Palkin *Единоверие в середине XVIII – начале XX в: общероссийский контекст и региональная специфика*. [Edinoverie in the middle of the 18th - beginning of the 20th centuries: the all-Russian context and regional specifics] (Ekaterinburg, 2016), p. 325.

Figure 1. The number of Orthodox churches operating in Ekaterinburg in 1917–1941



Other religious denominations experienced the same destruction. The Lutheran Church congregation, which had a high number of Germans, was closed around 1920 or 1921, and the building was turned into a dormitory. The Catholic Church was closed in 1930 and the city’s Catholic community disintegrated afterwards.⁸ Its building, erected in an elegant gothic style, was converted into the ‘working youth drama theater.’ The authorities also closed churches and chapels where the city’s Old Believers used to gather for prayer at the same time. Some congregations, for example the Baptists and Evangelical Christians, disappeared after enjoying religious freedom for a decade. The Ural Evangelical movement, which was being suppressed by the state during the Imperial period, was not considered a threat to the Soviet state from the start, and therefore lasted longer. Ekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk since 1924)⁹ was the center of the Ural’s religious non-conformists and had the largest Baptist congregation in the region, numbering 80 members in 1928, and Evangelical Christians’ meetings in the city attracted up to 400

⁸ Elena Glavatskaya, “...В весьма изящном, готическом стиле’: история католической традиции на Среднем Урале до середины 1930-х гг.” (‘In a Very Elegant Gothic Style’: A History of the Catholic Tradition in the Middle Urals from the late 1600s until the late 1930s). *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov’ v Rossii i za rubezhom* № 22 (2015). pp. 218-238.

⁹ In 1924 Ekaterinburg got a new name Sverdlovsk after the revolutionary leader Jakob Sverdlov. Only in 1991, the city got back its original name – Ekaterinburg.

participants. Both Baptists and Evangelical Christian congregations disappeared from the city's landscape in 1930.¹⁰

The city's Muslims met for prayer until February 1930, when their building was closed to be transferred into a kindergarten for the ethnic Muslim children (Tatar and Bashkir). Ekaterinburg's Jewish community grew rapidly due to migration from the western provinces, i.e., contemporary Poland, Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Lithuania in the early 20th century, especially after the First World War broke out. There were two synagogues in the city, but the authorities closed one of them in 1926. When they attempted to close the second synagogue in 1930, the believers managed to protect it. Apparently, it helped that the synagogue existed along with a *mikva*, used as a public bath—an obvious social institution much needed in Soviet Russia.¹¹

Thus, it took two decades for the Soviet authorities to destroy the religious landscape of the former Ekaterinburg. The 1937 census indicated a misbalanced religious situation in the USSR and in Sverdlovsk particularly. More than 50 percent of its adult population claimed they were religious, and answered positively to the question whether they believed in God.¹² Taking the historic and cultural background as well as the city's ethnic composition into consideration, we have grounds to identify most of them as Russian Orthodox. Therefore, there was only one church left to conduct the services in—John the Baptist Cathedral, the former cemetery church, which could serve the tens of thousands of the city's religious population. It remained outside the public sphere: according to the law, religious organizations were deprived of the right to carry out any activity other than liturgical activity, which only adults could attend. Two religious minorities managed to defend their buildings and gather for communal prayer and keep their religious identity. They were the Old Believers and the Jews: both with centuries-long history and experience to withstand religious oppression and maintain their religious traditions and values even under the threat of life. The rest disappeared from the city's religious landscape for almost 70 years.

¹⁰ Elena Glavatskaya, Nadezhda Popova. "Russian Religious Non-Conformism in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries: Baptists and Evangelical Christians in the Urals," *Quaestio Rossica*. № 4. (2016). pp. 190-206 .

¹¹ Elena Glavatskaya and Elizaveta Zabolotnykh, "The Jewish Religious Community of Yekaterinburg between the mid-19th and early 20th century: size and institutions" *Izvestia. Ural Federal University Journal. Series 2. Humanities and Artsi*. 4 (2017). pp.206–221.

