

Faith-Based Responses to Trafficking in Women from Eastern Europe*
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On 7 September 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell presided over the swearing-in ceremony of John R. Miller as Ambassador-at-Large of the State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. Before an assemblage of ambassadors, members of Congress, and White House and State Department VIPs, Ambassador Miller related the nightmare of Katya, “a Czech teenager lured to Amsterdam with a promise of a restaurant job, her passport seized, her two-year-old daughter threatened so she would service 10 and 15 men a day in a brothel.” On 23 November 2004 Moldovan television reported the case of a family of traffickers in the northern Moldovan village of Vulkaneshty that had purchased girls from Ukrainian orphanages, along with all their paperwork, and had dispatched them to work in East European countries as prostitutes and beggars.¹ Could this possibly happen today in a civilized Europe? Or in the U.S.? The awful truth is that such cases are all too commonplace.

The Globalization of Trafficking

Much-lauded economic globalization has opened doors not only to growth in sanctioned trade, but to burgeoning illicit commerce as well. Trafficking in women is widely reported to be the third most lucrative branch of organized crime, after international sales in contraband weapons and drugs.² This growth has been fueled by a seemingly limitless supply of economically desperate women, the lure of extraordinary profits earned by traffickers, pimps, and organized

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crime, and the low risk of arrest and punishment. Also in Europe, the collapse of Communist regimes in the East has led to wholesale recruiting of Slavic women for East and West European, Middle Eastern, and even U.S. brothels.

Asia, historically, has been the major source for global trafficking of women, as well as the locus of international sex tourism. But the liberation of East European states from Communist rule in 1989 and the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the addition of another major stream of trafficking victims. Millions of destitute women from these regions have been led away in new chains fashioned by Russian and East European organized crime rings, traffickers and pimps, and brothel operators worldwide.³

The Numbers

Estimates for global trafficking in women range from 600,000 to four million per year, with the higher figures including persons trafficked within, as well as across, national borders.⁴ The United Nations and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent each calculate four million women trafficked annually within and across borders.⁵ Dr. Laura Lederer, a State Department senior advisor on trafficking, believes that the many millions of women victimized by the global sex industry now places this modern-day slavery “on par with estimates of the number of Africans enslaved in the 16th and 17th centuries.”⁶

Conservative estimates for the number of women and children from post-Soviet states subjected to international trafficking range from 175,000 to 250,000 per year.⁷ An impoverished post-Soviet Ukraine appears to be the greatest loser with 400,000 or more of its women having been

trafficked abroad in its first decade of independence.⁸ The Moldovan Security Service calculates that of the more than 600,000 of its citizens working abroad illegally, a great many are trafficked women. Prosecutors contend some ten percent of all Moldovan women working in brothels abroad were drugged by traffickers. In some villages “75 percent of the women are working abroad.”⁹ Both Moscow’s anti-trafficking Angel Coalition and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimate Russia’s loss to traffickers to be 50,000 women a year.¹⁰ A Miramed Institute survey of Russia “indicated that in some economically depressed regions, 30 percent of people had a close friend or family member who had been lured abroad.” Especially hard hit were Yaroslavl, Novgorod, Karelia, and Buryatia.¹¹ In May 2004, IOM estimated “50,000 to 100,000 Moldovans, over 100,000 Ukrainians, and 500,000 Russians [currently] active in prostitution outside their home country.”¹² So many Slavic women have been ensnared in the global sex industry that in many parts of the world, including Turkey, Israel, and England, “Natasha” has become the generic term for prostitute.¹³ At the same time Caucasus and post-Soviet Central Asian republics also pay tribute to the trafficking behemoth in dimensions that, to date, are only partially documented. (Losers include Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan.)¹⁴ One anti-trafficking NGO estimates that citizens of post-Soviet states now constitute one quarter of all women subjected to trafficking worldwide.¹⁵

Traffickers transport women from post-Soviet states to brothels and apartment lock-ups in Europe, the Middle East, even the Far East and the U.S.¹⁶

- An estimated 500,000 women are trafficked to Europe annually,¹⁷ with up to 75 percent coming from former East Bloc states.¹⁸

- Of the 400,000 women in prostitution in Germany, 80 percent are from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Eighty percent of women in London's sex trade industry also come from former Soviet Bloc states.¹⁹
- Most of the estimated 20,000 foreign women in prostitution in Greece are from former Soviet Bloc states.²⁰
- In the Balkans, especially in largely lawless places like Bosnia and Kosovo, approximately 100,000 women from the former Soviet Union and 75,000 from other parts of Eastern Europe service some locals and many "peacekeeping" troops.²¹
- Albanian traffickers have smuggled thousands of women from Kosovo into Italy by boat for prostitution.²²
- Eighty percent of the women one Dutch anti-trafficking NGO assists are from former Communist Bloc countries.²³
- The Russian mafia controls much of Israel's sex trade with up to 90 percent of trafficked women coming from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.²⁴ "Police officials estimate that there are 25,000 paid sexual transactions [in Israel] every day."²⁵
- Women from former Soviet Bloc nations also work in brothels in Thailand, Japan, and South Korea on "entertainer" visas.²⁶ In 1995 Global Survival Network (GSN), co-directed by Gillian Caldwell, discovered that a group trading Siberian tiger pelts was also trafficking Russian women to Japan. GSN went undercover to document the intricacies of the business, including the delivery of Russian women and girls not only to Japan, but to Macau, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. GSN's clandestine videotaping of global trafficking from the inside forms the basis for its documentary film, "Bought and Sold."²⁷

