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Does Post-Soviet Theological Training Need to Be Revamped?

Donald Marsden

I have been involved in theological education in Russia for eight years. While I have taught several courses at Moscow Baptist Theological Seminary, the majority of my work and experiences have involved the development of non-residential theological training programs in European Russia and Siberia.

Cultural Differences

First, we need to keep in mind the relationship of culture and theological education. During one of my first visits to a Russian Baptist church in the early 1990s, I was surprised after the worship service to be greeted by men kissing me on the lips. This is a biblical practice based on the Apostle Paul's writing in II Corinthians 12:13: "Greet one another with a holy kiss." I have noticed that since 1993 this tradition, which is not practiced in American churches, has become somewhat less conspicuous in Russia. At the same time, when I visit Russian Orthodox churches, both men and women greet me by kissing me three times on the cheeks.

To cite another example, on a recent visit to a church in the Tula Region, I arrived at the home of a good friend who pastors a small church. Upon my departure, which occurred on my birthday, my friend presented me with a bouquet of flowers from his garden. In my Anglo-American culture it is not considered appropriate for men to give men flowers. But I was grateful because I know that in Russia it is perfectly appropriate. I am glad to be included in these traditions, not because I particularly enjoy them, but because they indicate that my Russian friends at some level have accepted me into their culture.

At the same time, certain cultural practices are changing. For example, when I first visited Russia in 1993, it was common practice for Evangelicals to both begin and end meals with prayer. Today, through the influence of Western visitors, it seems the tradition of praying after meals has disappeared in many places. (This practice, by the way, is not only Russian, for in

the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* John Calvin writes that prayer should be offered before and after meals.)

Visiting a Baptist church in Siberia, I noted that most, if not all, the songs in the service were translations of praise choruses frequently used in American churches. I no longer hear many of the Russian hymns that express the deep suffering of the people of God during times of trouble and persecution, hymns that express a deep longing for God in the darkness of this world.

Cultural Assumptions in Theological Education

I make these comments in order to emphasize that cultures differ, and that culture is a powerful influence on the way in which the gospel is preached and expressed. Culture also influences the process by which church leaders are educated and trained. This is as it should be. But cultural assumptions that are built into the training process need to be examined closely. The form of training common in Russia and Ukraine today has in large part been borrowed from the West. This training involves a number of cultural assumptions that have been imported from abroad, some of which are not helpful. Cultural assumptions appropriate in one context may not be appropriate at all in another cultural setting.

Do Jobs Await Seminary Graduates?

One of the major assumptions made in theological schools in the West, is that jobs await graduates. However, this is rarely the case in Russia and Ukraine. Though it is rarely if ever discussed, this understanding does affect the training process. In fact, all post-Soviet republics suffer from a widespread and persistent problem of low salaries. Doctors, nurses, coal miners, teachers, traffic policemen, pastors, and missionaries all receive salaries that are inadequate. Many must find ways to supplement their income.

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Parents of children who attend public school often gather a collection to supplement the teachers' salaries because they are so meager. Traffic policemen also receive a salary too low to live on. They supplement their income with contributions made by motorists whom they stop with their batons. Motorists make these contributions, whether they have broken the law or not, because they fear the inconvenience and further problems of having their car registration documents confiscated. The daughter of our driver, who gave birth to a child two years ago, may serve as a final example. Even though the mother was in a private hospital and was paying for services, the nurse would not take her to the observation window to see her child until she was paid.

Do Pastors Receive a Living Wage?

And what of Russian pastors and missionaries? They must live under the same conditions as nurses, teachers, and traffic policemen, but they are expected to live without resorting to questionable or dishonest practices. Very few churches provide financial support that makes it possible for pastors to devote themselves to fulltime church ministry. In some cases, pastors refuse to accept any financial support from their congregations because they believe church money should be given for the needs of the poor, or because they do not want to face the complications in relationships that come with financial dependence on a congregation.

This leaves pastors with the following options:

- 1) Find a second job, preferably with flexible hours, such as taxi driving or serving as a courier in order to maintain some flexibility in ministry and family commitments;
- 2) Depend upon extended family for support. Some receive support from relatives and friends who have emigrated to America or Germany;
- 3) Maintain a garden and livestock with chickens, cows, and other animals to supplement a low salary;
- 4) Have one's spouse take outside employment;
- 5) Seek financial support from Western church or mission organizations which may come directly from Western Christians who visit from abroad;
- 6) Simply trust God that at the necessary time the needed financial support will be there.

I have seen all these options practiced. I sometimes ask myself, why do churches fail to provide adequate support for their pastors? Is it because they cannot afford to pay a reasonable salary? Is it because they believe the pastor

should be as poor as they are? It is difficult to know for sure, but I suspect it is because Russians harbor deeply held beliefs that rich people are sinful and that the ideal Christian is poor. In this sense, the ideal of poverty in Orthodox Christianity as exemplified by monks who are dedicated to prayer and fasting has been carried over and applied to pastors in evangelical churches.

Unstable or irregular financial support is a problem for pastors ministering in most Russian, Ukrainian, and Moldovan churches. The impact is wide ranging, but it is not discussed in theological schools. It is as if the schools are not concerned with such "minor" questions as how graduates will feed their children. Nevertheless, low pay is a major problem. As one theology teacher seeking work told me a number of years ago, "My children have a bad habit. They like to eat."

Admissions Shortfall

Recently, some of the best-equipped theological schools in Russia, with excellent buildings, libraries, and teachers, have had difficulties finding students. It seems to me that one of the reasons is that graduates have discovered that they have few opportunities for ministry related to their training that will also provide a living for themselves and their families. Some have begun to raise the question, "Why should I invest three to five years in fulltime study so that I can remain poor?"

Are There Ways Around Western Aid?

Another widely held assumption is that theological education in the former Soviet Union cannot be conducted without a high percentage of financial support from the West. We need to examine this assumption. I do not doubt that at this time financial support is needed. But we must look at the form of theological education being provided and ask whether or not it is the optimal form for the post-Soviet context. We must also consider what forms of theological education might be possible if they were developed to fit the post-Soviet reality. To that end, the following questions should be addressed.

- 1) For those entering fulltime theological study for a period of one to five years, how will they support themselves after they complete their program of study?
- 2) Young people who leave small provincial towns to study in fulltime residential programs in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kyiv, Odessa, or other large urban centers will become accustomed to life in the big city. Having entered into the intellectual and cultural stimulation of urban living, larger churches, and challenging classes, how

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often will graduates return to serve the people of God in out-of-the-way places?

- 3) What are the cultural assumptions included in American and West European theological literature translated into Russian? Do these cultural assumptions apply to the post-Soviet world? We need to bear in mind that the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation occurred in Western Europe in response to Roman Catholicism under circumstances far different from those in tsarist, Soviet, or post-Soviet contexts. The Evangelical movement in Russia arose in the nineteenth century in an environment deeply shaped by Byzantine Orthodox Christianity. This heritage profoundly affects, in both positive and negative ways, the worldview of Slavic peoples, including not only Orthodox believers, but non-believers and Evangelicals as well. If Slavic Evangelicals do not seriously study the history, traditions, practice, and culture of Orthodoxy, they will be doomed to a kind of intellectual vacuum in the midst of their own culture and history. Evangelicals, so blinded, will not be able to seriously engage in evangelizing the intellectual, cultural, and political leaders in the Slavic world who consider themselves to be Orthodox. If Jesus died for all people, love for all should motivate our interest in learning about the beliefs and practices of the Orthodox as well and about folk beliefs passed down from Russia's pagan past, so that we can lovingly preach the gospel to all.

