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Christian Responses to the Aids Crisis in Russia

Michael Cherenkov and David Johnson

The Threat

HIV/AIDS in Russia is a pestilence with social and spiritual consequences that are so alarming they are often ignored. If the developing HIV/AIDS epidemic is not checked, a catastrophe awaits Russia. Today, every second man in Russia dies having never reached retirement age; the average male life expectancy is 58 years. The proportion of the population of working age is constantly decreasing. If the millions potentially infected with AIDS are added to these data, it is possible to understand the conclusion of expert Michael Specter that this disease threatens to transform Russia into a Third World country ("The Devastation," *The New Yorker* 80 [October 2004], 58-69).

In Russia, the initial growth of the epidemic occurred primarily through the injection of drugs. Up to three million Russians inject drugs, with half using unsterilized needles. The main means of transmission now, however, is through sexual relations. By this means HIV/AIDS has begun to endanger a broader portion of the population, threatening society as a whole. It is enough to say that for the past several years the number of infected pregnant women has increased sharply. More and more sick children are being born, the most innocent and defenseless victims of the epidemic.

Despite its frightening tempo of development, the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Russia is still in its early stages. This means that catastrophic consequences can be averted, a pandemic can be avoided, and Russian society can be saved. To date, the state has side-stepped participation in the fight against the epidemic. Recent promises to set aside hundreds of millions of dollars for prevention programs remain unfulfilled. Just as in the past, Russia lacks an AIDS policy and it lacks concrete, funded programs.

Church Responses to AIDS

In July 1999 the Russian Orthodox Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists signed an "Inter-confessional Agreement Concerning Social Mission." Another positive development has been the preparation of the document "The Plan of the Russian Orthodox Church for HIV/AIDS." One of its worthy goals is to call Christians to active participation in the fight against the spread of the HIV infection. However, this plan focuses not so much on the necessity of individual involvement, as on the Russian Orthodox institutional position as regards the threat of AIDS: "The church considers its first debt to be the spiritual-moral evaluation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic." By the concept "the loss of moral compass and orientation,"

the Russian Orthodox Church means that its position of power in society is in jeopardy. And so, it is certainly noticeable that the moral emptiness and spiritual loss of the current generation is directly linked to the loss of Christian orientation.

Interconfessional Cooperation?

Today it has become evident that neither the state, social organizations, nor religious confessions can independently organize the fight against the AIDS epidemic. A consolidation of strengths and effective partnerships are needed. The Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and the Christian organization For Russia have put forward such an initiative. On 18-20 April 2005 they sponsored an international conference in Moscow on "State, Society, and Religious Organizations in the Solution to HIV/AIDS – Prospects for Cooperation." At this meeting For Russia presented a plan "Concerning Society's Position in Relation to HIV/AIDS" and also produced a document addressing the need to join forces in the fight against AIDS. Both of these evangelical documents, which provide a foundation for Protestant social doctrine, also call for collaboration with the Russian Orthodox Church in the fight against the proliferation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. One conference organizer, Vladimir Samoilo, noted: "We are responsible for the enlightenment of society about HIV/AIDS and, also, for the spiritual-moral health of Russia." On this point Roman Catholic Metropolitan Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz and Representative of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims Imam Xatib Allutinov are in full agreement with evangelical churches. However, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church at the conference refused to sign the declaration. Also disappointing is the fact that state officials responsible for fighting AIDS are no more than lukewarm about evangelical initiatives. Protestant efforts are seen as covers for evangelism and as mechanisms for strengthening the Protestant position in contemporary Russian society and politics.

Protestant churches, nevertheless, have participated actively in interconfessional discussions for the purpose of uniting Christian confessions and organizations in the battle against AIDS. One concrete outcome of these discussions was the "Social Position of Protestant Churches of Russia," produced in 2003. This document defines the general principles for participation by churches in the fight with the epidemic. Along with spiritual, practical, and rehabilitation support in overcoming AIDS, priority is given to preventative measures through family upbringing, education, and church

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Christian Responses to Aids Crisis

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instruction concerning a healthy and moral way of life. In addition to rehabilitation centers that work with the consequences of the disease, Christian organizations have begun to develop awareness and educational programs. Some of these organizations and their programs are listed below.

AIDS Programs Underway

- The Adventist Church and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) have been supporting public HIV/AIDS prevention education programs in Russia for more than ten years, focusing special attention on orphans and other vulnerable children (Helen Zhadan, *Adventist News Network*, 3 May 2005).
- The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS have supported the work of an Interdenominational Christian Organizational Committee working on the problem of HIV/AIDS in Russia. The committee includes representatives from the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Russian Joint Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria, the Union of Evangelical Pentecostal Christian Faith, Caritas of European Russia, Seventh-day Adventists, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Consulate of Muftis of Russia, the Central Muslim Spiritual Department, the Congress of Jewish Communities and Unions in Russia, and the Federation of Jewish Communities in Russia (“The International Conference,” 19 April 2005, www.undp.ru).
- The Russian Orthodox Church, a participant in the “Church Anti-AIDS Network,” is involved in training priests and nuns to provide spiritual support for those suffering from AIDS, the development and publication of materials supporting anti-AIDS programs, and prevention events for young people based on Christian spiritual principles (“Working Meeting of the Church Anti-AIDS Network,” Moscow Patriarch, 6 September 2005).
- MiraMed Institute, since 2002, has been creating HIV/AIDS educational materials for Russian orphanages and schools. One project, sponsored in conjunction with the Curriculum Committee of the Russian Ministry of Education and approved by the Russian Orthodox Church, will be implemented throughout the Russian public school system after a pilot program is tested in several Moscow area schools through 2007 (“HIV/AIDS Prevention Education,” MiraMed Institute, www.miramed.org, 2 November 2005).
- ACET International (Aids Care Education and Training) has trained more than 200 HIV/AIDS educators who work in schools, churches, universities, youth centers, orphanages, hostels, counseling centers, telephone hotlines, advocacy programs, drug rehabilitation centers, and the army. To date this outreach extends to 60 cities in seven regions of the Russian Federation. ACET also has published books in the Russian language about AIDS and sexual health (ACET International, www.acet-international.org/Russia.htm, 2 November 2005).
- OPORA/Prevention Partners International, through its *Keys to Healthy Living* curriculum, trains professionals to implement HIV/AIDS and substance abuse prevention

programs in shelters and summer camps for street children, prisons, rehabilitation centers, and schools (*Fall 2005 Report*, 20 September 2005).

- Russia Inland (Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists), in addition to sponsoring training for the ACET program “Teach the Teacher,” has developed two programs to promote a healthy way of life among children and adults to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS (Russia Inland, www.russaiainland.org, 2 November 2005).
- The Youth Ministry Department of Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries/Association for Spiritual Renewal (PDRM/ASR) has successfully adopted the program “No Apologies,” for use in lectures and seminars and in informal discussions with young people about the consequences of pre-marital relations and the advantages of a healthy way of life. In 2004, PDRM/ASR started the project “Time to Live!,” which includes a series of educational events for children and teenagers, the organization of large-scale Christian concerts for young people, and an international film forum.
- Campus Crusade Youth on the CrossRoads is providing HIV/AIDS education programming to orphanages in the Moscow Region. In Spring 2006, CrossRoads began training Children’s HopeChest to use its Christ-centered curriculum in Vladimir, Kostroma, and Ivanovo Region orphanages (Cliff Harder, *CrossRoads News*, October 2005).
- The Salvation Army is working with HIV/AIDS-infected persons in the central, northern, and southern parts of Russia (Risk Network, www.risknetwork.ru, 2 November 2005).
- Brothers of Compassion has worked to help Russian orphanages for HIV/AIDS-infected children since 1998. (Risk Network, www.risknetwork.ru, 2 November 2005).
- Kid Save International, founded in 1999, works with HIV/AIDS-infected persons in the St. Petersburg, Moscow, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, and Smolensk Regions of Russia (Risk Network, www.risknetwork.ru, 2 November 2005).
- Liberation, founded in 2001, works with HIV/AIDS-infected persons in the Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Smolensk Regions of Russia and conducts drug and AIDS prevention programs in schools (Risk Network, www.risknetwork.ru, 2 November 2005).

Where Protestants Fit In

Despite the jealous reaction of the Russian Orthodox Church and the unwarranted suspicions of the federal government, Protestant churches and other Christian organizations are engaged in meaningful AIDS prevention work, joining forces with local government and social organizations and using their own network of Christian centers and the resources of their donors. Unfortunately, it seems that the state still has not defined its final position regarding cooperation with non-Orthodox Christian confessions and organizations working to address Russia’s AIDS crisis. ♦

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It has become evident that neither the state, social organizations, nor religious confessions can independently organize the fight against the AIDS epidemic.

