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## Faith Can Unite Us:

### A Conversation with Moscow's Archimandrite Zacchaeus

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*Father Zacchaeus, your surname is Wood, but you speak Russian like a Russian. So I assume you are of Russian background?*

I am Orthodox by birth – born 1971. I grew up in the church; I was an altar boy from age five. I was born in Spring Valley, New York, and grew up five minutes away from a well-known Russian Orthodox convent: Novodivevo. I grew up in an Orthodox Church in America (OCA) congregation with Slavic roots at the Church of St. John the Baptist, Spring Valley, New York.

*Did your parents or grandparents come from Russia? They were Belarusian on my mother's side. On my father's side, they were Irish and Scottish; he's a non-practicing Protestant. Thanks to my mother, church was always a very important part of my life.*

*Where did you study?*

I studied at Roman Catholic Iona College in New Rochelle, New York, from 1989 to 1991 simultaneously with my studies at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, New York. Then, with the blessings of my bishop, I left studies to help start a monastery in New England. But there were problems and eventually the abbot of the newly formed monastery even left the canonical church. That was a difficult experience for me, but through difficulties we can grow.

After the monastery closed, I went to Syosset, New York, to be a personal aide to His Beatitude Theodosius, who was then Metropolitan of the OCA. I studied under him for two years. Then my bishop, Job, with whom I had been close since my youth, was elected Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest. At the Archbishop's request, Metropolitan Theodosius allowed me to move there with Archbishop Job, and I served in Chicago as his secretary for eight years beginning in 1992. I then came to Moscow to study at St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Institute, improve my Russian, and finish the master's degree I had begun at St. Vladimir's. I completed those studies in 2002.

*Did you have a favorite professor at St. Vladimir's? I was really blessed by the opportunity to study under Father John Meyendorff (1926-1992). He was a church historian, wonderful person, and in many ways a very holy man.*

*How then did your spiritual ministry in Moscow begin?*

The 17th-century Church of St. Catherine the

Great Martyr in-the-Fields was returned to the Moscow Patriarchate in 1992. Two years later, it was designated the official representation church of the OCA in Russia. It remains the property of the Moscow Patriarchate and is only loaned to the OCA.

*What do you see as being the greatest strengths of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)? What might be its strongest temptations?*

I am incredibly impressed by the speed with which the ROC has found its place in Russian society. This is miraculous realizing that the church was in a very different place only 20 years ago. Under the wise leadership of Patriarch Alexy II and Patriarch Kirill the church has used its new-found freedoms for the good not only of the church, but for the people of Russia as a whole. His Holiness Patriarch Alexy always said: "The church is separate from the government, but the church is not removed from society." To keep that balance requires a great amount of spiritual strength and responsibility. We know it is easy to abuse freedoms and benefits we might have.

The great strength of the ROC is its dedicated people. The people are its power base. People are willing to serve and to sacrifice their own needs, desires, and wants for the common good of the church. That is something unique and extremely beautiful about Russian Orthodox piety. There are no theological differences, but each culture allows the church to take on local traditions that add to the beautiful bouquet of Orthodoxy. In Russia there are liturgical differences and different ways of behaving. Here women cover their heads when they come to church and rarely wear pants. External forms help with the internal state of mind. They are a form of humility and obedience and help transform the inner person.

Temptations? My only comment would be that when everything is going so well, there can be a temptation to forget the past. We can get accustomed to the good very quickly and forget that if we are not careful, everything could again be taken away. Getting too comfortable is dangerous.

*Help me get things straight: It was the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA) – also called the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOA) – which rejoined the Moscow Patriarchate in 2007, not your OCA?*

Correct. They are different and totally separate from us – our OCA was given its autocephaly (self-governance) by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1970.

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## Faith Can Unite Us *(continued from page 1)*

ROCA always was intent on remaining Russian and wanted to retain its ecclesiological sovereignty and independence only as long as Russia was not free from the Communists. So our mentality and mission differed. I believe – as does the ROC – that the church in America needs to be for Americans. The ROCA wants to be a Russian church.

*So you are responsible to North America?*

Yes. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah (Paffhausen) is my metropolitan. I am his official representative to the Moscow Patriarchate. We are a kind of embassy. I am the ambassador of the American church to the Russian church.

*Did anything change for you through the merger of the ROCA with the ROC in May 2007?*

It is a wonderful thing that we can now celebrate jointly with clergy of the ROCA. The OCA has always had a wonderful relationship with the Moscow Patriarchate. So thanks to this merger, we now have a much better relationship with the ROCA. Since that merger, representatives of the ROCA have served here consistently. It is now a rarity if a visitor from the ROCA does not stop by St. Catherine's. Metropolitan Laurus (1928-2008), former first hierarch of the ROCA, was here. It has happened that we have three churches – ROC, OCA, ROCA - leading one service and joining in common prayer. We are not ROCA, but many who come here on Wednesdays for our weekly service honoring Saint John (Maximovich)\* are. We have a part of his holy relics in an icon donated to us. He was once a saint of the ROCA, but now of the entire ROC. He is now seen as a truly American saint.

So I strive to make this parish a place of gathering for many different people. That is one of my major missions - to bring people from various backgrounds, faiths, and nationalities together and give them the opportunity to understand one another.

*\*Interviewer's note: When Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco (1896-1966) served in China from 1934 to 1949, he was the only Russian hierarch there who did not submit to the authority of the Moscow-based ROC. He was canonized a saint by the ROCA in 1994 and is – since 2008 – venerated by all churches in full communion with the ROC.*

*How does the OCA assist the ROC?*

We had a very active humanitarian aid department in the 1990s. But our ability to give aid has decreased. Sofrino, an Orthodox firm just east of Moscow producing icons, literature, and church vestments, received its first computers from the OCA. They have thrived and their budget is now larger than the OCA's budget!

*Do you try to interpret the West to the ROC?*

As an ambassador of my church, we coordinate some things with the ROC Department of External Affairs, now headed by Archbishop Hilarion. It is a source of pride and joy for us that the Archbishop, who also studied in Oxford, once served as a clergyman here in our parish! We try to coordinate things with the U.S. Embassy – meetings between the Ambassador and the Patriarch, for example. Being a bridge between America and Russia is something very important to

us. When Russian clergy or bishops visit the U.S., we help coordinate that. The U.S. Embassy's visa department has been very willing to accommodate us. At His Holiness, Patriarch Kirill's request, we will be working closer with U.S. embassy staff in their preparation of the State Department's annual report on religious freedom. The ROC will at least be open for questions in hopes of making the report more fair and realistic.

*Do you help interpret North American Evangelicals to the Orthodox in Russia?*

We have a very good relationship with non-Orthodox communities here. Their representatives are always invited to events at our parish, including the Feast of St. Catherine in early December. In 2009 American Metropolitan Jonah and Patriarch Kirill participated. This was the first joint celebration here for both of them and it marked our 15th anniversary. Having both here allowed conversations to take place in a very informal way between representatives of the Orthodox church and the non-Orthodox community. This is usually appreciated very much by both sides. A forum for conversation on neutral territory is always helpful and takes the pressure off both sides.

