

Saints and sinners: Looking at science vs. the supernatural

Living in a scientific age, we are convinced there is a logical explanation for everything. Even so, there are times when the only response to seemingly inexplicable events around us is to scratch our heads in amazement. Take what happened to a couple of my acquaintance. After they had moved from the city into a 140-year-old farmhouse, they noticed one morning that the door to the guest room was open. They had always kept that room shut to save on heat. A few mornings later, they awakened to find the light on in the room.

When the door was found open on other mornings, the husband searched for some explanation, such as the wind or a faulty door latch. He put a wad of paper between the door and the jamb to keep the door from opening. Even after doing this, however, he would sometimes find the door open in the morning and the wad

of paper on the floor. "That didn't bother me so much," he said. "I assumed I hadn't made the wads of paper thick enough. But I was really shaken one morning to find the door to the room open and the wad of paper not on the floor but on top of a chest of drawers six feet from the door!"

Is there a reasonable theory to account for such eerie occurrences?

Even stranger is the story of an Eastern Airlines jet that crashed in the Florida everglades in 1972. Among the 101 casualties were the pilot and flight engineer.

A few months later, the ghosts of the two crew members began to appear on other Eastern Airlines planes that were using salvaged parts from the wrecked plane.

In his book, "The Ghost of Flight 101" (Berkeley Medallion Books, 1976), John G. Fuller



george plagenz

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tells of one occasion after the accident. A flight attendant discovered she had one more passenger than she could account for on the manifest. Then she spotted an Eastern Airlines captain in uniform she hadn't remembered seeing.

"I beg your pardon, captain," she said, "I don't have you on my list." He didn't respond, but stared straight ahead. She called the captain. When he leaned down to address the man in uniform, he turned white.

"My God!" he said. "It's Bob Loft!" Loft had

been the pilot of the ill-fated plane. As soon as the captain blurted out Loft's name, the man disappeared.

According to Fuller's book, that was just one of the many occasions in which Eastern Airlines crew members and passengers reported seeing the ghosts of Loft and the flight engineer.

Susy Smith, author of "Prominent American Ghosts" (World Publishing Co., 1967), says ghosts appear at the places where they were happiest or saddest or at the scene of a great crime or accident in which they were involved.

The renowned Society for Psychical Research in London, made up of psychologists, physicists and doctors, still has an open mind on the subject of ghosts.

While conceding that many ghost stories originate in the imaginations of people, it does go so far as to say it is not impossible that there

are such things as ghosts.

The society is aware of the chance for fraud on the part of mediums who purport to be speaking to the dead. Consequently, mediums who come to the society are put through stiff tests. They are required to blow through their lips the entire time they are conducting a seance.

Because it is impossible to blow through your lips and speak at the same time, if a voice speaks while the medium is blowing through his or her lips, the presumption is that it is authentic — the spirit of the deceased is speaking through the medium's voice mechanism.

But most seances are held in the dark, you say. Under such conditions a medium can pretend to be blowing while not blowing at all and no one will be the wiser.

Next week, I'll tell you how the society nips that little ruse in the bud.

In heart of Bible Belt, Russian Orthodox church far from ordinary

By Jay Reeves

Associated Press Writer

BROOKSIDE, Ala. — The Rev. Benedict Tallant seems like a typical Alabama preacher with his GMC pickup truck and slow drawl, yet the three-armed cross and onion-shaped copper dome on his little brick church stand out in the Bible Belt.

Tallant — Father Benedict to parishioners — is pastor of St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, the oldest patriarchal Russian congregation in the South.

Just as Roman Catholic churches report to the pope in Rome, tiny St. Nicholas is under the auspices of Alexy II, head of the church in Russia.

"Our patriarch is in Moscow," Tallant said.

That's a long way from Brookside, a town of about 1,400 people some 20

miles north of Birmingham.

The church was organized in 1894 for Slavic immigrants who came to Alabama to work in area coal mines. The mines played out years ago, but a half-dozen of the congregations remain.

"Most families had up to 10 kids," said Helen Slatsky, at 80 the oldest active member at St. Nicholas, which has about 70 members and averages 30 people for its Sunday service.

Slatsky's parents immigrated from Slovakia in the early 1900s. Her life today is a mix of the Old World and the New: Two icons hang on a wall above her TV, while a miniature University of Alabama football helmet decorates a table-top.

The congregation has changed through the decades. While the church cemetery is filled with tombstones bearing family names including

Bobyarchick, Krofchick and Yarchak, the current church roll includes people named Buzbee, Davis and Beck.

"We've got a McCracken — a good Russian name," joked Tallant.

Tallant, who grew up in nearby Walker County, attended both Baptist and Methodist churches before converting to the Russian Orthodox church. Ordained in 1962 after completing a home-study course, he has been at St. Nicholas ever since.

While St. Nicholas maintains many traditions dating back to its earliest days as an immigrant congregation, the church — like many other Russian churches abroad — has adapted as its first generation died away, to be replaced by Americans.