Agencies Assisting In Russia's Aids Crisis

ACET International Alliance

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Tel: 44-0-20-8568-7770
E-mail: p.osullivan@acet-international.org
Web site: www.acet-international.org

ACET – Russia

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E-mail: hop@attack.ru
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Adventists, General Conference of Seventh-day

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E-mail: presidential@esd-sda.ru
Web site: www.adventist.ru

Brothers of Compassion

Maliy Trekhsvyatitelskiy Per., 3
Moscow, Russia 109028
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Kid Save International

Ul. Pravdi #21/1, office #47
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E-mail: info@kidsave.org
Web site: www.kidsave.org

Liberation

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New Life – Russia (Campus Crusade)

c/o Christian Center
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Tel: 495-718-5313
Web site: www.ccci.org

OPORA/Prevention Partnership International

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russian_project.htm

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Web site: www.salvationarmy.ton.ru

Tearfund

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United Nations Development Program

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Evangelical Social Ministries in Ukraine Since Independence

Mary Raber

It is well known that in the Soviet Union church life was legally restricted to worship. In 1927 the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* [*Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*] stated that "charity is a phenomenon characteristic only of a class society."¹ The 1950 edition of the same encyclopedia called charity "assistance that is hypocritically given by representatives of the ruling classes. By means of so-called charity the bourgeoisie attempt to extinguish hatred of capitalism among the masses and hold them back from revolutionary struggle."² The 1970 edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* had no entry for "charity" at all. In contrast, since the late 1980s, charity has become an increasingly significant part of evangelical Christian activity and identity in the former Soviet Union.

A specifically Christian response to human need—apparently the first to be recognized as such by the Soviet government—came in 1986, when the Orthodox Church responded to the Chernobyl disaster.³ Two years later, on 29 April 1988, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Pimen and five metropolitans met with Communist Party Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev at the Kremlin. Among other requests, these church leaders sought permission to do charitable work, including care for the sick and elderly.

Evangelicals began to consider the implications of social service ministry at about the same time. For example, in 1988, the Central Baptist Church in Moscow regularly sent volunteers to assist staff in the geriatric wards of Moscow's Kashchenko Psychiatric Hospital No. 1.⁴ At an evening worship service on 24 September 1988 dedicated to the theme of mercy, V. N. Kozyrev, chief physician at this hospital, stated, "If someone had told me a few years ago that this kind of symbiosis between a church and a hospital was possible, I wouldn't have believed it. Out of the cobwebs of oblivion, words full of human warmth have surfaced: love, mercy, kindness—and we have begun to measure our lives accordingly."⁵ On 22-23 January 1989, the Baptist church in Syktyvkar, Komi ASSR, held concerts of classical and contemporary Christian music to benefit victims of the 1988 Armenian earthquake.⁶ By November 1991 Evangelical Christians-Baptists were sponsors or patrons of 120 hospitals, 145 children's homes and boarding schools, 95 facilities for the disabled, and over 130 correctional facilities.⁷

Types of Charitable Outreach

Evangelicals in post-Soviet Ukraine conduct three basic types of formal social service ministry: 1) humanitarian and material aid; 2) social service ministries directed to specific needs; and 3) the establishment of social service institutions. A church or association of churches, a Christian charitable fund, a mission society, or an institution such as a theological school may have the necessary juridical status and resources, such as transportation and storage facilities, to receive humanitarian aid from abroad.

Churches or missions may have relationships with children's homes, hospitals, or secular charitable organizations. Regular visitation may be established. This often begins with a special event, such as a holiday celebration, for which the church or mission prepares a program—a skit or puppet show, music, and a sermon—and brings gifts of humanitarian aid as well, such as groceries, literature, or school supplies. Also, government-

run agencies frequently contact Christian missions or churches for assistance with supplies. I am aware of several occasions in which area prisons have turned to Pavel Metlenko, Senior Presbyterian of the Association of Baptist Churches of the Zaporizhzhia Oblast, for supplies such as soap.

As the social service system in Ukraine continues to unravel, Christians, even though few in number, have begun to fill the gap. While not required by law, Christian organizations receiving humanitarian aid are nevertheless "strongly encouraged" to contribute 10 percent of their shipments to secular social service agencies. In addition, some Christian organizations act as supply stations for individual requests. Some city authorities have arranged with evangelical charities to supply clothing and household items to citizens who appeal to the city council for aid.

The second category of charitable work is social service ministry directed toward specific segments of the population. The Christian Medical Association of Ukraine operates free clinics and organizes doctors' visits to areas where medical care is especially limited. Also, church members or missions may pay regular visits to children in institutions, provide wheelchairs to those in need, or organize picnics and social events for the homebound.

The third category is the establishment of actual institutions, such as children's homes and shelters, homes for the elderly, community centers, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities. According to Vladimir Tsupko, director of the Good Shepherd Charitable Fund in Makiivka, Ukraine, Baptist, Pentecostal, and Charismatic groups now operate at least ten Christian children's homes in Ukraine. Some church associations have opened homes for their own elderly, but accept other seniors in need, as well. All these institutions occupy a particular place in post-Soviet Ukraine because they model a holistic approach to human need, ministering to spiritual as well as physical needs.

Trends in Evangelical Charity

I would like to summarize general characteristics of evangelical charitable ministries in Ukraine in the 1990s and note directions for the future.

1. The primary stated motive for social service ministry among Ukrainian Evangelicals is evangelism. There is no doubt, in addition to all the other motives they may state, that the most significant work that Evangelicals do, in their own understanding, whether distributing humanitarian aid or caring for orphans, is serving as bearers of the Gospel to lost humanity.
2. Social service ministries among Evangelicals are explained biblically. No matter what the ministry, Ukrainian Evangelicals readily recite Bible verses to explain why they engage in charitable work. They refer repeatedly to God's commands to care for widows, orphans, and strangers, and especially Matthew 25.
3. A corollary to the emphasis on biblical motivation is a willingness on the part of Ukrainian evangelical believers to plunge into new endeavors or expand outreach in ways that at times appear more rash than faithful, especially to a Western observer. Instead of conducting feasibility studies or lining up adequate financial resources ahead of time,

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Evangelical Social Ministries in Ukraine

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Ukrainian Evangelicals generally are prepared to move ahead with the conviction that God will provide all their needs.

4. Does this mean, however, that charitable ministries are unrealistic in what they seek to do? I find the willingness of Evangelicals to obey in faith, even when it seems risky, to be one of their most attractive and convincing traits. Often they receive surprising answers to their prayers. When Hope Children's Home was down to its last day's supply of coal just a few winters ago, the adults confided the problem to the children and asked them to pray. Their prayer was very simple: "Dear God! We have no coal! Amen!" The next day a truck arrived—unsummoned, unlooked for—with a donation of a ton of coal.

I have found Evangelicals' mysticism to be neither flippant nor careless. In fact, they show great practicality and resourcefulness as well. Planning does take place, although perhaps more informally than Westerners are accustomed to. Usually it is enriched with much discussion and prayer. In addition, to keep up with changing demands from the wider society, many Evangelicals have mastered such skills as accounting, public relations, and information systems, all of which require systematic approaches.

5. Social service ministries have had the interesting effect of transforming Evangelicals into individuals of consequence in their communities. Prejudice against Baptists is still significant in post-Soviet society, but their generous use of material aid and the work of the institutions they have founded convinces many of their sincerity and seriousness of purpose.

6. Evangelicals in charitable institutions have had to make their peace with the social sciences, especially psychology. For example, when they began work in 1997, the staff of Good Shepherd Children's Shelter believed that the Bible contained all they needed to know to care for neglected children. A few years later they concluded that they needed other tools as well to deal with the serious psychological needs of some of the children. More and more staff members of new evangelical institutions see the need for formal study, especially in the areas of pedagogy, social work, psychology, economics, and law. Theological schools such as Donetsk Christian University are seeking to incorporate at least components of some of these subjects into their degree programs.

7. Through engagement in social service ministries, Ukrainian Evangelicals have developed new relationships with state authorities. In some places, authorities have recognized their need of the services Christians provide and Evangelicals have acknowledged the government's good intentions. One irony of social service work, particularly with children, is that no one cares about children on the street, but once under a roof, they have to be accounted for officially to numerous government structures—a time-consuming, nerve-wracking process that Christians may be tempted to short circuit with bribes. Some evangelical organizations choose to work as quietly as possible to avoid entanglement in government regulations.

8. While doing charitable work and forming new organizations, Christians have had to develop new ways to work together, including conflict management, appeals procedures, and methods of communication. They have dealt with questions that never arose in the Soviet Union. How does one handle hiring and firing? Wages? Promotion? Should a Baptist group hire a Pentecostal? Should Christians hire an unbeliever?

9. The most vexing question of all is sustainability. How can social services, particularly resource-consuming

institutions, be kept functioning? Support from the West has eroded as Westerners have begun to prioritize aid to other parts of the world. How can churches and organizations finance their own ministries? Some charitable organizations seek to develop a sense of responsibility for their ongoing existence among local churches. They have had some success, but cash-poor Christians have money worries of their own. What is the most effective, faithful way to develop the ministry of giving, or encourage income-generating initiatives?

10. Social problems are interrelated, and evangelical institutions are finding that addressing one issue compels them to address others as well. For example, some children who lived in Christian shelters or orphanages in the 1990s have now grown up and have children of their own, often repeating their parents' mistakes. Does the institution have continued responsibility for them? What can be done to help keep families together before children are abandoned, or to restore families whose children are now in institutions? Moreover, new social challenges are appearing all the time. For example, will evangelical churches have anything to say about the AIDS epidemic, or will they pass over this issue in silence?

