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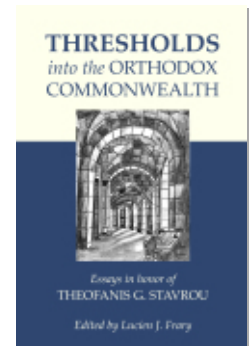
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Looking East: The American YMCA's Interaction with Russian Orthodox Christians, 1900–40

Matthew Lee Miller

The American branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (the YMCA, or the Y) entered Russia in 1900 and developed a variety of educational, religious, and athletic programs—the primary goal was to support the intellectual, spiritual, and physical development of young men. YMCA leaders began their work by establishing a public gymnasium, organizing Bible study groups, and providing direction to a Christian student movement. During World War I, many Y workers organized assistance for soldiers and prisoners of war. After the emigration of a number of Russians to western Europe, they assisted the new Russian Student Christian Movement, the YMCA Press, and the St. Sergius Theological Academy in Paris. During these years, Y leaders, such as Paul B. Anderson and Donald Lowrie, developed partnerships with a number of outstanding Orthodox leaders, including Sergei Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdiaev, and Georges Florovsky. In this way, the YMCA contributed to the preservation, enrichment, and expansion of Eastern Orthodox faith and culture. Especially through its support of the émigré student movement, publishing house, and theological academy, the YMCA played a major role in preserving an important part of prerevolutionary Russian culture in western Europe during the Soviet period. The American Protestant YMCA contributed to the enrichment of Russian Orthodox Christianity by making significant financial contributions, advising administrative development, encouraging flexibility on theological and ministry issues, setting an example of practical service to people, and developing a strong network of global relationships. These contributions combined to form a catalyst for the expansion of Eastern Orthodoxy and its influence throughout Europe, the United States, and beyond.

The relationship of the YMCA with Orthodox leaders provides a rare example of fruitful interconfessional cooperation between Protestant and Orthodox Christians and an extraordinary period of interaction between American and Russian cultures. This essay focuses on the shifting outlook of the YMCA on Orthodoxy—the Y did not begin its work as a champion of Eastern churches. More specifically, over the years, the association's approach shifted from resigned toleration to pragmatic support to limited support to enthusiastic support.¹

¹ For discussion of the social, political, and religious context of the YMCA, see two works by the author: *The American YMCA and Russian Culture: The Preservation and Expansion of*

Contact between evangelical Protestants and Eastern Orthodox gradually increased during the nineteenth century through the westward emigration of Orthodox believers from eastern Europe and the European outreach of American and British missionaries. This essay examines scholarly views on Orthodoxy and Orthodox-Protestant relations, discusses the varying perceptions of English-speaking evangelicals toward the Eastern churches during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and provides a survey of secondary and primary sources which shed light on the issue. In addition, the essay illustrates the connection between these perceptions and the descriptions of Eastern Orthodoxy contained in the historical, political, travel, and theological literature of this period. This background provides context for the focus of this essay, the shifting outlook of the YMCA on Orthodoxy.

Scholarly Perspectives on Orthodoxy

A brief reflection on the academic study of Russian Orthodoxy highlights the significance of the YMCA's approach to the Eastern churches. Thirty years ago, few historians paid any attention to the dominant faith of the Russian people. In 1985, Gregory Freeze, a leading American scholar on the history of Russian Orthodoxy, commented: "The history of the Russian Orthodox Church, especially in the modern imperial period (1700–1917), has been a woefully neglected field of scholarly research." Fortunately, during the last twenty-five years, the situation has been improving, with regular publication of research on many aspects of Orthodoxy.² In 2003, Valerie A. Kivelson and Robert H. Greene wrote that after "seventy years of neglect, the study of Russian religious life has entered an exciting period of growth in the decade since the fall of the Soviet Union." They explain:

Orthodox Christianity, 1900–1940 (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013) and "The American YMCA and Russian Politics: Critics and Supporters of Socialism, 1900–1940," in *New Perspectives on Russian-American Relations*, ed. William Benton Whisenhunt and Norman E. Saul (New York: Routledge, 2015). These works analyze the influence of the activities of the YMCA on Russians during the late imperial and early Soviet periods. This research is based on the YMCA's archival records, observations found in Moscow and Paris archives, and memoirs of both Russian and American participants.

² Gregory L. Freeze, "Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36, 1 (1985): 82. A few examples of this new research on the recent history of Russian Orthodoxy are Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827–1905* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); Chris J. Chulos, *Converging Worlds: Religion and Community in Peasant Russia, 1861–1917* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Jennifer Jean Wynot, *Keeping the Faith: Russian Orthodox Monasticism in the Soviet Union, 1917–1939* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004); Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); and Laurie Manchester, *Holy Fathers, Secular Sons: Clergy, Intelligentsia, and the Modern Self in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

By fortuitous coincidence, the transformation of the political climate of Russia since 1991 coincided with shifts in the intellectual currents in Western scholarship, where renewed interest in cultural anthropology has driven a rush of work on religious life and culture.³

Textbook descriptions usually presented a rigid system of dogma and ritual which has operated as a closed system. Recent work, however, has looked at the interplay of Orthodoxy with local and national historical trends as well as at the individual desires of laity and clergy. Historians are examining the church not simply as an organization, but as a participant in the wider culture of Russia. More recently, Freeze has observed:

Only in the last decade has Russian Orthodoxy finally become a major focus of research. If nothing else, that research has posed a challenge to antireligious assumptions and encouraged historians to give more attention to the role of the church and religion—in politics, social relations, and culture.⁴

A leading trend among scholars in this field is a focus on popular religion, the lived experience of Orthodox believers, rather than on episcopal politics and church-state relations. As one scholar summarizes, “we also need more studies of popular religion in the years before the revolution in order to substantiate statements about change in the early Soviet period.”⁵ The experiences of Orthodox office workers, students, and émigrés are considered in detail in this study of the YMCA. In spite of this historiographical progress, very little scholarly attention has been paid to one of the church’s leading concerns from the 1870s to 1917—the spread of the Baptist and Evangelical Christian movements in the Russian Empire. Two recent exceptions are the monographs by Heather Coleman and Sergei Zhuk.⁶ One reason for this limitation in American historiography may lie within the tradition of church history developed

³ Valerie A. Kivelson and Robert H. Greene, eds., *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice under the Tsars* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 1.

⁴ Gregory L. Freeze, “Recent Scholarship on Russian Orthodoxy: A Critique,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, 2 (2001): 269.

⁵ Heather J. Coleman, “Atheism versus Secularization? Religion in Soviet Russia, 1917–1961,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, 3 (2000): 557–58.

⁶ Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905–1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); and Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia’s Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830–1917* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). Another recent study on Orthodox-Protestant contacts is Arkhimandrit Avgustin (Nikitin), *Metodizm i Pravoslavie* (St. Petersburg: Svetoch, 2001). This volume contains an overview of contacts between American Protestants and Russian Orthodox, with a focus on Methodists, and highlights of the YMCA’s work with Russians on pages 149–51 and 157–66. See also Karina Ann Ham, “Interplay between Orthodoxy and Protestantism in Russia, 1905–1995” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1998).

within the Russian Orthodox Church. As Gregory Freeze has noted, scholars have often shown disregard of non-Orthodox groups and simply labeled them as heretical or schismatic.⁷

Many lay observers before and after 1900 noted the rapid growth of Russian Protestantism and saw it as a reaction to the postreform social changes and the shortcomings of the state church. The majority of bishops, however, simply assumed that Protestantism was treasonous and a threat to society. At this time, Konstantin Pobedonostsev was ober-procurator of the Holy Synod, the lay state official who supervised the Russian Orthodox Church. He “was firmly convinced that society could be kept together only by a single authority (the autocracy) and a single faith.” State and church officials developed a two-pronged approach to these heterodox Russians: state repression and church education. The state would attempt to hinder Protestant leaders, and the church would increase popular and clerical religious education.⁸

The YMCA entered Russia at a time when the Russian Orthodox Church was engaging more actively with social issues and philanthropy. Since 1860, clergy and lay leaders had been moving the church into new programs of charity and popular religious education; the center of this trend was St. Petersburg. Jennifer Hedda summarizes her research on this topic by arguing that by 1900, “the local church had become a vigorous institution that played a prominent role in the city’s public life.” St. Petersburg clergy were motivated primarily by their evaluation of growing social problems as an ethical challenge to the church. “They did not see poverty, intemperance and class tension as social problems that could be eliminated by legislating higher wages or providing better municipal services. They saw them as moral ills.” Their approach could not be described as overly optimistic or utopian, since

The church did not teach that poverty could be eliminated or that the material differences between the fortunate and the unfortunate could be erased. Rather, it taught that people should not allow such material distinctions to divide them from each other or to alienate them from God.⁹

St. Petersburg’s largest voluntary association was the Society for the Dissemination of Moral-Religious Enlightenment in the Spirit of the Orthodox Church. The catalyst for the formation of this program had been the popularity of meetings led by the British evangelist Lord Radstock and his Russian friend Colonel Pashkov for the capital’s social elite in the 1870s. These meetings included discussions of the Bible, hymn

⁷ Freeze, “Recent Scholarship,” 276.