*Which Protestants usually attend these events?*

Rev. Bob Bronkema from the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy comes, also usually Father Michael Ryan from the Roman Catholics and Canon Simon Stephens from the Anglican community. The Salvation Army has also attended. We do not send out general invitations, but we would be pleased if more Protestants came.

*How did the 9/11 Monument come to be on your property?*

After 9/11, I was contacted by a representative of Bell Manufacturing Co. which wanted to donate a bell to a Greek Orthodox church at the site of the World Trade Center. They wanted a memorial bell there and an identical bell here. The Bradley Foundation in Wisconsin then offered to fund the building of a monument to house the bell. And so now we ring the bell every year on 9/11, and it is a very moving experience. The U.S. ambassador, a senior Russian official, and I ring the bell together. We began by commemorating only 9/11. But terrorist attacks are continuing, so we have broadened the scope of our service to include victims of the Beslan School attack and all other innocent victims of terrorism around the world. At this service we have ambassadors from 15 to 20 nations. When there has been an attack in their area, they come. Last year they came from Egypt and Pakistan. We are the only place in Moscow that hosts such a service, and this is something very positive for us. It is an honor to be able to do this.

*What is the demographic composition of your congregation? I believe the vast majority are Russians.* Despite being the representation church of the OCA, St. Catherine's is also a typical Moscow parish – 99 percent of our parishioners are Muscovites. It varies, but if there are Orthodox Christians working in the U.S. Embassy, they choose St. Catherine's as their temporary spiritual home. This year we have

Being a bridge between America and Russia is something very important to us.

four from the embassy and others from American businesses. Some years we have 15 Americans here; other years, not even one. Russians are the stable part of our community.

*The ROC's definition of canonical territory gives it virtually exclusive access to ethnic Russians living in Russia. So is there any room in your theology for North American Protestants to do mission in Russia?*  
 We have to concede there is freedom of religion in Russia. That means Russia is open territory. We Orthodox have to realize that we ourselves are constantly called to be a missionary church – here and in North America. So if we fear foreign missionaries, it is only because we are not doing a proper job of missionizing ourselves.

There have been very positive meetings in the recent past between Archbishop Hilarion in particular and representatives of the Protestant community. That is something very, very good, because we must be open to understanding one another. And through that we will be able to overcome past difficulties and conflicts. There have been instances in which Protestants sought to missionize not only non-believers, but also the Orthodox. We must dialogue openly about this, for that is unfair and a major part of our problem with Protestant missionaries. If they were preaching to those who have never heard the Gospel, then that is one issue. But if they are preaching to

those who just walked out of an Orthodox church, then that's extremely irresponsible.

*Is there a way for Protestants to missionize in Russia without proselytizing? Can we do it in a peaceful way that allows us to remain friends?*

I hope so. We wanted to cooperate with Pastor Bronkema and his soup kitchen - he's a wonderful man. I wanted our people to plug into what his ministry is already doing. Why reinvent the wheel? So we helped out for several months. But I must confess to my shame that I was not able to make it work long-term. Most of our people have a job during the day and don't have time then. But there are ways in which we can work together. We can work together to feed the hungry. That way we can bear witness to the love that we preach about every Sunday. By our example we can demonstrate the bond of love and understanding between us and our Protestant brothers and sisters. We have mistaken faith in ourselves for faith in God. But if it really is God in whom we place our faith, then that faith will unite us. ♦

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## Russian Orthodox Attitudes on Church-State Issues

Christopher Marsh

*Editor's Note: The first portion of this article was published in the previous issue of the East-West Church and Ministry Report 17 (Fall 2009): 10-13.*

### Orientation toward Society

While the church might not be seen as having the answers to society's problems, Orthodox Christians in Russia are not distanced from community life and the plight of those around them. (See Table 3.) Nearly 80 percent of devout Orthodox responded that they were concerned with the sick and disabled, with more than 50 percent responding that they were prepared to help

they are for the sick and disabled. For example, only 31.4 percent of devout Orthodox were prepared to help their neighbors, while 26.8 percent of cultural Orthodox and 22.6 percent of non-religious Russians responded the same way. Quite interesting, however, is the fact that all three groups were more concerned with their fellow countrymen than with their neighbors. While 28.8 percent of devout Orthodox were concerned for their fellow countrymen, only

**Table 3: Orthodox Christians and Their Views of Society (in Percentages)**

|                                       | Devout Orthodox | Cultural Orthodox | Non-Religious |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Concerned with sick and disabled*     | 78.7            | 67.6              | 58.5          |
| Prepared to help sick and disabled ** | 53.2            | 47.4              | 44.3          |
| Concerned with neighbors*             | 21.8            | 17.1              | 11.9          |
| Prepared to help neighbors**          | 31.4            | 26.8              | 22.6          |
| Concerned with fellow countrymen*     | 28.8            | 18.8              | 19.7          |

\*Answers of "very much" and "much" \*\* Answers of "absolutely yes" and "yes"

in any way they could. Cultural Orthodox were not far behind, with nearly 70 percent and just below 50 percent feeling the same way. Finally, non-religious Russians were only a step behind the Orthodox, with nearly 60 percent expressing concern and 45 percent willing to help the sick.

When it comes to one's neighbors, however, all groups are less concerned and prepared to help than

21.8 percent were concerned for the living conditions of their neighbors, with similar disparities for the cultural Orthodox and non-religious respondents. One possible explanation may be the ethnic dimension of Russian life, since respondents may have had in mind their ethnic kin when being asked about fellow countrymen. In this regard, all Russians have a marked tendency, no matter what their religious behavior, to identify more with their "imagined"

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## Russian Orthodox Attitudes on Church-State Issues *(continued from page 3)*

national community than their actual neighborhood community.<sup>1</sup> To the extent that this is so, it raises serious and somewhat disturbing questions about the prospect of genuine democratization, given the world-historical experience of the vibrancy of *national* level democracy being contingent upon the vibrancy of *local* level civic engagement.<sup>2</sup>

### Church-State Relations and Religion in the Public Square

Having examined a range of religious, civic, and political orientations, we can now turn to the issue of church-state relations in Russia, a topic that has rarely been examined with the use of survey data. As noted above, a significant disparity exists among devout Orthodox, cultural Orthodox, and non-religious Russians in terms of their belief that the church can provide answers to social problems, with more than 40 percent of devout Orthodox feeling so while less than 10 percent of non-religious respondents agreeing. These data suggest that the overwhelming majority of Russians simply do not view the Orthodox Church as

thought so, with 55.5 percent of cultural Orthodox agreeing.

