The Independent Greek Church in Canada, 1903-1912: A Middle Ground on the

Canadian Prairies between Ukrainian Immigrants and Presbyterianism

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**ABSTRACT** 

The Independent Greek Church in Canada, 1903-1912, was a middle ground between The

Presbyterian Church in Canada, which desired to bring the growing Ukraine diaspora into the

Presbyterian fold, and the Ukrainian immigrant intelligentsia, who imagined an independent,

Protestant, and culturally and linguistically Ukrainian church. Using the work of Richard White

on middle ground and the work of Lamin Sanneh on non-dominant cultures' agency in

missionary contexts, the paper offers a new interpretation of the Independent Greek Church in

Canada, an interpretation that valorizes the agency of the Ukrainian participants in the

denomination. Yet, as a middle ground, the denomination was too unstable to survive long. The

growing uniformity of Canadian Presbyterianism ended this unexpected pairing on the

Canadian Prairies. (PB)

**KEYWORDS:** Middle ground, Canadian Presbyterians, Ukrainian immigrants

The Independent Greek Church (IGC) in Canada was a middle ground shaped on the Canadian

Prairies by Ukrainian immigrant intelligentsia and leaders in The Presbyterian Church in

Canada. Both the Ukrainian intelligentsia and the Canadian Presbyterians had something to

gain from this relationship, but each side needed the other in order to achieve their goals. The

middle ground required not only negotiations with the other party, but also each side needed to

convince their own constituencies that this was the way forward to the hoped-for conclusion.

While scholars have depicted the Independent Greek Church as a tool of assimilation imposed on Ukrainian immigrants by Canadian Presbyterians, the story is nuanced with members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia exercising agency in the shaping of this middle ground. In fact, without the initiative of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Canada, the Independent Greek Church would not have been created. The agency exercised by Ukrainians complicates previous accounts of the Independent Greek Church presenting a connection between two parties, each of whom had power in the relationship. That the Independent Greek Church was a contingent middle ground will be demonstrated through tracing the agency exercised by Ukrainian leadership, the negotiated development of both a constitution and a catechism, and the complexities of funding and authority. The middle ground, which is always contingent, collapsed in this case for a variety of reasons, a primary one being the inability of nascent bureaucratic systems in The Presbyterian Church in Canada to allow such middle ground to exist.

## Ukrainian immigration to Canada

The first immigrants from the region now called Ukraine arrived in Canada in 1891. The 1896 election of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal government saw Clifford Sifton become the cabinet minister responsible for Canada's immigration policy. Sifton believed the peasant stock of Eastern Europe would do well on the Canadian prairie; between 1891 and 1914, approximately 170,000 persons migrated to Canada from present-day Ukraine, most settling in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The new arrivals came most frequently from the provinces of Galicia and Bukovyna. Ethnic Ukrainians living in Russia seldom made their way to Canada and Ukrainians from Transcarpathia were more likely to emigrate to the mining regions and urban centers in the United States. In Galicia, Ukrainians were known as Ruthenians (rusyny), and the term "Ruthenian" came to be an identifier for all those of Ukrainian ancestry. Between 1891 and 1914 the identifiers of Galician and Ruthenian were

frequently used in the Canadian press (Martynowych 4). The term "Ukrainian" will be used in this essay, unless the sources being discussed use other terms.

The vast majority of Ukrainians were Uniates (Greek Catholic), that is, Eastern-rite Christians who, while recognizing the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff, used the Orthodox (Greek/Byzantine) rite and liturgy. This denomination was known as the Ruthenian Greek Catholic church or the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church. Only after 1918 did the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox church arise, a split in response to fears that the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church was becoming too Latinized (Martynowych xxviii). In Ukraine, tensions had arisen between the nationalist aspirations of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, who were progressive in their thinking, and Ukrainian Catholic priests, the intellectual leaders of the villages, who were generally more traditional in their views. Many of the intelligentsia following the thinking of Mykhailo Drahomanov (1841-1895) had sought to combat clerical influence by reviving traditions of lay initiatives in church matters and telling Ukrainian peasants about the more democratic and egalitarian practices of Protestant denominations (Martynowych 15). The intelligentsia were primarily young men who were schoolteachers, small entrepreneurs, and professionals in their communities. They sought to maintain a distinct Ukrainian culture and identity even in diaspora (Martynowych xxviii, xxix). Few priests were among the first immigrants arriving on the Canadian Prairies. Into the gap caused by the non-presence of priests stepped the small group of Ukrainian intelligentsia who had come with the first wave of immigrants. The new arrivals came as family groups, often with three or four children. The appearance of hundreds of children in rural areas of the Canadian Prairies put pressure on the education system. It was in teacher training programs in Winnipeg that the future leaders of the IGC came into contact with Canadian Presbyterians.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada's primary roots are among the Scottish Presbyterians who arrived in Canada in various waves of immigration from Great Britain starting in the eighteenth century. With a theology rooted in the writings of John Calvin and one of Calvin's disciples, John Knox, Canadian Presbyterians developed spiritual practices based on the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Westminster Catechisms. Their church sanctuaries were devoid of images or icons and into the late nineteenth century did not use musical instruments in worship beyond a pitch pipe or tuning fork. The center of worship was the sermon. The Lord's Supper (the Eucharist) was celebrated as rarely as once a year in some congregations. Congregations were led by elders selected from the members of the congregation, who, together with the minister, oversaw the life of the congregation including exercising church discipline. By 1896, The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) was the largest Protestant denomination in Canada.