- Anywhere from 14,500 to 50,000 women are trafficked into the United States annually,²⁸ including from Eastern Europe, often via Mexico. As an example, the *Kyiv Post* reported the case of a Ukrainian woman working in prostitution in a Silver Spring, Maryland, massage parlor owned by a Russian.²⁹

The Profits

The modern slave trade has become an extremely lucrative business for organized crime, with estimates ranging from six to nineteen billion dollars annual profit.³⁰ The Angel Coalition estimates sex trafficking just in Russia yields seven billion in annual profits.³¹ And in Germany alone bars, clubs, and brothels dependent on traffickers are estimated to earn 4.5 billion a year.³²

The income of individual traffickers and pimps is stunning.

- The CIA calculates that profits from one trafficked woman alone average \$250,000.³³ A Ukrainian doctor operating a brothel in Essex, England, earned \$210,000 in eight months prior to her arrest.³⁴
- In Bosnia, with an average annual income of \$4,400, a single bar owner working five East European women can earn \$240,000 a year from prostitution.³⁵
- Yitzhak Tyler, chief of undercover police operations in Haifa, Israel, has tallied pimps' profits from mostly Slavic women: "a small place with 10 girls" times "15 to 20 clients a day," times 200 shekels, equals 30,000 shekels a day, times "25 days a month minimum So we are talking about 750,000 shekels a month or about \$215,000. A man often owns five of these places. That's a million dollars [a month]. No taxes. No real overhead. It's a factory with slave labor. And we've got them all over Israel."³⁶

Not only are trafficking profits sky high, but overhead is negligible. Women from Eastern Europe cost pimps \$500 to \$1,000 each but, unlike drugs, they can be sold over and over again.³⁷ And when they die from maltreatment or sexually transmitted diseases or commit suicide, or are caught in police raids, pimps--who are rarely arrested--have access to a seemingly inexhaustible supply of additional desperate women and girls from Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Nigeria, Thailand, etc., etc.

The Low Risk

Not only is trafficking a high profit, low overhead proposition, it is very low risk as well. “Sadly, in most countries there’s a greater penalty for dealing drugs than for dealing in human flesh.”³⁸ In the Netherlands and Belgium, the maximum penalty for trafficking is one year and in the Czech Republic it is a misdemeanor.³⁹ Arrests and prosecutions of traffickers are infinitesimal compared to the millions of women being traded and the billions being earned every year.

Corruption

Rampant corruption only compounds the problem. Trafficked women fleeing brothels rarely seek help from the law because the police are too often the johns—or are on the take—or both.⁴⁰

- Macedonian police reportedly earn \$750 every time they assist a trafficker, compared to a monthly salary of \$200.⁴¹
- The chief of criminal investigations for the Ukrainian Ministry of the Interior sees trafficking as a “human tragedy” and a “national crisis” compounded by wealthy criminals

bribing impoverished police: “Gangsters make more money from these women in a week than we have in our law enforcement budget for the whole year.”⁴²

- Of 70 travel agencies in Moldova, an estimated 50 are thought to be fronts for traffickers.⁴³
- Pimps in Western Europe and Israel, “working with officials, tip off police on the whereabouts of a woman just about the time that woman has earned enough money to leave, resulting in the woman being arrested and deported and the pimps keeping the money.”⁴⁴

Christian Responses

What has been and what should be the Christian response to trafficking in women? Having surveyed voluminous literature on trafficking and having conducted several dozen interviews, I can answer that Christian responses, though spotty and uneven, have been far more numerous and consequential than I originally realized. However, at the same time, it must be noted that Christian responses have not been nearly enough to help more than a negligible percentage of trafficked women and, to date, have been dwarfed by the research and work of non-faith-based NGOs and government agencies. And all anti-trafficking efforts to this point pale before the continuing escalation of the global sex trade.

U. S. Legislation

Before exploring what more Christians could and should do to combat trafficking, a review of Christian efforts to date is in order. In the United States in the 1980s mainline and evangelical Christians and feminist organizations managed to find common cause in combating pornography. Evangelicals also gained experience in working collaboratively as they lobbied successfully for

passage of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. The expertise in coalition building and networking that U.S. Christians gained in anti-pornography and religious liberty campaigns proved immensely helpful as U.S. faith communities began to wake up to the staggering dimensions and horrific depravity of worldwide sexual trafficking in women.⁴⁵

Christian Networking

Landmark U.S. legislation to combat international trafficking in women, passed in 2000 and strengthened in 2003, owed much to concerned Christians inside and outside government and their willingness to work together with equally concerned Jewish groups and feminist organizations. Michael Horowitz of the Hudson Institute prodded both Evangelical Christians and feminists to get involved. The informal anti-trafficking coalition he helped forge in the mid-1990s, including John Busby (Salvation Army), Joe Mettimano (World Vision), Lisa Thompson (NAE, later, Salvation Army), Barbara Ledeen (Senate Republican Conference), Claudia Barlow (private consultant), Penny Lance (Kids First Coalition), Marian Bell (Prison Fellowship), and Janice Crouse (Concerned Women for America), continues to press its case.