Icons adorned with English words hang near the Royal Doors, which lead to the enclosed altar area. The liturgy is

in English with a touch of church Slavonic, an Old World ancestor of modern Russian. "We haven't had a full Russian liturgy since one family went back to Moscow" around 1998, said Tallant.

The church still has a few Russian-speaking members, but most speak English only. The granddaughter of immigrants, Elizabeth Beck sings in the choir and helps maintain the liturgical calendar. She went to Russia with a group last year to get a taste of her church in its native land.

"I enjoyed the language and the churches being so beautiful. We are very small," she said.

St. Nicholas looks much the same today as in its earliest days.

Built in 1916 after one church was destroyed by a tornado and a second by fire, the temple sits on land donated decades ago by U.S. Steel, which em-

ployed many of the immigrant miners.

The 86-year-old church originally was all wood, with a tongue-and-groove ceiling and painted walls. Members paneled the interior in dark wood after Tallant arrived, and brown bricks were added to the exterior.

The old parsonage was converted to a parish house, where Sunday school lessons and other events are held. A food festival held each November draws hundreds of people, many of whom buy nesting dolls and other Russian items purchased through a wholesaler.

St. Nicholas belongs to the smallest of the three Russian heritage denominations in the United States, called the Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the United States of America.

It has 32 congregations, while the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Rus-

sia has 177 and the Orthodox Church in America has 721.

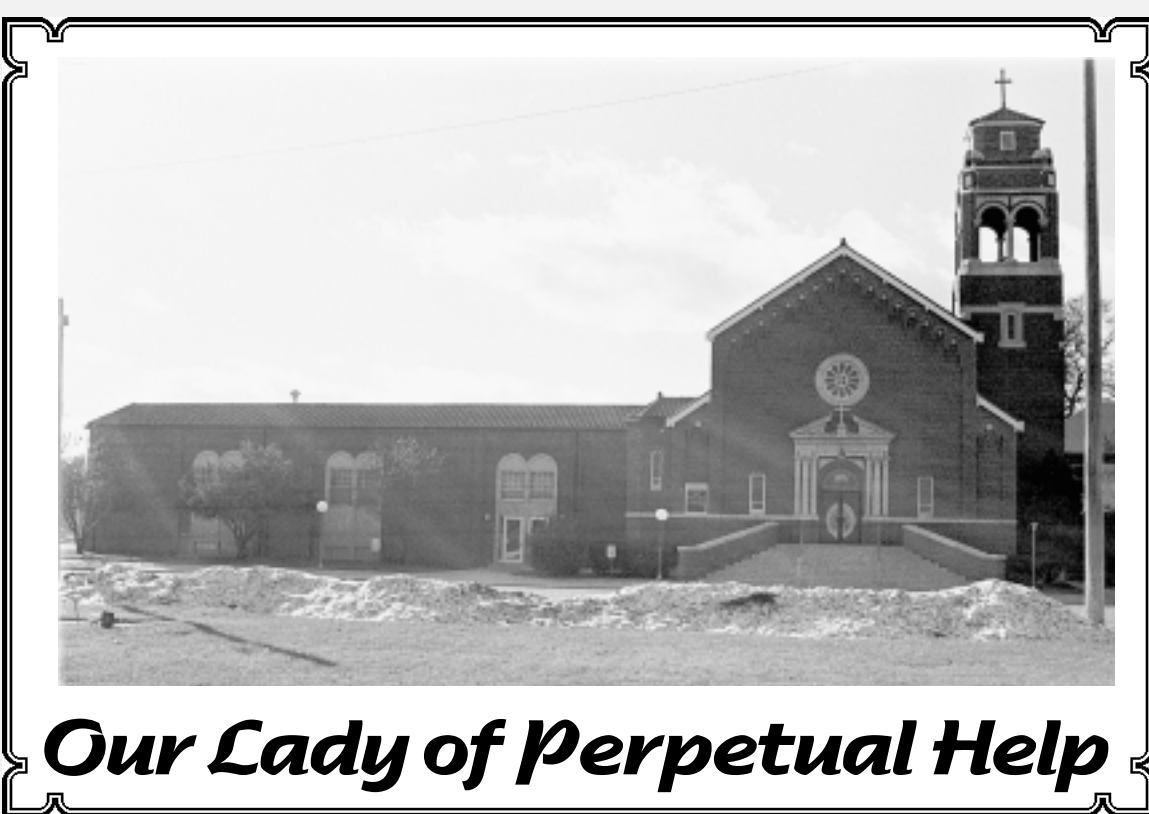
There are a handful of Russian heritage churches in Alabama. Consequently, St. Nicholas has experienced problems through the years because of unfamiliarity with its heritage and practices.

Teenagers who didn't recognize the Orthodox cross have called members devil worshippers, Tallant said, and one young man referred to St. Nicholas as the "communist church" because of its Russian roots and the old Soviet Union.

"I said, 'Son, you're showing your ignorance of both religion and politics. This church was persecuted by the communists,'" said the priest.

Such slights are rare today, according to Tallant. The church regularly has visitors, and the small sanctuary gets crowded on Easter and other special days.

"We can pack 'em in here," he said.



Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Bible Baptist Church
Pastor: Don Crutcher
 Fifth & Broadway
 899-7368
Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am
 Worship Service: 10 am
 Evening Service: 6:30 pm
Wednesday: Evening Bible Study: 7 pm

Calvary Gospel Church
Pastor: Rev. Steve Rains
 Fourth & College • 899-3605
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am
 Morning Service: 10:30 am
 Evening Service: 6:00 pm
Wednesday: Adult Prayer and Worship: 7:00 p.m.
 Youth @ the Rock House: 7:00 p.m.
 Helping you focus upward in worship, inward in commitment and outward in evangelism

Church of Christ
 401 Caldwell
 899-6185
Sunday: Bible Study: 9:45 am
 Worship Service: 10:45 am
Wednesday: Bible Study: 7 pm

Church of the Nazarene
Pastor: Matthew Delp
 Third & Caldwell
 899-2080 or 899-3797
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am
 Worship Service: 10:50 am
 Evening Service: 6 pm
Wednesday: Evening Service: 7 pm

First Baptist Church
Pastor: Bud Chester
 Fifth & Center • 899-3450
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am
 Morning Worship: 10:30 am
 Evening Worship: 6:30 pm
Tuesday: Mens' Prayer Group: 6:00 am
Thursday: Night Bible Study: 7:00 pm

Seventh Day Adventist Church
 1160 Cattletrail
Pastor: Arlin Cochran • 785-332-2888
Saturday: Sabbath School: 9:30 am
 Worship Service: 11 am

First Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
Pastor: Loren Strait
 Eighth & Arcade • 899-5233
Sunday: Worship Service: 10:30 am
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.
Activities: Junior High & High School Youth Groups, Adult Bible Study, Choir, Men's and Women's Groups, Devotions Study, Monthly Fellowship
Special Notice: Handicap Accessible, Hearing Assistance Equipment and Infant and Toddler Nurseries Available

First United Methodist Church
 1116 Sherman
 899-3631
Pastor: Rev. Janet Hernandez
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am
 Worship Service: 8 am and 10:30 am

Sonrise Christian Church
 Ninth & Caldwell • 899-5398
Minister: Tony Kafka
Youth Minister: Doug Bean
Sunday: Worship Service: 9:30 am
 Sunday School: 10:45 am
Wednesday:
 Junior/Senior High Meeting: 7 pm
 Adult & Children's Classes: 7 pm

Emmanuel Lutheran Church
 13th & Sherman • 899-6161
Pastor: Scott Grimshaw
Sunday: Sunday School: 8:45 am
 Worship Service: 10 am
Wednesday: Confirmation: 6 pm

Kanorado
United Methodist Church
Pastor: Leonard Cox
 399-2468
Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am
 Worship Service: 10:15 am

Goodland Bible Church
 109 Willow Road • 899-6400
Pastor:
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am
 Morning Worship: 11 am
 Evening Worship: 6 pm
Wednesday: Call for location

Grace Fellowship Church
 104 E. Hwy 24 • 899-6423
Pastor: Bob Snyder • Residence: 899-0134
Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am
 Worship Service: 11 am
 Youth Group at Gattshall's at 5:30 pm
 Adult Bible Study 6 pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
 13th & Center
 899-2115 or Rectory 899-2114
Priest: Father Charles Schneider
Deacon: Gretchen Talitha
Adult Forum: Sunday : 8:30 am
 Morning Prayer: 9:30 am 1st & 5th Sundays
Holy Eucharist: 2nd, 3rd, & 4th Sundays: 9:30
 Sr. Warden for emergencies during the week 899-2067

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
 1200 15th Street • Burlington, CO • (970) 664-2470
Sacrament Meeting: 9:30 am
Sunday School: 10:45 am
Priesthood/Relief Society: 11:30 am

Word of Life Foursquare Church
 223 E. 10th
 899-5250
Pastor: John Coumerilh
Sunday: Worship Celebration & Kids' Church: 10:30 am

United Methodist Church
Brewster:
Pastor:
 Worship Service: 10:45 am CST
 Sunday School: 9:45 am CST
Winona:
Minister: Rev. Bob Winters
 Worship Service: 9 am CST
 Sunday School: 10:15 am CST

Iglesia Del Dios Vivo
 La Luz Del Mundo
 Spanish Speaking Church
Minister: Esteban Ortiz B.
 1601 Texas • 899-5275
Daily Prayer: Sunday thru Saturday: 5 am & 6 pm
Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am

Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Pastor: Father Norbert Dlabal
 307 W. 13th • 899-7205
Sacrament of Reconciliation:
 4:30-5 pm Saturday or by appointment
Mass Schedule:
 Saturday: 6 pm
 Sunday: 10:30 am
Spanish Mass:
 1st & 3rd Sunday: 2 pm

Pleasant Home Church
 Serving the rural community for over 100 years
 Rt. 1, Box 180 • 694-2807 • 3190 Road 70
Pastor: Jim Cress
 899-5784
Sunday: Worship Service: 9 am
 Sunday School: 10 am
 Evening Service: 6 pm

The following sponsors urge YOU to attend your chosen House of Worship this Sabbath:

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