### Describing a middle ground

The IGC was a form of middle ground, as defined by historian Richard White. White's exploration of the relationship between the French and the Algonquin¹ in the 1650–1815 period demonstrates three aspects of a middle ground. The French did not become indigenous or give up French values, nor did the Algonquin become French or give up Algonquin values. The two groups "nonetheless had to deal with people who shared neither their values nor their assumptions about the appropriate way of accomplishing tasks. They had to arrive at some common conception of suitable ways of acting" (White xxi). Each side needed to find a way to relate to the other, since the other side was present and was not going away, a mutually agreed way forward had to be found. Such a way forward was not built on having achieved "widespread mutual understanding and appreciation" of the other, rather it was simply a way to live together (White xxi). This common conception was built on seeming congruences between the two cultures. White's second important point is that these congruences "often seemed—and, indeed were—results of misunderstandings or accidents" (White 52). Congruences "no matter how

tenuous, can be put to work" to produce a cohesion of shared interest. These perceived congruences often arise from the assumption that the meanings attached to words and actions by one side are the meanings attached to those same words and actions by the other. Not surprisingly, a middle ground is a non-permanent place, "a realm of constant invention, . . . just as constantly presented as convention" (White 52). The third point to be gleaned from White's work is that an agreed upon set of conventions when met by the exigencies of a new situation become new ground over which a further set of struggles take place until a new middle ground can be defined. A middle ground is contingent and the conventions governing it are constantly shifting.

Despite the tensions and tenuousness White describes, a middle ground provides a place where two diverse cultures can find a way to work together, even if their purposes are not congruent, and the relationship is strained. Such a situation existed between those Ukrainians willing to enter into the middle ground of the IGC and the leaders of the PCC similarly prepared to enter it. A middle ground exists where each party believes it is possible to achieve at least some of their purposes even if they are unable to achieve all their goals, where both parties exercise agency even as their freedom of action is constrained by the agency of the other. The competing agencies and incongruent goals which mark the history of the IGC demonstrate that White's typology of middle ground applies to understanding contexts beyond Algonquin-French relations.

Missiologist Lamin Sanneh, in *Religion and the Variety of Culture*, discusses the ways Christian missionaries brought and imposed their form of Christian faith on people living in Sub-Saharan Africa. His insights aid in further understanding the nature of middle ground. Sanneh rejects the suggestion that Western Christianity was synonymous with "the whole Western enterprise." He is not denying that Western Christianity caused "real destruction and harm . . . including missionary denigration of non-Western cultures." However, the gaps that

existed between the "Western enterprise," on the one hand, and Western Christianity, on the other, introduced "some ambiguity into cultural encounter, such that there would be ambivalence, paradox, and other unintended consequences resulting from the encounter." One such ambivalence arose as Western missionaries recruited "translators, interpreters, . . ., colporteurs, teachers, writers, preachers, catechists, secretaries." All these persons had some level of agency. These local agents played pivotal roles in their societies leading to unintended, at least as far as Western church leaders were concerned, consequences. Sanneh is particularly interested in how the use of the mother tongue preserves and even valorizes the non-dominant culture. He writes, "It is impossible that missionaries should devote so much time and effort to mother tongues without being aware at some point or other of the wider consequences of what they were doing." The preservation of vernacular languages, in worship, schooling, and even the press, created space for the aspirations of the non-dominant culture to grow. Sanneh's work complicates the questions of assimilation, agency, and control regarding the IGC. As this church maintained Ukrainian as the language of communication and worship, space was made available for the aspirations of the non-dominant Ukrainian community to grow (Sanneh 62-65).

# Previous writing about the Independent Greek Church

The claim that the IGC was a form of middle ground challenges the widely held view that the denomination was a creation of the PCC as a means of assimilating Ukrainians into a Protestant Canada. The argument that Ukrainian voices had agency in the creation of middle ground in the IGC seeks to add nuance to the commonly recounted narrative. In the absence of a Ukrainian Greek Catholic clergy among the Eastern European immigrants arriving in Canada, the Roman Catholic Church in Canada regarded the growing Ukrainian community as their mission field. The Canadian Roman Catholic community of the first decade of the twentieth

century was outraged by the actions of the Presbyterians, describing the IGC as a "deception of a simple people, this trickery, this fraud" (Karwchuk 212). Presbyterians responded to those charges by noting that *The Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly* of The Presbyterian Church in Canada carried annual reports from the IGC. In addition, the Synod of Manitoba, a regional Presbyterian body, regularly heard about the work among Ukrainians including hearings from representatives of the IGC. Reports of the Synod's meetings were published in the *Winnipeg Tribune* and Presbyterians argued it was not a secret that they were involved in the IGC.

The narrative that the Presbyterians kept their assimilationist agenda hidden has appeared in the scholarly writing about the IGC. Educator and college principal Roman Yereniuk describes the three key leaders of the IGC—John Bodrug, John Negrych, and Cyril Genyk—as "secretly" making arrangements with Presbyterian church leaders. He argues that "the major obstacle for the IGC was the manipulation of the Presbyterians" (Yereniuk 117–18). Historian Vivian Olender argues that the IGC used "symbolic manipulation" in its "proselytizing of Ukrainians," contending that the full constitution was not introduced to potential supporters of the IGC and therefore those not party to the negotiations with the Presbyterians were not aware of the assimilationist agenda (Olender 195). Orest Martynowych also argues that the constitution of the new denomination was done "secretly" between Protestant-leaning Ukrainians and leaders in the Presbyterian Church. He contends that the Presbyterian Church "could be accused of deception by not stating clearly at the outset that the new church was intended as a bridge to Protestantism" (Martynowych 191, 218). Such arguments limit the agency of the Ukrainian immigrants who were seeking to create a middle ground with the Presbyterian Church. Further, the scholars named above fail to appreciate the flexibility Canadian Presbyterians showed through funding the IGC with its Eastern Christian liturgy if only on a temporary basis. Historian Paul Yuzyk, known as "the father of multiculturalism" in Canada, comes closest to the complexity of the situation when he describes the IGC as "a sensational movement which shocked many a devout Protestant." Yuzyk emphasizes the agency of the Ukrainian leadership of the IGC claiming that "these priests broke away from [Bishop Seraphim's] church and secretly became a subsidiary body of the Presbyterian Synod in Canada" (1953, 73). This analysis opens the possibility of understanding the IGC as a middle ground. In a personal reflection on his academic career, Yuzyk wrote in 1989, "[T]o my knowledge, no authentic scholarly studies have appeared on the Protestant church among Ukrainians" (3). This article does not claim to fill that gap, but it does use the Presbyterian Church as a lens through which to view the IGC as middle ground.