⁸ A. Iu. Polunov, “The State and Religious Heterodoxy in Russia (from 1880 to the Beginning of the 1890s),” *Russian Studies in History* 39, 4 (2001): 54–58.

⁹ Jennifer Hedda, “Good Shepherds: The St. Petersburg Pastorate and the Emergence of Social Activism in the Russian Orthodox Church, 1855–1917” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1998), iii, 215, 220. For discussion of a number of fundamental issues concerning the Orthodox Church during this period, see Robert L. Nichols and Theofanis George Stavrou, eds., *Russian Orthodoxy under the Old Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978).

singing, and informal prayer. They did not promote direct opposition to the Russian church, but Radstock's informal ministry appealed to many among the nobility who were unsatisfied with their worship experiences in the state church.¹⁰ Hedda remarks, "Seeing how effective Radstock's methods were, this concerned group of clergymen and laymen decided to adopt his methods for their own purposes." She also notes the significant role played by this society in the development of civil society in St. Petersburg, as it encouraged voluntarism and civic responsibility.¹¹ Simon Dixon's research on the growing social awareness of clergy comes to similar conclusions and emphasizes the role played by Orthodoxy's competitors in sparking new forms of activity within the state church.¹² This essay will show how a number of clergy studied and utilized the YMCA's programs and ideas—since the Y and social Orthodoxy shared a number of basic convictions.

Protestant Perceptions of Orthodoxy

As the YMCA entered Russia and began its interaction with society and the state church, all was not business as usual. For Y secretaries, gaining even a basic grasp on the spectrum of responses to church concerns was no simple matter. As Vera Shevzov's groundbreaking monograph points out, the Russian Orthodox Church faced a variety of external and internal challenges to its own self-understanding. Marxists and other atheists challenged the church on political and philosophical grounds, while competing factions within the church attempted to shape its values.¹³ She compares this period to the Protestant Reformation and the Second Vatican Council:

True, the "evolution" or brewing "revolution" (depending on one's interpretation of those debates) in Russian Orthodoxy never had the chance to become

¹⁰ See Mark Myers McCarthy, "Religious Conflict and Social Order in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Orthodoxy and the Protestant Challenge, 1812–1905" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2004); and Sharyl Corrado, "The Philosophy of Ministry of Colonel Vasilii Pashkov" (Master's thesis, Wheaton College, 2000).

¹¹ Hedda, "Good Shepherds," 250–53, 217.

¹² Simon Dixon, "The Church's Social Role in St. Petersburg, 1880–1914," in *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Geoffrey A. Hosking (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 168, 175. See also Dixon, "The Orthodox Church and the Workers of St. Petersburg 1880–1914," in *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830–1930*, ed. Hugh McLeod (New York: Routledge, 1995), 119–41. For a discussion on the cross-cultural expansion of Orthodoxy, see James J. Stamooolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1986).

¹³ Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 258.

a comparable definitive “event,” largely on account of the political aftermath of the 1917 revolutions.¹⁴

During the 1920s, YMCA leader E. T. Colton described what he saw as the three major American Protestant responses to the Russian Orthodox Church: proselytization, condemnation, and support. According to Colton, the first group included Baptists and Methodists. The second group was made up of left-wing Protestants, such as Anna Louise Strong and Harry Ward, who condoned Soviet measures to demolish an outdated church so that a new one could replace it. The third group, Anglicans, Episcopalians, and YMCA members, was attempting to support the more liberal and progressive wing of the Orthodox Church.¹⁵

An extensive review of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Protestant literature on Eastern Orthodoxy suggests that Protestant views on Eastern Christianity have often been linked to views on Roman Catholicism and Islam. Those Protestants who had been sympathetic to Catholics and desirous of reforms had also been open to the Orthodox churches. Those with a strict anti-Catholic approach usually presented a very negative view of the Eastern bodies. A number of writers were pragmatically guided by their strong desire to see Christianity advance in the Muslim world. Some advocated assisting the Eastern churches in evangelizing Muslims. Others suggested it would be better to avoid relationships with these clergy in order not to offend adherents to Islam.

American Protestants formed a variety of opinions as they became more aware of Orthodoxy. The speakers at a 1918 conference discussing the evangelization of Russia demonstrated one very negative position. At this Chicago assembly, one speaker referred to the Russian church as a “condemned ecclesiasticism.” Another speaker explained that in this tradition “there is little room for intellectual worship” because of the “gorgeous display, semi-barbaric pomp, and endless changes of sacerdotal dress, crossings, genuflections.” Other American Protestants chose a divergent position—a romanticized admiration with a “veneration bordering upon enthusiasm and exuberance.”¹⁶ These opinions, ranging on a continuum from disdain to veneration, were primarily based on superficial impressions, for Protestants and Orthodox had lived separate lives since the Reformation. Few American and British Protestants had made a serious attempt to understand the heart and mind of Eastern believers.

Evangelical and Orthodox Christians shared a number of common foundational elements but lived in different worlds. Their common theological heritage included the authority of the divinely inspired scriptures and a common understanding of

¹⁴ Vera Shevzov, “Icons, Miracles, and the Ecclesial Identity of Laity in Late Imperial Russian Orthodoxy,” *Church History* 69, 3 (2000): 610.

¹⁵ Letter from E. T. Colton to F. W. Ramsey, 16 July 1926, 3, Russia, Colton E. T., Reports, Addresses, and Papers, volume 2, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis [hereafter KFYA].

¹⁶ Jesse W. Brooks, ed., *Good News for Russia* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1918), 75, 156, 211.

the Trinity and Christ defined by the councils of Nicaea (325 AD) and Chalcedon (451 AD). Protestants and Orthodox experienced a variety of contacts since the sixteenth-century Reformation. Philip Melancthon, the German reformer, initiated the first formal contact in 1559, when he sent a copy of the Augsburg Confession to Patriarch Joasaph of Constantinople. More than twenty years later, Joasaph's successor responded, condemning central aspects of the Confession's explanation of justification and biblical interpretation.¹⁷ However, seventy years later, the new Ecumenical Patriarch, Cyril Lucaris, published a confession which included teachings adapted from the writings of John Calvin. The entire Orthodox Church rejected this confession—several councils of the church hierarchy condemned Lucaris's views.¹⁸

In the following years, Anglo-Catholic theologians of the Church of England and the Russian Orthodox Church initiated an ongoing dialogue which continued into the twentieth century.¹⁹ After World War I, friendly contacts between Orthodox and Anglicans increased steadily. Both sides expressed a desire for Christian oneness and mutual respect. Of course, the motivations for these meetings were not only religious in nature. Russian church leaders in Europe were experiencing life after disestablishment; the Ecumenical Patriarchate found itself within a newly secular Turkish state, so support from the Church of England became desirable. Orthodox and Anglican history also played a role in forming new ties. A number of Anglo-Catholic and Orthodox leaders felt an extra measure of Christian brotherhood. Both communities argued that they represented authentic apostolic Christianity. Their common mutual opposition to certain positions of the Roman bishop and their belief that the Roman Catholic Church had created the existing schisms led some Orthodox and Anglicans to see existing differences between their communions as more apparent than real.²⁰

The growing strength of Roman Catholicism in Britain, and its attractiveness to younger Anglo-Catholics, was a great concern to the older generation of high church Anglicans. Some of these elders saw the possibility of Orthodox recognition of Anglican clergy as a counterweight to the growing popularity of the Roman Church. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a variety of Protestant mission organizations conducted ministry with Russians, Greeks, Cypriots, Bulgarians, and other traditionally Orthodox ethnic groups. Missionaries, representing a variety of denominations, expressed a range of views on the nature and condition of the churches. The British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), an interdenominational Christian organization founded in 1804, coordinated the translation and distribution of the Bible throughout

¹⁷ P. D. Steeves, "The Orthodox Tradition," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 807.

¹⁸ Carnegie S. Calian, *Icon and Pulpit: The Protestant-Orthodox Encounter* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1968), 22–23.

¹⁹ Josef L. Altholz, "Anglican-Orthodox Relations in the Nineteenth Century," *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 18–19 (2002–03): 1–14.