11. Many leaders of Christian charitable organizations are women. Will that eventually affect the position of women in evangelical churches?

12. Where might social service ministries lead in the future? The Ukrainian government in 2005 quietly invited church leaders to recommend honest, educated people for government service. Will some people now managing charities enter politics?

Conclusion

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, social service ministries became a significant part of evangelical activity and identity in Ukraine. What was a despised subculture in the Soviet period now creatively responds to the needs of a demoralized and confused society. The change is striking, yet it is not surprising that the people who pick up the pieces are those whose worldview does not change when earthly kingdoms fall. In general, Evangelicals are capable of self-organization; they are dedicated; and they can trust one another—essential components for maintaining complex ministries.

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Notes:

¹ *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 6 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1927), 466.

² *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 5 (Moscow: Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1950), 278.

³ Dmitry V. Pospelovskiy, "Religious Themes in the Soviet Press in 1989," *Religion in Communist Lands* 18 (Winter 1990), 319, quoted in Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 60.

⁴ Vera Kadaeva, "Seminar molodykh sluzhitelei rossiiskoi federatsii," *Bratskii vestnik* No. 6 (1988), 58.

⁵ Viktoria Mazharova, "'Byl bolen, i vy posetili menia,'" *Bratskii vestnik* No. 6 (1988), 70.

⁶ S. I. Nikolaev, "Po dorogam severnogo kraia," *Bratskii vestnik* No. 3 (1989), 77-80.

⁷ Mikhail Ivogin, "Poslednee interv'iu," *Nauka i religiia* No. 1 (January 1992), 6.

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Support from the West has eroded.

The Christian School Movement in the Former Soviet Union

An Interview with Cindy Le Clair

Editor's Note: The editor recently interviewed Cindy Le Clair, Associate Regional Director of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) in the former Soviet Union, concerning the growth of Christian schools in the post-Soviet era.

East-West Report: When and how did ACSI begin working in the former Soviet Union?

In early 1990 evangelical pastors and Christian teachers invited representatives of ACSI to Central and Eastern Europe to help them explore the possibility of starting Christian schools. As a result of those meetings, in July 1991 ACSI, in cooperation with Romanian Christian educators, sponsored the first conference for evangelical Christian educators ever held in a former Iron Curtain country. More than 300 educators from nine countries, including Russia and Ukraine, attended the conference.

In Moscow in January 1992, ACSI and Slavic Gospel Association co-sponsored, to our knowledge, the first Protestant evangelical educators' conference held on the territory of the former Soviet Union (FSU). Because of over 70 years of educational discrimination, Russian and Ukrainian Christian teachers with a higher education were very difficult to locate, so early conferences were open to Sunday school teachers, lay teachers who were sharing the gospel in public school classrooms, and a small percentage of non-Christian professional teachers who were recommended by Christian associates. Even with such a small percentage of professional Christian teachers in attendance, that first conference was attended by Vera Volgemute, newly appointed director of the first known Christian school in the FSU – Riga First Christian Gymnasium. She amazed conference attendees with her photographs and her report of the Latvian government's gift of a run-down building to be used as a Christian school. The seed was planted in the minds of other conference participants.

The second ACSI/SGA teachers' conference met in Kyiv, Ukraine, in June 1992. By this time the idea of Christian education for children (other than Sunday school instruction) was beginning to take root in the minds of some Christian teachers. Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) was also becoming interested in Russia and offering its English-language material and training for sale in the FSU. In September 1992 ACSI opened a field office in Moscow staffed by two half-time American missionaries and two Russian assistants.

As early as Fall 1992, Christian schools opened in Russia in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Krasnodar, and Kholmsk (Sakhalin Island) and in Ukraine in Odessa and Dnepropetrovsk. In many cases in these early days, a school was a single class that gathered in a spare room at a church, in a teacher's apartment, or in a single classroom rented from a sympathetic public school principal, but the intention to provide a bona fide Christian education was there. In most republics of the FSU at that time, no legislation permitted even secular private schools, so parents registered their children as home-schoolers (*externat*) and were required to have them periodically tested in public schools.

East-West Report: What is the current outreach of ACSI?

According to our records, over 4,000 teachers from 11 of the 15 former Soviet republics (excluding Georgia,

Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Tadjikistan) have attended our "Christian Teacher" conferences. However, since some teachers attend every year, the total number is less. In the former Soviet Union 42 schools (including a few Christian daycare centers) currently are members of ACSI. The largest number of member schools is in Ukraine (21); followed by Russia (15); Lithuania (2); Moldova (2); Belarus (1); and Armenia (1). These figures do not include schools for the children of missionaries in Russia, Ukraine, and Central Asia which are also ACSI members. Total student enrollment is just over 2,400. We have also provided some services for non-member schools in Estonia, Latvia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Most of our work with schools is with Protestants because almost all of our schools have been founded by Protestant churches. Concerning work with teachers, we see somewhat more diversity. We invite all Christian teachers to our conferences: including Orthodox in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, and in Lithuania, Catholics. At every conference, however, the majority are evangelical Protestant Christians.

East-West Report: What is the extent of your publishing efforts? Can you discuss to what extent translated works have to be adapted for purposes of contextualization? And have Russians, Ukrainians, or others been recruited to write pedagogical materials for publication?

In our publishing program we generally try to choose books for translation that do not have to be greatly adapted. One of our principles of selection is to find materials that have appeal across cultures. In the case of anthologies, such as *Philosophy of Christian School Education* (ACSI) or *Entry Points for Christian Reflection within Education* (Christian Action Research and Education – CARE) we translate only the most appropriate articles. If a particular concept or example would not readily be understood by an average reader because of cultural differences, we may add an explanatory note.

Our two most popular publications have been *99 Ideas That Work! Discipline in the Classroom* by Sharon Berry (almost 16,000 copies distributed in five languages) and *Understanding the Times* by David Noebel (approximately 6,000 copies distributed in Russian). Probably because it is very inexpensive, practical, and it makes an attractive gift, *99 Ideas* has sold well. We know that quantities have been purchased by Christians working in public schools as gifts for colleagues. *Understanding the Times* is a serious worldview book, purchased not just by Christian teachers, but by Christian universities, colleges, and seminaries.

For Christian schools in Ukraine we are currently working on curriculum projects in physics, mathematics, and Ukrainian life and culture, that in American terminology would be called a series of "scope and sequences," with suggested reading materials. All the authors are Ukrainian.

We previously published a Russian-language journal for teachers called *Traces*. The general editor and most contributing authors were Russian or Ukrainian. Next year we hope to launch a Russian-language electronic journal of methodology for Christian teachers. Our intention is for contributors to be Christian teachers from the former Soviet Union.

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According to our records, over 4,000 teachers from 11 of the 15 former Soviet republics (excluding Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Tadjikistan) have attended our "Christian Teacher" conferences.

The Christian School Movement

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East-West Report: Can you speak of steps you have taken towards the development of indigenous leadership?

Presently about 50 percent of our conference and summer program lecturers are specialists or professors from the FSU. In March 2005, for the second time, we scheduled a Christian teacher conference in Minsk, Belarus, but because of political considerations we decided it would be better if North American and European lecturers did not participate. As it turned out, the conference was run entirely by Byelorussians and Ukrainians. We had all Russian, Byelorussian, and Ukrainian speakers, and our Ukrainian staff handled all conference arrangements.

As for indigenizing leadership, we have created a regional advisory board of Christian school directors elected at our annual school directors' conference. Unfortunately, to date, this board has been less active than we had hoped it would be.

East-West Report: Have there been steps taken towards eventual financial self-sufficiency in the ministry?

In January 2005 the ACSI board of directors decreed that, in principle, the various ACSI regions must become financially self-sustaining; the amount of time suggested for each region depends on the perceived difficulty of making it happen. The timetable for the former Soviet Union is ten years.

East-West Report: With what other Christian ministries, NGOs, and denominations have you worked most closely? Can you briefly describe several instances of collaboration?

ACSI is open to working with any organization that has an interest in promoting Christian school education or in teaching and learning based on Christian principles. Mainly on a person-to-person level, we have collaborated with scores of North American, European, and national organizations here in the FSU, including Bibles for Everyone (St. Petersburg), Lithuania Christian College (Klaipeda, Lithuania), Latvian Christian Mission (Riga, Latvia), European Educators' Christian Association (EuRECA), Christian Schools Charitable Trust (England), Summit Ministries (Manitou Springs, Colorado), and professors from many Christian colleges in the U.S. and Canada.

One of our longest cooperative relationships has been with Summit Ministries. In our early years Dr. David Noebel gave permission to translate and publish his *Understanding the Times* in Russian, with Summit Ministries providing the funds for us to do so. Dr. Noebel himself participated as keynote speaker in several Christian teacher conferences and has continued to send a lecturer for the last several years to teach in our summer training program for teachers in Christian schools.

Another extremely fruitful relationship has been with EurECA, as a source of knowledgeable contacts and potential speakers, but especially in the person of Dr. John Shortt, EurECA Traveling Secretary. Dr. Shortt has generously volunteered his time over the last decade to teach at many of our conferences, various seminars, and summer training programs. He has been an advisor and encourager in the development of other valuable contacts and resources.