# Presbyterian interest in Ukrainian immigrants

As the flow of Ukrainian immigration to the Prairies became a flood following 1896, the PCC, along with other Christian denominations in Canada, was concerned about reaching this new group of arrivals. They did so in ways that sought to Christianize and Canadianize. In October 1898, Ivan (John) Bodrug and Ivan (John) Negrych, two members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Canada, came to the Presbyterian leadership indicating their desire to make the Presbyterian Church their spiritual home. They had reached this decision because they preferred the understandable, intelligent sermons and the dignity that marked Presbyterian worship over the emotional piety of Methodism and the ritualism of Anglicanism (Bodrug 9–12). The next day, Bodrug and Negrych began courses at Manitoba College, the Presbyterian post-secondary institution, receiving free tuition and living expenses. As James Robertson, the superintendent of missions for the Presbyterian Church in western Canada told the *Winnipeg Free Press*, "The two young men who commenced their studies in Manitoba College this morning are shrewd and intelligent and eager to learn; if they are fair specimens of their race, the Galicians are desirable additions to our population." By the spring of 1899, Bodrug and Negrych had left

Manitoba College and were working as translators among Galician, Ruthenian, and Doukhobor settlers on the Prairies. Later that same year, James Robertson convinced these two and Ivan Danylchuk, also part of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, to become teachers at Ukrainian language schools in the Dauphin, Manitoba, area which were funded by the Presbyterian Church. These three were the first Ukrainian school teachers in Canada. Bodrug would subsequently say that it was Robertson who "found him and induced him to turn his attention to teaching" (Sub-Committee). The focus on education was quickly joined by health care with the Presbyterians building small hospitals and medical dispensaries in Ukrainian-speaking communities. In 1900, Dr. J. T. Reid opened a hospital in Sifton, Manitoba; in 1902, Alexander Hunter opened one in Teulon, Manitoba; and the following year hospitals were opened in Ethelbert, Manitoba, and Wakaw, Saskatchewan. Combining education and medical care was the default mission practice of Christian churches at the time. This practice fit well with James Robertson's understanding of the church's task. He wrote to the Rev. David McQueen, an influential Presbyterian minister in Edmonton, in 1899:

Watch the Galician settlements and tell me what can be done to meet the wants of the people. Until we can get some of their own people trained, can anything be done thro' interpreters? We must not leave large lumps of undigested foreigners in the stomach politic else there is trouble ahead, nor can we afford to have the religious views of the Greek Church, any more than the Roman, influencing the religious tone of the country, else religion will decline. And since many of the Galician women are sure to become mothers of no small part of the next generation, the homes must be Christian. (Robertson)

Robertson did not regard Ukrainian Greek Catholics as Christians; they needed to become

Protestants or else Canada was at risk both spiritually and politically. To that end education was essential, as he had demonstrated in recruiting three teachers for Presbyterian-funded schools using the Provincial education curriculum. This standard approach to the evangelization and assimilation of non-Protestants into an Anglo-Protestant worldview was re-imagined in 1903 by the agency of the Ukrainian intelligentsia.

#### **Ukrainian overtures towards Presbyterians**

Orthodox Church liturgy and Canadian Presbyterian Church theology are an unlikely pairing, but that unusual pairing took place on the Canadian Prairies in the form of the IGC in the first decade of the twentieth century. A Presbyterian woman from Ontario after worshiping in an IGC congregation wrote:

An onlooker finds difficulty in seeing a Presbyterian element in their service, for with their crosses, candles, incense, etc., one would think them of the Roman Catholic faith. They have no seats in their church, and remain standing throughout their long service, which lasts from 8 a.m. to 1 or 2 p.m. They prostrate themselves and the minister intones much of the service, as the Independent Greek Church has not discarded the Ritual of John Chrysostom of the Orthodox Greek Church. They get their ritual from John Chrysostom, but their theology from Manitoba College. (Story, Anna Turnbull Hospital)

Rural Ukrainian culture was anchored in the religious life of the local parish. The church was a source of cultural identity, nationalist philosophy, and spiritual support. Thus, the way towards a truly independent Ukrainian identity had to include a religious component. A significant number of the intelligentsia had religious dispositions that were Protestant and were desirous of a truly independent Ukrainian church, free from hierarchies in both Rome and St.

Petersburg. Among these Protestant-leaning promoters of Ukrainian identity were Bodrug, Negrych, and Danylchuk. By 1903, they and others in the Ukrainian intelligentsia had "earned the lasting enmity of Catholic and (Russian Orthodox) missionaries and acquired a reputation as 'atheists' among many immigrants" (Martynowych 174). With such a reputation it was hard to develop a hearing among the rural Ukrainian population of the Prairies.

What made their task easier was that few priests had come with the influx of immigrants to Canada and the newly arrived community was without spiritual moorings (Ustvolsky). Stephan Ustvolsky, a Russian Orthodox priest who claimed to have the authority to ordain priests and establish a North American Orthodox church, although that claim was contested, arrived in Winnipeg in April 1903. Ustvolsky, known as Bishop Seraphim, drew thousands of Orthodox to the Eastern/Greek Rite liturgy and his preaching (Bodrug 34). He was prepared to ordain as cantors, deacons, and priests those who were selected by their communities to those responsibilities and who were able to pay his fee of twenty-five dollars (Martynowych 174).