What does all of this tell us about popular conceptions of church-state relations in Russia today? For one, only a thin wall of separation between church and state seems to exist. On the one hand, it is true that a majority of all Russians polled believed that religious leaders should not influence government decisions or how people vote (although the devout Orthodox as a group was less resolute on the topic of influencing government decisions than their fellow countrymen). In a country with no real history of separation of church and state, where politicians regularly try to enact policies favorable to the Orthodox Church, and the patriarch presides over the president's inauguration ceremony, the existence of even this thin wall of separation may be surprising to some. On the other hand, as students of Russian history are acutely aware, the Russian (and Soviet) government's overtures to the church have almost always resulted in the subordination of the latter, resulting in the curtailment of religious

Only a thin wall of separation between church and state seems to exist.

**Table 4: Orthodox Christians and Their Views on Church-State Relations (in Percentages)**

|  | Devout Orthodox | Cultural Orthodox | Non-Religious |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Churches should have an influence on national politics*                          | 43.8            | 39.6              | 31.4          |
| Religious leaders should not influence government decisions*                     | 48.6            | 55.4              | 67.5          |
| Religious leaders should not influence how people vote*                          | 63.6            | 71.9              | 79.2          |
| Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office*               | 46              | 26.1              | 9.5           |
| It would be better for Russia if more people with religious beliefs held office* | 80.2            | 55.5              | 25.2          |

\*Answers of "strongly agree" and "agree"

a significant source of social improvement. They also imply that Russian public opinion is almost certain to be significantly divided regarding such issues as separation of church and state and the role of religion in the public square.

To begin with an objective question, devout Orthodox are significantly more likely to believe that the church influences national politics, irrespective of whether or not they feel that this is positive, with 43.8 percent of devout Orthodox and 39.6 percent of cultural Orthodox holding this opinion, as compared to only 31.4 percent of non-religious respondents. (See Table 4.) And whereas 67.5 percent of non-religious objected to religious leaders influencing government decisions, only 48.6 percent of devout thought similarly. Finally, all respondents were less open to religious leaders influencing the way people vote, again with non-religious Russians more opposed to this practice (79.2 percent) than the devout (63.6 percent).

When we look more directly at issues relating to the impact of religious belief, the disparities in opinion among the three groups become even clearer. While less than 10 percent of non-religious respondents felt that politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office, this number more than doubles for cultural Orthodox (26.1 percent) and reaches almost 50 percent for the devout. Similarly, only a quarter of non-religious Russians felt that society would be better if more people with religious beliefs held office, but 80 percent of the devout

freedoms more than the enactment of religiously based policies.<sup>3</sup>

Although Russians appear to value a limited separation of church and state, we can probably also conclude that not many wish to see religion divorced from public life. Thus, their version of a modern "secular state," to use the French term, may be more akin to the American or German models in which church and state are distinct but somewhat interactive, rather than the French or Mexican models, in which the secular state is demonstrably suspicious of institutionalized religion. For example, devout Orthodox clearly support the involvement of religious individuals in political affairs, with well over three-quarters thinking that believers could make a difference in society. Although devout Orthodox may be more focused on other-worldly issues, they feel that in this world religious believers can make a difference, an opinion with which even a quarter of non-religious Russians agree.

### Religiosity, Civic Engagement, and Church-State Relations in Russia

The data analyzed above allow us to reach several tentative conclusions regarding religious, social, and civic life in Russia today. For one, Russian Orthodox Christians are considerably more religious than some have argued. While their regular church attendance might remain low by American standards, they are quite prayerful and religious people. Moreover, Russian Orthodox Christians tend

to be more civic-minded and socially concerned than their non-Orthodox fellow citizens. The degree to which their interest in society and politics has thus far evolved into direct political participation, however, is still open to debate. While their membership in political organizations remains low, they are active in charitable activities and social programs. Quite interestingly, Stephen White and Ian McAllister have also shown that Russians who attend Orthodox churches frequently are more likely to participate in elections, a critical development in a country undergoing a democratic transition.<sup>4</sup>

With a thousand-year history of Orthodox Christianity, it is only natural for religious and cultural values to become fused—even to the point that some identify themselves as “Orthodox atheists,” such as Aleksandr Lukashenko, president of Belarus. More devout Orthodox tend to hold views distinct from their fellow countrymen. However, given their small numbers (perhaps somewhere in the area of 10 to 15 percent of the population), their impact is likely to remain limited. When considering the much-touted divide between Western Christianity and Eastern Orthodoxy, therefore, the values of this group cannot be considered representative of anywhere near even a plurality of Russians, let alone a majority. Likewise, the use of a simple dichotomy between Orthodox and non-Orthodox is clearly no longer an adequate means of classifying religious believers in Russia today. When discussing political and social orientations of Russian Orthodox Christians, we must also bring into the equation varying degrees of religiosity.

The religious, civic, and political orientations of Russian Orthodox Christians have serious implications for Russia’s new political and social order. And while Orthodox believers appear to have a unique conception of the role of religion in political life, the data above make it abundantly clear that it is not one of the church taking over society. As Lawrence Uzzell phrased it in his investigation of this topic, the chances that Orthodox Christianity might replace “Marxism-Leninism as the compulsory state ideology” in Russia are not very high. As he concludes, state discrimination in favor of the Russian Orthodox Church may be common, but it is not based on any real theological concerns. Rather than paying such great attention to some of the rhetoric coming out of the Moscow Patriarchate, therefore, we should pay more attention to the opinions of Russians themselves, because official church pronouncements

do not necessarily reflect actual popular opinion to any great degree. Indeed, declarations from the Moscow Patriarchate do not accurately reflect public opinion, but rather, are intended to shape it. Thus, it is critically important to avoid confusing and conflating official *ex cathedra* statements, including the *Basic Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*, with actual beliefs among the population.

Based on the evidence presented here, if given the opportunity to make democratic choices, the Russian people are likely to support a cultural role for the Russian Orthodox Church. In addition, they would possibly support a system that gives preferential treatment to the majority confession. From the perspective of Western liberal democracy and the prospect of it taking root in Russia, the good news is that Russians themselves would prefer for such a preferential status to exist only within certain prescribed limits. ♦

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> In the Russian case, this issue has been explored most robustly by James Warhola, “Is the Russian Federation Becoming More Democratic: Moscow-Regional Relations and the Development of the Post-Soviet Russian State,” *Democratization* 6 (1999): 42-69.

<sup>3</sup> Dmitriy Pospelovskiy, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998); Nikolas Gvosdev, *An Examination of Church-State Relations in the Byzantine and Russian Empires with an Emphasis on Ideology and Models of Interaction* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> “Orthodoxy and Political Behavior in Post-Communist Russia,” *Review of Religious Research* 41 (2000): 359-72.

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## For the Love of God: Faith-Based Nonprofits in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Shawn Teresa Flanigan

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of several states that emerged from the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. It is situated in southeastern Europe, bordered by Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia. In recent years the name Bosnia and Herzegovina brings to mind images of Serb campaigns of “ethnic cleansing” that killed hundreds of thousands of civilians and displaced millions more in the early 1990s.<sup>1</sup> In the face of the humanitarian disaster of the Yugoslav Civil War, a large number of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) began to operate in Bosnia and

Herzegovina. The end of Communism in the former Yugoslavia created a new civic space for voluntary associations and nonprofit organizations, and in response to the great needs created by the war, many local social service NGOs, both faith-based and secular, also began to emerge in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

#### Ethno-Religious Identity

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s population of 4.5 million is composed of Bosniaks (48 percent), Serbs (37.1 percent), Croats (14.3 percent), and others

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In many parts of Central and Eastern Europe, an era of Soviet-style Communism destroyed previous traditions of civic engagement and political representation.