A newer association is with Lithuania Christian College in Klaipeda, Lithuania. We have provided a platform for them to advertise their programs at our annual Baltic

Christian Teacher Conferences and have helped with logistical support in TOEFL testing in Ukraine for their prospective students. In turn, they have generously provided facilities and staff support for two of our conferences held in Lithuania.

The Lord has blessed us with a multitude of talented authors, speakers, and advisors, more than can be listed here by name.

East-West Report: Has ACSI worked with orphans?

Not specifically, but one of our member schools, "Father's House," was founded on the basis of a Christian orphanage outside Kyiv. Interestingly, the founder of that orphanage, Roman Korneiko, attended our first ACSI teachers' conference in Moscow in 1992 while still a medical student. He has told us many times that he felt God called him to work with street children at that first conference! Other member schools that have a ministry to orphans and street children are "Rainbow Way" (Klaipeda, Lithuania) and "Elim" (Chisinau, Moldova).

East-West Report: Have you faced opposition from any governmental authorities or churches?

As an organization, we have not faced any particular opposition from anyone. We were registered very early in both Russia (1993) and Ukraine (1994). However, some of our schools have faced intense opposition from government authorities or local traditional churches or their representatives. ♦

Next year we hope to launch a Russian language electronic journal of methodology for Christian teachers.



Letter to the Editor

I appreciated your recent issue on the church in Eurasia, and especially your comments on leadership training. We have sensed a shift in the world of leadership training in recent years. In Eurasia more and more programs seem to be struggling with decreasing enrollments in residential, full-time programs and with a changing profile of students enrolled in such programs. More and more seem to be responding to the desire on the part of many ministers to pursue training that minimally interrupts their family, professional, and ministry life. Modular programs that take students away from home for only short periods seem to be growing in popularity. Another key issue is the need for greater unity and cooperation among those engaged in leadership training. It is becoming clear that there are far too many programs doing relatively similar work in the same geographical area. Greater cooperation is essential. Money is not the solution to better theological education. The truly critical issues are governance, relevant curriculum, and financial sustainability. These issues are addressed through training of people and the growth of cooperative networks. Overseas Council International is attempting to encourage this through our Institutes for Excellence, which bring leaders of theological schools together to address these key issues. I am confident that the best and most productive days of leadership training in Eurasia are still ahead, but there are many hard choices that will have to be made both by leaders in the region and Western supporters of these efforts.

Jason Ferenczi, Director of Programs, Overseas Council International, Indianapolis, Indiana

Private Christian Colleges and Universities in the Former Soviet Union

Perry L. Glanzer and Konstantin I. Petrenko

Editor's Note: The present work is an expanded and updated revision of the authors' article: "The Recent Emergence of Private Christian Colleges and Universities in Russia: Historical Reasons and Contemporary Developments," Christian Higher Education 4 (2005):81-92.

For the first time in former Soviet states, there are now at least eight Christian institutions of higher education offering or planning to offer liberal arts degrees.

Despite the long history of Christianity in Russia and its neighboring territories dating back over a thousand years, many readers may be surprised to know that private, liberal arts Christian education has existed in the area for less than two decades. The collapse of the Soviet Union created unique conditions that allowed for the emergence of private Christian higher education within former Soviet states. The vast majority of these institutions still are no more than what is typically thought of as Bible colleges or seminaries in the United States, meaning that their education is focused on practical areas of Christian ministry such as pastoral training, religious education, youth ministry, and other practical religious degrees. (See the East-Asian Accrediting Association of Evangelical Schools list at www.e-aaa.org/d/e/homeE.html.) Christian institutes and universities able to offer a variety of undergraduate degrees have been much fewer and have developed much more slowly. Still, for the first time in former Soviet states, there are now at least eight Christian institutions of higher education offering or planning to offer liberal arts degrees outside of theology or Bible.

The origins of these colleges come from two different sources. Half of the colleges started as intentional efforts to create Christian "liberal arts" universities. (The application of the term "liberal arts" to these universities pertains more to the attempt to combine theological studies with a particular disciplinary major, for example, business or social work. Many of the schools do not offer a wide variety of liberal arts majors since in the current Russian context professional majors are more in demand.) The other four colleges changed or are in the process of changing from Bible colleges or theological institutes to broader institutions. We will outline the former first.

The Founding of Christian Liberal Arts Universities

Russian-American Christian University (Moscow, Russia)

The most serious attempt to develop an ecumenical Christian liberal arts college has been undertaken by the Russian-American Christian University (RACU). Established in 1996 in Moscow, RACU became the first private Christian liberal arts institution of higher education in Russia to appeal to students from all Christian confessions. The idea for RACU originated after several high-ranking officials from the Russian Ministry of Education visited a number of North American Christian colleges and invited the leadership of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCC) to establish a similar school in Russia. RACU came into being through a collaborative effort of American and Russian educators and is affiliated with the CCCC.

RACU describes itself as a "comprehensive faith-based university" with a mission to "equip . . . Russian students

for leadership in their local communities, in the marketplace, in their churches, and in their nation" (Russian-American Christian University, 2004). Since its establishment, RACU has offered undergraduate programs in business and economics and social work. In the fall of 2001, an English program was added as well. In November, 2003, RACU received state accreditation. As a state-accredited university, RACU can now issue accredited diplomas and offer deferments from military service, as well as a variety of other benefits limited only to students of those institutions that are able to secure accreditation by the Russian Ministry of Education. Currently, it enrolls around 160 students. (For more information see <http://www.racu.org/>.)

Russian Christian Academy for the Humanities (St. Petersburg, Russia)

Established in 1989, the Russian Christian Academy for the Humanities is one of the oldest private higher education institutions in post-communist Russia and the first faith-based school to receive the prestigious academy status because of its extensive research initiatives and academic offerings. The academy was founded as a result of collaboration between the St. Petersburg Orthodox Theological Academy, the Institute of Russian Literature, and the Russian Academy of Sciences. The school's enrollment is currently 600 students, with majors covering such diverse liberal arts and professional fields as philosophy, Russian history and culture, ancient and medieval studies, art criticism, psychology, management, oriental studies, and Finnish and English languages. The academy is unique among Russian faith-based educational institutions because of its heavy emphasis on research and publication, its commitment to the humanities, and its open admission policy. Admission to the Russian Christian Academy for the Humanities is open to any person, and faculty members are not required to adhere to Christian doctrines or to practice any faith at all. (For more information see www.rchgi.spb.ru/Engl/entrant.html.)

St. John Orthodox University (Moscow, Russia)

St. John Orthodox University, one of the first Orthodox universities founded in the East, began in 1992 as a joint initiative sponsored by Father Ioann Ekonomtsev, head of the Department of Religious Education and Catechization of the Moscow Patriarch, and a group of Russian professors. From the start, the founders understood St. John's academic mission as combining secular humanities with historic Orthodox tradition and theological education. "Our purpose," Father Ekonomtsev told the *New York Times*, "was to bring about a synthesis between scholarship and faith, and religion and morality, because scholarship without morality at its core is dangerous. My goal is to prepare the intellectual and spiritual elite of Russia. We are preparing students for a regenerated Russia, for a cultural, highly moral Russia of great intellectual and scientific potential" (Marina Lakhman, "Russia's Church-Run Campus Has a Secular Goal," *New York Times*, 4 January 1988, Section 1, p.3).

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Private Colleges

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St. John University draws upon the model of the “confessional orthodox university” similar to Catholic universities in Western Europe and the United States. The university offers eight undergraduate degrees in such fields as philosophy, history, philology, ecology, economics, law, psychology, and theology. All prospective students are required to present a recommendation from a personal confessor and go through an interview, testing their knowledge of church history and “God’s Law,” a subject primarily focused on explaining the fundamentals of Orthodox faith and practice (St. John Orthodox University, 2004). Currently, it enrolls over one thousand students.

Lithuania Christian College (Klaipeda, Lithuania)

Established in 1991 at the request of Lithuania’s Ministry of Education, Lithuania Christian College (LCC) became one of the first faith-based higher education institutions in the former Soviet Union. The college is located in Klaipeda, an important Lithuanian port on the Baltic Sea, which serves both Russian and European businesses and industries. Since LCC considers itself an international higher educational institution, classroom instruction takes place in the English language. This allows the college to attract students and faculty from a variety of backgrounds. Although the majority of LCC’s 600 students represent East European nations, some students travel from North America, Western Europe, Africa, and Asia as full-time students or as participants in study-abroad programs. The teaching staff also includes Lithuanian faculty as well as instructors from North America and Western Europe. Most students and faculty come from a variety of evangelical churches and denominations. Canadian and U.S. Mennonites have been particularly active as supporters and teachers for LCC.

The college’s vision is focused on developing leaders who possess the ability to think critically, promote democracy, and help build civil society in Eastern Europe based on Christian ideals. As part of this vision, LCC offers a core curriculum, consisting of liberal arts, social sciences, biblical studies, and effective methods of written and verbal communication. Undergraduate majors at LCC include business administration, English language and literature, and theology. Students may also choose from a variety of minors such as business, English, Lithuanian studies, psychology, and theology. LCC is an international affiliate of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. (For more information see <http://www.lccbc.org>.) ♦

Editor’s Note: The concluding portion of this article will be published in the next issue of the East-West Church & Ministry Report.