¹² Valentina Zhiromskaia, "Отношение населения к религии: по материалам переписи 1937 года", in *Труды Института Российской истории РАН* [Institute of Russian History Russian Publications]. 2(2000): 324–338.

During WWII, the Soviet State's attitude towards religions slightly softened, and they allowed the All Saints church operation at the second city's cemetery. However, it was again closed during the next antireligious campaign in 1961, along with the synagogue. Thus, the St. John church was the only religious institutional building in the city, whose population reached a million, for almost three decades.

From Sundown to Sunset

Religious revival in the Russian Federation started in the early 1980s when the political system also started changing in the country. Political and social changes in the former socialist countries' earlier search of new ethnic and religious identities inspired a similar search in former Soviet republics, including the Russian Federation. The celebration of the millennial jubilee of Russia's conversion to Christianity catalyzed the process of religious renaissance, which spread from Moscow to all over the country, Ekaterinburg included. All religious denominations, both those that existed in the city before the 1917 revolution, and the new ones that appeared due to the different missionaries got involved in the process.¹³ The phenomenon of religious renaissance manifested itself by the return of religion to social and political life. Visually, this was most clearly manifested by the rapid construction of church buildings due to the restitution process: religious activists demanded the buildings that once belonged to religious organizations be returned to them and initiated the construction of new ones. In the first round, they demanded the former church buildings seized by the Soviet state in 1919–1930s, which often housed government offices, workshops, cultural centers or educational institutions. If a historical church building did not survive, religious communities sought to obtain land where it once existed and if this was not possible, then they needed some other allotment in order to rebuild the church. One of the most striking examples is the return of the St. Alexander Nevskii Cathedral building to the jurisdiction of the Church. The former Cathedral was turned into a museum during Soviet times, housing the Department of Natural History, Planetarium, and the depository of the Regional Studies Museum. The newly organized community of the Orthodox believers demanded the building be returned to the Church. The political struggle of the 1990s determined the events'

¹³ Detailed analyses of the Russian Orthodox Church's landscape development presented in a separate paper: Dmitrii Bakharev and Elena Glavatskaya "Развитие православного ландшафта в современном российском мегаполисе (на примере Екатеринбурга)" [The Orthodox Church landscape Development in a Modern Russian Megapolis (the Case of Ekaterinburg)] *Religiovedenie*. 2017. № 4. (2017). pp. 143-153.

stormy development and the extremeness of the measures implied. Believers went on hunger strike, which immediately attracted the attention of the public and the authorities due to the media, now free to report the news. The Commission on Religious Affairs of the USSR Supreme Soviet approved the transfer of the former St. Alexander Nevskii Cathedral building to the Church in 1991, the same year. The exhibitions and the depository of the Regional Studies Museum suffered serious losses during the transition.

The newly established militant-religious Cossack community of Ekaterinburg, one of the most powerful political actors in the 1990s, initiated the return of the Holy Cross Church's former building. Ekaterinburg's Catholic community, composed mainly of local Poles, received the territory where their church once stood, to construct a new building. The construction process received international-wide support. The Lutheran community, whose building was also demolished in the 1950s, put a memorial plaque on the building erected in the basement of their former church. The Lutheran congregation of Ekaterinburg, mostly composed of Russian-Germans, is not numerous due to their mass repatriation, so they usually met for a communal prayer and religious ceremonies in a rented building.¹⁴ The Ekaterinburg Jews, after several failed attempts, finally received land near the historic site of the city's synagogue, which was demolished in 1961, and built a new temple that became a place for the revival of community life. Ekaterinburg's Muslims registered their community in mosques in different parts of Ekaterinburg: four of them in the newly constructed buildings and the fifth using the refurbished cinema 'Komsomolets,' where a minaret is currently being erected. Generally, the religious revival developed along with the ethnic mobilization of the former Soviet peoples, shaped as the city's numerous "national-cultural autonomies." Naturally, religion has since become a major factor in their ethnic consolidation.