²⁰ Bryn Geffert, *Eastern Orthodox and Anglicans: Diplomacy, Theology, and the Politics of Interwar Ecumenism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 3–4.

the world.²¹ The BFBS quickly expanded its work to many regions, including Russia. The Russian Bible Society was organized in 1812 with the support of Alexander I, who maintained friendly contacts with evangelicals. The Russian organization's work led to increasing involvement with the church hierarchy, and soon thereafter several priests served as members of the society's leadership council. Initially, the Bible society was quite successful in distributing the Scriptures widely. The society's efforts led to the translation of the Bible into modern Russian, as well as other significant minority languages within the empire. The society began its work with the hesitant support of the established church, but many clergy grew to resent its growing influence. Eventually, many began to view the society as a subversive organization, and in 1826 Nicholas I declared that it must cease operation. The service of the BFBS with the Russian Bible Society was significant, since it stands as a unique case in the history of Russian Christianity of sustained cooperation between the Orthodox hierarchy and the clergy of non-Orthodox Christian churches.²²

The establishment of Methodism in Russia began in the late nineteenth century, primarily through the work of American missionary George Albert Simons.²³ In 1908 Simons began his ministry in St. Petersburg. He ministered through evangelism, publishing, and social service until his departure in 1918. By 1928 the denomination claimed 2,300 adherents. Apparently, Methodist missionaries worked in Russia without any significant communication with the Orthodox Church. Simons viewed Orthodoxy negatively, yet he chose to speak carefully about the church in order not to provoke opposition.²⁴

Historian David Foglesong has described the work and views of a number of Protestant missionaries, especially Methodists and Adventists. He argues that these workers shared a number of views regarding Russian Orthodoxy; for example, they assumed that the Russian people were only "superficially Christianised." Also, they believed that they were justified in conducting missionary work in a traditionally Orthodox nation due to the limitations of the church's missionary efforts and the immense size of the country. Foglesong presents additional information on Methodist

²¹ Judith Cohen Zacek, "The Russian Bible Society and the Russian Orthodox Church," *Church History* 25 (December 1966): 413. For additional insight on the Bible Society, see James Urry, "John Melville and the Mennonites: A British Evangelist in South Russia, 1837–ca. 1875," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 54, 4 (1980): 305–22. For a Soviet perspective on this project, see Andrei Rostovtsev, "'Britanskoe Bibleiskoe Obshchestvo' i rasprostranenie Biblii: Torgovlia 'dukhovnoi sivukhoi' v Rossii," *Bezbozhnik*, no. 24 (December 1927): 5–9.

²² Zacek, "The Russian Bible Society," 414–16, 436–37.

²³ Mark Elliott, "Methodism in Russia and the Soviet Union," in *Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, ed. Joseph L. Wieczynski (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1981), 22:15–18. For an analysis of similarities and differences in Orthodox and Methodist religion, see S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., ed., *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002).

²⁴ John Dunstan, "George A. Simons and the Khristianski Pobornik: A Neglected Source on St. Petersburg Methodism," *Methodist History* 19 (1980): 24–25, 40, 38.

missionary George Simons, who wrote to his supervisors, “The Russo Greek Church does not preach. Hers is a religion of male singing, ritual and image-worship. Like other branches of paganized Christianity, she offers a stone to those who are hungering for the Bread of Life.”²⁵ American Congregational and Episcopal missionaries worked actively among Greeks in independent Greece and the Ottoman Empire and expressed different perceptions of the Orthodox churches. Pliny Fisk, one of the first Congregational workers, sharply criticized the established Greek church: “for though nominal Christians, they [the Greeks] pay an idolatrous regard to pictures, holy places and saints. Their clergy are ignorant in the extreme.” The Episcopal missionaries expressed a more positive evaluation. They wrote of how an understanding of Jesus Christ had been passed down from the apostolic Greek churches through years of tradition. The Episcopalians claimed that problems, such as “errors of doctrine” and “clerical ignorance,” were due to conditions of oppression under the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, they did not attempt to organize their own churches in Greece but focused on publications and the education of children.²⁶ Congregationalists attempted to invigorate Greek churches in various ways, including education of children and distribution of Bibles. While carrying out these plans, they criticized local traditions, such as monasteries and the special attention accorded to Mary. They hoped that a focus on individual repentance would be more appealing to Greeks than ceremonies.²⁷ In Cyprus, the attitudes of Congregational missionaries appeared to have been similar to the views held by their colleagues in independent Greece, but these workers were more restrained in their public criticism to avoid conflict. For this reason they attempted to build relationships with local priests. The stated goal was to reform the religious life of the island. The root motivation in their ministry seems to have been to increase the intellectual understanding of the Bible: they believed that biblical knowledge had been obscured on the island by clerical ignorance and superstitious rituals. Missionaries organized schools to raise the level of literacy and attempted to recruit local priests to distribute Bibles in the villages.²⁸

The interdenominational British and Foreign Bible Society, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians, all ministered actively within predominantly Orthodox countries. The Bible society chose to serve alongside the Orthodox in a

²⁵ David S. Foglesong, “Redeeming Russia? American Missionaries and Tsarist Russia, 1886–1917,” *Religion, State and Society* 25, 4 (1997): 355–56.

²⁶ Theodore Saloutos, “American Missionaries in Greece: 1820–1869,” *Church History* 24 (1955): 155, 164–65.

²⁷ Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810–1927* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 8. See also P. E. Shaw, *American Contacts with the Eastern Churches, 1820–1870* (Chicago: American Society of Church History, 1937).

²⁸ Terry Tollefson, “American Missionary Schools for Cyprus (1834–1842): A Case Study in Cultural Differences,” *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 10–11 (1994–95): 37, 50. See also John O. Iatrides, “Missionary Educators and the Asia Minor Disaster: Anatolia College’s Move to Greece,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 4, 2 (1986): 143–57.

way which assisted a wide variety of Russians, while the Methodists chose to serve through independent outreach. Congregationalists and Episcopalians both attempted to facilitate reform, but the Congregationalists were far more critical of weaknesses and distinctive practices. These encounters serve as points of comparison to the interaction between the YMCA and Orthodox believers. This wide variety of reactions to Eastern churches suggests that denominational membership played a key role in determining a missionary's perception. Baptists and Methodists usually denounced the Orthodox faith and conducted their ministry independently of the established churches. Congregationalists frequently criticized certain aspects of Eastern Christianity, but expressed sympathy for the difficult conditions faced by the churches in Europe. Often missionaries from this denomination described the goal as "reformation" of the established church. Episcopalians and Anglicans typically expressed admiration more frequently than criticism. These workers often attempted to provide ministry support. In addition, interdenominational alliances also tended to express sympathy and aimed at a ministry of reformation. In general, staff members of denominations which included more traditional forms of ritual in their worship were more accepting of Orthodoxy than those from denominations which rejected traditional forms for a simpler sermon-centered worship. Russian Orthodox leaders also encountered Protestants in the Middle East, as both groups worked to set up schools in Palestine and Syria. While American Christians worked to expand their service in Russia through the YMCA and other organizations, Russian Christians actively supported educational development abroad through the Orthodox Palestine Society. Cross-cultural philanthropy did not simply operate as a one-way phenomenon.²⁹

Missionary perceptions of the Eastern churches developed under the influence of American attitudes toward Orthodox immigrants. Negative perceptions in the United States and in Europe seem to have been mutually dependent. Relatively few publications written in English during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries examine Orthodoxy in depth. Several of these books presented a sympathetic description, but the negative evaluation provided by Edward Gibbon's influential *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* overshadowed the other viewpoints in the minds of nineteenth-century Americans. During this century, many Americans feared the immigration of non-Protestants, such as Catholics, Jews—and the Orthodox. Different social values, financial practices, religious traditions, and ethnic heritages seemed to threaten accepted understandings of the American "way of life."³⁰

A key factor shaping missionaries' understandings of Eastern Christianity was the information presented in books available in the United States and Great Britain. One could assume that travel and ministry accounts were popular reading choices for missionaries, especially before their departure for service. *The Story of Moscow*, Wirt

²⁹ Theofanis George Stavrou, *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882–1914: A Study of Religious and Educational Enterprise* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), especially 62–63.

³⁰ Peter Carl Haskell, "American Civil Religion and the Greek Immigration: Religious Confrontation before the First World War," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 18, 4 (1974): 167, 180–81, 173.

Gerrare's travel account published in 1903, provided a description of the practices, beliefs, and landmarks of Russian Orthodox Christianity. One uncommon feature of the book was the warning that foreigners need to be careful when making observations of the Russian church. He wrote:

For many, who are quite ignorant of its tenets and practice, the Eastern Church has an irresistible fascination; the danger is that these, on a first acquaintance will over-praise such details as they may appreciate and too hastily condemn others they may not rightly comprehend.³¹

John Bookwalter described his travels in the *Russian Empire in Siberia and Central Asia* (1899). He paid special attention to the role of icons in prerevolutionary Russia and used this theme to illustrate his claim that "the strongest trait of the Russian's character is his intense religious sentiment."³² A. McCaig published a very different view in his book, *Grace Astounding in Bolshevik Russia*. McCaig served as principal of Spurgeon's College in London, a study center for conservative European Baptists. During a visit to Riga, he met Cornelius Martens, who told of his recent ministry in Russia. McCaig then collected and edited the accounts of Martens. One chapter, "Victory over Priestly Opposition," included a dramatic story of how an Orthodox priest came with a group of followers to disturb one of Martens's preaching services. His friends told him to flee "to save his life as they had intended to kill him."³³

During this period, key Protestant textbooks of systematic theology and church history included little information on Eastern Orthodoxy. This may have contributed to the assumption that distinctive Eastern theological positions and historical realities did not deserve serious consideration. A. H. Strong's popular three-volume set, *Systematic Theology* (1909), did not comment on any theological positions of Orthodoxy after the Middle Ages. George Fisher's *History of the Christian Church* (1897) and Williston Walker's *A History of the Christian Church* (1918) also virtually ignored developments in Eastern Christianity after the medieval era. These were, for the most part, well-researched textbooks written by respected professors at Yale University. One exception to this trend was the English translation of the standard German textbook *Church History*, by J. H. Kurtz (1890), which commented extensively on developments in Greece and other countries. Many Protestant Christian leaders of this period adopted a negative view of Orthodoxy, due to the evaluation of Adolf Harnack, the influential German theologian and church historian. Harnack's writings included an "uncompromising condemnation of the Eastern Churches as relics of the syncretistic cults of late classical antiquity coated by a thin Christian veneer."³⁴

³¹ Wirt Gerrare, *The Story of Moscow* (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1903), 173.