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Russian Orthodoxy : Two Paths

John Binns

The fall of Communist governments across Eastern Europe and Soviet Asia has left the churches there facing a volatile if more liberated future prospect. The changes have left the church, especially in Eastern Europe, with two overriding challenges. The first task is moral and spiritual. The twentieth century saw a series of persecutions of a ferocity unparalleled in any period in the history of the church. Many discovered a new life and strength through persecution. Metropolitan Antony of Sourozh was asked once, “Is the church in Russia free?” He replied, “The freedom of the church is to love until death.”

The Need for Renewal

Now, however, new trials are confronting the Orthodox churches. There is the need for the renewal, nurture, and re-conversion of societies undergoing economic and political disorientation, and for a response to the arrival of Western exports of secularization, consumerism, and globalization. Faced with a rapidly changing society, the Orthodox churches may see their vocation as maintaining a pure and unchanging tradition and so become inward-looking, defensive, and condemnatory of others. Or they may become committed to a new world order, responding to new demands and questions posed by science and technology and to the sheer presence of other churches and faiths in an increasingly interdependent world. They may find it possible to be both true to the tradition of the past and open to the opportunities of the future. This will require far-reaching spiritual and moral reorientation.

The second task is similar to the first, but is transposed to the political and cultural arena. In the course of a long history, the Orthodox churches have moved through several locations on the world cultural map. The process began with a thousand years of being the center of culture, in the Byzantine Empire, with Islam and the Catholic West as increasingly assertive but still subordinate competitors on either side. In the next period Western Europe and Islam were the two major powers, with the Orthodox churches functioning partly as a minority within Islam and partly as a Russian Empire which could be called, with some reservations, Orthodox. The question now is: where do the Orthodox belong?

Separation or Integration?

For the Orthodox of Eastern Europe and Russia the options are twofold. The Orthodox could become a separate cultural entity, part of a reconstituted Russian-dominated economic and cultural alliance. This is the view of the celebrated – or infamous? – theory of Samuel Huntington, set out in a book which touched a raw nerve among many Orthodox by suggesting that Orthodoxy belongs to a different civilization from Western Christianity: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Re-making of World Order* (New York: 1996). Or they could become part of a new Europe, culturally reverting to the Graeco-Roman synthesis of the empire before it was torn apart by the embitterment of the Great Schism (1054), and so developing an identity within a new enlarged Europe. This is a question which has long preoccupied Orthodox Christianity: in fifteenth-century Constantinople, with its debate over the acceptance of the Council of Florence (1439); or in nineteenth-century Russia, with the division between Slavophiles and Westernizers. In the past the Orthodox have decided against seeing themselves with the West, as part of European Christian culture; and any suggestion of rapprochement with Catholic or Protestant has been firmly rejected by the common mind of the church. But now the new circumstances of the post-Communist era in the East and the post-Christian era in the West may lead both East and West to come up with different answers from those of the millennium before, and to evolve a new Christian sense of common purpose and shared life within a unified European political and economic entity.

The Difficulty in Measuring Orthodox Adherence

In Russia the period following the fall of Communism has been marked by the rebuilding of churches and re-opening of institutions on a massive scale. The existence of this religious revival has, however, been questioned. Although accurate statistics are not available, those familiar with Russian society generally agree that between one and three percent of the population of Russia attend church regularly. This level of attendance is less than in many countries in secularized Western Europe. But caution must be exercised over this more negative approach. For the West, with its post-Enlightenment individualism, belief is a matter of individual choice and the commitment of faith is expressed through attending church worship. The Orthodox East has inherited a more communal approach, with membership of a church often being bound up with membership of a nation. Expression of faith is more finely nuanced and can be shown through keeping the fasts, sharing the celebration of the feasts, venerating icons, and visiting places of pilgrimage. People are likely to attend church on

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Russian Orthodoxy

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major festivals, rather than on Sundays. Such diverse forms of expression of faith are harder to assess, but there is plenty of evidence of firmly entrenched Orthodox practice. In 1999 the relics of St. Panteleimon were brought to Moscow. There was huge interest: observers reported that around a million people queued for eight hours or more to venerate the relics. Such indicators suggest that religious practice is too varied and many-sided to be accurately captured in a survey.

A fuller picture of religious observance in Russia has recently been presented by a team of researchers who have traveled to all parts of the country. Rather than compiling statistics, they have chosen to produce a more descriptive survey of their findings. It provides detailed information about the state of church life in different parts of Russia. (Some results of this survey are published in *Religion, State and Society* 28 [March 2000], 7-69.) Compare, for example, the situation in two dioceses which the research team visited and described: Petrozavodsk, a diocese formed in the 1990s in the northwest of Russia; and Ekaterinburg, the former Sverdlovsk in the Urals, where Tsar Nicholas II and his family were assassinated.

Comparing the Diocese of Petrozavodsk . . .

In Petrozavodsk the researchers found a lively and vibrant church life. Bishop Manuil is from an intellectual St. Petersburg background, enjoys good relations with Lutherans and Pentecostals, and uses a translation of the New Testament made by Finnish Pentecostals for his work among Karelian-speaking congregations. The monasteries, especially the Muromsky Monastery, are centers for his catechetical work. In the city itself the Zhuravka Educational Center has been financed by the head of a building firm who is also the director of the center. Its three-year course for catechists is taught by the bishop, leading priests, and secular teachers. Some of its graduates have become priests. The bishop's press secretary, however, is a leading conservative who regularly publishes nationalist articles that contradict the public statements of the bishop. The bishop values the variety of church life in his diocese.

. . . And the Diocese of Ekaterinburg

Ekaterinburg sprang into the news when it was learned that in May 1998 books by the more open Orthodox writers - Alexander Schmemmann, John Meyendorff, and Alexander Men - had been burned in public. This was in fact the second book burning, as there had been an earlier occasion in 1994. The bishop who had ordered these burnings was the young and upwardly mobile Bishop Nikon, who had been appointed to the diocese in 1994 while he was still in his early thirties. He turned out to be a keen fundraiser for the diocese, raising money mostly from parish churches, and also an opponent of foreign missions and heterodox sects. He built up good relations with the army and some of the local institutions but was unpopular with many clergy. He cut off support for the church's education program, acted against liberal priests, and aroused the opposition of some of the monasteries. He later denied to the Synod of Bishops that the book burnings had taken place, but nevertheless he was eventually removed after numerous complaints against him had been received by the Patriarchate. He was then sent to the well-known and conservative Pskov Monastery of the Caves.

The leadership of the church under Patriarch Alexis II is sometimes criticized for caution at a time when positive leadership is required. These two examples show just some of the range of church life in Russia and show the importance of the task of holding the church together in a time of social change. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from John Binns, An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

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Church Strength in Georgia

Darrell Jackson

Eastern Orthodox Churches

In Georgia the Divine Liturgy is celebrated by three Eastern Orthodox traditions. The largest is the official, autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia. Additionally, dwindling numbers of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians living in Georgia worship in Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Orthodox congregations. In addition, Ukrainian Orthodox are deeply divided into a number of competing jurisdictions, although they will not be considered here.

Georgia also is home to several dissenting Orthodox groups who normally refer to themselves as "Orthodox traditionalists." Most are conservative and are trying to revive an earlier, more traditional form of Orthodox practice. The most widely known groups are Old Believers (Old Ritualists), divided into two groups: The smaller Popovtsy who recognize the authority and role of priests and bishops over their congregations, and the larger Bezpopovtsy who, as their Russian name suggests, reject the authority and role of priests and bishops. The Christian Orthodox Church in Georgia (True Orthodox Church) claims its apostolic succession through a Metropolitan Bishop in Boston, USA, and believes itself to be the only faithful Orthodox remnant in Georgia, in opposition to the Georgian Orthodox Church led by Patriarch Ilia II, which it considers to be heretical. Smaller groups, including the Gldani Orthodox Eparchy, the Dukhoboriy Orthodox, and the Malakani Storoveriy, may also be noted.

Oriental Churches

The Armenian Apostolic Church has existed in Georgia for many centuries. Its bishop resides in Armenia and is represented in Georgia by a vicar general. Other Oriental churches include small numbers of Syrian Orthodox Christians (distinct from the Assyrian, or Syrian, Church of the East, which is also known as the Chaldean-Rite Eastern Catholic Church). The Syrian Church was formerly known in English as the Syrian Orthodox Church but adopted its current name in 2000. The Oriental churches are distinct from Eastern Orthodox churches in that they reject the Chalcedonian Ecumenical Council and its christological formulations.

Catholic Churches

The Roman Catholic bishop resident is responsible for the care of three distinct Catholic traditions: Latin-Rite Catholic; Eastern-Rite Catholics who celebrate the Eastern liturgy but recognize the primacy of the Pope; and Chaldean-Rite (Syrian or Assyrian Churches of the East) and Armenian-Rite congregations. (The latter are not to be confused with the Armenian Apostolic Church.)