Recommendations

Having raised difficult questions, a number of recommendations are in order.

- 1) Theological educators need to think seriously about the fact that only a small number of graduates will be able to support themselves in fulltime ministry according to the Western pattern. The great majority of graduates in ministry will obtain their daily bread by some means other than the support of their congregations. This fact needs to be taken into consideration in theological education.
- 2) Theological educators in large cities, such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kyiv, and Odessa, need to consider how they can be a part of the training process for those in isolated provincial and rural regions who desire further training. High quality theological education needs to be delivered far and wide where potential students are currently active in ministry.
- 3) To this end, theological educators should

take into account:

- A challenging social context that may include collective farms, high levels of unemployment, and poverty.
 - A challenging academic context in which students may not be able to read at the same level of difficulty as students in fulltime residential seminaries. Many provincial students may have problems with dyslexia without even knowing it. Many may feel ashamed of their weak academic abilities. In such cases students need to be helped and encouraged. Attention needs to be given to the development of study skills and habits that will allow them to become better students of the Word of God. They need to be given assignments that they are in fact capable of completing. To summarize, teaching methods need to be adapted to student abilities. Seminaries with the best qualified teachers and the best libraries should be concerned not only about students on their campuses, but also about those who desire training in remote places.
- 4) Ways need to be found to underwrite theological training in isolated areas through local resources. Keep in mind that during Soviet times Slavic Evangelicals developed methods for training pastors even though they had little in the way of formal theological education. It can be done, and we should give our attention to ways formal theological institutions can be partners in training pastors in the provinces. In order to extend effective training beyond the large cities, pastors in remote areas need to develop their teaching abilities as preachers and evangelists.

In summary, we must keep in mind that culture has an enormous impact on the training of pastors. Culture is not uniform from place to place, and it is always in flux. If these facts are ignored, the message of the gospel will not be relevant and it will not be embraced.

Theological educators must strive to preserve what is valuable in Slavic culture that is consistent with the gospel and be ready to abandon whatever runs counter to the gospel. ♦

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Doctoral Studies for East European Evangelicals

Donald Fairbairn

One of the exciting developments in the post-Soviet Evangelical movement is the growing recognition of the need for well-educated teacher-scholars who can serve as a resource for the Protestant churches of the region. The advantages of developing such teacher-scholars are many. They are not affected by changes in visa requirements that so hamper Western missionaries in some countries. They are better able than Western missionaries to adapt their learning to their own cultural and religious context. They are less likely to be perceived as importing a “foreign” Christianity. And their presence enables the region’s fledgling theological schools to teach in local languages, rather than through translators.

Because of these obvious advantages, and in light of the increasing number of East European students who desire doctoral degrees, the question naturally arises: How and where should a doctoral degree be pursued? This article will first describe ingredients of an “ideal” doctoral program for East Europeans, followed by an evaluation of some of the existing options in light of recommended key ingredients.

How and where should a doctoral degree be pursued?

An Ideal Doctoral Program

One obvious ingredient of an ideal program would be the presence of committed Christians, preferably Evangelicals, on a theological faculty. Unlike most master’s degrees, doctoral degrees focus primarily on independent research, and the value of the program depends heavily on the relationship between students and supervisors. This relationship is so important that many doctoral students change supervisors during the course of their study. Unfortunately, students who do not have, or cannot find, supervisors with whom they can relate well often flounder for years without finishing their degrees. The more Evangelicals on a given faculty, the more likely East European Evangelical students will be able to find compatible supervisors. Or if the faculty does not include Evangelicals, it should at least include professors who are sympathetic toward Evangelicals.

A second ingredient of an ideal program would be its ability to allow students to study in their own country, or at least in a country where the same language is spoken. Obviously, the less students are uprooted (culturally, linguistically, and geographically) for a doctoral program, the better. Some of the reasons for this are well known. Students who

travel far to study face difficult cultural adjustments. And, these adjustments are often more difficult for their families (who are usually less accomplished in English and less familiar with Western culture), than for the students themselves. Sadly, many students who travel far to study never return home. And if they do return, they often do not succeed in re-adapting to their native culture. Other reasons are more subtle, but still important. Successful completion of a doctoral program should give students a life-long thirst for study, research, and learning. But if the way they have learned to do research requires vast resources in, say, English and German, then new graduates beginning their careers teaching in small, perhaps isolated theological schools in Eastern Europe, are likely to be very frustrated with limited libraries. In contrast, if students are accustomed to research with more modest resources, or with more locally available resources, then their chances of success at continued scholarship are much higher.

A third ingredient of an ideal program would be the provision of an environment conducive to fulltime study and research. The process of research, reflection, and writing/teaching is an ongoing one. Budding scholars need to cultivate a lifestyle of the mind if they are to become intellectual resources for the church. Such a lifestyle is very difficult to cultivate if study is confined to a few brief, exhausting periods a year, with little time to carry out research or reflect on its implication the rest of the year. It is much better for students to have an ongoing program of research and reflection that forms a part of their overall responsibilities and daily life.

The Ideal and the Reality

In contrast to these ideal ingredients, the most common realistic options for East European students fall basically into three categories.

Study Fulltime at an Orthodox or Roman Catholic Institution in One’s Home Country or Region

This option clearly satisfies the second and third ingredients described above. It reduces cultural and geographic uprooting to a minimum. (Still, one should never forget, for example, that Moscow and St. Petersburg are very different worlds from the Russian Far East.) Also, this option usually does not involve linguistic difficulties. And it enables students to hone their research skills using local resources. Perhaps more important, the types of resources

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available encourage students to focus their research on topics closely related to their cultural context.

Conversely, this option often creates great problems with respect to the first ingredient. It is quite possible that in a Roman Catholic or Orthodox institution in Eastern Europe the animosity toward Evangelicals might be even higher than it would be at a secular, state-run institution. Finding an appropriate supervisor could be a huge problem, and even surviving in a hostile environment could be difficult. At the same time, it should be mentioned that this problem depends largely on the institution and the student. For example, institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church, Kyiv Patriarchate, are likely to be vastly more hospitable toward Evangelicals than institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate. Also, students who are willing to work respectfully with Catholic or Orthodox scholars will have much less difficulty than students who are more stridently sectarian.

Study Through a Program Administered from Abroad but in Which Most of the Work is Done In-Country

Programs that fit into this category actually exhibit a fair degree of diversity. Some, such as the Oxford Center for Missions Studies in England, are run completely by institutions outside the European mainland. Others, such as programs at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, are *validated* by institutions outside Europe but *run* in-country. And still others, such as the Evangelical Theological Faculty, Leuven, Belgium, are fully accredited and recognized by the European Union. In spite of this variety, what these programs have in common is their requirement that students complete most of their work independently, at home, on a research topic clearly related to the religious situation in their native land. At the same time, they require periodic visits to the host institution for supervision, exams, and more technical research.

These programs are an attempt to provide the best of both worlds: A strong indigenous “flavor” and competent supervision by faculty members who are Evangelicals themselves, or who are at least open to Evangelicalism. And they tend to succeed well at blending these strengths. At the same time, however, they raise the thorny issue of who, if anyone, will recognize their degrees. If a person holds an earned doctorate from an in-country institution, there should be no problem with the appropriate authorities recognizing that degree. But if one studies at a school whose

degrees are validated by a British or American institution and thus actually granted by a foreign institution, then it is possible that local officials will not recognize those degrees. For example, in the European Union, even British degrees are frowned upon, to say nothing of American degrees. So the question of where students intend to teach after graduation must be taken into account before they actually enroll in one of these doctoral programs.