Cyril Genik, part of the intelligentsia but unconnected to the church, feared that Bishop Seraphim's "ignorant priests will bring about religious chaos among our people" (Bodrug 36). He urged Bodrug and others to take up the task of providing leadership to the All-Russian Patriarchal Orthodox Church that Bishop Seraphim had created. Bodrug was uncertain but willing, replying to Genik that "[i]f there were any possibility of creating a reformed Christian church out of Orthodoxy, then for the sake of the idea I would leave everything, and go forth to serve God and my people" (Bodrug 37). Bodrug was committed to the Reformed theological understanding, which arose from the teachings of Jan (John) Hus and Jean Cauvin (John Calvin). Bodrug and Negrych met with Genik to plan their approach; they agreed the two would seek ordination under Bishop Seraphim and "would accord him due respect. But, having once established leadership over his priests, would undertake to preach not Orthodoxy, but Evangelical [Protestant] Christianity. As for the forms and traditions in the Church ritual, we

would honor those which did not conflict with the spirit of Christ and the teaching of the Apostles" (Bodrug 37). Respect for Bishop Seraphim would attach to his person, but little of what he stood for would be honored, as Bodrug and Negrych hoped to establish their leadership over the priests, essentially undermining Bishop Seraphim's authority. No sources indicate that anyone inside The Presbyterian Church in Canada was aware of these plans.

Plan in place, Bodrug and Negrych met with Bishop Seraphim, having been introduced by Genik, in late April 1903. The only record of the conversation is Bodrug's memoirs written years after the event, a source which other scholars have treated as an accurate account of the events. Bodrug remembered Seraphim asking if they "had the willingness and the call to become Orthodox priests," to which Bodrug and Negrych replied they "were Protestants by conviction." Bodrug records Bishop Seraphim saying, "We will make fine Orthodox priests out of you." The conversation demonstrates the awkward position of each side. Bishop Seraphim needed the abilities these two and the other intellectuals would bring to the denomination he was building. The intelligentsia, in order to effectively lead the Ukrainian community into the future they envisioned, needed the status Bishop Seraphim offered them through ordination (Bodrug 38–39).

In an action-packed week in May 1903, Bodrug and Negrych were made deacons and then priests by Bishop Seraphim, and also entered into negotiations with the Presbyterian leadership located in Winnipeg. On Bodrug's account, it was only after Bishop Seraphim had set the date for Bodrug and Negrych's ordination that they approached Principal William Patrick of Manitoba College seeking "moral and material support from the Presbyterian Church in realizing our project" (Bodrug 39). Patrick, newly arrived from Scotland, had offered encouragement to a variety of experiments across theological lines. Upon reading the "sketch" of the denomination's proposed constitution, Bodrug recorded Patrick as saying, "You, young people know your countrymen and are planning to open a new page in the religious history of

our young Dominion" (Bodrug 40). Patrick, who was not the initiator but an encourager of the idea, was responding to an existing document prepared by Bodrug and Negrych. He did, however, recognize how unusual the proposal was, hence his referring to it as "a new page." The language used by both Patrick and Bodrug suggests significant agency on the part of the members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in imagining what Bodrug called "our project." In his 1912 interview with the Sub-Committee on the Reception of Ministers of the Independent Greek Church, Bodrug spoke of being "induced" into teaching school, going on to say, "[I]n due time the Independent Greek Church was organized and he became one of its ministers" ("Minutes," Sub-Committee). The shift in language is notable: becoming a teacher was something he had to be convinced to do; but on the other hand, organizing and joining the IGC was something into which he willingly entered.

This meeting with William Patrick and the subsequent meeting with leaders of the Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg have been identified as *the* secret meeting in which the plan to create a duplicatious church structure was developed. What Bodrug called "our plan" proposed initially drawing Orthodox worshippers into the IGC due to the familiar liturgy, but which over time would become increasingly Protestant (Presbyterian). Bodrug envisioned this plan resulting in an independent Protestant Ukrainian Church; he did not envision a Canadianized church.

Just as Patrick was not expecting the plan Bodrug and Negrych proposed, neither were the Presbyterian leaders Patrick gathered to hear it. Bodrug arrived at the meeting with a constitution prepared. The desire was to name the denomination "The Ruthenian Independent Greek Orthodox Church of Canada," a name which clearly stated the goal of the Ukrainian intelligentsia: a Ukrainian-language church independent of Rome and of St. Petersburg. The name identified to ethnic Ukrainians the church's cultural heart, but as Bodrug and Negrych had told Bishop Seraphim, it would be theologically Protestant. "Ruthenian" in the name was

a non-starter for the Presbyterians, and Bodrug had to give that up. Giving up the name did not change the goals of the Ukrainian leadership, but the Presbyterians thought the removal of the name removed the risk that they were funding an ethnically nationalistic denomination inside Canada. One of the misconceptions frequent in the building of middle ground had become a "convention" (Bodrug 41).

Bodrug proposed that worship gatherings in the IGC would "shorten the Divine Service of St. John and other rituals, so that they would not last longer than an hour and a half." The Presbyterians pushed back stating that the worship should follow "on the lines of the Reformed Christian Churches." Bodrug rejected this idea stating that Ukrainians had no psalms and hymns in Ukrainian, and over time such patterns could be introduced, but "in the meantime, we would have to use liturgical forms of service with prayers and sermons." Here again a contingent middle ground was created in which each side could claim a convention had been set. The Ukrainians were given an unspecified amount of time to introduce psalms and hymns, and the Presbyterians were able to state that a commitment had been made to transition to Reformed worship practice (Bodrug 42–43).