## For the Love of God *(continued from page 5)*

(0.6 percent). Bosniaks are predominantly Sunni Muslim; Serbs, Eastern Orthodox; and Croats, Roman Catholic.<sup>2</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina's ethnic and religious communities match quite closely: Muslims, 40 percent; Orthodox, 31 percent; and Roman Catholics, 15 percent.<sup>3</sup> Other religions (14 percent) include a very small Jewish community and a growing number of Protestant Christians.

Before the civil war Yugoslavia was a federation of eight federal units, including the six republics of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Montenegro, and two autonomous provinces inside Serbia: Kosovo and Vojvodina. While only Slovenia was ethnically homogenous, five of the six republics were inhabited primarily by the ethnic group for which they were named. The exception was Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was ethnically diverse with no single majority group.

### Civil War Violence

The Yugoslav Civil War was the worst eruption of violence in Europe since World War II. "The human costs of fighting included about a quarter of a million dead, millions of refugees, mass rapes and other atrocities, and devastation of entire cities and regions."<sup>4</sup> Serbia's ethnic cleansing policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina were applied through mass murder, torture, and large-scale deportation of civilians with internment in detention or concentration camps.<sup>5</sup> Also infamous was the Serbian practice of systematically raping and impregnating women and girls.<sup>6</sup>

M. Sells characterizes nationalism in the former Yugoslavia as religious, in which fundamentalist versions of Christianity and nationalism "reinforce each other and merge."<sup>7</sup> However, while acknowledging that religious identity is crucially important to understanding the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, most scholars characterize it as an ethnic conflict. Nevertheless, ethnicity and religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina are so intertwined that a religious dimension clearly emerged during the conflict. Much of the violence targeted mosques and

### Religion, Violence, and NGOs

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, each of the three primary religious communities has a single dominant faith-based social service organization (FBO), while in some instances a few other small, local FBOs have emerged in the same faith community. However, the scope and scale of these local organizations are quite small. Instead, international FBOs, which arrived in the region to provide aid during and following the war, are predominant.<sup>9</sup>

In many parts of Central and Eastern Europe, an era of Soviet-style Communism destroyed previous traditions of civic engagement and political representation.<sup>10</sup> With the notable exception of the International Red Cross, NGOs that provided social services, particularly religious NGOs, did not exist. In its short history, Bosnia and Herzegovina's NGO sector has become quite large, with estimates of the number of its NGOs ranging from several hundred to several thousand. Of such groups registered with the government, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) estimates that approximately 30 percent have developmental and humanitarian aims.<sup>11</sup>

### The Role of Faith in Social Service NGOs

The following social service NGO table shows the religious identity of the NGOs included in the sample for the present research and the number of interview participants from each faith community. In addition, the percentage of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina belonging to each religious group and the percentage of FBO interview participants from each religious group are included. The sample for the study was somewhat over-representative of Christian organizations (61.1 percent of the sample versus 46 percent of the population).<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, I believe the chart reasonably reflects Bosnia and Herzegovina's NGO sector, though admittedly less

### The Added Value of Faith

In the United States, proponents of increasing faith-based service delivery argue that FBOs add a desirable moral or spiritual component to services provided, and that they are more effective because

### Non-Governmental Social Service Organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina

| NGO Category              | Number of Interview Participants | Percentage of Population | Percentage of Faith-Based Organization Participants |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Catholic                  | 4                                | 15                       | 22.2  |
| Orthodox                  | 4                                | 31                       | 22.2  |
| Other Christian           | 3                                | Undetermined             | 16.6  |
| <b>Christian Subtotal</b> | <b>11</b>                        | <b>46</b>                | <b>61.1</b>   |
| Interfaith                | 3                                | N/A                      | 16.6  |
| Muslim                    | 4                                | 40                       | 22.2  |
| Secular                   | 23                               |                          |   |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>41</b>                        |                          |   |

churches which were systematically destroyed while outside actors supported those with whom they shared religious ties.<sup>8</sup>

their staff and volunteers are more caring and supportive.<sup>13</sup> Numerous interview participants from FBOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina likewise believed that religious identity gave added benefits to their

NGOs. Thirteen of the 18 interview participants from FBOs enumerated additional benefits they believed their organizations provided, including:

- more individualized and compassionate service;
- more highly committed and motivated workers;
- more effective service due to church networks;
- more secure funding and more flexible use of funding; and
- the ability to promote reconciliation.

One Christian FBO interview participant described the role of faith as follows:

In terms of how we interact with people, I cannot say the other NGOs are bad, and we are the best. No. Everyone is giving very much. But somehow when you feel this in your heart, that this work is given to you by God, maybe you behave a bit different. Maybe your arms are a bit more open, and your heart is a bit more open.

An interview participant from a Muslim FBO also indicated that she believed religion of any sort gave FBO employees more empathy for their clients:

I believe that religious NGOs have more benefits to give. Any organization that is a religious organization, in any religion, if someone who works there is really a person who believes in God in any way and is true to himself and what he believes, he must be more empathetic because this is originally from religion.

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### **More Effective Social Service Due to Church Networks**

Three interview participants from Catholic FBOs believed church networks allowed them to be more effective in their work. As one interview participant explained:

It's wonderful because [the local Catholic NGO] has some grassroots networks, and we couldn't reach those people without those grassroots networks. So that is a real benefit to being a Catholic organization and having a Catholic partner, because they have those parish structures. This gives us an advantage over some other foreign organizations who maybe come in and don't have any natural partner to work with as soon as they arrive.

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### **More Secure and Flexible Funding**

Another interesting benefit mentioned by three of the interview participants from Catholic FBOs and one interview participant from another Christian FBO was that, because their financial support came from religious sources, they believed their funds were more secure and they could use them more flexibly. One interview participant explained,

We are fortunate that we are able to raise money from people in [our home country], many of whom are Catholic, so we don't have to go out and fund-raise for my salary. I can allocate my time in a much more flexible manner. There are some organizations that ran their projects here on grant only, and so when their grant ran out, they had to close their doors.

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### **Ability to Promote Reconciliation**

A final benefit FBO interview participants mentioned was that they thought their religious

identity allowed them to promote understanding and reconciliation among Bosnia and Herzegovina's different ethno-religious groups. As one interview participant from a Catholic FBO noted:

We as a faith-based organization are showing that we are not only working for Catholics but also for other groups, and I think this is something very special to show people that you don't only look at your own group, but that you are trying to support people in need. Honestly, I think that is one of the most important things we do here.