Study Fulltime at an Evangelical Institution in the West

Both the advantages and disadvantages of this option are readily apparent. The farther students travel for doctoral study, the harder the cultural adjustment for them upon returning home - and the greater the temptation not to return at all. In addition, East European Evangelicals who have studied abroad all too often lose the respect of churches in their own country because they can no longer effectively communicate spiritual ideas in their own language and context.

At the same time, in some cases study in such institutions offers students the best access to specialized resources, the best opportunities to interact with professors who are committed Evangelicals and well-read experts in their fields, and the best guidance in sifting through cultural, political, and scientific factors that impinge on some aspect of spiritual life in their home countries. Cultural and geographic distance is often a problem, but sometimes it can be overcome.

Where Do We Go From Here?

East European theological students considering doctoral work and East European institutions seeking to develop their own indigenous faculty members may want to consider the following suggestions.

First, seriously consider the possibility of study at a non-evangelical institution in-country. While such study certainly is not for everyone, Evangelicals are far too quick to assume that this option will necessarily be unsuitable. At the doctoral level, students *must* learn to interact respectfully with scholars whose views they do not share. Having professors who adhere to an Evangelical understanding of the major teachings of the Christian faith is not nearly as important at the doctoral level as it is at the undergraduate or master’s level. If faculty members are *open* to the Evangelical faith to permit students actually to graduate from a Catholic or Orthodox institution, it might

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If students decide that they cannot remain in their own culture to do doctoral work, then they should try to find a truly international Christian scholarly community in which to study.

well be valuable for them to study there. If local institutions have credible academic standing, students should at least give them serious consideration.

Second, resist the temptation to study in America. Since I myself am American, I should not be accused of “Yankee-bashing.” But the fact is that American Evangelical culture is both *very different* from East European Evangelicalism and *much more insular* than European culture. American theological institutions reflect that insularity to some degree, although some of them reflect significantly more cultural diversity today than they did a generation ago. If students decide that they cannot remain in their *own* culture to do doctoral work, then they should try to find a truly *international* Christian scholarly community in which to study. In fact, such an international community in which scholars in all fields work cross culturally, could actually be the most beneficial environment in which to study theology at the doctoral level. And I believe that, in general, one is *more likely* to find

that kind of community in a European, or even African or Asian, institution than in an American Evangelical seminary.

Third, recognize that doctoral study is *not* a one-size-fits-all endeavor. Which programs will be most suitable, or even suitable at all, for particular students depends on many factors, all of which should be carefully identified and weighed. New Evangelical schools in Eastern Europe should work together with their faculty who seek doctoral training, taking into consideration their personalities, cultural and linguistic skills, and desired topics of research. East European seminaries do not need faculty members who are all graduates of the same institutions. Instead, these institutions need to be enriched by the insights their faculty have gleaned from various places of study, both in-country and abroad. ♦

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Western Assistance in Theological Training for Romanian Evangelicals Since 1989

Danut Manastireanu

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Unrealistic Hopes

On 17 December 1989 I received a phone call from a friend in Timisoara, Romania. In his panic, he uttered just a few words: “They are shooting here. Please pray for us.” It was the beginning of the revolution in Romania that the whole world watched on TV. After the fall of Communism, most Evangelicals in Romania believed that everything was going to change overnight. That is why the suggestion that Romania might need 20 years to understand democracy raised vehement objections. Yet, now, 16-plus years after the fact, Romania does not appear to be much closer to the goal. Conditioned by 45 years of Communist propaganda, Romanians – Evangelicals included – appear to be virtually incapable of coping with the demands of modern, pluralist democracy. Maybe the proverbial “40 years in the desert” will be necessary before Romania will be able to return to normality.

For many years during the Communist era, radical Evangelical leaders had demanded greater liberties for their own communities. Yet, when freedom came after 1989, Evangelicals

proved totally unprepared for it. And to this day Evangelical ventures into the media, education, and politics, are for the most part amateurish.

Some time before 1989, Baptist pastor Josef Tson published *The True Faith*, which contended that when freedom comes, Evangelicalism would compete freely with Orthodoxy and (obviously) would prevail. Many expected to see at least one million converts to Evangelical Christianity in a few years. Yet, in spite of the remarkable resurgence of interest in religion in post-Communist Romania, only a relatively small number joined Evangelical ranks: about 145,000, or an increase of 38 percent, between 1992 and 2002. (For more details, see www.oci.ro.) Pentecostals registered the largest growth, with an increase of close to 50 percent. Today they represent about one percent of the entire population, while other Evangelicals amount to another one percent. And two percent is quite far from the overly optimistic expectations in 1989.

Ghosts of the Past

Soon after 1989, a Romanian author observed that although Communism was dead politically, the Communist mindset was alive and well in Romania: “Although we had killed the dictator, a little Ceausescu was still alive in every one of us.” After the fall of Communism,

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all churches suffered from an authoritarian style of leadership. Romanian Evangelicals, in addition, suffered from denominational fragmentation and a lack of clear vision for the future. This has made it impossible to have any significant impact on Romanian society as a whole.

Missionaries: A Hindrance and a Help

In 1995 Wheaton College, near Chicago, Illinois, launched an informal East European summer school (<http://www.wheatongrad.com/?p=183>). Through this program 20 Romanian and over 80 other East European Evangelical theologians and church leaders received the opportunity to engage in study and research for six weeks in the school's libraries under the supervision of a Wheaton lecturer.

In the summer of 1996 ten East European theologians and heads of theological schools gathered at Wheaton, including this author. We all were grateful for the opportunity to have access to the rich theological resources we had at our disposal. Yet, a recurring theme of our conversations centered on discontentment with the way most Western missionary agencies handled their relationships with nationals in our part of the world after the fall of Communism. Issues prominent in our discussions included the following:

1. Many Western missions were building their own missionary empires as if no indigenous churches existed in former Communist countries.
2. Very few missionaries manifested cultural sensitivity.
3. Often, Western missionaries proved to be completely ignorant of Eastern Orthodoxy, often associating it with paganism.
4. Western missionaries, often seconded by nationals, resorted to blatant proselytism, using material and other incentives to attract people to Evangelicalism.
5. Missionaries tried more than once to impose on Romanians Western theological disputes that were irrelevant in the East European context.
6. Missionaries created dependence on the West in most of the ministries they initiated.

This does not mean, however, that everything Western missionaries did in Romania was wrong. Just a few of their positive contributions may be noted.

1. Western missionaries helped alleviate the suffering of children in orphanages.
2. They offered Romanians good examples of social involvement in many areas of need.
3. Westerners provided expertise and financial support for local publishing initiatives.
4. Western churches provided financial support for local pastors and missionaries.
5. Western missionaries encouraged national

Christians to take an active part in world missions.

6. Westerners supported the creation of Christian educational institutions.
7. Christians in the West contributed to the formation of a new generation of Evangelical theologians in Romania.

For these and many other such contributions, Christians in Eastern Europe are sincerely grateful to churches in the West.

With the above description of the post-Communist Evangelical context in Romania, it will be easier to evaluate the impact of Western theological assistance.