³² John W. Bookwalter, *Siberia and Central Asia* (Springfield, OH: n.p., 1899), 242.

³³ A. McCaig, *Grace Astounding in Bolshevik Russia: A Record of the Lord's Dealings with Brother Cornelius Martens* (London: Russian Missionary Society, 1920), 99.

³⁴ Heinrich A. Stammeler, "Russian Orthodoxy in Recent Protestant Church History and Theology," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 23, 3–4 (1979): 208.

YMCA Perceptions on Orthodoxy

The YMCA's efforts in Russia and Greece were unusual examples of cooperation between American Protestants and Orthodox Christians. In 1875, few association members would have dreamed that fifty years later their organization would be publishing works of Eastern Orthodox theology. At that time, almost all YMCA members belonged to evangelical churches and accepted a traditional form of Protestant theology. Few of these men knew Orthodox believers or studied the history of the Eastern Church. The position of the American YMCA regarding the Eastern faith shifted significantly from 1900 to 1940; the attitudes of its leaders and secretaries ranged widely across a spectrum from dismissal to praise over these years. It is simply not possible to identify one YMCA stance on Orthodoxy at any one time.

However, basic steps in the shift in the prevailing position may be identified among this diversity of views—the following section provides a number of illustrations. From 1900 to 1918, the leaders of the YMCA's Mayak ministry for urban men in St. Petersburg and Petrograd expressed and demonstrated resigned toleration of Orthodoxy—its doctrine, practices, and leaders. Mayak leaders functioned with state approval, so they maintained polite relations with the church in order to safeguard freedom for their activity. Though they encouraged and supported young Orthodox believers, they hoped for a day when they would be able to teach evangelical Protestant belief and behavior without restrictions. They resented the necessity of leaving all Bible teaching to state church priests and doubted the salvation of many clergy. They were, however, able to operate without serious opposition from the hierarchy. This attitude was similar to that held by the British and Foreign Bible Society. In the early nineteenth century, the Bible society chose to cooperate with the Orthodox Church in order to serve larger numbers of Russians. During the same period, the Russian Student Christian Movement (RSCM) usually operated without formal state approval, so it was not required to rely on clergy for religious programs. The Americans working with the RSCM welcomed the participation and leadership of Orthodox students but promoted an interconfessional approach which attempted to emphasize the common beliefs shared by all Christians and avoid religious controversy. In this way the American Protestant leaders offered pragmatic support for Orthodox believers but did not encourage them to share the distinctives of their heritage with those of other backgrounds.

For a variety of reasons the leaders of the YMCA became more intentional and enthusiastic in their support of the Orthodox Church during the challenging years of world war, revolutions, and civil war. These leaders encouraged Y secretaries to back the ministry of clergy. However, the stated position of the YMCA for work in Russia did not exclude support for other non-Orthodox confessions: this period's philosophy was one of limited support for Orthodox believers. After the revolution, the YMCA Russian work leaders in Europe eventually adopted a position of enthusiastic support: they even avoided supporting Russian Protestant ventures. This YMCA policy of a confessional approach was unusual and did not develop without challenges from some secretaries. By 1940, however, the Y had moved from resigned toleration to

enthusiastic support of Russian Orthodoxy. Yet there was always a vocal minority ready to criticize the church and the YMCA's support of its leadership. The YMCA's growing support of Orthodoxy occurred as many of its secretaries abandoned several Protestant distinctives, such as the primacy of scripture over reason and tradition and justification by faith alone. Paradoxically, as the general Y organization in the United States moved away from the doctrines of traditional Protestantism, the Russian work staff became more supportive of Eastern Orthodox churches which held on to far more traditional doctrines.

John R. Mott led the way for the YMCA with his sympathies for the Eastern churches and his desire to support and expand their ministry. Shortly before the opening of YMCA work in Russia, Mott met Archbishop Nikolai, the Russian missionary who had established Japan's Orthodox Church. Meeting this hierarch challenged his perception of a corrupt and servile church. Mott "saw that one Orthodox missionary had established a large church even in a hostile country."³⁵ His enthusiasm grew as a result of his meetings with church leaders during his participation in the Root Mission of 1917. He sensed a mood of renewal and optimism. His public comments and writings frequently emphasized his enthusiastic evaluation.

The first YMCA field worker to live and work in Russia was Franklin Gaylord, who was often critical of the traditional faith in his letters and reports. After eight years of work with the Mayak he wrote:

There is great difficulty in securing Christian men as voluntary workers. Orthodox Russian Christianity is a low grade of Christianity and to find men of real spiritual development is next to impossible.

He reported that the prominent religion was of little consequence in everyday life:

[T]he Russian priests and the Russian people generally, are formally most religious. In fact, there is a shocking lack of Christianity in all of Russian society. The great need of Russia as indeed of every country is men of character and of all round Christian development.

He was especially frustrated by the limitations placed by its official charter on the religious work of the Mayak:

Although its work is largely preventive at the present time there is hope that with increasing religious liberty in Russia, the Society will become more and more similar to the American Young Men's Christian Association on which, as far as possible, it has been modeled.³⁶

³⁵ Paul B. Anderson, "A Study of Orthodoxy and the YMCA," booklet printed in Geneva by the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1963, 15, Pamphlets on Orthodoxy, YMCA of the USA, Anderson, Paul B, 1, KFYA.

³⁶ Franklin Gaylord, "Extracts from Report for the Year 1908 of the Society for the Moral, Intellectual and Physical Development of Young Men in St Petersburg Russia," 10-11. Corre-

Gaylord attempted to work with priests who could connect with young people and communicate well but was frequently disappointed by what he sensed as lack of spiritual fervor and Bible teaching ability: “Among the thousands of priests in this city, some must be true Christians.”³⁷ Gaylord’s assistant, Erich Moraller, shared his negative views and hoped for wider opportunities in the future:

We hope the time is not far distant when the name of Christian with its full meaning will dawn upon the whole nation. That all men may know Christ, as personal Saviour, and God in life and deed. As yet He is to them a far off inaccessible Being.³⁸

The Y men who worked among university students held similar critical attitudes. In his 1914 annual report Philip A. Swartz gave an extended summary of his views: “The Orthodox Church is utterly inadequate for the new conditions to say nothing about its failure in meeting the spiritual demands of former years.” His evaluation was entirely negative and repeated the common criticisms of lack of biblical knowledge, entanglement with the state, popular superstition, clerical greed, and immoral leadership.³⁹

The attitude of most secretaries became more positive as the Russian work expanded after 1914. Mott’s influence continued, especially after he became acquainted with the future Patriarch Tikhon during the Root Mission thanks to Charles R. Crane, a wealthy American philanthropist who was especially concerned with Russia and had financed Tikhon’s New York cathedral choir. After 1917 the entire Y program had the blessing of Patriarch Tikhon. Ethan T. Colton, senior secretary for the Russian work beginning in 1918, developed relationships of trust with the Orthodox hierarchy. In the years to follow Tikhon passed instructions to Metropolitan Evlogii in Berlin via Colton. However, Colton states that from 1917 to 1921 the YMCA received a mixed reaction from Russian Orthodox clergy: “We found perhaps half friendly, the others aloof.”⁴⁰

In 1920 William Banton, a YMCA leader for the Russian program who was based in New York, wrote a letter that expressed the policy of limited support for Or-

spondence and Reports, 1903–1910, Russian Work Restricted, Correspondence and Reports, 1903–1917, KFYA.

³⁷ Letter from Franklin Gaylord to John R. Mott, 11 March 1912, 1, Correspondence and Reports, 1911–1912, Russian Work Restricted, Correspondence and Reports, 1903–1917, KFYA.

³⁸ [Erich Moraller], “Report of the Physical Department and the Department of Bible Study in the Society “Miyak,” (an alternate spelling of Mayak) [1910], 4, Russian Work, James Stokes Society including Saint Petersburg, KFYA.

³⁹ Philip A. Swartz, “Annual Report of Philip A. Swartz,” [30 September 1914], 5–6, Correspondence and Reports, 1913–1914, Russian Work Restricted, Correspondence and Reports, 1903–1917, KFYA.

⁴⁰ [E. T. Colton], “The Russian Work Sequences with their Church Relations,” no date, 2–3, YMCA Relationships (1920–1925), 2, Russian Church, KFYA.

thodoxy which had evolved to that point. Banton described Orthodoxy as “fundamentally sound” and believed that its weaknesses were rooted in years of state control. He then expressed his opinion that the Association could function in an Orthodox context: “As far as having to first evangelize the Russian nation before we plant the seed of an indigenous Association movement I do not believe that this is necessary or desirable.” Banton concluded his statement by describing his desire for the YMCA to work with the Orthodox Church—and other Christian churches in Russia:

The official attitude of the Association in connection with the Orthodox Church is one of cooperation, but we do not limit ourselves to supporting this Christian body alone but desire to equally serve all Christian bodies existing in Russia.⁴¹

His letter expressed appreciation for the context of the Russian church, but listed a number of typical Protestant criticisms; the spirit seems to be sincere but not whole-hearted. The approach was positive and interconfessional.