Protestant Churches

Protestants in Georgia find that their right to erect places of worship is severely restricted by the manner in which local authorities "interpret" legal regulations. In practice, it is nearly impossible for any non-Orthodox

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Georgia

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congregation to build a place of worship without the consent of the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate. Even for those churches that enjoy reasonably good relationships with the Patriarchate, establishing places of worship is not at all easy. The Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church of Georgia has been able to develop new congregations only by using private homes for worship. Despite restrictions, Evangelical Christians-Baptists are growing: from one church in Tbilisi prior to the collapse of Soviet power to almost 100 congregations and home Bible-study groups today. The majority of these congregations belong to the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church of Georgia. A smaller Association of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Churches consists of “non-registered,” independent churches. Both groups tend to be ethnically Russian.

The largest group of Pentecostals belong to the Pentecostal Union though, again, significant numbers of independent Pentecostal and other charismatic fellowships exist outside the Union. Some Pentecostal congregations that are unable to secure permission to build churches continue to meet in forests around Tbilisi in the summer.

Ethnic and Geographical Factors

The disputed regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia reflect ethnic questions that have an ecclesial corollary. Georgian Orthodox Churches in Abkhazia, for example, are generally led by Russian priests from Russia. Georgian clergy, including the metropolitan, are not permitted to enter the region. Many Georgian Orthodox cross into Georgian territory to attend the Divine Liturgy in the Georgian language.

Religious Communities in Georgia ¹					
Confession	Community	Active Members	Total Adherents	Leaders	Congregations
Eastern Orthodox	Georgian Orthodox	1,154,277	3,062,000 ²	730	512
	Russian Orthodox	7,600	54,650	-	-
	Ukrainian Orthodox	1,300	7,600	-	-
	True Orthodox	200 ³	800	5	5
	Old Believers	250	1,000	-	5
	Other Orthodox	250	1,000	-	-
Oriental Orthodox	Armenian Apostolic	36,000	261,600	11	12 (30)
	Syriac Orthodox	3,360	9,344	-	-
Catholic ⁴	Roman Catholic: Latin Rite	7,500	35,050 ⁵	14	26
	Eastern Catholic: Armenian Rite	2,000	10,000	-	26
	Eastern Catholic: Chaldean Rite	1,000	5,000	-	13
Protestant	Evangelical Christian – Baptist Church of Georgia	5,100	15,000 ⁶	25	118 ⁷
	Association of Evangelical Christian – Baptist Churches	800	1,200	-	8
	Lutheran	1,000 ⁸	1,500	4	6
	Pentecostal Union ⁹	4,000	6,000	-	2 (minimum)
	Independent Pentecostals	2,500	5,000	-	11 (minimum)
	Charismatic	1,300	1,600	-	5
	Salvation Army	700 ¹⁰	950	18	8
Seventh-day Adventists	343 ¹¹	450	6	10 ¹²	
Other	Jehovah Witnesses ¹³	15,300	30,000	-	127
	Jewish	2,000	3,780 ¹⁴	3 (minimum)	3 (minimum)
	Muslim	24,000	420,500 ¹⁵	-	40
	Bahai	30 ¹⁶	50	-	1
	Hare Krishna	30 ¹⁷	40	-	1
	Satanists	20	40	-	1
Total “active” (27 percent attending > 1/month)		1,261,500			

Source: European Values Survey, 2001.

Georgia

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Outmigration

Especially important for predicting trends in church attendance, the Georgian population has been decreasing by an average annual rate of 6.7 percent since 1989. This decrease is most marked among ethnic Russians and Ukrainians. Between 1989 and 2002, the population decreased by 799,100 (14.5 percent) as a result of outmigration. This movement is important in trying to understand general patterns of church attendance and especially in trying to predict future patterns of attendance in those churches traditionally supported by ethnic

Russians and Ukrainians, including their respective Orthodox, Independent Baptist, and Pentecostal churches. The year 2002 witnessed a reduction in the Slavic community's strength from 341,000 to 67,700, that is, from 6.3 to 1.5 percent of the population. ♦

Edited excerpt of the author's findings originally presented to the Third International Lausanne Researchers' Conference, August 2005, as part of a larger study, "Beyond the Preamble: Searching for God in a Secularizing Europe."

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The Georgian population has been decreasing by an average annual rate of 6.7 percent since 1989.

Notes:

- ¹ This table updates and revises 2000 data, drawing on the fullest possible range of sources, including a personal visit in August 2004. I am still cautious about being definitive about the relationship of the respective size of Orthodox communities and their active members. I am also cautious about what I suspect is over-reporting by Jehovah's Witnesses. It also is extremely difficult to estimate the size of the Pentecostal and Charismatic communities. I am not aware of any reliable data for the relative sizes of Chaldean and Armenian-Rite Catholics. My estimates are based on the 39 congregations for the two rites *combined*, reported to me personally. I assume that 600 Muslims visit a mosque at least once per month and that 1,200 Armenians attend worship at least once a month at each congregation, based on the higher figure of 30 congregations.
- ² The official Orthodox Web site reports that 65 percent of the population identify with the Orthodox Church (www.patriarchate.ge). The figure for active members derives from a Bible Society report compiled within Georgia and therefore credited with a reasonable level of accuracy. The caution of Mark Elliott should be borne in mind when assessing these figures, as they are intended to refer to the Orthodox "community": Mark Elliott, "Analysis of *World Christian Encyclopedia* Figures for Post-Soviet Christians," *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 9 (Summer 2001), 4-5.
- ³ Estimated from number of congregations, assuming 40 per congregation. The majority of these congregations met in homes.
- ⁴ Catholic Hierarchy Web site (<http://catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dcauc.html>), viewed 10 September 2004.
- ⁵ R. Roberson, *The Eastern Christian Churches: A Brief Survey* (Rome), 187.
- ⁶ www.ebcgeorgia.org reports 15,000 active members in 50 churches and 53 mission stations, 15 August 2004.
- ⁷ This total includes 65 churches and 53 preaching stations. Personal e-mail from Bishop Malkhaz, April 2005.
- ⁸ Web report indicated "over 1,000 members" in early 2004.
- ⁹ The U.S. State Department (2004) estimates 9,000 Georgian and Russian Pentecostals.
- ¹⁰ Based on a report of 500 soldiers, adherents, and friends attending a central act of worship in 1999.
- ¹¹ www.adventiststatistics.org. Figures are active members for 2002. Reports indicate a strength of over 300 in 2003.
- ¹² Six registered churches plus four "companies" (www.adventiststatistics.org/view_summary.asp?FieldstID=222829), April 2005.
- ¹³ http://www.watchtower.org/statistics/worldwide_report.htm. Figures are memorial attendance for 2003. Membership given is 15,200. Witnesses have been active in Georgia since 1953.
- ¹⁴ Census data for 2002 indicates 3,600 Jews in Georgian-controlled territory, representing 95 percent of the total population of Georgia. Our figure is adjusted to allow for Jews living in the autonomous regions of Georgia at a similar level to that elsewhere in Georgia.
- ¹⁵ U.S. State Department Reports (2000-04) variously report the size of the Muslim community at between 8 and 9.9 percent of the population. This is considerably influenced by the presence of Chechen refugees in the valley of northern Georgia.
- ¹⁶ Estimated from reports and photographs of visits to the Bahai community in Georgia. I err on the side of overestimating.
- ¹⁷ Estimate based on experience of the size of Hare Krishna communities in Central and Eastern Europe. The community in Tbilisi also operates a vegetarian restaurant.

Indicators of Georgian Religiosity

Percentage of the population who	
Consider themselves religious	89
Attend a religious service more than once a month	27*
Believe in God	93
Believe in life after death	58
Believe that people have a soul	76
Believe in Hell	59
Believe in sin	84
Say that "God is important in my life"	72
Draw comfort and strength from religion	83
Belong to a religious denomination	94

* The percentages for Ukraine and Russia are 17 and 9 respectively.
Source: European Values Survey, 2001.

Catholicism in Russia Today

Dennis J. Dunn

Russian Catholics: Strength and Distribution

The implosion of the Soviet Union dramatically affected the number and location of Catholics who live in Russia. The new independent states of Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan were no longer part of Russia, with the size of the Catholic Church in Russia thus significantly reduced. It is difficult to say precisely how many Catholics are in Russia today. The number varies from the official Vatican estimate in 2000 of 1,285,000 to a recent estimate by Sergei Filatov and Lyudmila Vorontsova of 150,000. Russian Catholic leader Yuli Shreider and Yuri Gnedkov, editor of the Moscow Catholic weekly *Svet evangelii*, estimated in 1996 that the number of Catholics was about 500,000.¹

Whatever number is correct, there does seem to be general agreement that the location of most of today's Russian Catholics is no longer European Russia, but Siberia. The Vatican maintains that there are one million Catholics in Western Siberia, 200,000 in Northern European Russia, including Moscow and St. Petersburg, 50,000 in Eastern Siberia, and 35,000 in Southern European Russia. While Vatican figures are debated, no one appears to disagree with the pattern that the figures present.² This reality is the fruit of tsarist and Soviet policies of deporting to Siberia Catholic Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians, Germans, and others over centuries. By 1996, according to reports in *a letter from Siberia*, the number of Catholic parishes and communities totaled 86 in European Russia and 110 east of the Urals. In 2000 the Vatican calculated 327 parishes and 51 missions. This number is the rough figure that Russian Orthodox nationalists accept and denounce.³

Besides the sudden reduction in numbers and the subsequent movement of Catholicism's numerical center of gravity to Siberia, the Catholic Church also faces the challenge of geography. Russia still has 11 time zones, with the Catholic Church spread from St. Petersburg on the Baltic Sea to Magadan in eastern Siberia. The administration of this huge region is daunting.