Theological Training in the West

The limited possibilities of local theological institutions made it impossible for Evangelical churches to meet the new challenges of freedom without sending some of their people to receive theological training in the West. After almost four years of distance learning, 20 of the 42 Romanian students in the London Bible College program completed B.A. or M.A. degrees in England at this institution, now the London School of Theology (www.lst.ac.uk). For background see the first half of the article published in the *East-West Church & Ministries Report* 14 (Summer 2006), 1-3. They then returned to Romania to continue their ministries. Later, ten of the London graduates obtained Ph.D. degrees in various fields of biblical and theological studies. They returned home to teach theology in existing schools. Unfortunately, for reasons that will be explained later, only four of the ten currently are teaching in Romania.

The Langham Scholars Program (<http://www.langhampartnership.org/>), founded by Evangelical theologian John Stott, also played an important role in the formation of a new generation of Romanian Evangelical theologians. Out of the 12 Romanian Langham Scholars who studied in the West, six obtained doctorates in theology. However, once again, only two of these theologians are still involved in theological education in Romania.

The two British programs discussed above proved to be highly successful. Most of the Romanians involved were mature Christians who already had a proven ministry in their homeland. That may explain why they returned to Romania after receiving their degrees, in order to contribute to the formation of a new generation of leaders for the Evangelical churches in their homeland. The same happened with most Romanian Evangelicals who studied theology in the United Kingdom through other programs.

A very different project in this field was initiated, again, by Josef Tson. In the early 1990s, about 100 Romanians, generally in their

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early 20s or younger, received scholarships to pursue undergraduate degrees in the U.S. at several Evangelical institutions. In spite of its commendable intentions, the purpose of this program, to train future Evangelical leaders for Romania, did not succeed. When these mostly immature Christians went to study in the richest country in the world, they were exposed to great temptations. It is not surprising that most of them found various reasons to stay in the West. Only a fraction of those who studied in the U.S. ever returned to Romania, and even fewer of them are really making an impact for Christ in their homeland.

Finally, other Evangelicals studied theology in the U.S., with the initial intention of returning to Romania after receiving their degrees. To date, at least 16 of these have completed doctoral degrees. Unfortunately, only two of these are still teaching theology in Romania. Unattractive circumstances in some Romanian theological schools (yet to be described), the pastoral needs of Romanian churches in the West, or simply the more comfortable life in America, led most to stay in the West. In summary, approximately 40 Romanian Evangelicals have received doctoral degrees in theology in the West since 1989, but only about 12 of them are still teaching theology in Romania today.

Formal Theological Education in Romania

To begin with, it is important to know that Romanian educational legislation does not allow non-denominational or interdenominational theological institutions. As a result, denominational schools represent the only official option available for Evangelicals in Romania.

Baptist Institutions

The Baptist Seminary in Bucharest, now the Baptist Theological Institute (www.itb.ro), led by Dr. Vasile Talpos, received a new impetus after the fall of Communism. Of the new lecturers, some were trained at the London School of Theology, while others received their degrees at Regents Park College, Oxford. This accredited school, that trains about 50 students a year, traditionally cooperated with the whole spectrum of Baptist communities around the world. In spite of some progress in strengthening the academic life of the seminary, it continues to struggle with an insufficient number of qualified faculty, a poor theological library, and an unimaginative style of leadership. Nevertheless, it continues to be the main provider of pastors for Romanian Baptist churches.

The Baptist Theological Faculty at Bucharest University (http://www.unibuc.ro/en/fac_ftb_en), under Dean Dr. Otniel Bunaciu, is the only Baptist faculty in a state university in

Europe. Launched in 1991, it instructs 220 students seeking a B.A. degree, 30 students in an M.A. program, and 14 doctoral students.

In the early 1990s, Josef Tson returned to Romania from the United States and, together with Paul Negrut and a few others, decided to create a Baptist university in Oradea, Romania. The goal was to enroll about 1,000 students. Emmanuel Bible Institute, which opened in fall 1990, focused primarily on pastoral training. During the first years, under the leadership of Tson, the faculty included highly respected lecturers including Radu Gheorghita, now at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri, and Emil Bartos, now Assistant Professor at the Baptist Faculty in Bucharest University. Also, Western faculty teaching on a regular basis included Dr. John Wilkes in Old Testament from London School of Theology, and Dr. Robert Yarbrough in New Testament from Trinity University, Deerfield, Illinois.

During the academic year 1993-1994, Paul Negrut and 16 other Romanians were studying at London School of Theology. Our hope was that, upon returning home, we would be able to build one of the strongest Evangelical schools in Europe. In 1994, some of us did return to Romania to teach at Emmanuel in Oradea, where Dr. Paul Negrut became principal. During the next two years, the academic standards of the institute attained a level unprecedented in Evangelical theological studies in Romania: Emmanuel hosted quality theological conferences, engaged in significant publishing, and prepared students for graduate study in prestigious schools in England and Scotland. The school began to attract stronger students and, for a few years, enjoyed an exceptional academic and spiritual reputation.

Circumstances, however, began to change in 1996. At that time, Emmanuel already was oversized compared to both the needs and the financial resources of the Evangelical community in Romania. The leadership of the school, in its desperate search for funding, decided to designate the U.S. Southern Baptist Convention as its preferred partner.

This decision progressively affected the direction of the school. First, Dr. Josef Tson was asked to leave. Later, under duress, all the faculty with degrees from London School of Theology (with one exception, the principal himself) and Trinity University, Deerfield, Illinois, were forced to leave. As a result, classroom rigor and research gradually declined. The school, now Emmanuel University (www.emmanuel.ro), presently has two faculties (theology and management) with over 300 students. Academically, sad to say, it is only a shadow of what it had been in 1996.

Theological Training

Pentecostal Institutions

The Pentecostal Seminary, now Pentecostal Theological Institute (www.itp.uv.ro), is the leading theological school of traditional Pentecostals in Romania. Presently, it has over 150 students. After many struggles, the school, under the leadership of Dr. John Tipei, secured the number of qualified faculty necessary for accreditation. A number of Baptist and Adventist lecturers helped in this process. In addition, a number of lecturers from Pentecostal seminaries in the West now teach at the school on a regular basis.

The U.S.-based Assemblies of God established its own denomination in Romania in 1996, while continuing to cooperate with the traditional Pentecostal Union. This denomination founded its own theological school, the Biblical University in Romania (<http://www.ubr.ro/>), under the leadership of Rev. Ioan Ceuta. The school has not yet received official accreditation. Other Pentecostal theological schools in Romania include: a seminary in Arad, led by Rev. Ravis Tipei, president of the Pentecostal Union, which will soon be closed; Timisoara Bible School, functioning on the premises of Elim Pentecostal Church; Constanta Bible School % opened in 1998 under leadership of Rev. Ghita Ritisian; and Eastern European Bible College in Oradea (<http://www.cbee.ro>).

These Pentecostal schools generally are struggling academically, primarily due to traditional Pentecostal distrust of theological studies. Thus, according to Rick Cunningham, head of the Eastern European Educational Office of the Assemblies of God, the school in Timisoara should be just a school of missions, rather than a theological institution. He also insists that it remain strictly a Pentecostal school, rather than following the more inclusive model established by Dr. Peter Kuzmic at Evangelical Faculty of Theology in Osijek,

Croatia, with which the school is loosely associated.