While participants from Muslim FBOs also spoke of the ways that inclusiveness in outreach could help promote greater understanding, they also spoke of the important role their FBO needed to play in improving impressions of Muslims in light of terror attacks in recent years. As one participant explained:

You know, in the world generally people think bad about Islam because of all these terrorist attacks. But we just try to explain the rules of Islam, because of course every Muslim is not a good Muslim. We have to make a difference between bad people who happen to be Muslims and what they do, and what Islam really is.

It is interesting to note that interview participants from Orthodox FBOs were the only participants who did not see any added value from the religious orientation of their organization. This was the case even when interview participants were asked directly about any benefits they felt faith brought to their organization. ♦

*Editor's note: The conclusion of this article will be published in the next issue of the East-West Church and Ministry Report.*

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### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> S. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> CIA, *Factbook Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, 165.

<sup>5</sup> H. Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenisation of Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> B. Allen, *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); A. Stiglmayer, *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> M. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 89.

<sup>8</sup> Rae, *State Identities*; S.M. Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> International Council of Voluntary Agencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *The ICVA Directory of Humanitarian and Development Agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: International Council of

“Somehow when you feel this in your heart, that this work is given to you by God, maybe you behave a bit different. Maybe your arms are a bit more open, and your heart is a bit more open.”

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## For the Love of God *(continued from page 7)*

Voluntary Agencies, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> A. Fagan, "Taking Stock of Civil-Society Development in Post-Communist Europe: Evidence from the Czech Republic," *Democratization* 12 (No. 4, 2005), 528-47.

<sup>11</sup> ICVA, *ICVA Directory*.

<sup>12</sup> The figure for the percent of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina that is Christian is based on CIA *World Factbook* (2006) estimates of Catholic and Orthodox populations in the country. However, an additional 14 percent of the population is categorized as "other." Due to a small preexisting Protestant Christian population and the influx of Christian missionaries following the war, this figure is likely to be partially, if not predominantly, composed of other Christian denominations. Therefore, the total population of Christians in Bosnia and Herzegovina is likely to be higher than 46 percent.

<sup>13</sup> M. Chaves and W. Tsitsos, "Congregations and Social Services: What They Do, How They Do It, and with Whom," *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30 (No. 4, 2001), 660-83; H. Ebaugh, J. Saltzman Chafetz, and P. Pipes, "Faith-Based Social Service Organizations and Government Funding: Data from a National Survey," *Social Science*

*Quarterly* 86 (No. 2, 2005), 273-92; P. Frumkin, *On Being Nonprofit: A Conceptual and Policy Primer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); S.V. Monsma, *When Sacred and Secular Mix: Religious Nonprofit Organizations and Public Money* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996); A.L. Sherman, "Cross Purposes: Will Conservative Welfare Reform Corrupt Religious Charities?," *Policy Review* (1995), 58-63; J. Singletary and C. Collins, "The Rest of the Story: The Perspective of Faith-Based Program Participants," paper presented at the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, Los Angeles, CA, 2004.

*Edited excerpts published with permission from Shawn Teresa Flanigan, "For the Love of God: Ethno-Religious Identity and Faith-Based Nonprofit Service Provision in Contexts of Violence," Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Albany, 2007.*

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Most historical accounts of Serbian-Jewish relations emphasize that compared to many other European societies, the relationship between Serbs and Jews over the centuries had been amiable.

## Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović and Charges of Anti-Semitism

Jovan Byford

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### Amiable Serbian-Jewish Relations

Most historical accounts of Serbian-Jewish relations emphasize that compared to many other European societies, and notwithstanding some less laudable periods in Serbian history, the relationship between Serbs and Jews over the centuries had been amiable.<sup>1</sup> This fact is also emphasized by representatives of the Jewish community and by liberal public opinion. In fact, one of the reasons why recent manifestations of anti-Semitism have attracted so much interest and criticism is precisely because of the lack of an established, long-standing legacy of anti-Semitism in Serbian culture.

### Jews Saved by Bishop Velimirović

Ela Trifunović-Najhaus, a Jew from Belgrade, sent a letter to the Holy Synod in 2001 in which she testified that during the German occupation Bishop Nikolaj dressed her and her mother in monastic attire and hid them in a convent in his diocese, risking his own life.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the bishop saved concrete individuals, more importantly the family of a personal friend, does not and should not in any way undermine the valid criticism of anti-Semitic views which appear in some of his writing. A single act should not be used to divert attention from Velimirović's broader perspective, which was demonstrably anti-Semitic.

### "Biblical" Anti-Semitism

In the case of the management of Velimirović's moral accountability, by far the most common strategy for legitimizing his anti-Semitism involves

the argument that anti-Jewish proclamations apparent in the bishop's writing originate directly from the Holy Scriptures. Shortly after the Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church announced the canonization of Nikolaj Velimirović, Deacon Ljubomir Ranković discussed the new saint's contentious views in a debate on *Radio Free Europe*. He argued, "The anti-Semitism, let's accept that term, of Bishop Nikolaj was on a theological, or rather, biblical level. That kind of anti-Semitism is present in the Bible itself."<sup>3</sup>

Emphasis on the "theological" or "biblical" nature of Velimirović's anti-Semitism implies that a contrast can be drawn between this legitimate form of criticism of Jews and some kind of "real" anti-Semitism, for instance that of the Nazis, that warrants moral censure. The distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, which is, in effect, a denial of prejudice, assumes that "biblical" anti-Semitism is an acceptable ideological position. The justification of Velimirović's controversial stance towards Jews rests, therefore, on the distinction between, on the one hand, the seemingly legitimate doctrine of Christian anti-Judaism – said to be rooted in the Holy Scriptures and motivated by divine love for the Jews – and, on the other hand, the ideology of secular, Nazi anti-Semitism.

Scholarly literature on Christian-Jewish relations acknowledges the possibility, and even the necessity, of preserving the formal, theoretical distinction between anti-Judaism – as a theological abstraction – and the secular variants of racial and conspiratorial



anti-Semitism.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, Christian anti-Judaism and modern anti-Semitism are said to be tied by a profound historical connectedness which undermines the relevance and appropriateness of this differentiation in practice.<sup>5</sup> G. Baum, for instance, argues:

While it would be historically untruthful to blame the Christian Church for Hitler's anti-Semitism and the monstrous crimes committed by his followers, what is true, alas, is that the Church has produced an abiding contempt among Christians for Jews and all things Jewish, a contempt that aided Hitler's purposes. The church made the Jewish people a symbol of unredeemed humanity; it painted a picture of Jews as a blind, stubborn, carnal, and perverse people, an image that was fundamental in Hitler's choice of Jews as a scapegoat.<sup>6</sup>

In *Words to the Serbian People Through the Dungeon Window*, Velimirović accredits Nazism to the secularization of Europe and portrays it as the outcome of Western civilization's fatal departure from traditional Christian values. Yet, in the same book he asserts that the much-maligned secularization stems from Jewish influence and the fact that Europe "knows nothing other than what Jews serve to her." The implication of this argument is that Nazism was not just a new "whip" brought on by the "innocent blood" of Christ, or yet another burst of the fire that "burns [Jewish] repositories of schemes against Christ." It is also the work of the Devil and his disciple, the Jew.<sup>7</sup>

Attempts at refuting the accusations of anti-Semitism directed at Nikolaj Velimirović have turned one of the oldest premises of traditional Christian anti-Semitic rhetoric – the idea that Jews killed Christ and have drawn upon themselves eternal damnation that will end only when they repent and accept Christian teachings – into a seemingly acceptable, natural, and even normative aspect of Christian identity. The rhetoric of denial based on the drawing of a parallel between Velimirović's anti-Semitic work and the words of the Bible has been shown to depoliticize and legitimize the bishop's anti-Jewish stance by placing it under the banner of normal and acceptable "theological anti-Judaism."