Evangelical movements were also rapidly institutionalized in the city's religious landscape, among others, the Methodist Church, Evangelical Christians (Baptists), numerous congregations of Pentecostals, and Seventh-day Adventists. European and American missionaries' activity in the city helped to establish Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of the Latter-day Saints (Mormon) communities. Except for the Methodists who erected their own gorgeous church in Ekaterinburg, others had to rent or share buildings for prayers and

¹⁴ Until lately just in a rented apartment in ordinary compartment building.

ceremonies or buy available buildings, including private houses or former kindergartens.¹⁵ Eastern religious movements were represented by the Krishna Society, as well as the Buddhism of the Diamond Way—the Karma Kagyu tradition. The latter, like in many other Russian cities, bought a wooden private house with a little estate, where they opened a temple.

All of the religious organizations, once registered in the 1990s, continue to be present in the city’s religious landscape, with the exception of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who were accused as an “extremists’ organization” and banned in 2017, despite numerous protests.¹⁶ As was the case in pre-revolutionary times, their numbers are insignificant compared to the Orthodox Church majority (whether active or passive) and have no prospects for significant growth. The only exception are the Muslims, whose numbers keep growing due to the influx of migrants from the Central Asian countries—former republics of the USSR.

Restoration of monastic life became an important stage in the development of Ekaterinburg’s religious landscape. First, the Novo-Tikhvinskii Convent was reopened in 1994–95 and later, the Spasskii Monastery was opened in its courtyard. Nuns, mostly young educated women, initiated charity activities, established an educational center and a primary school for girls, where they widely use modern IT technologies in their activities.

In just three decades, the Russian Orthodox Church managed to get back or rebuild more than 20 churches in the historical part of Ekaterinburg. Most of them dominate the landscape of the downtown area—the Ascension Church (the Revolutionary Museum until 1991); the Holy Spirit Church with its big bell tower (blown up in 1930); the Holy Trinity Cathedral (the city’s Culture Club until 1995) and St. Alexander Nevskii Cathedral of the Novo-Tikhvinskii Convent (a Regional Studies Museum until 1991). The final touch in this process might have been the restoration of St. Catherine’s Cathedral in its historical place—the contemporary Square of Labor.¹⁷ However, this initiative of the city’s secular and ecclesiastical authorities was met with

¹⁵ Due to the social crises on 1990s the birthrate dropped and many kindergartens were sold out to different organizations. One of them was purchased by the Russian Orthodox Church, who needed a building for the theology school, another by the Mormons.

¹⁶ See for the details Elena Glavatskaya and Nadezhda Popova “Nobody Pressed Hard, and People Listened to the Message of the Kingdom”. Jehovah’s Witnesses of Sverdlovsk Region: A Historical and Anthropological Study *Quaestio Rossica*. Vol. 6. 2018. No 2. Pp. 468–484.

¹⁷ The church was the city’s oldest, built in honor of its patroness—the Great Martyr Catherine. It is not by chance that the city got St. Catherine as its patroness, for that was also Emperor’s Peter the Great wife’s name, whose protection the city’s fathers-founders naturally hoped for.

serious rebuff. During Soviet times, the church was demolished and its square became a meeting place for citizens. A big fountain—the Stone Flower built in its center—became one of the city’s main landmarks and attractions. In 1991, in commemoration of the lost Cathedral, citizens erected a cross at its former place and in 1997-1998, built a St. Catherine chapel. The chapel initially had memorial functions but later became a parish center with a priest and services, including public processions with the cross, on the main holy days. The square itself organically combined religious and secular elements, reflecting the contemporary pluralistic situation.

When the mayor’s office announced its decision to replace the fountain with the church, the citizens immediately initiated campaigns against it. A group of historians at Ural State University collected signatures from protesters against the construction of the church, despite threats articulated by Orthodox activists: the Orthodox Brotherhood, Cossacks, etc. This situation was different from what happened during the destruction of the church buildings carried out by the Bolsheviks. The decision of the authorities to destroy St. Catherine’s Cathedral did not cause objections by the population in 1930; but in 2010, the similar imperious decision to rebuild the temple was rebuffed by a significant part of the townspeople. As a result, the city hall and the diocese had to abandon the plan.