Brethren Institutions

Brethren churches – officially Christians According to the Gospel – do not ordain pastors. Nevertheless, in order to meet the need for trained lay ministers, the denomination created Timotheus Theological Institute (<http://www.itt.ywam.ro/>). With the assistance of Wiedenest Bible College in Germany (<http://www.wiedenest.de/>), this unaccredited program enrolls 25 students yearly. Another unaccredited, independent Brethren school, Brethren Center for Biblical Instruction was initiated in Iasi by missionary Karl Kosobuky, a graduate of Western Baptist Conservative Seminary in the U.S. It averages 50 students per year, mostly young people from Brethren churches in eastern Romania. Both Romanian and foreign faculty teach its four-year curriculum.

The most important problem confronting Evangelical theological education in Romania is its heavy dependence - financial and otherwise - on Western sponsors. These supporters from abroad often compel Romanian schools to follow a Western model for theological education. Western funders also stress theological agendas that have little relevance in the Romanian context. It is not surprising, then, that a genuinely Romanian Evangelical theology has yet to emerge.

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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The most important problem confronting Evangelical theological education in Romania is its heavy dependence - financial and otherwise - on Western sponsors.

Russian Philanthropy Now Making a Difference

Alexander Livshin

Editor's Note: The U.S.-based Hudson Institute provided the following introduction for its May 2006 panel on "NGOs, Philanthropy, and the Fate of Democracy in Russia," which included comments by Alexander Livshin.

On 10 January 2006 President Vladimir Putin signed into law a controversial bill regulating Russia's non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This act requires NGOs operating in Russia to register again with the government, disclose their sources of aid, and undergo expanded state auditing. Citing human rights concerns, the U.S. Department of State has promised to monitor very carefully the implementation of the

law's provisions. The Russian government declared 2006 "The Year of Philanthropy."

NGOs and Philanthropy

There is no inherent contradiction between philanthropy and Russia's current political system of "managed" or sovereign democracy. The government is apparently seeking to make philanthropy more centralized in order to exercise greater control over it. In addition, current regulations make it very difficult for an individual citizen to make a charitable donation: a potential benefactor must fill out a complex form at a branch of the Savings Bank of Russia.

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Analysts traditionally see philanthropy as contributing to the development of civil society and social capital. In practice, philanthropy has become important in helping to maintain social stability in Russia, including the alleviation of social problems. Yet strengthening an independent civil society in Russia requires making philanthropy more independent of the state and more of an individual and middle-class phenomenon.

The fact that foreign donors constitute only 8.4 percent of total Russian philanthropy dispels the popular myth that Russia's NGOs depend completely on the West for support.

Growing Philanthropy – Despite Government Policy

Philanthropy has been growing rapidly in Putin's Russia despite the government's policies. For example, although a 2001 law ended virtually all tax breaks for charitable giving, approximately 60 percent of people making charitable donations have increased their contributions since 2001. This growth in philanthropy is occurring notwithstanding the condition that, especially for small-to-medium companies, charitable giving often attracts unwelcome attention from the authorities. The latter often suspect that philanthropic donations seek to conceal shady business practices or other illicit activity. For this reason, much of Russian philanthropy is not publicly reported.

Some facts about philanthropy in Russia are, nevertheless, evident. First, Russian corporations make the most donations, accounting for about 70 percent of the total. The remaining 30 percent is split between foreign donors and individual benefactors. The fact that foreign donors constitute only 8.4 percent of total Russian philanthropy dispels the popular myth that Russia's NGOs depend completely on the West for support.

Over 80 percent of all Russian companies make charitable donations, equaling 17 percent of their total profits. Many of them have established a special "social budget" to fund charitable giving. In contrast, the typical Western company gives only one to two percent of its profits for philanthropic purposes.

Russian philanthropy has many distinct features. First, almost all charitable donations flow to secular groups. Second, almost all donations stay in Russia. Russian philanthropists are overwhelmingly concerned with solving Russian domestic problems. Not even a catastrophe on the scale of last year's tsunami disaster in Southeast Asia induced them to give money to foreign recipients. Third, very few philanthropists use NGOs to deliver aid to fellow citizens. Most Russian donors see NGOs as inefficient if not thievish; most NGO leaders share common Russian prejudices against capitalists and rich people. It would be a gross misconception to characterize

the Russian NGO community as predominantly liberal or pro-Western. Finally, the most striking piece of information is that almost 90 percent of donations in Russia go to state-run institutions such as local orphanages.

Why is Russian Philanthropy Growing?

What are the reasons for the recent growth of philanthropy in Russia? Social patriotism motivates much Russian philanthropy. Many philanthropists give money because they genuinely want to improve the lives of their fellow citizens. They understand that the state is fundamentally inefficient in terms of providing social goods, so private individuals feel duty-bound to fill this gap. The younger generation is especially inclined to support a strong Russian society, despite their predominantly pragmatic, rational, and materialistic nature. In addition, some large Russian corporations, seeking to gain access to international markets and capital, are trying to improve their global image through acts of philanthropy.

Official coercion accounts for additional contributions. Three-fourths of Russian philanthropists report experiencing pressure from local authorities to donate to public projects. Ironically, half of this group looks favorably on such overtures since they see such solicitations as strengthening their ties with the local bureaucracy. In addition, over 70 percent said they would donate to public projects despite this pressure, though often they would choose different recipients for their largesse – meeting urgent social needs rather than paying to sustain decaying public infrastructure.

Three Types of NGOs

Currently, Russia has around 600,000 NGOs, although not all of these groups are active. Russian NGOs tend to fall into one of three categories. "Elite" NGOs are relatively wealthy organizations. They are often associated with big Russian businesses or serve as "VIP landing grounds" where former government politicians can use a "golden parachute" to occupy an influential and prominent position after they leave office. Some influential Russians create organizations to occupy family members. Intermediary institutions like museums or social welfare organizations have characteristics of both government and non-government bodies. Finally, grass-roots organizations are increasingly numerous and varied. Many of them can be considered political if the definition encompasses non-partisan social advocacy.

The Effect of the New NGO Law

The new NGO law will not greatly affect Russian philanthropy. It will affect foreign donors, but they constitute a minor share of

Russian Philanthropy (continued from page 9)

philanthropic activity in Russia. The new law will have the negative consequence of allowing the bureaucracy to decide arbitrarily which group constitutes an NGO. It will also increase substantially the operating expenses of small foundations, potentially driving some of them out of business. In the end, however, no one knows how the law will work in practice since so much depends on how it is implemented.

Edited excerpt published with permission of the Hudson Institute and Dr. Alexander Livshin.

Dr. Alexander Livshin is a professor at the School of Public Administration, Moscow State University.

NGOs on Russia's Leading Edge

John A. Bernbaum

During the course of my work in Russia, a number of truths have become evident to me about the future of this long-suffering nation. First and foremost, it is clear that Russians themselves are going to be the ones to determine their future – not Americans and not Europeans, as well intentioned as they may be. Second, Russia's future society will probably not look like those in the West. It will be distinctively Russian, with some borrowings from the West and some uniquely Russian structures. Third, any productive Western help in the rebuilding process must be through communicating experiences and lessons learned, both positive and negative. Finally, constructive, long-lasting change in Russia will only come from the bottom-up, and not from the top-down.

Russia Rebuilding

While Western media tend to focus on the negative, much good news, in fact, can be reported on the rebuilding process in Russia since 1991. It is this part of the story, the good reasons for hope for the Russian people, that has not been adequately told. This good news can be highlighted with a set of statistics. Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev did not tolerate voluntary organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The state, not independent organizations of citizens, were to care for all human needs. Mikhail Gorbachev began to make changes in this policy of prohibiting popular initiatives. During *perestroika* and *glasnost*, small networks of grassroots organizations began to form. By 1987, for example, the state sanctioned the registration of 30 to 40 civic NGOs. Within a little more than ten years, approximately 410,000 NGOs legally registered with the Russian Ministry of Justice. In addition, of course, many unregistered local groups came into existence as well.