### Ongoing Denials of Anti-Semitism

Velimirović's ideological position continues to be unchallenged within the Serbian Orthodox Church. Most disturbingly, the spontaneity with which Velimirović's supporters invoke denial suggests that normalization and legitimization of anti-Jewish sentiment have become entrenched in the routine of Velimirović's remembrance. Bearing in mind Velimirović's popularity in Serbia today, it is clear that apologist rhetoric is gradually becoming part of the ideological common sense, an outcome that cannot have a positive impact on Christian-Jewish relations in the country.

The continuing adulation of Nikolaj Velimirović involves routine repression of his anti-Semitism and a whole host of strategies of denial, the aim of which is to justify, play down, and rationalize

his lamentable stance towards Jews. The way the bishop's admirers talk about Jews allows them to construct themselves, their hero, and in some cases even the whole of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian people as being devoid of prejudice. By legitimizing and normalizing the discredited ideological tradition of anti-Jewish prejudice, denial and repression of Velimirović's anti-Semitism perpetuates social inequality, while at the same time protecting the dominant group's ideas, symbols, and authority against charges of intolerance.

The hero-worship of Nikolaj Velimirović and the favorable interpretation of his controversial work within Orthodox culture are not peripheral to the problem of anti-Semitism and are therefore not something that can be simply overlooked for the sake of mutual respect. Remembrance and uncritical reverence of Nikolaj Velimirović are the most powerful ideological sources of anti-Jewish prejudice in Serbian culture, from which much of contemporary anti-Semitism derives legitimacy and authority.

The "problem" with the persistence of Serbian anti-Semitism in Orthodox culture does not lie in the "sins" of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović. Although much of the current public debate between different "memory communities" in Serbia revolves around whether or not Velimirović was an anti-Semite, this issue is of little practical importance. Velimirović lived and wrote in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reaching the pinnacle of his career in the period between the two World Wars. This was a period when conspiratorial anti-Semitism was at the peak of its worldwide popularity and anti-Jewish slurs were, in Billig's words, the "polite currency of gentile conversation."<sup>8</sup>

Contempt for Jews was also a routine feature of Christian theology, liturgical practice, and church life throughout Christendom. In 1938, a Vatican encyclical, which, somewhat paradoxically, was critical of the passing of anti-Semitic laws in Italy, argued that "Jews put to death their Savior and King" and invited upon themselves "the wrath of God" and "divine malediction, dooming them, as it were, to perpetually wander over the face of the earth." The same document accused Jews of promoting revolutionary movements that aim to "destroy society and to obliterate from the minds of men the knowledge, reverence, and love of God."<sup>9</sup> These words are virtually identical to those that Velimirović wrote six years later in his *Words to the Serbian People through the Dungeon Window*. He, just like the authors of the encyclical, inhabited the world before the post-Holocaust political morality justifiably imposed limitations on expressions of intolerance and pushed anti-Semitism to the margins of political discourse. Thus, the fact that we find anti-Semitic language in Velimirović's writing is not unusual. Nevertheless, it does cast a shadow over his integrity because a considerable number of his contemporaries, who may not have been as educated, knowledgeable, and eloquent as Nikolaj is said to have been, but who were just as devoted to their religion and their people, adopted a more commendable stance towards Jews and took a political stand which, in contrast to that of

Continuing adulation of Nikolaj Velimirović involves routine repression of his anti-Semitism and a whole host of strategies of denial.

(continued on page 10)

## Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović and Charges of Anti-Semitism (continued from page 9)

Velimirović, was unequivocally anti-fascist.

### The Defense of Velimirović: More Troubling Than Velimirović

Still, the main problem with contemporary Christian-Jewish relations in Serbia lies not in what Velimirović was really like, but in his remembrance and his uncritical adulation. It is to be found in the attempts to justify and excuse his stance toward Jews and present it as normal, acceptable, and even necessary. The reluctance by church authorities to address the controversy surrounding his writings obscures the boundaries between the extreme and the mainstream in Serbian Orthodox culture and in so doing facilitates the promulgation of anti-Jewish prejudice and feeds political extremism. ♦

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> H.P. Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia: A Quest for Community* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979); Z. Lebl, *Do "konačnog rešenja": Jevreji u Beogradu, 1521-1942 [Until the "Final Solution"; Jews in Belgrade 1521-1942]* (Belgrade: Čigora, 2001); L. Sekelj, *Vreme beščasća [The Age of Dishonor]* (Belgrade: Akademija Nova, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Lj. Ranković, "Zvona zvone Vladići [Bells Toll for the Bishop]," *Večernje Novosti*, 21 June 2003; <http://www.novosti.co.yu/code/navigate.php?Id=16&status=jedna&datum=2003-06-21&feljton=3655>.

<sup>3</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2 June 2003.

<sup>4</sup> J. Hellig, *The Holocaust and Antisemitism: A Short History* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002); R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Antisemitism* (New York: Seabury, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> J. Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002); D. Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its Unfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Knopf, 2002); R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (London: Holmes & Meier, 1985).

<sup>6</sup> G. Baum, "Introduction" in R. Ruether, ed., *Faith and Fratricide*, 1-22.

<sup>7</sup> Velimirović, *Poruka*, 194.

<sup>8</sup> M. Billig, *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 250.

<sup>9</sup> Goldhagen, *Moral Reckoning*, 85.

*Edited excerpts reprinted with permission from Jovan Byford, Denial and Repression of Anti-Semitism; Post-Communist Remembrance of the Serbian Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008).*

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The main problem with contemporary Christian-Jewish relations in Serbia lies not in what Velimirović was really like, but in his remembrance and his uncritical adulation.

## Protestant Theological Education in Central Asia: Embattled but Resilient

Insur Shamgunov

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The political, religious, and economic situation in Central Asia is changing so rapidly that theological schools must constantly adapt their training programs. No one can predict whether some of these schools will even survive current pressures. As noted in the first portion of this article (Fall 2009), some of the challenges facing theological education are external: political pressure, growing materialism and indifference to Christianity, stagnation in church growth, and social ills in society. Other challenges come from within the institutions.