At the same time, two Catholic laymen in Congress, Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS), worked in tandem leading efforts to pass the 2000 and 2003 legislation that commits the U.S. to a major role in combating what amounts to a modern-day slave trade. Political scientist Allen Hertzke has written a fascinating account of truly “strange bedfellows” coming together to promote Congressional action against trafficking: “At a pivotal last stage of the legislative campaign, members of Congress received a letter from Gloria Steinem and other feminist leaders at the very moment that they were being lobbied by such

figures as Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship, Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention, Richard Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals, and John Busby of the Salvation Army.”⁴⁶ Among a host of Christian groups that played a role in supporting U.S. anti-trafficking legislation, especially prominent were the National Association of Evangelicals (Richard Cizik and Lisa Thompson), Concerned Women for America (Janice Crouse), the Salvation Army (John Busby and Marilyn White), the International Justice Mission (Gary Haugen and Sharon Cohn), the Institute on Religion and Democracy (Diane Knippers), the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (Richard Land and Shannon Royce), World Vision (Joe Mettimano), and Prison Fellowship (Chuck Colson and Marian Bell).⁴⁷

Christian networking to combat trafficking is having a significant impact. The U.S.-based National Association of Evangelicals, for example, helped launch an Initiative Against Sexual Trafficking (IAST) in 1999 that in 2001 came under the auspices of the Salvation Army. This grouping of 28 church and parachurch organizations supporting anti-trafficking efforts is led by Lisa Thompson. She is a tireless, energetic, single-minded crusader who has been inspired by the 19th-century anti-slavery campaign of William Wilberforce and the compassionate ministries to prostitutes undertaken in England by Josephine Butler and Bramwell and Florence Booth.⁴⁸

Anti-Trafficking Public Letters

Increasing Evangelical involvement in an issue of international social justice is no better illustrated than in a string of anti-trafficking public letters with multiple signatures. These have been generated by such activists as Lisa Thompson and Janice Crouse with help from such friends of Evangelicals as Michael Horowitz (Hudson Institute) and Donna Hughes (University

of Rhode Island). These widely circulated letters seek to put pressure on politicians to use their influence to combat this evil. Examples include open letters to President Bill Clinton and congressional leaders to support U.S. anti-trafficking legislation (June 1999—130, mostly Evangelical, signators); to Secretary of State Powell urging the removal of the Netherlands and Germany from the State Department's Tier One status as countries successfully combating trafficking (April 2002--over 100 U.S. Christian and human rights organization signators); to President Vladimir Putin opposing Russian legalization of prostitution (September 2002--185 signators); to Pope John Paul II urging greater Vatican efforts to combat trafficking (January 2003--146 signators); to Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice urging President Bush's participation in a high profile swearing-in for Ambassador John R. Miller, responsible for State Department counter trafficking efforts (December 2003--19 signators); and to President Vaclav Klaus and other Czech officials opposing the legalization of prostitution (May 2004--105 signators); and to U.S. House and Senate leaders to preserve \$50 million in U.S. government funding for anti-trafficking efforts (November 2004-29 organizations).⁴⁹

The Salvation Army

The premier Protestant denominational response to trafficking to date is seen in the concerted efforts of the Salvation Army. The work of Lisa Thompson on behalf of the Salvation Army and IAST is just the latest chapter in longstanding Salvation Army efforts to attack the evil of trafficking. In 1884 followers of founder William Booth opened a safe house for women and girls escaping prostitution. And in 1885 the Army collaborated with journalist W. T. Stead in a campaign to end child prostitution in England.⁵⁰

On 11 July 1885 William Booth railed against sexual trafficking in the Army's *War Cry*:

“Something must be done and somebody must do it. Thank God the Salvation Army never sees an evil without asking the question, ‘Can anything be done to remove it?’”⁵¹ Before the end of the year Parliament was sufficiently prodded by a Salvation Army petition drive and an aroused public to pass the Criminal Amendment Law, raising the legal age of consent from 13 to 16. Josephine Butler, famed stalwart crusader against British laws that aided and abetted pimps and child predators, saw the Salvation Army as her “answer to prayer.”⁵² Meanwhile, in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Salvation Army, the National Florence Crittendon Mission, and other Evangelical groups took up the cause of ministering to sexually exploited women.⁵³