It was in the area of church polity, however, that the two sides most misunderstood each other. Bodrug proposed a system of a minister and at least three elders elected by the congregation being the decision-making body at the congregational level. This fit with the Session structure Presbyterians were used to. At the level of the Consistory, however, which was "the supreme governing body over the entire Independent Greek Church" misunderstandings arose. The Consistory's control was limited when the majority of the funding for the IGC came from the PCC; as the funder, the PCC expected to have a role in directing the IGC. Further, as the IGC submitted annual reports which were reviewed and approved by the General Assembly of the PCC, the Consistory's claim to be "the supreme governing" over the IGC was contingent. Both sides chose to leave these questions of church

polity and independence unanswered.

The constitution based on Bodrug and Negrych's work was a middle ground between Protestant-leaning, educated Ruthenian leaders and the leaders of the PCC. While the leaders on both sides were content with the approach, both sides had constituents who also needed to affirm the plan if it was going to be successful. For Bodrug and Negrych, those constituents were not only Protestant-leaning Ukrainian-speakers, but it was also rural parishioners who were thoroughly rooted in Eastern rite and liturgy and who were also desperate for religious gatherings and spiritual care that was also rooted in that practice. For the Presbyterian Church leaders present at the meeting in Winnipeg, the constituents they needed to be concerned about included the nascent denominational bureaucracy and the advocates for the development of uniform Canadian Presbyterian worship practice.

At the urging of leaders within the All-Russian Patriarchal Orthodox Church, Bishop Seraphim went to St. Petersburg in early 1904 to get clarification of his role and authority and to obtain financial support. By the time of his return, Bodrug and Negrych had mounted a takeover and virtually all the priests Bishop Seraphim had ordained were part of the IGC.

## The ministers of the Independent Greek Church

The IGC, by 1907, had grown to 15,000–20,000 adherents with twenty-four ministers and missionaries, all financed by the Presbyterian Church's Board of Home Missions. In addition to the paying of stipends for the ministers/priests, the Presbyterians also funded the construction of church buildings in the architectural style of churches in Galicia and Bukovyna. Furthermore, Manitoba College started a theological course in Ukrainian to educate ministers for the IGC. Up until this point Ukrainians enrolled in the school were being trained as teachers. Michael Sherbinin, a Russian who spoke Ukrainian and German, was hired by the college in February 1904 to begin a class teaching the clergy and prospective clergy of the IGC. He had

been educated in Russia and grew up Russian Orthodox, but after converting to Protestantism, he left Russia. He arrived in Canada in 1901, and by early 1903 was employed by the Presbyterian Church working among Doukhobors<sup>2</sup> and Ukrainians. Having made the journey from Orthodoxy to Presbyterianism, his theological story shaped him into a helpful teacher for the clergy of the IGC who were taking similar theological journeys. Sherbinin believed the best way to learn another language was to know one's own language well; therefore, he insisted that much of his teaching be in Ukrainian and that his students encourage the use of Ukrainian in the congregations of the IGC. The theological course began as an evening class so students could hold down employment and still study. But it quickly evolved into a regular academic timetable, although many students attended only one of two terms of classes before being sent out to serve congregations. The starting date of the Ukrainian language theological classes is significant: February 1904 was after Bodrug and Negrych had led the split which created the IGC. The Presbyterians were trying to catch-up with the fast-moving developments initiated by the leaders of the IGC (Knysh 14, 22).

In the fall of 1912, as the IGC was being wound down, a committee of the Presbyterian Church interviewed twenty-two ministers from the IGC to determine their fitness to be ministers of the PCC. The notes taken provide a thumbnail sketch of those interviewed. Of the twenty-one ministers who gave their ages to the interviewing committee, five were in their twenties, thirteen were in their thirties, only three were over the age of forty. The data is skewed by the fact these are interviews with ministers who wished to join the Presbyterian Church, which is approximately half of the clergy of the IGC. What is missing are the reasons why half the ministers of the IGC chose to not move to the Presbyterian Church. A significant number of those moving into the Presbyterian Church were born in Galicia, which was consistent with the immigration patterns that saw a majority of Ukrainian immigrants coming from that region.

Bodrug's voice so dominated the history of the IGC at times it is assumed he spoke for

all the leadership, but the story is more complicated. The pastoral leadership of the IGC was diverse in its social and educational background, and in its goals. Some ministers joined the IGC because of their Protestant leanings, others resonated with Bodrug's rhetoric promising a church free from the interference of Rome and St. Petersburg, and still others were drawn to the stability offered by a guaranteed stipend.

Bodrug, a nationalist and a Protestant, wanted a distinctly Ukrainian expression of church that would be Protestant and free from interference from any non-Ukrainian authority. As a nationalist he saw among Protestant polities a way to create an independent denomination. Even in 1912, when Bodrug saw the writing on the wall for the Independent Greek Church, he still sought to create space for what he called the Ruthenian Presbyterian Church which would have its own newspaper, "Ranok" (Bodrug to Farquharson).

Bodrug's vision stands in contrast to the vision of the Rev. Maxim Balizniak, minister of the Independent Greek Church in Edmonton. Balizniak described to the Rev. Dr. James Farquharson, Convenor of the Synod Missions Committee, his ministry approach:

I explained to the people what the Independent Greek Church is, who supports her and what future this Church must have. Then I introduced the people to the dogma and the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church and after awhile they understood that the Independent Greek Church is just a bridge to the Presbyterian and of course it is no use to continue any longer to be Independent, but we must be real Presbyterians. (Balizniak)

For Balizniak the IGC was a bridge; the sooner the people crossed the bridge to the other side—joining the Presbyterians, which meant rapid adoption of Presbyterian liturgical and doctrinal approaches—the better. With this would come assimilation into the dominant Canadian culture and the loss of a distinctly Orthodox religious and cultural expression.