A new attempt to rebuild the church in 2016 was based on a compromise—they suggested building the Cathedral on an artificial island, which they planned to make in the middle of the city’s central pond. However, this plan also caused disapproval by the citizens and was abandoned. The reasons for the protests, in addition to arguments about historical memory and the established architectural harmony, also involved the city’s layout and the generally low attendance in the centrally located churches. Three years later, the municipality, together with the Diocese and one of the Urals’ industrial giants, decided to build a church on the Iset’ river’s¹⁸ western bank, occupying part of the square where the city’s youth gathered. The preparatory work again provoked the public, especially young people and students, who picketed it in defense of the square. Clashes with the police attracted the attention of the central authorities, and as a result, President Vladimir Putin recommended the city’s authorities to reach a compromise with the citizens: namely to suggest several places for the church construction and to hold a referendum. Based on the referendum’s results, the construction of the St. Catherine Church began in 2019 and should be finished by the city’s 300th Jubilee in 2024.

¹⁸ Iset’ is the river runs through the city’s center.

Other religious communities also had problems getting land in the city center. Due to the citizens' protests, the Jewish community had to change its plans for the construction of a synagogue three times. The Lutheran Church was also denied the right to erect a building in its historic location, which became a park. The Muslim community continues its struggle to preserve the place reserved for them in the city center for the construction of the mosque. Many communities of the Pentecostals and Baptists were denied new access to premises as well.

Religious Landscape Development: Beyond Downtown

Apart from the restoration, many new churches were built in the 1990s. Due to the failing economy, this process progressed rather slowly. The newly registered parishes rented rooms or small private houses to conduct services. Some churches started their activity at hospitals. The St. Panteleimon church began at the regional psychiatric hospital, St. Cosma, and Damian church started at the First Regional Hospital, and Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God at a boarding house for the elderly, etc. In 2015, the Ekaterinburg Diocese signed an agreement with the city administration for the construction of twenty new churches by 2020, this time in remote areas of the city. Thus, by 2017, the Orthodox Church landscape was restored in the downtown area, while altogether, about 80 Orthodox Church buildings were commissioned within the modern borders of the city. Nevertheless, there are still not enough Orthodox churches in the new districts of the megapolis.

At the beginning of the religious landscape formation in the 1990s, the city's administration tried to support freedom of conscience and inter-religious dialogue. The foundation of the "Square of Religions" with an Orthodox church, a synagogue and a mosque located side by side, was meant to become the manifestation of ecumenical ideology. Generally, this principle continues to be respected. Most of the non-Orthodox ethno-religious communities: Catholics, Lutherans, Muslims, Jews, and Armenian Apostolic Church followers (St. Karapet church) constructed their own buildings, enjoy religious freedom, and are respected. Congregations that are not ethnically defined, are located on the periphery of the city, mainly in rented premises. The only exception is the First United Methodist church, which was the first one to be registered and constructed its own gorgeous building. The community of Methodists was established soon after the international conference in Ekaterinburg mentioned in the prologue to this paper. One of the foreign participants turned out to be a Methodist Church

minister, and one of the Russian participants—a philosophy teacher—became interested in Methodism, received the required training in the USA and organized a Methodist church in Ekaterinburg.