As noted earlier, the Salvation Army was a charter member of the Initiative Against Sexual Trafficking (IAST), launched in 1999 by the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). In 2001, at a point that NAE was no longer able to sustain the Initiative financially, Commissioner John Busby, U.S. national commander of the Salvation Army, arranged for it to be housed at the Army's Alexandria, VA, headquarters. IAST combats trafficking by means of public awareness and advocacy campaigns, educational work, and social services for victims. This same comprehensive approach marks the work of the Salvation Army worldwide. In August 2003 The U.S. Salvation Army established a Trafficking Services Council (TSC) headed by Adam Freer.⁵⁴ Also in 2003, General John Larrison in London set up an International Headquarters Anti-Trafficking Desk. Lt. Col. Dawn Sewell, who manages this effort, was also directed to oversee a

new International Anti-Trafficking Task Force set up in January 2004, consisting of 15 Salvation Army officers representing the Army's anti-trafficking efforts on every continent.⁵⁵

The Salvation Army is not only organized to act; it does act. Through its leading role in the IAST coalition, the Army has been involved not only in lobbying for laws combating trafficking but in awareness raising campaigns through forums, lectures, and open letters.⁵⁶ Also, around the world the Salvation Army works with trafficked women, including in India, Tanzania, Switzerland, Australia, South Africa, Canada, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, The Netherlands, Britain, Ghana, Costa Rica, and Bangladesh. It also establishes microenterprise and microcredit projects to alleviate the poverty that breeds trafficking and to provide victims of trafficking with an alternative livelihood. Its work in Jessore, Bangladesh, for example, has liberated 98 women from prostitution since 1997. The Army provides literacy classes and training while its Sally Ann Shop sells crafts and clothes made by the women. Others are extended small loans to launch businesses: "One woman now owns four rickshaws and has a daily income from their hire. Another has bought carpentry tools for furniture making and yet another has bought and sold cattle...and there is a good repayment record."⁵⁷

European Protestant Efforts

In Europe, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) has repeatedly denounced trafficking as "an unacceptable new form of slavery."⁵⁸ In Germany, the Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches staff some 20 counseling centers for victims of trafficking, helping women cope with trauma and assisting them in finding food and shelter.⁵⁹ A quite recent Protestant initiative is that of the European Baptist Federation which, urged on by concerned

Swedish Baptists, will make counter-trafficking efforts the focus of an upcoming meeting scheduled for April 2005 in Budapest.⁶⁰

European Catholic and Ecumenical Efforts

Catholic bodies have been particularly active in Europe publicizing the plight of trafficked women and taking steps to provide protection and care for women leaving prostitution. The international Catholic charity, Caritas, organizes prevention campaigns, operates safe houses, and assists in the repatriation of trafficked women. In addition, it helped launch Catholic Organizations Against Trafficking in Women (COATNET), which in turn in December 2002 helped spawn a broader coalition including non-Catholics: Christian Action and Networking Against Trafficking in Women (CAT). In 2003 Caritas also prepared an information and workshop kit on “Trafficking in Women and Children.”⁶¹

In 2003 CAT published *Christian Action and Networking Against Trafficking in Women*, “an action-oriented guide for awareness-raising and social assistance.” In addition to outlining the alarming dimensions of trafficking, the study provides sound, practical advice for Christians motivated to move beyond concern to action. Types of assistance that CAT suggests should be offered victims of trafficking include:

- Shelter, medical assistance, food, and clothing
- Social, psychological, and spiritual assistance
- Legal and financial assistance
- Moral support for victims in legal proceedings and meetings with police
- Help in contacting other services including doctors and advice centers

- Information on sexually transmitted diseases
- Help in contacting family and relatives
- Help in legalizing residency in the destination country and assistance for victims desiring to return home
- Visiting victims in hospitals and prisons
- Arranging therapy for drug users and the traumatized
- Arranging vocational training and employment.⁶²

Above all, the added dimension concerned Christians can bring to aftercare is compassion based on the conviction that the spiritual healing of the Great Physician is the best hope for overcoming the pain, brokenness, and trauma suffered by trafficking victims.

Christian Action and Networking also offers sobering reflection on church involvement in combating trafficking: “churches and church-related organizations play an important role in assistance and prevention and should be aware of their responsibility, being committed to the dignity of human beings.” Sadly, however, church leaders and church members are sometimes unwilling “to take trafficking as seriously as it would need to be taken. It is even more painful to acknowledge that trafficking is not a problem of ‘them’ but of ‘us’: a great number of those profiting from the trafficking, or who are as ‘clients’ using the services of trafficked women forced into prostitution, are baptized Christians.”⁶³

At the same time, *Christian Action and Networking* concludes that “An important element of work against trafficking which is specific to churches is the resource and power of prayer and the biblical message.” The study quotes I Corinthians 12:26-27, “If one part of the body suffers, all

the other parts of the body suffer with it,” and it reproduces a powerful paraphrase of Psalm 69 from the perspective of a woman subjected to trafficking:

Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. My feet can no longer touch bottom in the deep mire where I am sinking You know how I am insulted and shamed, you know who they are, my tormentors. Shame has broken my heart and brought me to despair. I long for someone who sees me and cares about my pain Those who looked to God for counsel and help find new courage in their hearts. For God hears the voice of the poor and needy. God identifies with those in bondage.⁶⁴

Caritas Europe and CCME work together closely not only in compassionate ministries and church awareness campaigns, but also in lobbying the European Union for common European migration laws that could undercut criminal trafficking. Both “are convinced that more straightforward and transparent visa regulations and comprehensive information about legal working possibilities in different European countries could significantly reduce the number of women who are in danger of trafficking.”⁶⁵ Most recently, Caritas Europe and CCME co-sponsored a public meeting on counter-trafficking efforts at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, 4 March 2004.⁶⁶

Additional Catholic Efforts

The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) is especially active in providing protection and reintegration services for women trafficked in Europe.⁶⁷ Also, Sister Eugenia Bonetti leads the efforts of some 200 nuns in the Italian Union of Major Superiors, working fulltime to provide housing and security for hundreds of women trafficked to Italy from Eastern Europe and other parts of the world.⁶⁸ Recently Sister Eugenia has taken on the task of urging Catholic men’s as well as women’s religious orders to become more active in fighting trafficking. With financial help from the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, her order has

developed training programs for Catholic religious who have begun, or plan to begin, work on behalf of trafficking victims. Between January and May 2004 the Italian Union of Major Superiors led four training courses focused on prevention for over 80 members of religious orders from Nigeria, Albania, and Romania.

Finally, two Italian priests assist many victims of trafficking in Italy. In 1995 Don Cesare Lo Deserto founded a safe house near San Foca, Puglia Province, Italy, for women fleeing brothels. To date, over 1,000 victims of sexual trafficking have found safe haven, protection, and compassionate care in his Fondazione Regina Pacis Shelter.⁶⁹ Similarly, Father Oreste Benzi, founder of the Pope John XXIII Community, has helped over 2,000 women escape the control of traffickers and pimps. At any one time shelters run by his community harbor some 200 women from many countries. On 15 May 2002 this man of compassion accompanied 500 former prostitutes, mostly from Eastern Europe and Africa, to a general audience with John Paul II. The pope encouraged the women to “keep walking the path toward full freedom, which is a foundation of human dignity.”⁷⁰

Additional Protestant Efforts

Other West European, mostly Protestant, direct intervention charities ministering to prostitutes and former prostitutes include The Scarlet Cord (Amsterdam), Christian Aid and Resources Foundation (Amsterdam), Door of Hope (London), One25 Limited (Bristol), and Alabare Christian Care Centers (Bristol). These groups reach out to local women and women trafficked from Asia, Africa, and, increasingly, Eastern Europe. Other Christian ministries combating trafficking and aiding its victims in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union include The

Bible League (Serbia), Shared Hope (Moldova), Assemblies of God (Moldova and Ukraine), World Vision (many countries of the region), Door of Life (Thessaloniki), Lydia's House (Athens), International Teams (Athens), The Lost Coin (Athens), Sonia (Limassol, Cyprus), Rahab Ministry of Hungarian Baptist Aid (Budapest), United Methodist Committee on Relief (Pristina, Kosovo), Hagar (Central Asia), Ministry to Women in Prostitution (Bishkek, Kyrgyzia), NGO "Suyuu-Bulag" (Bishkek, Kyrgyzia), and Podruga NGO (Osh, Kyrgyzia).⁷¹

Emma Skjonsby is a missionary with International Teams ministering in Athens, Greece, to women engaged in prostitution. During Easter season, 2004, she shared the following with her supporters:

Everywhere we went that night, the presence of the Lord went ahead of us. Although the atmosphere was exceedingly depraved and dark, the light of the Lord made it a joy to be there. It was the first brothel I'd been in and I cautiously push open the door and stepped inside. It's a bare room, lined with benches and a curtain. We catch sight of an old, lumpy woman with half her teeth missing and a suspicious look on her face. "What do you want?" she asked. We explain that we brought a gift for the girls working there and asked to speak with them. Another woman, let's call her Eleni, pokes her head out to see what's going on. We wish her a happy Easter and invite her to pick a candle. As we offered the brightly wrapped [Jesus film] video and the candle to Eleni and then to the madame, it was so beautiful to watch their expressions soften from suspicion to surprise and joy. When was the last time they were loved?