In addition to these approaches, other streams of thought can be discerned among the ministers of the IGC. Quite a few of them had "leanings to Protestantism" while still in Ukraine but had had no forum in which to explore those "leanings," which are likely to have been encouraged by the work of Drahomonov and his students, who introduced Ukrainians to Protestant thinking. Upon arrival in western Canada and with the presence of the IGC, they had the opportunity to seek out a theological home with which they were more comfortable. The Rev. Glowa, aged thirty and born in Galicia, had been in a Basilian monastery in Europe for three years but left the monastery feeling it was not where he belonged. After coming to Canada by way of the United States, a Roman Catholic priest urged him to study at St. Boniface College in Winnipeg. While there, he taught classes in singing and met A. Baczynski, who was a cantor before leaving Galicia and had Protestant leanings. As a result of Baczynski's influence, Glowa left the Church of Rome. He "felt that he must preach the Gospel as he understood it," which was "in accordance with the Bible." The Rev. A. Baczynski-who was sixty-five years old, making him the oldest minister in the IGC—was ordained by Bishop Seraphim seven years after his arrival in Canada. Although ordained by Seraphim, he articulated a thoroughly Protestant understanding of Christianity; teaching that people "became Christians by believing in Christ," he "assured all that Christ would receive whosoever came to him." The Rev. J. Danylchuk, also from Galicia, had done well in school to the point that a wealthy woman offered to become his patron funding his education if he would enter the priesthood. But Danylchuk "declined because of his difficulties regarding the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church." Four years after his arrival in Canada, the Presbyterian Church contacted him to be a teacher in one of their schools that opened the door to his becoming a minister in the IGC in 1903. The Rev. N. Sekora, also from Galicia, joined the IGC "because he had been favorably impressed with Protestantism before leaving his Native land." For these individuals the Prairies and more specifically the IGC became a place to follow through on theological leanings they

had had in their homeland but never had a context in which to explore fully (Minutes, Sub-Committee).

Another group within the IGC had been comfortable with the Greek Orthodox practices while in Galicia or Bukovyna, but arrival in Canada had dislocated their theological frame. The Rev. A. Wylchinski had trained in the Greek Catholic Church to be a cantor and teacher of catechism. Upon his arrival in Canada, his desire to address the spiritual needs of "his fellow" countrymen" led him into the IGC. That experience had changed him; "when he began to preach he followed the liturgy of the Orthodox Church pretty thoroughly but gradually abandoned the use of the objectionable parts." The new context of Canada provided a venue in which to examine the practices and theology of the Orthodox Church. The Rev. E. Eustafiewicz had also been moved by the spiritual needs of "his own people" upon his arrival in Canada. In Canada he obtained a Bible and read it. That experience made him dissatisfied with both "the Greek Church" and the Roman Catholic Church. The Rev. A. Maximchuk "rather than be compelled to become a soldier he escaped to Canada." Sometime after his arrival he became concerned with people's spiritual well-being and would read the Bible to people in need and explain it to them as best he could. His motivation in being a preacher was "his desire to give the people light concerning Jesus Christ." The Rev. J. Zazulak had been a Church Teacher in his parish in Galicia and had spent a year in a Roman Catholic monastery before coming to Canada. His moving into a church role in Canada was consistent with his previous life, and the IGC was a logical place for him to continue his vocation of being a spiritual mentor and support. Seeing the spiritual needs of those around them and recognizing that the spiritual models that had worked in Ukraine might not be applicable on the Canadian Prairies, these individuals adjusted their theological practice to fit a new reality ("Minutes," Sub-Committee).

Being a minister in the IGC was a challenging vocation as the life of the Rev. Joseph Czerniawski demonstrates. Czerniawski had some education in Galicia and worked as a customs agent before he, his parents, and siblings emigrated to Canada. In 1903 when Bodrug was in Vegreville, Alberta, recruiting priests for a church free from the influence of Rome and St. Petersburg, the senior Czerniawski was supportive and encouraged his son to be ordained. Ordained by Bishop Seraphim, Joseph Czerniawski followed Bodrug into the IGC. There he became a respected minister, working for the spiritual well-being of his congregation and seeking to be an advocate for Ukrainian immigrants and the Ukrainian language. His public advocacy was in line with Bodrug's vision for the IGC. Tragically, in the contested religious context of the early twentieth century, a member of the community took exception to Czerniawski and he was murdered in March 1912. Orest Martynowych in his analysis of this tragic series of events suggests that Czerniawski's death "brought to a climax a crisis that had been brewing for years" inside the IGC (Czerniawski).

# The Catechism of the Independent Greek Church

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a confessional church, which means that Presbyterians are formed in the faith through learning, studying, and living out the creeds, confessions, and catechism of the church. When the Rev. Charles Gordon, long-time member of the Synod of Manitoba's Mission Committee and a supporter of the IGC, was asked in 1912 to outline the history of the Independent Greek Church for his Presbyterian colleagues, he began by stating that the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed were its doctrinal bases. He knew this was the fastest and best way to give legitimacy to the church in the eyes of those who were skeptical about the IGC. A further way to add legitimacy in the Presbyterian worldview was the creation of a catechism (*Christian Catechism* 1–16).

Instead of choosing to translate the Westminster Shorter Catechism and its 107 questions, a catechism most Presbyterian young people were taught and had memorized, the team of IGC pastors and members of the Presbyterian Home Missions Committee agreed, on

Bodrug and Negrych's recommendation, to make the recently published (1899) catechism drafted by members of the various Evangelical Free Churches of England the basis for the Catechism of the IGC (*The Independent* 439–41). This newer catechism, put together by a team including Presbyterians, Baptists, and members of five different branches of Methodism, had as its lead author J. Oswald Dykes (1835–1912), a Presbyterian and Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge. Among the goals of the new catechism to demonstrate the unity between churches, albeit in this case between Protestant denominations, was key. Choosing an ecumenically written catechism as the basis of the IGC catechism was an attempt to signal the IGC was seeking to build a tent larger than just Presbyterianism; in fact, it desired to be a Protestant Ukrainian church. This particular catechism was heralded for its simplicity. "It is in the language of today," wrote the editor of *The Independent*, a New York based Christian periodical, going on to say, "[T]here are no theological formulas in semi-medieval phrases to puzzle" readers (433).