Veneration of the Tsar family, assassinated by the Bolsheviks in Ekaterinburg during the Civil War, became dominant in Ekaterinburg's religious landscape. There were two remarkable complexes created in memory of this sad event. One of them is the Church on the Blood Monument in the name of All Saints who shone in the Russian land (hereinafter the Church on the Blood), built in 2000–2003. It was erected in the basement of the house of the engineer, Ipatiev, where the family of the last Russian emperor was shot in 1918. The complex includes the Patriarchal Compound, the Cultural and Educational Center, the Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, and a chapel to commemorate Princess Elizaveta Feodorovna. The complex has the status of state cultural heritage. The second complex is the Monastery of the Holy Royal Martyrs, or the Monastery on Ganina Yama. It was built on the site where the royal family was initially buried and includes seven wooden churches erected in Russian style. The main sponsor of the construction was Ural Mining and Metallurgical Company. A lesser known, but also revered site, is the site at Porosenkov Log, a few hundred meters from the Ganina Yama complex, where Tsarevich Alexei's and Grand Duchess Maria's remains were found. Memorial stones and a cross was installed at the site, which attract many pilgrims and tourists.

The “Tzars’ Days,” organized annually, has also become an important part of the city's religious life. There are special ceremonies organized at the Church on the Blood, like pilgrimages to the Monastery on Ganina Yama, as well as a series of cultural and educational events, including conferences and music festivals. Several thousand people from all over the country and from abroad come to participate in the “Tzars’ Days.” All objects associated with the veneration of the Tsars family are of great tourist importance for the city. At the square in front of the Church on the Blood, an ice sculpture festival is held every Christmas and ice bathing is performed on the Day of Epiphany.

Religion and Education

Religious enlightenment is one of the most important activities run by the city's religious denominations. Training and educational centers and programs exist in Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Buddhist, and other communities. The Orthodox Church

institutions carried the most ambitious work however. Ekaterinburg Theological Seminary operates to prepare the Orthodox priests and the Missionary Institute. A training department opened at Ekaterinburg Theological Seminary, making it possible to educate choir masters. They founded several choirs in the city, including Choirs at Ganina Yama Monastery and Novotikhvinskii Convent; the Choir of the Holy Trinity Cathedral; the Choir of Ekaterinburg Diocese; the Choir of Transfiguration Church; the Ascension Church Children's choir "Oktoih," and others. The Church Information Center and Library (hereafter the Library Center), was founded in 2013 to ensure the educational process in the newly established Ekaterinburg Theological Seminary, the Missionary Institute, and other Orthodox educational institutions. The Library Center became a summit for dialogue between the Orthodox Church representatives and secular scholars. For the official opening, the Library Center prepared the book exhibition, "The Twelve Centuries of the Bible in Russia: a History of publications and translations" in collaboration with the Laboratory of Archaeographic Research of Ural Federal University and the Museum of History of Ekaterinburg. Visitors can see the rare edition of the Bible published in Russian in 1581, and the first translations of the Holy texts into Siberian peoples' languages. The Library Center also organized events to commemorate the great Russian poets, Alexander Pushkin and Yurii Lermontov, which included memorial religious services, lectures, and music performances, that attracted many citizens. Unfortunately, the Library Center activity is currently curtailed.

The Missionary Institute and the Department of Theology at Ural Mining Academy offer bachelor and master's degree programs on Theology (Orthodoxy and Islam). The latter is particularly important, since due to the lack of Russian Muslim theological schools, the growing mosques had to invite imams from abroad, Saudi Arabia included. These brought a version of Islam alien to local Muslims, the Tartar and Bashkir people, creating conflicts.

The Ekaterinburg diocese owns a publishing and printing house, news agency, editorial office, radio channel, and television company. It publishes an "Orthodox Newspaper," a "Voice of Orthodoxy," a "Pokrov," and the peer-reviewed journal *Bulletin of the Ekaterinburg Theological Seminary*.¹⁹ The radio channel, created in 2003, broadcasts round-the-clock church services and other programs. In 2005, the first Russian Orthodox television company, Soyuz, was

¹⁹ <http://epds.ru/bulletin>

founded based on the diocesan TV studio. Currently, the Orthodox TV company, Soyuz, broadcasts around the world. Muslims also have their own TV channel.

In Conclusion

The religious buildings growth in Ekaterinburg reached its peak at the eve of the 21st century, with up to five new churches appearing in the city annually. By the 2010s, the geography of parishes expanded far beyond the downtown area into the new districts of the megapolis. While another twenty new churches are under construction, the peak of religious landscape development, both in terms of numbers and variety, was surpassed in 2010.