### Declining Enrollments

Initially, one Kyrgyz institution under study sought to train pastors only. However, it eventually broadened its scope to include training for lay ministers as well. The principal admitted that the decision to broaden enrollment was influenced by the recent decline in church growth and the corresponding decrease in candidates for the ministry.

After graduating three classes in a three-year, full-time program, this school changed to a modular format in 2004, consisting of two-week training sessions with breaks of two weeks between modules. Again, one of the main reasons for changing the program was the declining number of applicants willing to study full-time.

The principal related the enrollment decline to the unwillingness of local pastors to send their members to study, which, in turn, arose for several reasons. First, many pastors did not understand the importance of solid theological doctrine, believing that for regular church members, weekly sermons alone were sufficient for their spiritual nourishment. The principal was concerned that such narrowness and lack of theological education have already led many people in his denomination to construct false doctrines. Second, he felt that some pastors were afraid of competition, as younger leaders became more educated than themselves, a theme that will be developed in more detail shortly. Third, he was concerned that many pastors had a short-term, rather than long-term, vision for developing church leaders. Thus, pastors would not let their most talented and capable emerging leaders attend seminary because they needed their help in the church. Instead, some pastors sent church members to study who were not currently engaged in ministry and who were not motivated to do so, hoping perhaps that the school itself would motivate them for ministry.

In my most recent conversation with the principal of this Kyrgyz theological college (9 November 2008), I learned that only a handful

The principal related the enrollment decline to the unwillingness of local pastors to send their members to study.

of applications were received for the 2008-09 academic year. As a result, the school changed its training format to an evening program, with teaching decentralized in four main regions of Kyrgyzstan. The principal believed that interest in training in local churches still existed, but because they were no longer growing, they had exhausted the pool of candidates wishing to study full-time. He concluded, as a result, that training had to become locally based and run as evening modular classes. Another strategy this same principal was considering was the addition of secular subjects to the curriculum. He related that in many cases, parents of young Christians did not believe a theological education could offer their children a sustainable future.

### **Adapting to New Realities**

A theological college in Kazakhstan also experienced a decline in applications and decided not to admit any new students in the 2007-2008 academic year. The principal was considering several ways of addressing the problem, including the introduction of a new program for social workers.

According to this principal and his dean, one of the main challenges the college faced was strong opposition from senior denominational leaders. Many of the elder pastors were not theologically educated themselves and so were suspicious of younger church members receiving such an education. The pastors felt they were competing with seminary graduates, asking difficult questions that they could not answer. Some of them viewed theological education itself as “liberal,” although the institution would be considered very conservative by Western theological standards. For some pastors, the college was “liberal” simply because “some teachers were Americans and Calvinists.”

One graduate, a Kazakh pastor in his 50s, offered an insight into the older generation’s contempt for education: Older pastors had led the church through Soviet persecution and therefore did not have a chance to receive an education. They could only learn from each other, or attend occasional conferences, or read their one-and-only denominational journal. Therefore, the older generation felt that their own experiences proved that education was not necessary. They initially resisted the cultural contextualization of Kazakh churches, namely, using the Kazakh language and traditions during services, or using the word *Allah* for God. But they changed their views. Pastor Anton, who belonged to a denomination that existed during the Soviet era, complained that most senior leaders emigrated to the West soon after *perestroika*, being “seduced by money.”

A third institution in my study, a college in Kazakhstan, also suspended its main program in 2007 after having graduated over 250 pastors and other church leaders from its nine-month pastoral training program. Again, a decline in church growth led to a corresponding drop in enrollment. After enrollment began to fall, the college moved its training into the regions and opened ten satellite schools in four Central Asian countries. This program, called “Christian Education in the Regions,” consists of short training modules for leaders and active church

members run by instructors coming from the central school. In response to falling fulltime enrollment, this institution, established to train church planters and pastors, re-oriented its program to train small group leaders. The principal pointed out that this change occurred not only because of a lack of students, but it also reflected the recent general shift in church-planting philosophy in Central Asia: from “classic” churches with one large Sunday gathering, to cell churches, replicating Korean, Chinese, and Latin American models.

In Kazakhstan in the spring of 2008 the government required all religious institutions to operate with an educational license. Not wanting to break the law, one school stopped offering its master’s of ministry degree. However, the school later realized that with its registration as a religious organization it could still offer small, informal seminars without offering any certification or degrees. The dean was considering a number of possibilities for moving forward, including relocating the program out of the country altogether, or trying to merge with an existing licensed university.

### **Causes for the Enrollment Decline: In Summary**

All colleges under study are currently facing very significant challenges, above all, declining enrollment. Explanations include Central Asia’s dramatic societal, economic, and political changes, the general decline in church growth, emigration, the poor financial prospects for pastors, the low value of a theological diploma in a secular job market, as well as the bias of some church leaders against theological education.

### **Guidelines for Evaluating Theological Education**

Donald Aleshire, executive director of the U.S. Association of Theological Schools, rightly draws the attention of theological educators to the importance of not only assessing student learning, but evaluating the educational program itself: “It is altogether possible that students could graduate knowing everything they were taught, but because they were taught all the wrong things, not function well in ministry.”<sup>1</sup> This warning is particularly important since theological programs in the former Soviet Union are mostly aping standard, well-established Western theological curricula.

Moreover, the region’s most influential policymaker in the area of evangelical theological education, the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (E-AAA), seems to have made little attempt to take into account what graduates themselves are actually getting out of the programs, the main emphasis being academic recognition for its member schools. Thus, in 1998, one of the leaders emphasized that the standards for the theological programs’ assessment would not be based on the graduates, but on various aspects of the “academic process,” such as “hours in class, testing methods, pages read, organizational stability, organizational legality, office management, program leadership and administration, [and] student activities.”<sup>2</sup> National church leaders express concerns about the inadequacy of an un-contextualized and

The Euro-Asian Accrediting Association seems to have made little attempt to take into account what graduates themselves are actually getting out of the programs, the main emphasis being academic recognition for its member schools.

(continued on page 12)

## Protestant Theological Education (continued from page 11)

uncritical transfer of Western theological curriculum into a very different cultural and social setting.

### A Classroom-Ministry Disconnect

Graduates interviewed generally shared a positive view of their training: They believed that it had positively influenced their character formation and that it had provided them with helpful biblical knowledge, certain ministry skills, and a desire to continue learning. Strikingly, however, most graduates could not articulate links between the training they had received and their ability to deal with their current professional problems. The majority of graduates pointed to the particular value of the knowledge they received from experienced practitioners, or the knowledge they acquired while involved in practical ministry during their studies. In many cases training failed to equip students to integrate classroom studies with practical ministry; it also lacked spiritual mentoring and it placed a disproportionate emphasis upon subjects that had few obvious links to practice.

In most cases Western theological education in Central Asia has not been contextualized. Culturally adapted training means translating a theological curriculum into the local language, substituting nationals for foreign teachers, and finding local examples to illustrate subject matter. Better yet, nationals write their own curriculum and develop their own indigenous theologies. This is the point of view that I heard from both national leaders and from many expatriate missionaries involved in church development and theological education in the region. This much I expected.