It is estimated that 60 percent of these NGOs are independent civic associations; the remaining 40 percent are other types of non-commercial entities.¹ These NGOs are the "seedlings" of an open, democratic society. They create the opportunity for citizens on the local level to take responsibility for their

neighborhoods, for the needy around them, for the "untouchables" in their community. And the vast majority of social service NGOs are faith-based.

In January 2005, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that the number of NGOs in the world is "increasing rapidly and has grown over 40 times over the past ten years." He said this could mark the beginning of "the era of the NGOs. About two million people in Russia are involved in these organizations and their activities affect some 20 million, or one in seven, in our country."²

Grassroots Initiatives

Clearly Russians on the grassroots level are organizing themselves. In other words, for the first time in decades – maybe even centuries – the Russian people are taking the initiative to rebuild their nation, to make it a normal society. The country may be on the brink of a transition to democracy, without change forced on people through the threat of violence and terror administered by agents of the state.

Similar initiatives have emerged within the Russian Orthodox Church. Librarian of Congress James Billington, one of America's leading scholars of Russia, has noted that a small but significant group of local clergy are focused on meeting the spiritual and physical needs of their parishioners. He calls this group "pastoralists" and has described how they are organizing parishes as social, educational, and cultural centers. These Orthodox priests are "beginning the general process of building democracy from the bottom up," using the same methods that Protestant churches used in nineteenth century America.³

Let me share another ray of hope, this one anecdotal. In 2001, the staff of the Russian-American Christian University (RACU) was looking for a new campus facility in Moscow. During the course of a site visit, the staff toured an unfinished four-story structure that was originally designed to be a hospital, but was never completed. The staff arrived at the site early one cold spring morning and entered the property through a broken-down barrier. As they entered the first floor of the building, they discovered a group of frightened boys, ten to

(continued on page 12)

For the first time in decades - maybe even centuries - the Russian people are taking the initiative to rebuild their nation.

thirteen years old, who had been sleeping in piles of straw and rags. As they stood watching, more than a dozen young boys fled this empty building that had become their home. They were among some 35,000 street kids reported in *The Russia Journal* that year who live on the streets, beg for food, and prostitute themselves to survive.⁴

Aiding Children at Risk

One month later, I was invited to observe a conference of faith-based organizations that were committed to helping these children living on the streets. I sat at a table of Russians – Protestant and Orthodox, mostly women – who had gathered to discuss efforts by their respective organizations to respond to the crisis of homeless children in Russia. I heard story after story, shared in meek and humble tones, outlining the approaches, experiences, and lessons learned by these outreach initiatives: “In my town, we bought a small cottage and put some beds in the house.” “When we discovered this problem in our province, we renovated the local church basement so we could house a number of the kids, with beds and showers.”⁵

It was a remarkable and moving experience for me, listening to the conviction of these Russians, hearing the passion with which they discussed the problem and what they could do to solve it. As I sat listening, I wished the Russian minister of social services had been there to hear their stories, or the American ambassador. I wanted these leaders to hear how modest Russian people were rising to meet the challenge in front of them, with meager resources, without state funding or foreign aid. As I sat observing these people of faith responding to a crisis in their society, I felt a deep surge of hope.

Russians across the country are taking the initiative to deal with pressing social issues in their communities. They are no longer waiting for the government to act in their place. For example, RiskNetwork is a group of 69 Russian-based organizations working with children at risk.⁶ Another parallel network of NGOs identified on the CoMission for Children at Risk’s website gives the names of 188 groups involved with vulnerable, needy children in Russia.⁷

The establishment of the Russian-American Christian University in Moscow is another example of a reason for hope. It was October 1990 when Russia’s minister of higher education extended an astonishing invitation to establish a faith-based Christian liberal arts university in Moscow. Only two years prior to this historic meeting, a person of faith could not even have been *admitted* into an institute of higher education. This new Russian leader had the vision to recognize that teaching democratic and free market values in a faith-based framework could play a pivotal role in

equipping Russia’s future leaders, and this is cause for great encouragement. That the Russian-American Christian University has thrived in this context sends a continuing message of great hope.

Building Civil Society in Russia

The media rarely report on these initiatives that are happening at the grassroots level in Russia. Yet these newly formed NGOs are laying the foundation for a new society in the Russian Federation. They are building private voluntary networks that can eventually develop checks and balances to reign in governmental institutions. Unlike the structure of Soviet society, or even pre-revolutionary Russia under the Romanovs, these community organizations have the potential to fence off political power from cultural power and economic advantage and prevent officeholders from enriching themselves at citizens’ expense. Over time, these NGOs can help Russia develop a free society in which elected representatives and the press restrain the state and the law restrains everyone.⁸

People-to-People Diplomacy

At present, the opportunities for Americans or Europeans to partner with Russians are endless. Those of us in the West have opportunities to work with our former Cold War enemies in true partnerships that can help both societies. In a recent analysis, Dmitri Trenin made the following insightful observation: “The West needs to realize that its most powerful instruments with respect to Russia are not its king-making abilities at the very top, but human contacts of all kinds at all levels, especially among the younger generation.”⁹ Russian officials need to come to the same conclusion. It is people-to-people diplomacy that builds the promise of a peaceful future and that creates an environment in which both America and Russia can learn from each other.

Thomas Graham, President George W. Bush’s Senior White House Director for Russian Affairs, emphasized the same point when he stated that the United States needs “to continue to pursue policies that help integrate Russia into rules-based institutions, support civil society in Russia, and expand contacts between our two societies, particularly among young people.”¹⁰ This is what is happening with NGOs in the Russian Federation and that is why they really are “the leading edge” in terms of making a difference in Russia’s future development.

It is vital that the leaders of both nations get the message that people-to-people diplomacy and private sector initiatives need to be encouraged, not blocked, and that private-public partnerships need to be formed where this is mutually beneficial. Forming partnerships between Russians and Americans, building

Russians across the country are taking the initiative to deal with pressing social issues in their communities. They are no longer waiting for the government to act in their place.

NGOs

people-to-people coalitions, is of great strategic significance for both countries. ♦

Notes:

¹ U.S. Agency for International Development, *2001 NGO Sustainability Index* (Washington, D.C., 2001), 133.

² Sergey Lavrov, "Russian Ministry Aims to Harness NGOs as Instruments of Foreign Policy," ITAR-TASS, 18 January 2005.

³ James Billington, "Reflections on Orthodoxy and the Construction of Civil Society and Democracy in Russia," *Kennan Institute Meeting Report* 21 (No. 15, 2004).

⁴ 25 February 2001, p. 1.

⁵ John A. Bernbaum, personal Russia journal, 2001.

⁶ www.risknetwork.ru.

⁷ www.comissionforchildren.com. The number of 188 agencies active in Russia was taken from the website in November 2005.

⁸ Michael Ignatieff, "On Civil Society," *Foreign Affairs* (March-April 1995), 128-29.

⁹ Dmitri Trenin, "Reading Russia Right," *Carnegie Endowment Policy Brief* (October 2005), 10.

¹⁰ Thomas Graham, "Text of Conference Remarks," American Enterprise Institute (14 October 2005), 5.