The Nationalities Question

Another problem for the Church is that social stratification and ethnic identity divide its followers. There is the traditional nucleus of the Catholic Church in Russia: Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, and other non-Russians who have retained their ethnic identities.⁴ Then there are those who favor a revival of the Russian Uniate or Byzantine Catholic Church, which was largely suppressed under the Soviets but still is recognized by the Vatican.⁵ These Catholics argue that the Byzantine tradition is the appropriate vehicle for the expression of Russian Catholicism.⁶ Then there are the russified descendants of Catholics living in territories annexed by Russia or the Soviet Union. Finally, there is a small but influential group of Russian Catholic intellectuals and youth who believe that the Latin rite is the appropriate expression of Catholicism and the way by which Russia can pull closer to the West. To serve each of these groups, to reconcile their agendas, and, at the same time, to increase the Catholic presence in Russia, is proving difficult.⁷

Catholic Parishes

Another obstacle for the Catholic Church has been the task of trying to secure the return of church property. The process is slow and tedious because the government has reused the property for a plethora of purposes, from hospitals to office space to residences. In addition, the court system is not set up to adjudicate property disputes and the Duma, controlled by Russian nationalists, is not in the least sympathetic to the Catholic Church. In addition, local governments, which invariably favor the Orthodox Church, are often more restrictive than the federal government.

Overcoming the Shortage of Priests

Another problem for the Catholic Church in Russia is the catastrophic shortage of priests, which has been solved in part by priests coming from abroad. As of 1996 in European Russia there were 89 priests from 16 countries; and of these, 37 were secular priests and the rest were members of various religious orders. There were also 104 nuns from 17 countries. In Russia in Asia there were 52 priests and 60 nuns. The Vatican reported that the Russian Federation as of 2000 had 192 priests and 312 nuns. The number had increased to nearly 300 priests by 2002.⁸

Although most foreign priests have residence permits, the non-renewal and revocation of visas have created fear and anxiety among non-native Catholic clergy. This trend may signal a resurgence of traditional Russian xenophobia and anti-Westernism. Indeed, human rights journalist Lawrence Uzzell believes that the Putin government started taking an anti-foreign tack in May 2001 when Nikolai Trofimchuk, an advocate of state repression of Catholicism and other Western religions on geopolitical grounds, became head of the Kremlin's new Council for Co-operation with Religious Organizations. Trofimchuk considers "spiritual security" as part of national security and demands that foreign missionaries be expelled because they are really agents of foreign governments that do not have Russia's best interest at heart.⁹

Although the influx of foreign priests has helped relieve the problem of the shortage of priests in Russia, it simultaneously reinforces another problem. The large number of foreign priests emphasizes the image of Catholicism as a foreign religion. The Catholic Church in Russia has been fighting this battle for centuries, and it continues to this day. Patriarch Aleksii II declared in August 1997 that "you cannot claim that there is a Catholic tradition in modern Russia," and in June 2001, when Pope Paul II visited Ukraine, he spoke of a Catholic invasion of Orthodox lands.

To solve the problem of being identified or painted as a foreign religion, the Catholic Church in Russia has pursued two policies. On the one hand, its leaders state categorically that the Catholic Church is not a foreign religion in Russia. Metropolitan Kondrusiewicz simply refers to the edicts of the tsars in the eighteenth century that granted Catholics the right to practice their faith.¹⁰ Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, Paul I, and Alexander I granted legal status to the Catholic Church, invited the establishment of Catholic communities, and approved archdiocesan and diocesan structures.

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The location of most of today's Russian Catholics is no longer European Russia, but Siberia.

Catholicism in Russia Today

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Theological Education

The second response of the Catholic Church to the charge that it is a foreign religion is a major effort to begin to build a native priesthood. To this end, an upper level seminary, Mary Queen of the Apostles, was opened in Moscow in 1993 with close to 30 students.¹¹ The seminary aims to prepare priests for ministry in Russia who will be familiar with Russian language and sensitive to the culture. Special courses on the history and distinctive aspects of Russian religious consciousness taught by Orthodox professors are included in the curriculum. The Catholic Church wants to be certain that its priests are attuned to the nuances and rich traditions of the Orthodox faith.

Because of cramped and uncomfortable conditions in Moscow and a new opportunity in St. Petersburg, the seminary was moved from Moscow to St. Petersburg in September 1995. The Catholic Church had asked the government to return to it the building that had housed the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Seminary, which had been confiscated in 1918. On 4 September 1995 the chief of the St. Petersburg Committee of Management of City Property returned one floor of the building to the Church, and the seminary moved to St. Petersburg shortly thereafter. In 2002 the seminary had about 70 diocesan and religious order students, mainly Russians and recent converts to Catholicism. Out of the nearly 300 Catholic priests in Russia in 2002, 17 were Russians.¹²

Nonetheless, the Catholic Church in Russia will be dependent upon foreign priests for many years to come. On 11 February 1996 Metropolitan Kondruszewicz set up at Mary Queen of the Apostles Seminary a new Center for Vocations to the Priesthood and the Dedicated Life. Bishop Joseph Werth established minor seminaries in Novosibirsk in 1993 and Vladivostok in 1996. Bishop Clemens Pickel also recently set up a minor seminary in Astrakhan.¹³

Catholic Charity

Another critical issue for the Catholic Church is its administration of charity. In 1991 Caritas, the international Catholic charity organization, opened a branch in Moscow. By the mid-1990s it had five regional branches in European Russia and two east of the Urals in Novosibirsk and Vladivostok. Throughout the 1990s Caritas provided material help to the homeless, single pensioners, and the truly needy. The largest Caritas center, in Moscow, served 942 people in 1995, almost 50 percent of whom were homeless, about 30 percent invalids, eight percent single pensioners, and the rest from large or broken families. The type of aid given included 334 requests for clothes, 226 for foodstuffs, 37 for money, 26 for physical rehabilitation, 35 for employment assistance, and 270 for psychological counseling. A children's hospital called the Holy Family Center was also opened in 1993 to help teenagers who had neurological disorders, many of whom had attempted suicide. Most of these teenagers are homeless, orphans, or the children of broken families and alcoholics. Priests and nuns are providing them with food, clothing, and counseling, and are trying to teach them how to lead a normal life.¹⁴

Besides Caritas, other Catholic charitable organizations include American Catholic Charities, Aid to the Church in Need, and aid directly from the Vatican. In addition, various Western religious orders provide assistance from their own resources. ♦

Editor's Note: The concluding portion of this article will be published in the next issue of the East-West Church & Ministry Report.

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Notes:

¹ Interviews with Yuli Shreider and Yuri Gnedkov, 19 May 1996. See also Sergei Filatov and Lyudmila Vorontsova, "Katoliki i katolitsizm v Rossii" in Sergei B. Filatov, ed., *Religiia i obschestvo: ocherki religioznoi zhizni sovremennoi Rossii* (Moscow: Letnii Sad, 2002), 284. For the Vatican's statistics see *Annuario Pontificio* (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 2000).

² Shreider and Gnedkov interviews, 19 May 1996; *Annuario Pontificio*, 2000.

³ *Annuario Pontificio*, 2000, p. 1112.

⁴ Ralph Della Cava, "The Roman Catholic Church in Russia, 1991-1996: The Latin Rite," *The Harriman Review* 9 (Winter 1996), 52-54.

⁵ *Annuario Pontificio*, 2000, p. 1112.

⁶ Filatov and Vorontsova, "Katoliki i katolitsizm," 282-84.

⁷ Della Cava, "Roman Catholic," 52.

⁸ *Annuario Pontificio*, 2000, p. 1112; "Media Advisory," 12 September 2002, www.keston.org/knsframe.htm.

⁹ Lawrence Uzzell, "A Letter from the Director," keston.institute@keston.org, 4 September 2001, pp. 1-2; Uzzell, "The Bullying of Russia's Catholics," Keston News Service, 4 May 2002, p. 2.

¹⁰ Della Cava, "Roman Catholics," 55.

¹¹ Shreider and Gnedkov interviews, 1996, p. 41.

¹² Keston, "Media Advisory," 12 September 2002.

¹³ Richard Szczepanowski, "Moscow Prelate Says New Dioceses Supported by Most Russians," *Catholic Standard*, 7 March 2002, www.cathstan.org/news/03-07-02/3, p. 2.

¹⁴ Shreider and Gnedkov interviews, 1996, pp. 42-43.

The Catholic Church wants to be certain that its priests are attuned to the nuances and rich traditions of the Orthodox faith.