In the next dark brothel we entered, a sun-withered Greek man suspiciously greeted us. As we explained that we were there to offer an Easter present to the women, he called out for Mirella to come see us. She is a young and charming Albanian and was delighted to receive a candle and the video. Both of them invited us to come back again. Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome the light! This is what Easter is about and I'm so delighted to be part of the light in Athens. Thank you for fighting with us on behalf of these precious women.⁷²

More recently, Emma and her co-laborers reached out to "women working out of hotels, cafeterias, bars, brothels, and the streets" during the August 2004 Athens Olympics. Perhaps

because of the overwhelming security and police presence, the number of women on the streets was down. Emma noted another shift in Athens prostitution: “Russian, Bulgarian, and Albanian women are quite rapidly being replaced by young African girls.”⁷³

Two American anti-trafficking charities serving East European women are Make Way Partners (Protestant; Tuscaloosa, Alabama) and International Partners in Mission (Catholic; Cleveland, Ohio). Make Way Partners is a U.S.-based Evangelical mission that works “to prevent and combat” sexual trafficking in women and children. Founders Milton and Kimberly Smith, with the help of Western churches and Christian entrepreneurs, organize “income generation teams” in Ukraine and Moldova, “planting small businesses through local Christians.” To counter extremely high unemployment rates, especially for women, “these teams offer practical alternatives to human trafficking while sharing the Hope of the Gospel.”⁷⁴

Integra Venture, a faith-based community economic development agency based in Bratislava, Slovakia, also believes helping economically destitute women obtain gainful employment is a critical component in preventing sexual trafficking. To that end in 2003 it launched “Microenterprise Development for Women at Risk,” an 18-month project in the Balkans funded by the European Commission. In Croatia and Serbia, Integra is training at-risk women to establish small businesses capable of supporting themselves and their families. In other cases, women who run promising small businesses are receiving loans through a microcredit scheme. The economic opportunities offered to victims of trafficking by such groups as Integra Venture, MakeWay Partners, the Salvation Army, and World Vision provide women “not just a way out, but a way of transcending the evil that has imprisoned them.”⁷⁵

The Romanian Orthodox Church

Unfortunately, most churches in post-Soviet Bloc states do not appear to have recognized the seriousness of sexual trafficking from and within post-Soviet states. One encouraging exception is the Romanian Orthodox Church. In 2002 it agreed to a collaborative effort with the intergovernmental agency International Organization for Migration (IOM). The two parties are working together to raise public awareness of trafficking, which Romanian Orthodox Bishop Ciprian Campineanul has characterized as a plague. Romanian Orthodox Patriarch Teoctist himself has taken a strong stand against trafficking, stating that it “undermines the very being of the Romanian nation.”⁷⁶ And he has involved his church in a variety of counter-trafficking initiatives with IOM help.

- Patriarch Teoctist has asked priests to include warnings against trafficking in Sunday sermons.
- He also has spoken out on national radio against this evil.
- The threat of trafficking is now a compulsory subject in Romanian Orthodox seminaries.
- The church and IOM have prepared counter-trafficking curricula that are made available to schools and churches.
- The church has sponsored anti-trafficking seminars and workshops for priests, teachers, and social workers in all 23 Romanian dioceses.
- The Romanian Orthodox Church is making appeals to co-believers in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova, Serbia, and Ukraine because, as Bishop Ciprian has stated, “It is necessary that all Orthodox Churches in Eastern Europe join the fight.”⁷⁷

A Single-Handed Orthodox Campaign on Cyprus

Another exceptional Orthodox effort is the work of a single Greek priest who, because he speaks Russian, was asked to serve a Russian Orthodox community in Limmasol, Cyprus. Father Savvas soon discovered large numbers of desperate women on the island who had been trafficked from the former Soviet Union to work in prostitution. Ruth Pojman of USAID calls him a “veritable one-man anti-trafficking campaign” as he uses his cell phone as a mobile hotline for women fleeing prostitution, as he provides safe shelter for these same women, as he fearlessly raises public awareness of the scourge, as he shames local Greek Cypriot clients “by showing up as they are leaving brothels and hotels,” and as he harangues and lobbies a host of complicit authorities and governments. “Importantly, he is trying his best to pressure [Cypriot, Russian, and Ukrainian] authorities to take real action and to implement good legislation.” No better example of Father Savvas’ concern is his righteous indignation over the case of “a Russian girl who died trying to escape after being returned to her traffickers by local police. He is hoping to get the police department to take responsibility for its actions.”⁷⁸

Evangelical, Ecumenical, and Catholic Meetings

Since the early 1990s, governments, international agencies, and secular NGOs have convened literally hundreds of meetings, conferences, and workshops and have published hundreds of reports addressing sexual trafficking in women. Specifically Christian efforts to combat trafficking, however, have been slower to emerge. Still, growing U.S. Evangelical participation in the campaign for anti-trafficking legislation precipitated a mushrooming of concern and more sustained action. Lisa Thompson’s IAST Coalition and the stream of open letters to politicians illustrate this dynamism and determination. So, too, do recent meetings organized by concerned

Christians. The Conference of European Churches, for example, sponsored a consultation on “Trafficking in Women in Europe” at Driebergen, Netherlands, 27 November-1 December 1999.⁷⁹