Several factors catalyzed the religious landscape's rapid reconstruction and further development: the obvious religious needs of the population; changes in legislation regarding religion; religion's key role in the new construction of identity; state and business financial support, and the last Tsar family's execution in the city. The latter influences the new, post-Soviet topography. There are streets called the Holy Quarter and Tsarskaya Street; an Orthodox high school named after the Holy Tsars—Martyrs, etc. In general, the diverse religious landscape that developed over the past 30 years, is able to satisfy the citizens' religious needs and plays an important role in the cultural life of the city. However, our anthropological studies show that citizens are not sufficiently aware of all the components in the city's diverse religious landscape. They know little outside of their own denomination. Given the Muslim population's significant growth and new religious enrooting, it can become a source of concern, especially taking into consideration mass media reports, which are occasionally rather aggressive. The solution to this problem may be in the development of educational activities aimed at introducing citizens to various religious traditions. This can be done through greater media attention to the various religious denominations' contributions to the city's welfare: their social programs aimed at supporting vulnerable groups among the population; promotion of family values; and their experience in dealing with social problems such as alcoholism, drug addiction, and violence. Regular excursions for schoolchildren to various religious denominations can contribute to this, so that they can be acquainted with alternative forms of religiosity of their fellow citizens.

Our field research conducted among religious communities of Ekaterinburg showed that a significant part of the newly erected churches are empty on weekdays and overflowed on special holidays, a well-known phenomenon in the western world. On Sundays of Great Lent, on

Christmas and Easter, all Christian churches are crowded, and the centrally-located churches, both Orthodox and Catholic, have to serve up to three liturgies a day. The same can be said about mosques on major Muslim holidays and Fridays.

Relations between the city's religious and main scientific institutions can be described as focused on dialogue and cooperation. The success is due to long-term established personal contacts, as many of the religious leaders graduated from the city's secular educational institutions and participate in research and educational processes. One of the successful examples of such cooperation is the scientific conference "Church. Theology. History," held annually (the VIIIth in February 2020) by the Ekaterinburg diocese in cooperation with Ural Federal University and the scientific conference "Islam in the Urals: Past. Present. Challenges," co-organized by the Muslim Spiritual Administration of the Sverdlovsk Oblast' together with Ural State Mining University. An important achievement was the emphasis on inter-religious and religious/secular dialogue, organized at the very beginning of the city's religious landscape development.

Naturally, there were mistakes made by both the state authorities and the regional administration, which is inevitable, given their lack of experience and education. Some of the cases are addressed in my paper on the Jehovah Witnesses, published in a journal at Ural Federal University in 2018,²⁰ just after they were banned in Russia, and in the interview with Politsovet—an independent Russian information agency. The interview, translated into English, was published in OPREE.²¹ The situation with banning the religious organization is sad and shameful for any state. However, we should keep in mind the several centuries of religious suppression in Russia, while the history of religious freedom has lasted only three decades. From this perspective, we have grounds to be satisfied with our achievements and cherish a hope that we shall admit our mistakes and eventually overcome them. Like with many other issues in regards to reforming Russia, we need more time, and we cannot just speed up the process. As history teaches us, we should not hurry when dealing with vulnerable matters like religious freedom. Support, friendly advice, and appreciation are needed.

²⁰<http://politsovet.ru/57775-zakon-yarovoy-udaryl-po-protestantam-intervyu-s-istorikom-religiy-elenoy-glavackoy.html>

²¹ E. Glavatskaya, "'Yarovoy Law' Struck the Protestants: an Interview with the Historian of Religions, Elena Glavatskaya" in *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*. 2018. 38 (3): 82-92.

Post Scriptum

While editing the paper, I received a message from a colleague that our initiative on founding a committee on evaluating doctoral dissertations in Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies was approved. Thus, there will be doctoral dissertation defenses run at our university and there will be more professionals in religious studies. Who could have imagined anything like that three decades ago?