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Xenophobia Versus Charity In Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy

Father Georgii Chistiakov

Almost two decades have passed since the era of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, when religion in Russia was allowed to escape the "ghetto" to which it had been confined in the Soviet Union. Until the mid-1980s, officially permitted religion existed under harsh state control. Churches were open, but far from all of them. Only 44 of the approximately 1,000 churches in Moscow remained open; in Leningrad, only ten, and in provincial regions, typically from one to three (although some had no churches at all).

It is impossible to watch new churches and bell towers being opened, renovated, and appearing in previously empty places without experiencing a feeling of excitement. One recent spring, in a small village about 40 kilometers from Moscow where I sometimes spend my free time, a new church began to go up. It was a tiny log church, built directly on the banks of a small stream near the forest. This is happening everywhere.

The Language of Worship

However, this idyllic form masks a quite complex reality. Orthodox religious services are conducted everywhere in medieval Slavonic, which is almost completely incomprehensible to churchgoers. The Slavonic language, while marvelous in itself, is analogous to Catholic Latin; for the modern individual it is an obstacle on the path to religious enlightenment. It makes the long Byzantine-style services inaccessible to most people, as they cannot understand what is being read and sung.

It is important to understand that neophyte believers predominate in the church today, people who had no ties to Orthodoxy or church life before the start of *perestroika*. As a model for behavior, they naturally chose to imitate previous generations, that is, those people who preserved Orthodoxy as a confession and way of life in the Soviet era. This harkens back to the second half of the nineteenth century and the preservationist tendencies of Orthodoxy of

that time (in the broad sense, from the late Slavophiles and Konstantin Leontiev to Konstantin Pobedonostsev and the "Black Hundreds").

Anti-Semitic Tendencies

Such an idealization of the past – and not the past of the apostles and the gospels, or of the great saints like Sergei of Radonezh, but of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – led to calls for the canonization of Nicholas II and the members of his family who were killed in 1918. In the 1990s, this became the main issue for many believers and for others who identified their political views and broader worldviews with Orthodoxy. Many of those longing for the quick canonization of Tsar Nicholas and his family demanded that the murder of the tsar be treated as a ritual murder, that is, carried out by Jews for ritual purposes. They praised Nicholas II as the "Tsar-Martyr," "One Anointed by God," and the "Preserver of Orthodoxy" who had been "Tortured by the Yids."

Suspicion of the Other

The above facts raise sharp questions about the self-conceptualization of Russian Orthodoxy. A modern religious society in Russia – not rooted in the life of the divine service, the life of prayer, and the generally mystic life of Eastern Christianity – is beginning to take shape without developing a deeper vision of Orthodoxy. Rather, it opposes itself to Christians of other traditions – both Catholic and Protestant – and does so not through Russian or Western concepts but through the Communist paradigm of a "bourgeois, enemy civilization in opposition to us."

Orthodox consciousness quickly becomes xenophobic, closed, and highly intolerant of other faiths and the West in general. This image of the enemy is connected with extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia.

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It is impossible to watch new churches and bell towers being opened, renovated, and appearing in previously empty places without experiencing a feeling of excitement.

Anti-Semitism within the realm of the Church is accepted quite broadly. "Yid-masons" are blamed literally for everything.

When believers know little about their own Orthodox faith, about its depth and spiritual treasures, they begin to think that they can prove their righteousness only through aggressive struggle against other confessions.

Xenophobia (continued from page 13)

Anti-Semitism within the realm of the Church is accepted quite broadly. "Yid-masons" are blamed literally for everything. In both Moscow and St. Petersburg, Sergei Nilus's well-known book, *It is Near, At the Gates* (2000), has been published and reprinted many times, most recently in a print run of 7,500 copies, and is sold in many Orthodox churches and in kiosks in the Moscow metro. This book includes the infamous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," an anti-Semitic tract which Hitler used extensively in *Mein Kampf*. Orthodox traditionalists Anatolii Makeev and Ruslan Bychkov go even further: "We Russians are in captivity in our own land." After condemning mixed marriages, they state, "Let the world 'get kinky-haired, dark-skinned, and speak with an accent,' but Vanya's blue eyes must never darken. Therefore, we repeat again and again: *Purity of Faith and Purity of Blood!*"

Orthodoxy: Universal or Particular?

One of the basic forms of xenophobia is intolerance in relation to other Christian faiths. In Soviet times, Catholics and Protestants were seen as brothers whose support helped Russia's Christians survive under state atheism. Now, however, they are seen as enemies, threatening the very existence not only of Orthodoxy, but of Russia itself. Orthodoxy is declared the Russian national religion, and calls for Christian unity are understood to be directed against Russia, against her past and future, against her national identity. In this way, Christianity becomes a means with which to express a national soul and a national spirituality. In this situation it inevitably loses its universal character, setting aside Christ's call to "let all be as one" and becoming, as one Orthodox priest from America put it, a Russian tribal religion.

In addition to this intolerance of other Christian traditions, today in Russia many feel defensive about Orthodoxy itself. When believers know little about their own Orthodox faith, about its depth and spiritual treasures, they begin to think that they can prove their righteousness only through aggressive struggle against other confessions. This leads them to a constant, forceful rejection of Catholics and Protestants, which reinforces an image of the enemy in their own consciousness. For example, a young artist announced on Russian national television that "Not a single other people has icon painting that can compare to ours." He made this statement and yet knew nothing about the religious art of other traditions, including that of other Orthodox peoples (Greeks, Cypriots, Romanians, and Bulgarians). Why could he not have stated this in another way, for example, that Russian icon painting is such that any people would admire it? This

would be true, and still very flattering for the Russian people. It is not an accident that a copy of Andrei Rublev's "Holy Trinity" became the primary sacred object and a symbol of the Ste Trinite Catholic Church in Paris, while reproductions of the icon Our Lady of Vladimir can be found in Catholic churches almost everywhere.

Orthodoxy as Substitute Ideology

The religious situation in Russia today results primarily from the almost blind search for a new, mandatory ideology by a society raised on Marxism-Leninism now seeking the next "one true path." As a result, in the minds of many, including pure and honest believing people, Orthodoxy has become a new ideology just like the old one. Apart from this, the situation can be explained by the extremely low level of knowledge about faith, about God, about the gospels, and, most importantly, about the nature of Orthodoxy itself. So, most people see the Julian Calendar, 13 days behind the modern (Gregorian) one, as a major symbol of Orthodoxy even though the majority of Orthodox churches, including Constantinople, rejected it long ago. When Metropolitan Vladimir (Kotliarov) suggested during a sermon a few years ago in St. Petersburg, that the Russian Church should follow the examples of the Constantinople, Alexandrian, and Antioch Orthodox churches and adopt the new style, a scandal ensued. In the pro-Communist newspaper *Sovetskaia Rossiia* (*Soviet Russia*), religious activists subsequently called the Metropolitan a heretic and an enemy of Orthodoxy.

This same newspaper and its regular contributor, K. Dushenov, called Metropolitan Filaret (Vakhromeev) of Minsk and Slutsk a heretic for his consistent ecumenism. Paradoxically, the same Communist Party that for 70 years cultivated a warlike atheism, destroyed churches, and shot believers, now adopts the role of defender of Orthodoxy. Of course, Communists are not interested in Orthodoxy itself, but they do support those who favor a politics of national, spiritual, and cultural isolationism. For this reason, the interests of some Orthodox fundamentalists coincide with those of today's Communist leaders.

There is hope that with time these "growing pains" will be overcome. Over the last few years, the tendencies described above have become somewhat weaker. But the tortuous, slow, and inconsistent development of civil society in Russia means that an isolationist worldview, rather than a vision of life rooted in the New Testament, which opposes all xenophobia and feelings of exclusivity, still predominates.