The Ukrainian translation of the Catechism stays close to the original version. Olender is correct when she notes it is a Protestant catechism which at times offers a little space for Greek Catholic expressions of Christianity (204). In those places where the IGC catechism breaks with the original text evidence can be seen of a middle ground being built. By happy accident Question 19 in the original asks, "What is the mystery of the blessed Trinity?" This phrasing sounds far more Orthodox than Presbyterian. Neither the word "blessed" nor "Trinity" appear in the Shorter Westminster Catechism. Without even trying to accommodate the Orthodox tradition, a little space was found. In response to Question 21 "What is it to repent?" the English answer is: the one "who truly repents of their sin not only confesses it with shame and sorrow, but above all turns from it to God with sincere desire to be forgiven." The Ukrainian translation speaks of the one making the confession of sin being absolved and having a "steadfast purpose to sin no more." In using the language of absolution, the Ukrainian

translation opens the door to Orthodox practices. Intentionally or unintentionally, space was made for two understandings of repentance to co-exist. Two questions later "providential discipline" became in Ukrainian "the ways of God's providence." This is a softening of the Reformed theological edge by holding up the Orthodox commitment to God's providence. In the cases of these two questions the translation team provided opportunity for Orthodox understandings to find a footing.

Two questions from the original document were not included in the IGC version: "What is the duty of the Church to the State?" and "What is the duty of the State to the Church?" (*The Independent* 440). For Scottish, Irish, and Canadian Presbyterians, the removal of any discussion of Church–State relations was to set aside three hundred years of bitterly argued theological debate and not a little bloodshed. By not including those questions, the priests and others in the IGC who dreamed of a Ukrainian church free of interference from outsiders were given the opportunity of silence in which to dream. For both Canadian Presbyterians and Ukrainians, the silence allowed for unspoken expectations to flourish in what each side believed was a convention of the middle ground between them.

Most surprising, however, were the questions about sacraments. Following a fairly standard description of the sacraments as "Sacred rites instituted by our Lord Jesus to make more plain by visible signs the inward benefits of the Gospel," Question 40 of the catechism asked: "How many Sacraments are there?" The original document gave as answer: "Two only—Baptism and the Lord's Supper." The answer provided in the IGC catechism was: "The Orthodox Greek Church say seven, namely: 1 Baptism, 2 Unction with Chrism, 3 Penitence, 4 Communion, 5 Anointing of the sick, 6 Orders, and 7 Matrimony." All seven sacraments of the Orthodox Greek Church were recognized as having value; the listing did not even locate Communion and Baptism as first and second, with the rest following. However, as Olender notes, the next question did put a Protestant flavor on the answer: "What are the principal

Sacraments?" The answer given was "Baptism and the Lord's Supper, called also Eucharist." The language is important here. Nowhere was there criticism of the other five sacraments, for they simply are not among the principal sacraments. The Catechism made fuzzy what had been clear lines drawn as a result of the debates of the Reformation. That softening points to the flexibility with which certain parts the PCC approached the challenge of showing hospitality to Ukrainian immigrants.

Further space was created in describing the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Olender argues that the catechism provided an explanation "of Communion as a memorial, thus denying the Real Presence in the Eucharist" (Olender 204), which suggests that no middle ground was given by the Presbyterians on the meaning of the Eucharist. The original catechism had answered the question "What is signified by the bread and the wine?" with: "By the Bread is signified the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ in which he lived and died; and by the Wine is signified His Blood shed once for all upon the Cross for the remission of sins." The bread and the wine were symbols, with the catechism using typical Protestant memorial language. The IGC catechism, however, provided a different answer to the question: "This question is most effectively answered by the Apostle Paul, who in the tenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians does write: 'The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one Bread." The Protestant Presbyterians and Ukrainians of the IGC in struggling to find mutually agreeable space on this matter turned to the Biblical witness and quoted without explanation one of the Apostle Paul's more mystical passages. The I Corinthians 10:16–17 passage is open to widely divergent interpretations, for it is not a narrowly memorialist text. Given the passage quoted in the IGC catechism, the answer to the next question, which originally would have sounded memorialist, takes on the possibility of a more mystical interpretation, as it says, "[Those who eat and drink] feed spiritually upon Christ as the nourishment of the soul, by which they are strengthened and refreshed for the duties and trails of life." Having participated in the "Communion of the Blood of Christ" and the "Communion of the Body of Christ," this may not be real presence, but the spiritual feeding is not mere memorial either. The IGC catechism had created a middle ground in which neither memorial nor real presence were endorsed.

The Catechism was used to introduce some elements of Presbyterian worship to the IGC. The Catechism was designed to be used with children, and the printing of some metrical psalms and hymns along with the Catechism was introducing the next generation to elements of Reformed worship (*Christian Catechism* 18–39). Two of the metrical psalms, which are designed to be sung, Psalms 100 and 103, had the same meter in both Ukrainian and English, allowing them to be sung bilingually, a practice the psalter encouraged. The hymns were all originally in English with Ukrainian translations and included a number of well-known nineteenth-century hymns such as "Onward Christian Soldiers," "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," and "Blessed Assurance." The expected hymn tunes would have been the tunes which English-speaking congregations commonly sang. The development of twelve hymn texts that could be sung bilingually required skill and commitment on the part of the translators. Determining how widely the metrical psalms and hymns were used, if at all, has not been possible. Bilingual singing preserved Ukrainian as a language of worship, and the hymns and catechism not only taught English to Ukrainians, but also exposed children to Ukrainian in the context of worship. The Catechism was the first book in Ukrainian published in Canada.