Two years later American Baptist minister Lauran Bethell, who since 1987 had been directing a safe house in Thailand for former prostitutes, attended a conference of the National Christian Alliance on Prostitution held in England in 2001. Out of that meeting came her dream for a consultation “bringing together the founders and leaders of Christ-based organizations ministering to women in prostitution, along with some of the women who have discovered freedom in Christ through their ministries.”⁸⁰ The result was the “International Consultation on Ministry to Women in Prostitution” held at Green Lakes, Wisconsin, 7-13 August 2004. Over 200 participants representing 26 countries gathered to network, to receive and provide moral support for those ministering to women in prostitution, and to learn best practices and mistakes to avoid. While most of the Christian ministries attending the meeting work in Asia, at least ten groups represented at the Green Lakes consultation provide care for trafficked women in Western and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Meanwhile, in June 2004 the European Regional Partnership Group of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Durrës, Albania, voiced its concern for greater church involvement in counter trafficking efforts. In addition, the ecumenical Norwegian Church Aid plans to focus on trafficking in its 2005 Lenten campaign.⁸¹

Overall, the Vatican seems to have been slower to appreciate the massive dimensions of the trafficking crisis than some of its subordinate bodies such as Caritas, ICMC, and the Italian

Union of Major Superiors. Nevertheless, in recent years Pope John Paul II has sponsored conferences at the Vatican addressing the problem (15-16 May 2002 and 17 June 2004).⁸²

What Has Been Done? What Needs To Be Done?

Hopefully, research on Christian responses to human trafficking will encourage more churches and church members to become involved in combating this modern day slavery. In addition to taking stock of who is doing what and where, other questions also need to be addressed. Who is working most effectively in prevention of trafficking, prosecution of traffickers, and aftercare for those who have been trafficked? What additional legislation should be enacted and in which countries in particular? What best practices in combatting trafficking, caring for its victims, and lobbying governments can be identified and highlighted for others to copy? What, even well-intentioned, mistakes have been made that ought not to be repeated?

To answer these questions churches and faith-based organizations need to study the best efforts of Christians and others of like mind presently working to combat trafficking. For example, Robert Aronson, director of programs for the anti-trafficking Miramed Institute, has written and produced “Let’s Go to Paris,” a Russian-language puppet drama whose purpose is to warn teenage girls about the false promises of ads touting jobs in the West. This production would be just as appropriate for East European church youth groups as for school audiences. Aronson specifically encourages East European Christians “to identify anti-trafficking NGOs who are not faith-based, but are in accord with their principles, and work with them closely since they have the expertise.”⁸³

The Role of Faith-Based Organizations

Whatever Christians have done to date to combat trafficking, it still must be conceded that in this cause the church of Christ as a whole has been a sleeping giant. Nevertheless, there is hope in its untapped potential to demand justice and to offer compassion. Sister Mary Ellen Dougherty of Migration and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops gave a brief but power-packed Christian call to arms at a Vatican-sponsored anti-trafficking conference in June 2004. Her presentation, “The Role of Faith-based Organizations in the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons,” deserves careful study. In summary, she ably makes the case for faith-based action to combat trafficking.

1. There is a “logic” in “lodging anti-trafficking work in faith-based organizations.”
 - a. They possess “theological perspectives on justice that mandate action.”
 - b. They possess a phenomenal networking potential through the broad-based geographic reach of local houses of worship.
 - c. And they have history and staying power, offering “continuity, stability, and permanence to the work.”
2. Faith-based bodies can use these strengths in a show of spiritual force against the powers of darkness.
 - a. They can educate their own community and the public in awareness and prevention campaigns. “Once a significant segment of the organization is convinced and educated, the potential for effective contribution is unlimited.”
 - b. They can assist victims by offering safe havens, assistance in accessing counseling, health, legal, and educational services.

- c. And they can build alliances of the like-minded to exert strength through numbers. “The value of the coalition is the ongoing education of its members, the sharing of resources, and the mutual commitment to action.”
3. Finally, there are reasons for “hope as we pursue efforts to eliminate human trafficking.”
- a. “Knowledge of human trafficking is spreading [and] more and more people are becoming educated about it.”
 - b. “There is [growing] power and authority behind the message against human trafficking. Governments across the world are converging around this common cause. Where they are not, there is the constant and concrete reminder to them that this is, universally, a human rights issue. National and international media are addressing that.” The anti-trafficking campaign, though still in its infancy and facing an entrenched, absolutely unprincipled, and extraordinarily wealthy adversary, can take heart in the fact that it is becoming increasingly clear, even to indifferent and corrupt governments, that opposition to trafficking will not go away and it will continue to grow.
 - c. “Finally, there is that which is beyond all of us. There is hope in our capacity for prayer. Simplistic as it may sound to the sophisticate, God can do what we cannot do. God *will* do what we cannot do. We all have our prophets and our saints. In their struggles against injustice, they did not waste their lives. They did not simply visit the world. That is why they are prophets and saints. We are in good company.”⁸⁴

A Final Call for Christian Action

It is imperative for believers to come to terms with the abominable assault on the God-given dignity of every woman and child inflicted by traffickers, pimps, and johns. And after

comprehending the massive dimensions of this international slave trade in women, Christians, West and East, must decide how best to pray and put feet to prayers, how best to comfort the afflicted, and how best to afflict those who ignore the most basic of human rights and who inflict grievous harm on million of women and children created in the image of God.