Xenophobia

Signs of Hope

What are the prospects for the progressive development of the religious situation in our country? They are, on the whole, not as bad as they may seem. Over the past 20 years, Christianity in the Russian Orthodox tradition (within Russia as well as beyond Russian borders) has given the world such glorious people as Father Aleksii Mechev and Archimandrite Sofronii (Sakharov), Father Sergei Bulgakov and Mother Maria (Skoptsova), Fathers Nikolai Afanas'ev and Aleksandr Shmemann, Archimandrite Tavrion, Metropolitan Antonii (Blum), and Father Aleksandr Men.

The joyous Orthodoxy of the recently canonized Father Aleksii Mechev, the spiritual teachings of Sofronii (Sakharov), the holy life, literary work, and icon painting of Mother Maria (a Russian nun from Paris) – all this is spiritual capital indicating that Orthodoxy lives and still possesses the evangelical spirit that makes Christians true disciples of Christ. Mother Maria, a philosopher, poet, and scholar, dedicated herself completely to the poor and destitute. During the war she saved Jews in Paris and for this was sent to the gas chamber.

Let us also recall the literary renaissance connected with Father Nikolai Afanas'ev in Paris and Aleksandr Shmemann in New York, as well as the teachings on prayer of Metropolitan Antonii (Blum). Think of the living, service-oriented communities that they created. According to Jesus in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, it is precisely work among those who are sick, who suffer, and who have been cast into the streets that heals Christians from spiritual illness and keeps our faith from corruption. Finally, it is impossible to forget the works of Father Aleksandr Men, killed in the time of *perestroika*. His scholarly and pastoral activities epitomized the work of those mentioned above and, of

course, we remember his openness to Christians of other faiths, and indeed to all of humanity.

We must keep in mind that there are as well many spiritually healthy people in the Church today. It is important only that they do not fear the “Black Hundreds” who announce themselves much more loudly than do quiet and diligent believers. Faith is not an ideology and not a call to battle with ever-present enemies. Orthodoxy cannot accept racist, anti-Semitic, or xenophobic attitudes because such attitudes are contrary to the gospel which Christ gave to all peoples without exception. Society in Russia is developing and tearing away the isolationist ideology that today attracts mainly those on the margins. Aggressive nationalism is not the ideology of the majority.

The main task facing the community of academic religious scholars, historians, and political scientists is therefore to ensure that people receive serious, factual information on religion and on the essence of the faith (the gospels and church history). Russians must be fed not on propagandistic myths, but on concrete facts. Myths lose their attractiveness once people possess information about what a phenomenon actually represents. It is vital to build an open society in Russia. Once that occurs, the situation in the Church will normalize as well, and quite quickly. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Father Georgii Chistiakov, “In Search of the ‘Russian Idea’; A View from Inside the Russian Orthodox Church” in Religion and Identity in Modern Russia: The Revival of Orthodoxy and Islam, ed. by Juliet Johnson et al. (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005), 53-64.

Father Georgii Chistiakov serves in the Russian Orthodox parish of Sts. Kosmos and Damian and is the head of the Department of Religious Literature at the Library of Foreign Literature, Moscow.

Orthodoxy cannot accept racist, anti-Semitic, or xenophobic attitudes because such attitudes are contrary to the gospel which Christ gave to all peoples without exception.

Youth Ministry Soviet Union *(continued from page 16)*

- Offer seminars for youth leaders in various locations;
- Have the Baptist Union of each former Soviet republic launch websites for youth leaders;
- Identify minimum requirements for youth leaders and publish this information on websites.

its attitude towards youth ministry. The church must come to an understanding of itself as a missionary church in relation to the new generation. Such an approach will require taking concrete actions as noted above. ♦

Edited excerpt published with permission from Viktor Artemov, “An Analytical and Critical Study of Youth Ministry in the Baptist Churches of the CIS,” Master of Theology thesis, International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, 2004.

In Conclusion

The church, without question, should change

CORRECTION

In reference to the table, “Religious Communities in Georgia,” *East-West Church & Ministries Report* 14 (Winter 2006), 11, the European Values Survey (2001) is the source for the figure of 1,261,500 total active church members. As noted in endnote 1, the rest of the table is the outcome of the research and investigation of Darrell Jackson, author of “Church Strength in Georgia,” *ibid.*, 10-12.

Youth Ministry in the Former Soviet Union: Survey Results

Viktor Artemov

Editor's note: Findings are based primarily on the results of a survey of Evangelical Christian-Baptist (ECB) youth leaders conducted during two Christian camp leadership conferences held in Kyiv, Ukraine, January 2004, and St. Petersburg, Russia, February 2004.

At the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, youth evidenced the lowest level of religiosity of any age group. However, today in the former Soviet Union 32.1 percent of youth identify themselves as believers, 27 percent vacillate between belief and unbelief, 13.9 percent are indifferent towards religion, but only 14.6 percent are non-believers.

Survey Findings

In Evangelical Christian-Baptist congregations in 2004, newly converted youth constituted a majority of the young people in 36 percent of churches, a significant portion (30-50 percent) in 39 percent of churches, and a minority (under 30 percent) in 25 percent of churches. Percentages of newly converted youth in charismatic churches were even higher.

According to youth leaders surveyed, particular church youth activities available in a local congregation are as follows:

Activity	Percentage
General meetings at church	75
Home youth groups	52
Regular sports activities	27
Youth clubs	13

Survey findings permit the development of a collective picture of youth ministry. Youth gather for meetings in the church building once every two weeks, some groups on Sunday

evenings and some on weeknights. In these meetings young people sing, perform skits, participate in a variety of contests, and discuss topics (mostly theological) on what is important to youth. The programs are not very appealing, but attendance is high because young people want to spend time with one another. For this reason, quite often, the dynamics of the fellowship increase after the official part of the program is completed. The most desired guests in these meetings are young people from other churches. The least desired guests are leaders of the local church.

Centrifugal vs. Centripetal Outreach

Possibly the reason Baptist churches are not so effective in reaching non-Christian youth consists of the methods and forms of their ministry. Missiologist George W. Peters singles out two approaches to church outreach: centrifugal and centripetal. In the former, all work is connected to the church, motivating non-Christians to come to church; in the latter approach, the church goes into the world and reaches people where they are. Youth ministry in Baptist churches today is mostly characterized by the centrifugal approach.

Improving Youth Ministry

Survey results identified the following sources for youth ministry training:

Source	Percentage of Respondents
Books *	53
Seminars organized by one's denomination or local church	20
Seminars organized by mission agencies	35
Training at Bible schools, institutes, or universities	40
Other	10

* Resources mentioned most often that have a direct connection to youth ministry were Doug Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, and *The Idea Package Magazine* published by Ruka Dopomogy (Hand of Help) Mission, Kyiv, Ukraine.

Survey respondents consider the most important problems in their work to be a distorted idea of the role of youth ministry in the life of the church and the low level of specialized training for youth leaders. To solve these problems the following steps are recommended:

- Develop a youth ministry philosophy;
- Publish a manual for organizing and conducting culturally relevant youth ministry;
- Encourage seminaries to introduce culturally relevant training programs for youth leaders;
- Discuss problems in youth ministry at pastoral conferences;

At the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, youth evidenced the lowest level of religiosity of any age group. However, today in the former Soviet Union 32.1 percent of youth identify themselves as believers.

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