Rev. Frederic Charles Meredith played a key role in educating YMCA secretaries about the history and beliefs of Orthodoxy and encouraging them to develop positive relations with clergy and lay people alike. He stopped short of full endorsement, however. His booklet, *The Young Men’s Christian Association and the Russian Orthodox Church*,⁴² was used as a staff training tool. Meredith had served as rector of the American Episcopal Church in Mayebashi, Japan, before his time of YMCA service in Siberia. He wrote that the senior national secretary of the YMCA in Russia, G. S. Phelps, saw that the youth of Russia could best be served in cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church, since it was “the determining religious influence of the country.” This view was not shared by all the secretaries. In general the Association workers who began to work in Siberia in 1918 were “ignorant” of Orthodoxy—and the church was ignorant of the YMCA. Meredith had been working among American troops at Spasskoe, when Phelps asked him to take up the assignment of studying Orthodoxy and helping the YMCA develop a relationship with the Russian church. Meredith had been studying Orthodoxy for some time and was familiar with developments in the relationship between Anglicans and Orthodox. Meredith set out with a five-step program for his assignment: 1) study the Russian church by meeting with clergy and attending worship services; 2) explain the YMCA to the clergy and lay people of the church; 3) explain the doctrine and worship of the church to YMCA

⁴¹ Letter from Wm. Walter Banton to Oliver J. Frederickson, 3 December 1920, 1, Correspondence and Reports, 1920, Russian Work Restricted, Correspondence and Reports, 1918–1921, KFYA.

⁴² Frederic Charles Meredith, *The Young Men’s Christian Association and the Russian Orthodox Church* (New York: The International Committee of Young Men’s Christian Associations, 1921), Russian Work, Restricted, Pamphlets, KFYA.

workers; 4) survey the religious conditions of cities and the influences of the church; and 5) survey the conditions of student life and the influences of Orthodoxy.⁴³

He began his study in 1919 with a meeting with Bishop Anatolii in Tomsk, who was familiar with the Y from time spent in the United States. The bishop welcomed Meredith warmly and provided many suggestions for his program of study. Meredith described the worship services he attended with great enthusiasm. He also explained his understanding of a controversy surrounding the Y triangle:

The apex of the triangle in many Russian Orthodox church decorations, and especially in representations and pictures of God the Father, points upward; therefore to many the red triangle, pointing downward instead of upward, seemed to be a popular “devil sign” or a Jewish emblem.

Bishop Anatolii said that Meredith “should take part in church services as soon as I had acquired certain [Russian language] proficiency.” The services seemed to create the deepest enthusiasm for Meredith, and he was overwhelmed by “the splendor of Russian worship.”⁴⁴

After his survey trip, Meredith gave a message to Y secretaries in Vladivostok on the history and doctrine of Orthodoxy. He emphasized that knowledge of the church depended on attending worship services. He “insisted that the duty of every secretary working in Russia is to do so.” The booklet closed with general observations and plans for the YMCA. He presented the doctrinal conservatism of the church in a positive way:

The Russian Orthodox Church has never given one uncertain sound with reference to the center and core of Christianity, the divine Son of God, Jesus Christ, and when the treasures of the Church are really unlocked to Western minds, her progress in the understanding of the Christ will be made manifest.

He noted that the Russian Orthodox Church needs to gain a better understanding of Protestantism and needs to continue with its reforms. The conclusion was not entirely positive:

The Church has alienated thousands and her sins of omission and commission hang around her neck as did the albatross around the neck of the Ancient Mariner. However, as has been said, “the Church is indestructible and its influence inextinguishable in Russia. It can be made an agency to reach millions for good, who can in no other way be reached. It needs sympathy and it needs aid.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid., 3–4.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 8, 10, 13, 30.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 41–45, 49, 52.

He commented that he felt sympathy for Russia's other Christian confessions, such as the Old Believers and "various sects." However, he did not believe that these groups would be able to provide a unifying faith for the Russian people. He suggested that Russian Protestants may use words that are similar to those of American Protestants, but there is only a "superficial resemblance" between these groups. He desired to serve and assist the Russian Orthodox Church and based his views on adopted positions of the YMCA on serving the local church. He agreed with the general orders issued by the leadership of the YMCA in Russia to support the Orthodox Church. He made these recommendations to the YMCA in Russia: 1) study and attend Orthodox worship services; 2) compile a handbook on Russian church history; 3) cooperate with local clergy in planning programs; 4) place icons in Y buildings and host Orthodox prayer services; and 5) distribute information on the YMCA to clergy and laypeople.

We can be of great help to the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Church can be of great help to us. With mutual respect and hearty cooperation, each in its own sphere can do much for "Poor Russia."⁴⁶

Colton continued to work within Soviet Russia from 1922 to 1925 with the American Relief Administration. During this time, he was able to observe the work of American Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, and Mennonites in Russia. The Methodist and Baptist workers were supporting the work of starting new churches, while the Lutheran and Mennonite workers were supporting relief efforts.⁴⁷ He realized that at this time the Orthodox Church was facing stiffer opposition from the government than the "Sectarians," which included the Baptists and Evangelical Christians. This situation doubtlessly deepened his sympathy for the Orthodox. He believed that the Soviet government was sympathetic to sectarians, since they had been persecuted during the period when revolutionaries had been opposed by the tsarist government. Also, he believed that the government was favoring the sectarians in order to help weaken the Orthodox Church.⁴⁸

In 1922 Colton became involved in the church's resistance to the Soviet government's demand to turn over religious valuables as a contribution to famine relief. The patriarch and synod authorized a committee to obtain help from Colton: they requested that he contact the leadership of the American Relief Administration (ARA). The church hoped to turn over the valuables as security for a loan from the United States which could then be directed to provide additional state famine relief. In this way the church planned to protect its valuables from destruction. Colton spoke personally with Colonel Haskell, who expressed sympathy for the plight of the church but refused to go through with this plan for three reasons. First, the plan would be seen as a political move in violation of the ARA's charter for Russia. Second, reliable

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 53, 56–60.

⁴⁷ E. T. Colton, "Contacts with the Russian Church, January to April 1922," 3–5, Russian Orthodox Church, Russian Work, Restricted, Ethan T. Colton Collection, KFYA.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

bankers would not accept the valuables as security. Third, limitations of transportation would mean that the funds could not actually get more food to those in need.⁴⁹

In the 1920s Colton also found himself involved in the efforts of the modernizing pro-government “Living Church” wing of Orthodoxy to secure support from American Methodists.⁵⁰ Colton was a Methodist and sharply opposed to this movement, which he identified as schismatic; the catalyst for Methodist support of this group was a former YMCA secretary, Julius Hecker, who had an uncanny ability to draw the Y into controversy. Hecker was a prolific and engaging radical writer and an outspoken opponent of traditional Orthodoxy, which he saw as devoid of moral power or creative thinking. In one article he argued that “the Russian, indeed, is pious, although his piety has little to do with his moral standards.”⁵¹ In another work he added that “religion had little to do with shaping the moral code and practices of the Russian people.”⁵² He showed little awareness and even less appreciation for the intellectual ferment of the prerevolutionary period:

There exists some scholarship to perpetuate the traditional theology and guard against heretics who might undermine the Orthodox faith, but for original thinking there is neither need nor place in the Orthodox Church.⁵³

In a 1924 article he barely disguised his glee over the Soviet attack on the church; Hecker believed that “the Russian Church hierarchy is reaping its own harvest,” since it had supported the suppression of both non-Orthodox groups and revolutionaries. He hoped that in the future Russia would adopt “a synthesis of the personal element emphasized in the Gospels with the social element emphasized by communism.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibid., 5–6. See Bertrand M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 654–62. The church’s proposal to Colton is not included in Patenaude’s account. Colton’s report sheds additional light on the rumors surrounding the ARA and the Russian Orthodox Church; many Russians at the time believed that the church’s treasures were being taken to pay for the ARA food aid.

⁵⁰ For recent research on the Living Church, see Edward E. Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905–1946* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Scott Kenworthy, “Russian Reformation? The Program for Religious Renovation in the Orthodox Church, 1922–1925,” *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 16–17 (2000–01): 89–130; and S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., “The Living Church Conflict in the Russian Orthodox Church and the Involvement of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” *Methodist History* 40, 2 (2002): 105–18.

⁵¹ Julius F. Hecker, “The Religious Characteristics of the Russian Soul,” *Methodist Review* 103, 6 (1920): 898.

⁵² Julius F. Hecker, *Religion and Communism: A Study of Religion and Atheism in Soviet Russia* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1933), 33.

⁵³ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁴ Julius F. Hecker, “The Russian Church under the Soviets,” *Methodist Review* 107, 4 (1924): 554–55.