New Light on a Pivotal Orthodox Theologian

Matt Miller

St. Andrew's Biblical-Theological Institute, Moscow, and Ostkirchliches Institut, Regensburg, Germany, organized an academic conference, 29 September – 3 October 2004, on “Russian Theology in European Context: Bulgakov and Contemporary Western Religious Philosophical Thought,” in honor of Archpriest Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944). This gathering of scholars, graduate students, and church leaders to discuss the impact of one of Russian Orthodoxy's most influential twentieth-century theologians was held in Dzerzhinsky, Russia, near Moscow. This conference in honor of a political exile was held, ironically, in a city named in honor of the founder of Lenin's political police, which forced Bulgakov to flee his homeland. A well-polished statue of Dzerzhinsky still stands in the city.

Approximately 40 participants attended the conference, 30 from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, and ten from Western Europe and North America. The majority represented state-supported academic bodies, with others from Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant institutions. This conference followed a 2003 event, “Russia and the Universal Church: The Humanity of God in the Perspective of Contemporary Interconfessional and Interreligious Dialogue,” dedicated to the memory of Vladimir Soloviev, the innovative Russian philosopher of the nineteenth century.

Bulgakov's insightful and often controversial works continue to spark heated debate 60 years after his death. His brilliant mind was sharpened by the trials of his tumultuous life. Born into the family of an Orthodox priest, the young Bulgakov dismissed his faith in an atmosphere of alcoholism and poverty. He later found worldly success as a Marxist professor of economics, but eventually found his new system of belief to be intellectually unsound. He wrestled through philosophical idealism and Christian socialism back to Orthodox Christianity and was ordained a priest in 1918. His outstanding leadership within the church led to his exile from Russia in 1922 along with other “unreformable” intellectuals. Until his death in 1944, he served as a professor at the St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris. In training a new generation of clergy, he emphasized the impact of the divine incarnation on every aspect of Christian life and called for personal spiritual revival and self-critical church renewal.

His influence spread broadly from Paris, but several equally talented Orthodox leaders sharply criticized some of his theological innovations (especially his ideas on “Sophia”) as heretical. His theological and philosophical writings attempted to face the wrenching doctrinal, political, and economic problems of the early twentieth century. His theological method always began with careful study of the Scriptures and the Fathers, but he saw the necessity of consulting contemporary Catholic, Protestant, and other thinkers as well. He believed that his theology must be both Orthodox and modern. In return, his ideas influenced many Roman Catholic and Anglican theologians. Today, Bulgakov's journey from parochial Orthodoxy through Marxism and idealism to a traditional but open-minded Orthodoxy resonates with many in the Slavic intellectual world. For this reason, anyone working within this environment should be familiar with his thinking and influence.

The wide range of Bulgakov's religious and philosophical interests was reflected at the conference in the presentation of topics: the Scriptures, the Church, the Trinity, culture, creativity, and economics. Dr. Aleksandr Ivanovich Negrov, rector of St. Petersburg Christian University (a leading Protestant seminary), addressed “The Hermeneutics of Sergei Bulgakov,” treating Bulgakov's approach to biblical interpretation compared to that of other Orthodox theologians. Negrov argued that Bulgakov placed an unusually strong accent on the divinely inspired nature of Scripture. He also outlined Bulgakov's four basic interpretive principles: 1) The interpreter needs to respect both the human and divine aspects of Scripture; 2) A full understanding of Scripture is received only with the assistance of the Holy Spirit within the Church; 3) The Bible can be fully understood only within the context of holy tradition; 4) The interpretation of a text reached by the Church in a council is superior to that reached by an individual interpreter.

Sergei Vasilievich Nikolaev, a Ph.D. student at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, and a Methodist pastor, explored “Epistemological Issues Raised by Fr. Sergei Bulgakov's Proposal for Partial Intercommunion among Members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius.” His study focused on Bulgakov's highly controversial 1933 recommendation that members of this Orthodox-Anglican group share a common celebration of the Eucharist. Nikolaev argued that the proposal was based more on an experiential sense of personal spiritual fellowship than on theological or canonical grounds.

Brandon Gallaher, a doctoral student at Oxford University and a graduate of St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, compared two outstanding, but rarely juxtaposed, thinkers in “There is Freedom: The Problem of Divine Freedom and the Necessity of Love in Karl Barth and Sergei Bulgakov.” Gallaher discussed their views on the philosophical interrelation of the purpose of God's creation of the world, the nature of God's gracious love, and the reality of God's freedom.

Dr. Nikolai Konstantinovich Gavrushin of the Moscow Theological Academy contrasted the careers and worldviews of two well-known clerics of the same name who both died in 1944: “Two Jubilees: Archpriest Sergei Bulgakov and Patriarch Sergei (Stragorodskii).” He stressed that although many are familiar with the theological conflicts between the émigré theologian and the Soviet patriarch, they may not be familiar with points of commonality in their early careers. For example, they both participated in pre-Revolutionary St. Petersburg religious-philosophical meetings.

In another presentation, Dr. Albert Rauch, a Catholic priest and director of the Ostkirchliches Institut, Regensburg, Germany, noted the influence of Bulgakov on the views of Catholic theologians, especially Hans Urs von Balthasar, Aloys Grillmeier, and Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), and the decisions of Vatican II. Father Sergei's ideas on *sobornost'* were seen in the council's theological description of the Church. He also influenced Vatican II statements on tradition and relations with other Christian confessions.

Bulgakov's journey from parochial Orthodoxy through Marxism and idealism to a traditional but open-minded Orthodoxy resonates with many in the Slavic intellectual world.

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Not all Orthodox welcome Bulgakov's call for openness to the modern world, free discussion, and self-critical church reform, but many others seem ready to listen to this voice from exile.

New Light

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This event left no doubt that Father Sergei's penetrating and often eccentric thought continues to influence, fascinate, and provoke both secular philosophers and believers of all Christian confessions. His career confirmed that Lenin was indeed correct when he labeled Bulgakov "unreformable." He held his course, and his books continued to circulate from hand to hand until they could be openly published and discussed. Not all Orthodox welcome Bulgakov's call for openness to the modern world, free discussion, and self-critical church reform, but many others seem ready to listen to this voice from exile.

In 2006 an edited collection of conference papers appeared as *Russkoe bogoslovie v evropeiskom*

kontekste: S.N. Bulgakov i zapadnaya religiozno-filosofskaya mysl' (Moscow: Bibleisko-Bogoslovskii Institut Sv. Apostola Andreia). Those desiring an English-language introduction to the life and thought of Bulgakov (or a bibliography of his works) should consult Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997) and Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), reviewed in the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 11 (Winter 2003), 14-15.

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The Russian Orthodox Social Concept and Religious Pluralism

Philip Walters

The *Basic Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*, hereafter, the *Social Concept* (<http://www.mospat.ru/index.php?mid=90>), adopted by the Russian Orthodox Church in 2000, affirms a desire to engage the world, but this is constantly questioned in the text. The *Social Concept* is in fact defensive in tone. Its predominant theme is that contemporary society is degraded as the result of the rise of irreligious individualism. The *Social Concept* does argue for the uniqueness and dignity of the individual, but this is subordinate to the main aim, which is the protection of traditional [collective] identity (variously and inconclusively defined), through resistance to globalization, liberalization, and secularization.

The *Social Concept* criticizes the concept of "freedom of conscience," which is seen as a symptom of "society's loss of religious aims and values, of mass apostasy and de facto indifference to the activity of the Church, and to victory over sin." This kind of understanding of "freedom of conscience" must raise questions about the attitude of Russian Orthodoxy to a multi-confessional state.

A Preference for "Traditional" Religions

As regards religious pluralism, the *Social Concept* champions the rights of "traditional religions," usually

meaning Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism. Some clearly think of these "traditional religions" in terms of their association with a particular area (or areas) of "traditional compact settlement" of their adherents. One suspects, however, that this is not the main criterion, which would seem to be that so-called "traditional" religions are in fact those that present no threat to each other. When we hear the word "traditional" we should in fact think "non-competitive." Russian Orthodoxy fears proselytizing or sheep-stealing, particularly by neo-Protestants and Roman Catholics. It is indicative that the denominations the Moscow Patriarchate feels happiest with are all non-Christian ones.

Orthodox Discomfort with Religious Pluralism

A prevalent Russian Orthodox assumption is that Russian history and culture have been shaped exclusively by Orthodoxy. The reality is rather more complex: One has only to recall the role of Lutherans and Lutheranism in Russian public life since the sixteenth century. What is indisputable, however, is that the Russian religious landscape today is increasingly pluralistic. To highlight just one development, in Siberia and the Far East Protestant denominations are proliferating.

The *Social Concept* contains no sections dealing with pluralism, civil society, or ecumenism. In my view, Russian Orthodoxy cannot deal coherently with these and similar issues because its implicit understanding of the nature of "the Church" makes this impossible. Throughout the *Social Concept* and Orthodox discourse in general, one is constantly aware of the presence of the "default" understanding that in Russia "the Church" means "the Russian Orthodox Church." The *Social Concept's* articulation of the Russian Orthodox Church's position and role in society is to be welcomed. However, it seems to me that its major weakness is its failure to recognize the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church is just one element in an increasingly pluralizing society.

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