## The end of the Independent Greek Church

A variety of motivations had brought together Ukrainian immigrants and the PCC in the IGC, but it did not last. The contingent and contested nature of middle ground meant the IGC could not withstand a series of changes that began in 1908. The departure of John Bodrug for

the United States left a leadership vacuum which no one was able to fill and with the creator of the middle ground gone, it started to fray. In addition, there was growing pressure on all Presbyterian congregations in Canada to adopt common worship practices, including the use of English. The limitations on vernacular practices and languages of worship sought to create a uniform worship style so Presbyterians moving from one community to another in Canada could attend any Presbyterian congregation and be comfortable with a recognizable worship style (Bush 2004). Thirdly, the attention of the Roman Catholic community had been drawn to the spiritual needs of the Greek Catholic community in diaspora in Canada, and in 1912, a Greek Catholic bishop, Nykyta Budka, was appointed to Canada. His arrival opened the way for Greek Catholic priests to be trained and ordained in Canada, and he also recruited priests from Galicia. This move meant that large numbers of IGC parishioners were able to access Ukrainian language worship in the ritual and theology they knew from their homeland. All of the above were factors in the decline of the IGC.

A further significant factor, often overlooked by scholars, was the rise of bureaucratic systems within the PCC. In the years leading up to World War I, the Canadian Presbyterian Church became increasingly committed to business models in all aspects of its ministry, including its mission on the Prairies (Bush 2012). This control was exercised through the centralized management of finances. The new systems could not allow for the freedom the leadership of the IGC enjoyed to open new congregations, hire additional personnel, and even launch building campaigns. Previously the Presbyterian Church was expected to finance all these actions without being able to exercise control over the decisions to spend the money. Under the new centralized management, not only did the IGC have less financial freedom, but there was also less freedom to have patterns of church that were outside the "normal," that is Presbyterian, ways of being a church. The Rev. Dr. Andrew S. Grant, the recently appointed full-time paid Convenor of the Home Missions Committee and the person charged with building

on the increasingly bureaucratized systems in the church, chaired a meeting of the Home Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg on May 29, 1912. The meeting's purpose was to develop a path by which clergy within the IGC would become fully recognized ministers within The Presbyterian Church in Canada, thereby regularizing the relationship the clergy of the IGC had with the Presbyterian Church. In so doing, the leadership of the Presbyterian Church would achieve the goal that "any further extension of the work among the Ruthenian people should be under Presbyterian supervision, and that in general closer supervision of work among the Ruthenians is desirable" (Minutes, Home Missions Committee). The IGC clergy would be brought under Presbytery control, and any new initiatives would come through Presbytery processes, including the determination of what funding would be made available. The autonomy of decision-making the IGC had enjoyed was to be eliminated. The Rev. J. A. Carmichael, a Superintendent of Missions for The Presbyterian Church in Canada and a supporter of the IGC, had died in 1911, leaving the IGC without one of its champions (Grant 1, 3). The Rev. Dr. Charles Gordon (Ralph Connor), a member of the committee that met in May 1912, spoke against the transfer of IGC clergy into the Presbyterian church. Gordon supported the work the IGC had done and did not believe its work was finished; he believed that it was still needed and should be "still strengthened and supported by the warm sympathy and financial aid of the Presbyterian Church" (Grant 1, 3). Yet, realizing his argument would not carry the day, Gordon was unable to do anything but express his opposition to the move and make his displeasure clear. Notably, no representative from the IGC was present at this meeting. The IGC had come into existence through a conversation between Protestant-leaning Ukrainian leaders and Presbyterian Church leaders, but the end came through a bureaucratic process at which only Presbyterian leadership was present.

In October 1912, twenty-two clergy of the IGC appeared one-by-one before a subcommittee of the Home Missions Committee to tell their story and answer questions examining their theology to determine if it was sufficiently Protestant. Those approved by the sub-committee were allowed to become ministers in the Presbyterian Church without further requirements. At the 1913 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, fifteen clergy from the IGC were welcomed as ministers of the Presbyterian Church—John Bodrug was not among them. His vision of an independent Ukrainian church living in middle ground had failed.

A. J. Hunter, a Presbyterian minister, who served in the largely Ukrainian community of Teulon, Manitoba, reflected on the IGC after its demise,

They [the Presbyterians] did not wish to induce the mass of Ukrainians to turn Presbyterian: this they knew would be impossible in any short space of time. They did want the Ukrainians to study the Bible and to give serious consideration to the arguments in favor of the evangelical [Protestant] interpretation of Christianity, yet they saw that for years to come the religious feelings of the majority would demand their ancestral form of worship. (Hunter 35)

The patience Hunter describes as being present among the Presbyterian leaders involved in the establishment of the IGC allowed for the creation of a middle ground, contingent as it was. However, the bureaucratizing impetus within the Presbyterian Church was not willing to be patient and was not willing to have such an ill-defined and, at times, unmanageable entity connected to the denomination. The IGC was not able to survive the pressure to become uniform like the rest of the Presbyterian Church, for in that uniformity there was no room for middle ground. In that uniformity there was no room for a Ukrainian expression of Protestant Christianity to arise which used the liturgy of John Chrysostom and the theology of John Calvin.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Fergus, Ontario, Canada

#### **Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> The Algonquin were one of the Indigenous groups present when the French arrived and started to settle the land.
- <sup>2</sup> The Doukhobours are a Christian ethnoreligious group of Russian origin dating back to the early eighteenth century. Some emigrated to Canada where they hoped to practice communal land holding and pacifism which were central spiritual practices.

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