Hecker became a counselor and promoter for the Living Church and an advisor for Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskii, one of its most prominent leaders. Colton described Hecker's efforts with a mixture of sympathy and disappointment: "He wants the social program of the Government to succeed, because he believes it has the same goal as Christianity, and therefore that the Church should be in alignment with the Government."⁵⁵ Hecker arranged for the American Methodist bishop John L. Neulsen to meet in Moscow with Living Church leaders, who invited support and assistance from the American Methodists. Neulsen was very critical of the old regime and very enthusiastic about the Living Church and their plans to modernize the Russian Orthodox Church.⁵⁶

When he learned of the plans of Hecker and these Methodist leaders, Colton intervened and provided information against the Living Church to prevent the relationship from developing further. He did not care to see his own denomination "undergird the schismatic 'Living Church' and capture it for something like Methodism."⁵⁷ Colton also advised the Federal Council of Churches in developing its policy of non-recognition toward the Living Church.⁵⁸ He steadfastly supported the patriarchal church and refused to back any competing factions. Colton's 1925 essay "The Russian Orthodox Church—A Spiritual Liability or Asset?" challenged the view held by Hecker that the persecution of the church was a just reward and a welcome development. Colton wrote that many of the common charges of clerical immorality and abuse of power are acknowledged by informed and loyal believers. However, he called on his readers to remember the more worthy leaders who are suffering persecution:

The secular authorities are undertaking on a national scale to teach childhood to deny God. Is it good economy of the Kingdom under these circumstances to defame the lovers of Christ and cheer on the assault?⁵⁹

Colton's personal views and the ministry experiences already described are clearly embedded in the policy statement "The Position of the Y.M.C.A. in Regard to Church Bodies in Russia," which clarified the stance of the organization on two positions that generated controversy: interconfessional ministry (which was controversial in Russia) and support of the patriarchal church (which was controversial in

⁵⁵ [E. T. Colton], "The Religious Situation in Russia," 1 November 1923, 8–9, *The Religious Situation in Russia*, Russian Work, Restricted, Pamphlets, KF YA.

⁵⁶ "Soviet Russia: Address of Bishop Neulsen to Annual Meeting, Board of Foreign Missions," [1922], 1–4, *YMCA Relationships (1920–25)* 1, Russian Church, KF YA. See also Kimbrough, "The Living Church."

⁵⁷ [Colton], "Russian Work Sequences," 6.

⁵⁸ Ethan T. Colton, *Forty Years with Russians* (New York: Association Press, 1940), 155–56.

⁵⁹ E. T. Colton, "The Russian Orthodox Church—A Spiritual Liability or Asset?" 1 January 1925, manuscript, 5, *Russia*, Colton E. T., Reports, Addresses, and Papers, 2 vols., KF YA. This was later published as "Is the Russian Church Christian?" in *The Christian Century*, 7 May 1925, 602–04.

the United States). He acknowledged that it would be difficult to cooperate with every Christian group which wished to cooperate. Many Russian Orthodox leaders would be troubled by YMCA support of US Protestants who sponsored evangelism in Russia. On the other hand, many conservative Protestants would oppose assisting the Russian church, “which they will regard as having lost its witness and laden with not only formalism but superstition.”⁶⁰

Donald A. Lowrie, a YMCA secretary who served among émigrés in the 1920s and 1930s made serious efforts to understand the worldviews and perspectives of Orthodox believers and attempted to integrate his insights in his work. He summarized some of his ideas in “A Method of Bible Study for Orthodox Groups.” Lowrie wrote on encouraging group Bible study among these believers, who were often hesitant to discuss a selection unless a priest was leading. Lowrie pointed out that the hesitancy was rooted in respect for the Bible and a fear of heresy. He suggested using the writings of the church fathers, such as John Chrysostom, to guide the selection of discussion questions. Chrysostom was noted for his insights into the problems of everyday life.⁶¹

In 1925 the American YMCA amended its constitution on the issue of membership requirements. Now anyone who believed in the “divinity” (a term used in different ways by different groups) of Jesus Christ could be an active voting member. So, Catholics and Orthodox could become members. However, “90% of the directing or managing committees and all delegates to Association national or international legislative gatherings must be members of Protestant Evangelical Churches.”⁶² During the 1920s, as the YMCA began working among Orthodox émigrés, they found themselves in a new environment. Criticism of the YMCA grew among the most conservative elements of the Orthodox hierarchy. Also, the church became increasingly popular among young people searching for spiritual roots. Y secretaries found themselves moving toward an exclusive support of Orthodoxy with programs built on a confessional, rather than interconfessional, basis. In one document, they defended their work in Russia: “In no case was it the intent of responsible Association leaders to subvert Russian Christian teachings. Simply their agents were too little informed.”⁶³ The move toward supporting confessional Orthodox programs, such as the émigré

⁶⁰ E. T. Colton, “The Position of the Y.M.C.A. in Regard to Church Bodies in Russia,” no date, Russian Orthodox Church, Russian Work, Restricted, Ethan T. Colton Collection, KFYA. A similar view is advocated by Y secretary Ralph W. Hollinger in his paper, “What American Protestant Churches Can Do for Russia,” 15 April 1920, Correspondence and Reports, 1920, Russian Work Restricted, Correspondence and Reports, 1918–1921, KFYA.

⁶¹ “A Method of Bible Study for Orthodox Groups (Prague),” [1925], 1–2, 1925, Russian Work—Europe, Restricted, Correspondence and Reports, 1920–29, Annual Reports, 1920–29, KFYA.

⁶² [Paul B. Anderson], “Fundamentals of the Young Men’s Christian Association,” unpublished draft, 1929, 23, Paul B. Anderson Papers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives [hereafter PBAP].

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 40.

RSCM, the YMCA Press, and the St. Sergius Theological Academy, raised pointed questions from some leaders and secretaries. One view was expressed in “Survey of North American YMCA Service to Russians in Europe,” a detailed review of over 250 pages which surveyed the work through the 1920s. In the foreword the (unnamed) reviewer questioned the wisdom of exclusively supporting the Orthodox Church. This document expressed doubt that this church would ever “exert a controlling influence.” It went on to suggest that the program may be rooted in “the inevitable result of homesickness.”⁶⁴

The survey, however, went on to explain the basis of the adopted policy of only supporting Orthodox programs: “Other historical denominations are of a foreign origin and until now were unable to become an integral part of Russian culture.”⁶⁵ The experience and study of Paul B. Anderson, a consistent supporter of confessional ministry, were key factors in the development of this position. He outlined past and current issues which had separated the Y and the church in a 1926 three-page outline, “The YMCA and the Russian Orthodox Church.” Anderson addressed some of the conflicts that had developed between the YMCA and the more conservative elements of the church in exile. He grouped the issues under seven headings: 1) misconceptions regarding the YMCA; 2) weaknesses in Orthodoxy; 3) hostile attitude toward YMCA by authoritative bodies; 4) weaknesses in the YMCA; 5) fundamental differences, Protestant and Orthodox; 6) conservatism vs. liberalism in both Orthodox and Protestant communities; and 7) questions related to political and social theory. Each heading contained a variety of fundamental and peripheral matters which had contributed to the conflicts. For example, Anderson included the misconceptions of some Orthodox that the YMCA was a Masonic organization, that it had ulterior motives, and that it “has lost its faith in Christ as Savior and God.” Under Orthodox weaknesses, he listed jealousy of the responses of youth to the Y’s programs because the churches did not have such activities. He also included “pride of age”—disliking anything that was new. One of the Y’s weaknesses listed was “Insistence on the ‘minimalism’ of ideas on which all members might agree, rather than ‘maximalism’ which would allow each confessional group to bring its religious fullness.” From the beginning of the Russian work, the YMCA preferred that participants downplay confessional and denominational distinctives—this was the position of minimalism. Eventually, Orthodox participants argued that they should be able to express their Orthodox convictions fully within the Y movement—this was the position of maximalism. Also included were “Secretaries’ ignorance of Orthodoxy” and “Use of money creates mush-

⁶⁴ [International Survey Committee], “Survey of North American YMCA Service to Russians in Europe” [1930], ii, Russia, International Survey—1930, Roumania, Russia, South Africa, Box 12, KFYA.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 14–15. There is some irony in the fact that YMCA leaders consistently described Russian Protestantism as “foreign.” The first Baptist and Evangelical Christian churches in the Russian Empire were not organized by foreigners. There certainly was influence from Germany and Great Britain, but it was likely not more than the influence of the Byzantine Empire on Kievan Rus’ in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Russian Protestants did translate some Protestant hymns, just as the Kievan church used liturgical texts translated from Greek.

room growth, not on firm spiritual basis.” Under fundamental differences, Anderson wrote, “Protestantism a developing doctrine. Orthodoxy rests on dogma.” In general, Anderson attempted to consider every possible angle for understanding the clashes, rather than seeing them as simple black and white problems. It is significant that he frequently challenged the YMCA’s previous actions, but never its theological shift.⁶⁶

Anderson’s support for the Orthodox Church led him to avoid support of even the largest Russian Protestant church movements, the Baptists and Evangelical Christians, since he believed they were guilty of proselytization, the active recruiting of a person from one religious group to another. He was reluctant to offer support for Ivan Prokhanov, the key leader of the Evangelical Christians.⁶⁷ Anderson seemed to equate any Protestant evangelism in Russia with proselytization, which is a problematic conclusion for a nation with a history of an established state church. He did not address in his books and articles how this view coexisted with his frequent calls for full religious freedom. Donald Lowrie’s book *The Light of Russia* provided readers with an introduction to Orthodox life and faith but also offered insight into the evolving position of the YMCA. He positively reviewed the unique role played by the church since the earliest days of Kievan Rus’.⁶⁸

In spite of his enthusiastic support for the Russian church, Lowrie believed that the Y could make a significant contribution. Like other Y men, he never stated that the church was without weaknesses: they remained Protestants and believed that their heritage had something to offer. He hoped to see a greater emphasis on Scripture:

Perhaps a new emphasis upon the study of the Bible is another step which Russian Christianity could take in its reorganization, using the gospel not simply in a devotional or inspirational sense, but as a source of method for making Christian every phase of daily life, social as well as personal.