Appendix I Recommended Reading on Best Practices

Author's Note: Christian ministries considering participation in the campaign to combat trafficking should learn as much as possible from the experience of fellow faith-based organizations and from the practices of other NGOs and government and international agencies that have proven effective in combatting trafficking and caring for its victims. Find below a selection of recommended readings.

Apap, Joanna and Felicita Medved. "Protection Schemes for Victims of Trafficking in Selected EU Member Countries, Candidate and Third Countries," prepared for the Seminar on Exchange of Information and Best Practices Regarding Protection Schemes for Victims of Trafficking in Selected EU Member Countries, Candidates and Third Countries, Madrid, 19-20 December 2002. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2003.
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Bethell, Rev. Lauran. "After-Care for Victims of Trafficking," U.S. House of Representatives, Sub-Committee on International Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Human Rights, 25 June 2003.
http://www.house.gov/international_relations/108/bet0625.htm. (A leading Christian anti-trafficking activist sharing practical advice in government testimony.)

Dougherty, Mary Ellen. "The Role of Faith-based Organizations in the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons." U.S. Embassy to the Holy See Conference, "A Call to Action: Joining the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons," Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, 17 June 2004. A Copy may be requested at RothTurnleyAE@state.gov.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Division for Church in Society. "A Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation." 2001.
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Hughes, Donna M. "Hiding in Plain Sight, A Practical Guide to Identifying Victims of Trafficking in the U.S. with Particular Emphasis on Victims of Sexual Trafficking as Defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000," October 2003.
http://64.233.161.104/search?q=cache:G6r2oIH0q5gJ:www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/hiding_in_plain_sight.pdf+Hiding+in+Plain+Sight+by+Donna+Hughes&hl=en.

"Look Beneath the Surface." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking>.

New York City Community Response to Trafficking. "A Toolkit for Helping Victims of Trafficking." http://www.ecpatusa.org/community_response.asp.

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Raymond, Janice G. "10 Reasons for *Not* Legalizing Prostitution." Amherst, MA: Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International (CATW), 25 March 2003. Available in seven languages, including Russian and Hungarian, at <http://www.catwinternational.org>.

Schinina, Guglielmo, ed. "Psychosocial Support to Groups of Victims of Human Trafficking in Transit Situations." *Psychosocial Notebook Series 4* (February 2004). <http://www.iom.int>.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Resources for Social Service Providers." <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking>. Six resources in particular are recommended:

1. Tips for Identifying and Helping Trafficking Victims
2. Screening Questions to Assess Whether a Person Is a Trafficking Victim
3. Understanding the Mindset of a Human Trafficking Victim
4. Communicating with Victims of Human Trafficking
5. PowerPoint Presentation for Social Service Providers
6. Sex Trafficking Fact Sheet

Zimmerman, Cathy and Charlotte Watts. "WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women." Geneva: World Health Organization, 2003. <http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/hpu/docs/WHO.pdf>.

Appendix II

Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Victims of Trafficking and Forced Labour and Slavery-like Practices (SMR)

The SMR aims to guarantee basic legal protection and possibilities for redress to victims of this form of violence and outlines the minimum standards as including the following:

Freedom from persecution and harassment by those in the position of authority;

Access to adequate, confidential, and affordable health, social and psychological care;

Access to competent translators during legal proceedings;

Access to free legal assistance and representation during criminal or other proceedings;

Access to legal possibilities of compensation redress;

Provision enabling women to press criminal charges and/or take civil action against their violators, through issuing temporary staying permits during criminal/civil proceedings, and adequate witness protection;

Assistance to return to her home/country if she wishes to do so;

Legal permission to stay in another place if return to her home/country is unsafe;

Protection against reprisals from the perpetrators or authorities;

Encouragement and adequate financial resources for self-help organizations of the women affected, as well as for NGOs who work in solidarity with them.

Source: Siriporn Skrobanek, "Trafficking of Women: GOs and NGOs Interaction on the Local and Global Scale" in "The Trafficking of NIS Women Abroad: An International Conference in Moscow 3-5 November 1997 Conference Report," International League for Human Rights, <http://www.ilhr.org/ilhr/reports/traffic/index.html>, 35.

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- ⁴ .6 to .8 million men, women, and children across borders: State, *Trafficking*, 2004, 6; .7 to 4 million: Dina Francesca Haynes, "Used, Abused, Arrested and Deported: Extending Immigration Benefits to Protect the Victims of Trafficking and to Secure the Prosecution of Traffickers," *Human Rights Quarterly* 26 (2004), 227; .8 to .9 million: Christopher Smith, "Trafficking in Women," *Helsinki Commission News*, 2 March 2004, <http://www.csce.gov>; .7 million across borders/1 to 2 million overall: "Sexual Trafficking on the Rise," *Christian Century* 117 (2 September 2004), 449; .7 to 2 million: State, *Trafficking*, 2003, 1; .8 to .9 million: Miko, "Trafficking," 1; 1million: Hughes and Denisova, "Transnational," 9; Allen Hertzke, *Freeing God's Children; The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 317.
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