Lowrie believed that programs such as the theological institute could inspire change with “a new type of clergy, retaining all the good of the old order and still alive with the broader ideals and a higher cultural standard” so “the Church will again occupy its proper place as guiding the nation’s moral and religious life.” He summarized his conviction in this way:

⁶⁶ “The YMCA and the Russian Orthodox Church,” 27 November 1926, 1–3, 1925, Russian Work—Europe, Restricted, Correspondence and Reports, 1920–29, Annual Reports, 1920–29, KFYA. A general work by Anderson on Orthodoxy is his article “The Eastern Orthodox Church in a Time of Transition,” published in “Over There with the Churches of Christ,” Bulletin 15, 1936 (New York: Central Bureau for Relief of the Evangelical Churches of Europe), 7–13, Pamphlets in English, Russian Work, Restricted, Pamphlets, KFYA, PBAP.

⁶⁷ Letter from Paul B. Anderson to E. T. Colton, 14 February 1933, ROTA, 1930–33, Russian Work—Europe, Restricted, Russian Orthodox Theological Academy, Russian Student Christian Movement, Russian Student Fund, KFYA.

⁶⁸ Donald A. Lowrie, *The Light of Russia: An Introduction to the Russian Church* (Prague: YMCA Press, 1923), 126, 190–91.

If religion consists solely in beautiful worship, adherence to ancient belief and custom, reverence for holiness in every age, and a sincere desire to spread the name of Jesus Christ, Protestants have nothing to teach Russia: but if it means, beside all this, a growing activity in the service of mankind, a keen appreciation of the needs of modern life, and a desire to educate its youth to minister to the needy of the future, perhaps Protestantism has its message for Russian Christianity.

Lowrie believed that American Protestants must work with the supply lines rather than take a spot on the front lines: “The Orthodox Church wishes every aid other Christian bodies can give it, but its preaching must be done by Russians if it is to appeal to the Russian mind.”⁶⁹ This conviction motivated the YMCA staff as they worked behind the scenes to facilitate the work of Russian believers. Ethan Colton summed up the relationship between the two groups after 1917 in this way:

The two groups were Eastern and Western, Orthodox and Protestant, sacerdotal and evangelical, trying to find basis and method for a common program. In both groups were men with scant knowledge and appreciation of the spiritual value in the doctrines, worship, and observances of the others. A few stayed so. Such had to be relegated. The uninformed but willing ones learned. The clumsy acquired skill.⁷⁰

Many Russian Orthodox believers genuinely appreciated the generous financial support and program assistance provided by the YMCA. Patriarch Tikhon issued this endorsement of the YMCA on 10 May 1918: “[W]e give to those carrying out this good work our prayerful blessing, asking the Lord to help them in the successful fulfillment of this task.”⁷¹ Metropolitan Evlogii explained why the YMCA and the World Student Christian Federation had his blessing: “[N]o other foreign organizations had helped, more thoughtfully and respectfully, Russian youth on its way back to the Church and the Church itself.”⁷² However, many Orthodox leaders vehemently opposed the association as a subversive sub-Christian organization aiming for their destruction; others received aid while holding unspoken suspicions of this American venture. The most common accusation was that the YMCA was Masonic, while others feared that the YMCA was a Jewish scheme, a demonic movement, or a program of insincere Protestant proselytization.

Freemasonry appeared in Russia in the eighteenth century as an international organization promoting “brotherhood,” love of one’s neighbor, and the equality of

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 196–97, 232.

⁷⁰ Colton, *Forty Years*, 151.

⁷¹ *Vestnik khristianskogo soiuz molodykh liudei*, Vladivostok, 17 August 1919, First year of publication, Number 1, 4, Lighthouse Herald, Russian Work, Restricted, Periodicals, KF YA.

⁷² Letter from G. G. Kullmann to E. T. Colton, 28 July 1926, 1, YMCA Relations (1926–), Russian Church, KF YA.

all men. Masons emphasized a general belief in God rather than the specific beliefs of any one religious group, such as the Orthodox Church. Historian James Billington describes Masonry as a “supra-confessional deist church.”⁷³ The movement did not openly oppose the Orthodox Church and included Russian priests in its activities, but some Masons demonstrated more loyalty to Masonry than Orthodoxy. Catherine II prohibited Masonic activity in 1792; Alexander I reversed this position but banned it again in 1822.⁷⁴ In 1900 many elements of Russian church and state continued to oppose the ideas of Masonry. The apparent similarities of belief, rather than documented organizational ties, led to suspicion of the YMCA being Masonic during its first years in Russia. As a result, American Masons were not allowed to serve as Mayak staff members.⁷⁵ From 1900 to 1940 a number of Russians accused the Y of being a Masonic organization; these charges usually came from more conservative Orthodox leaders. As émigré leader Nikolai Zernov later wrote, many clergymen argued that the YMCA was simply a wing of the Freemason movement. Therefore, the goal of the Y was to undermine the traditional theology of Orthodoxy and destroy the church. According to these critics, any believers who participated in the work of the association were considered to be “dupes” or agents paid by the YMCA.⁷⁶ Charges against the Y were especially intense and public during the mid-1920s, when the YMCA and the émigré church were developing closer ties. As Zernov pointed out, one frequent criticism was directed at the view held by many secretaries about Jesus Christ, that he was only an exemplary human rather than being fully God and fully man. As one critical report charged, the YMCA presents “Jesus Christ not as our God and Savior, but only as a great teacher.” This report cited a book by Hecker on the YMCA and two other books published in Russian translation by the YMCA: *Social Principles*

⁷³ James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 245; for his description of Masonry in Russia, see 242–52. For two recent studies of freemasonry in Russia and America, see Douglas Smith, *Working the Rough Stone: Freemasonry and Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999); and Lynn Dumenil, “Religion and Freemasonry in Late Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Freemasonry on Both Sides of the Atlantic: Essays Concerning the Craft in the British Isles, Europe, the United States, and Mexico*, ed. R. William Weisberger, Wallace McLeod, and S. Brent Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 605–20.

⁷⁴ Zacek, “The Russian Bible Society,” 412.

⁷⁵ D. E. Davis, “YMCA Russian Work: An Interview with Dr. Paul B. Anderson, September 9, 1971,” 62, Interview with Paul B. Anderson, Russian Work, Restricted, General, Personal Accounts, KF YA. Anderson also comments on this page, “Of course, during the war it didn’t make any difference.”

⁷⁶ Nicolas Zernov, “The Eastern Churches and the Ecumenical Movement in the Twentieth Century,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement: 1517–1948*, 2nd ed., ed. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1967), 670. Two examples of such accusations, written in the 1930s, were recently reprinted: V. Ivanov, *Pravoslavnyi mir i masonstvo* (1935; repr., Moscow: Trim, 1993); and V. F. Ivanov, *Russkaia intelligentsiia i masonstvo: Ot Petra Pervogo do nashikh dnei*, reprint (Moscow: Moskva, 1997).

of *Christ* by Walter Rauschenbusch, and *The Manhood of the Master* by Harry Emerson Fosdick. The report compared comments from Masonic handbooks to YMCA principles and concluded: “The similarity between these two ideologies—that of the Masons and that of the YMCA is very evident.” He quoted V. V. Zenkovskii, an Orthodox leader associated with the organization, to prove his point; according to this report, Zenkovskii had written, “We must forget the proud thought that God’s Spirit can only be found among us. When I was among Christians of other denominations I still felt myself to be in a Church.”⁷⁷ This view would have been scandalous among the most conservative Orthodox.

Conservative Russians often used the word “masonic” to describe a person or organization which displayed the essence of Masonry (anti-dogma, rationalist, etc.). They usually were not referring to membership in a Masonic lodge. In a sense, the YMCA work in Russia was not Masonic, in that no evidence has been seen which links the work of the YMCA and Masonic lodges in Russia. No evidence has been found which identifies which secretaries were Masons: an obituary for Louis P. Penningroth (1888–1973) notes that he was a member of a Masonic lodge, but this membership could have begun after his wartime service. However, one could argue that the Y was masonic, since it promoted several of the general principles of Masonry. In the United States these Orthodox conservatives might have called the Y “modernist” or “liberal,” but the fundamentalist-modernist controversy had not developed in Russia, so they used the word “Masons,” the nearest word in their vocabulary. Of course, a lack of documentary evidence does not prove that a connection did not exist. Documents on the YMCA in Poland reveal clear evidence of links between Masonic lodges and YMCA leadership. These ties may have been known to the Y’s opponents in Russia, especially due to the close political and cultural connections between these two cultures.

The YMCA was also charged with participation in a “Judeo-Masonic” conspiracy: according to this theory, Jews had taken over the Masons in the past to destroy Orthodoxy, so now the YMCA had been snared by Jewish leaders. Critics often pointed at the Jewish interpreters hired by the Y.⁷⁸ During the early years of the Russian ministry, YMCA secretary uniforms and other equipment often featured a logo which included an inverted triangle. Some Russians believed this to be a sign of the devil, since the point was directed down rather than up.⁷⁹

Many clergy were simply convinced that the YMCA was intent on converting Russians to Protestant belief, in spite of assurances to the contrary. As one report

⁷⁷ Vladimir Vostokoff and N. S. Batiushkin, “Report Handed Over May 18/31, 1925 to the Episcopal Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in Foreign Countries by the Former Members of the Church Administration Abroad,” 5, 1–2, 7, 9, ROTA 1923–29, Russian Work—Europe, Restricted, Russian Orthodox Theological Academy, Russian Student Christian Movement, Russian Student Fund, KFYA.

⁷⁸ Davis, “YMCA Russian Work: An Interview with Dr. Paul B. Anderson,” 62.

⁷⁹ R. J. Reitzel, “Brief Report on YMCA Work for Russians,” Irkutsk, 18 December 1919, [3], Siberia 2, Russian Work, Restricted, North Russia: Archangel, Murmansk, Siberia, KFYA.

suggested, “The tendency of this work is evidently Protestant. Cooperation with the Orthodox church is only tolerated.”⁸⁰ As Zernov described the process,

The fact that these international bodies [the YMCA, the Young Women’s Christian Association, and the World Student Christian Fellowship] publicly denied any intention of proselytism, and conducted their work in the spirit of respect for Eastern traditions, only increased the apprehensions of conservative-minded Christians who suspected some particularly sinister and secret designs behind the friendliness displayed by the Western leaders of the movements.⁸¹

This view of the YMCA was popularized as newspaper and other periodical articles commented on the Y with varying tones of anger and caution. This first example, published in 1925 in *Novoe vremia*, a paper for monarchist Russian émigrés in Belgrade, confidently demonstrated that the organization was an idealist group of capitalist Americans under the control of Jews and Masons—with proof contained in the fraudulent “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”:

As is known, well-organized Semitism seeks to get into its hands the entire spiritual life of Christian peoples. How this should take place is described in the so-called “Zion Protocols.” . . . Semitism endeavors to gather into its hands organizations which influence the spiritual life of European Christian peoples. Thus Masonry became a simple tool in Jewish hands. It may be that other organizations, having nothing in common with Semitism, will fall into its grasp. Even the Y.M.C.A. has not resisted this fate.⁸²

A second example, published in a 1927 issue of the organ of the RSCM, provides a more moderate, but no less intense, criticism of the YMCA. The author, Archbishop Mefodii, recommended that the association be cautiously evaluated on a case-by-case basis—with the final decision about any relationship left to church authorities. The editor introduced the archbishop’s statement with this comment:

In the passionate atmosphere of our church disagreement, voices attract to themselves special attention from the general public by accusing their opponents of Masonry and secret heresies. Especially popular among us are references to the allegedly Masonic character of the YMCA.

⁸⁰ Vostokoff and Batiushkin, “Report,” 3.

⁸¹ Zernov, “The Eastern Churches,” 670.

⁸² A. Pogodin, “Unexpected Unpleasantness,” *Novoe vremia*, 3 April 1925, no. 1179, translation in archive, 2, Corr. And Reports 1925–49, Russian Work, Restricted, Publications, YMCA Press in Paris, KFYA.

The archbishop wrote that the association was obviously sincere in its service to Christ and its support of Orthodox youth. However, he also urged caution in receiving gifts from this organization: “The Association helps the Orthodox with one hand, but with the other helps the enemies of Orthodoxy; that which the right hand does is destroyed by the left hand.”⁸³

The fullest and most direct American YMCA response to all these criticisms is contained in *Osnovy khristianskogo soiuz molodykh liudei* (The Fundamentals of the Young Men’s Christian Association), a 107-page booklet which gave a general overview of history and policy and commented on the history of the Russian ministry up to 1929. It included significant self-criticism, which is rare for most works published by the YMCA on its service among Russians. The booklet stated that secretaries made cultural misjudgments during their wartime service:

It is understandable that in these conditions more than a few mistakes were made, particularly in relation to the Orthodox Church. The Association regrets these mistakes and is ready to confess that for which it is actually responsible.

The book discussed the rumors and misunderstandings which developed after the war. The author acknowledged that the organization did not have enough qualified people to achieve its plans for serving soldiers and prisoners of war. Due to a perceived urgent demand for staff members, the association accepted people who did not possess the necessary cultural and language skills. The Y also employed workers who had been assigned by Russian military leaders—these workers did not reflect the values of the YMCA. The author emphasized that the Y took full responsibility for these choices. He addressed the Y’s publication of books written by American liberal Christian authors and stressed that leaders did not and do not agree with all the ideas in these books, which reflected the philosophical debates in America at that time. The booklet stated,

A particular theology of the Young Men’s Christian Association does not exist. There only exist the theologies of the churches and confessions of the Association members—Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox.⁸⁴

Informal discussions between YMCA leaders and Orthodox leaders from several countries led to three formal consultations held between 1928 and 1933. John Mott presided over these sessions, held in Sofia, Bulgaria; Kephissia, Greece; and Bucharest, Romania. At the 1928 consultation, participants adopted an “Understanding between Representatives of the Orthodox Churches and the World’s Committee of the Y.M.C.A.” According to this document, in predominantly Orthodox nations the

⁸³ Arkhiepiskop Mefodii, “Soiuz Y.M.C.A.,” *Vestnik russkogo studencheskogo khristianskogo dvizheniia*, June 1927, no. 6, second year of publication, 11–13.

⁸⁴ [YMCA], *Osnovy khristianskogo soiuz molodykh liudei* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1929), 57–61.

YMCA was to organize its services in consultation with church leaders. This statement discouraged and condemned proselytism. Also, in Orthodox groups, Y leaders were to teach the Bible only in “full harmony with Orthodox doctrine.”⁸⁵

After the 1928 consultation, international YMCA leader W. A. Visser ’T Hooft compiled his “Remarks on the Present Situation of the Orthodox Churches in the Balkan Area.” This essay summarized the status of the Eastern churches and then discussed a wide range of issues related to the Y’s work in Greece and other Balkan nations. Sections included: “Background,” “Signs of Vitality,” “Youth,” “The Y.M.C.A. in Orthodox Countries,” “Relations Between the Orthodox Churches,” and “Orthodoxy and Western Christianity.” Visser ’T Hooft demonstrated his knowledge of historical context when summarizing the effects of Ottoman domination and Greek nationalism. In addressing the conservatism of the Eastern churches, he also pointed out areas of relative openness and the significance of the Orthodox “renaissance” of the early twentieth century. He discussed the personalities of the Orthodox hierarchs, whom he knew personally. When addressing two acknowledged problems of the era, clergy preparation and preaching, he demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the issues and pointed out progress being made. He showed an understanding of the internal life of the Greek church by describing two movements, the Zoe Brotherhood and the Orthodox Youth Movement. Visser ’T Hooft also provided an open description of the struggle faced within the YMCA as it considered how to adjust to working in Orthodox countries. In the closing sections of the document on Orthodox-Protestant relations he displayed his attempt to see controversial issues from the point of view of the Orthodox, the believers he was attempting to serve. Visser ’T Hooft ended the essay with a summary of the YMCA’s vision for their work in the Balkans:

The question now asked of the Protestant world is whether it is willing to enter in a true fellowship with Orthodoxy—based on mutual respect and understanding—and whether it will help the Orthodox world to express its own God-given mission in a fuller way. If such would become the attitude of Protestantism one may not only hope for new fruits in the lives of the Orthodox nations, but also for a great quickening of the Western church by the old, re-born churches of the East.⁸⁶

The three consultations led to the publication of the *Objectives, Principles, and Programme of Y.M.C.A.’s in Orthodox Countries*, which summarized and clarified the policies adopted in 1928.⁸⁷ This 1933 document reflected the shift of the association’s

⁸⁵ D. A. Davis, “Understanding Between Representatives of the Orthodox Churches and the World’s Committee of the Y.M.C.A.,” unpublished report, 1928, World’s Committee—World’s Committee and the Orthodox Church, KFYA.

⁸⁶ W. A. Visser ’T Hooft, “Remarks on the Present Situation of the Orthodox Churches in the Balkan Area,” 1929, 15, Visser ’T Hooft Association Papers, May 1929, KFYA.

⁸⁷ *Objectives, Principles, and Programme of Y.M.C.A.’s in Orthodox Countries* (Geneva: World’s Committee of Y.M.C.A.s, 1933), 16–17, PBAP.

approach to Orthodoxy: from resigned toleration to pragmatic support to limited support to enthusiastic support. From 1900 to 1940 many Y secretaries developed a sympathetic and supportive approach to the Orthodox Church as they developed relationships, worked in partnership, studied culture and theology, and experienced the complex realities of the early twentieth century.