However, one of my most surprising findings was that only a quarter (nine) of the graduates interviewed pointed to cross-cultural issues as bearing any significance for effective learning. Rather, the majority were more concerned with the practical application of what their teachers taught, which in turn was linked not to their teachers' cultural background, but primarily to their practical experience, personal spiritual maturity, and teaching expertise. Although graduates did praise a few talented and experienced national teachers, many pointed out that it was better to have experienced, seasoned foreign teachers than young, inexperienced national teachers. Even worse was to have foreign teachers with no serious ministry or teaching experience. Moreover, counter to my initial assumptions, many graduates commended and used ideas they borrowed from popular Western Christian authors to develop their own thinking and practice, including Larry Crabb, Philip Yancey, Rick Warren, and John Maxwell. Graduates were intelligent and reflective enough to be able to contextualize these ideas to their local situations for themselves.

Graduates who believed they received the most benefit from their training for their later professional practice were the ones who were either actively involved in a local church ministry or who actively participated in student mission activities during their training. The theory-practice gap was minimal for them, as they were able to quickly transfer the learning that they needed and to rapidly contextualize

information for immediate use. At the same time, the majority of the criticisms from graduates were directed not at culturally un-contextualized theological training, but at the larger issue of the theory-practice divide, which is relevant not only to Central Asia, but to theological education everywhere.<sup>3</sup>

Theological education in Central Asia seems to have inherited the common flaws of theological education elsewhere. The major concerns are the same as in the United States: the applicability of theological knowledge, the lack of practical ministry, and the need for spiritual formation. In other words, the challenge seems to be not so much contextualizing theological education for Central Asia, but contextualizing theological education to real-life ministerial practice, regardless of the locale.

### Faculty Modeling and Mentoring: Incidental Versus Intentional

Although the Central Asian institutions studied were relatively successful in the spiritual formation of their students, it was the incidental outcome of the personal influence of their teachers, rather than the formal content of their training. Instructors who are experienced and spiritually mature practitioners serve as models, mentors, and sources of authoritative practical knowledge for students. The importance of modeling and mentoring for the training of ministers was confirmed by another finding: about a third of the pastors found mentoring support essential for their further professional and personal development after graduation.

The importance of mentoring for professional development is widely discussed in the literature on professional training, and in many cases is accepted as an integral part of professional development.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, this is not the case in theological education in general, where mentoring is often viewed as "nice," but not essential. As my findings show, theological institutions in Central Asia are not an exception to the general rule. While one Kyrgyz institution took mentoring seriously through its "curator" (spiritual supervisor) of students, most of the modeling and mentoring that occurred in the schools under review happened informally and was virtually a by-product of the training experience.

### Addressing the Crisis in Theological Education: Four Options

Evangelical theological education in Central Asia is at a critical stage because of weak ties with local churches, the severe shortage of students, the increase of government pressure, and the oversupply of various training courses which affects the quality of teaching. Several graduates considered the sheer number of theological institutions detrimental to the quality of ministry training. The supply of training opportunities has outgrown the demand. Church leaders often have chosen schools for their ministerial candidates based on free tuition. This has created a problem through negative competition: institutions with higher admission standards have been losing applicants because many Western-funded programs charge no fees. It would appear

The challenge seems to be not so much contextualizing theological education for Central Asia, but contextualizing theological education to real-life ministerial practice, regardless of the locale.

that to avoid extinction, major changes must be undertaken. Fortunately, theological colleges in Central Asia should be able to adapt more easily than their Western counterparts since these institutions are very young, are small in size, and are not yet burdened by traditionalism. They are, in fact, willing to change and are actively looking for ways forward.

The schools may consider several options. They may attempt to tap a new market, targeting the desire of younger Christians for a good general higher education, similar to the education provided by Christian liberal arts colleges in the United States. Some elements of this vision were being considered by two of the colleges studied. However, this approach might also create significant tensions with the expectations of all major stakeholders, including local churches, denominational leaders, Western financial sponsors, and even the staff of the colleges.

Another option might be to move in the direction of more generic professional training, for example, to offer degrees in leadership development that could be used both in ministry and in the business world. Alongside courses in biblical knowledge and ministry skills, courses could be offered in counseling, social psychology, leadership, management, organizational development, strategic planning, time management, financial planning, starting a business, and possibly even some vocational programs such as heating systems and welding.

A third option might be for the colleges to shift their emphasis entirely from leadership development to educating lay people by providing short-term training courses in churches. This seems to be the direction at least two colleges in my study are heading. In this case, they will remain within the "schooling" model, primarily providing the transfer of biblical knowledge, which is in itself valuable in the context of Central Asia. Finally, theological training colleges could retain their major emphasis on ministerial training, but dramatically revise the curricula stressing practical applications of training, problem-based learning, and learner-centered instruction (to be described below).

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### From a Schooling to a Missional Model

I suspect that today's preoccupation with contextualizing Western theological education for the non-Western world might be obscuring a much more significant systemic issue in theological education. While efforts directed towards encouraging national churches to develop their own indigenous theologies are commendable, in themselves they are not likely to initiate the much-needed systemic paradigm shift in national seminaries from a schooling model to a greater praxis orientation. Instead, these efforts may result in the development of national theological faculties with their own indigenous contextual theology, but who fundamentally retain the same academic approach to training. Instead of reading Calvin, they might start reading non-Western theologians. But without constant, carefully supervised and reflective involvement with ministerial praxis,

these institutions are as likely as ever to produce the phenomenon that Elliott refers to as a "trained incapacity to deal with the real problems of actual living persons in their daily lives."<sup>5</sup>

The findings of this study support R. Banks and A.G. Harkness in their insistence on a paradigm shift in theological education from a schooling model, still prevalent today, to a missional model.<sup>6</sup> Along with Harkness, I question the traditional framework of ministerial training with its fourfold divisions of biblical studies, systemic theology, church history, and practical theology. Instead, what is needed today is a more holistic model, centered on the actual ministry of the church. ♦

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### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Donald O. Aleshire, "The Character and Assessment of Learning for Religious Vocation: M. Div. Education and Numbering the Levites," *Theological Education* 39 (2003), 11.

<sup>2</sup>Mark R. Elliott, "Recent Research on Evangelical Education in Post-Soviet Societies," *Religion in Eastern Europe* 19 (February 1999), 51.

<sup>3</sup>R. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); A. G. Harkness, "De-schooling the Theological Seminary: An Appropriate Paradigm for Effective Ministerial Formation," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 4 (2001), 141-54; L. M. Cannell, "Theological Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, [manuscript draft] (Deerfield, IL: 2003).

<sup>4</sup>T. Maynard and J. Furlong, "Learning to Teach and Models of Mentoring" in D. McIntyre, H. Hagger, and M. Wilkin, eds., *Mentoring: Perspectives on School-Based Teacher Education* (London: Kogan Page, 1993); V. Brooks and P. Sikes, *The Good Mentor Guide. Initial Teacher Education in Secondary Schools* (Buckingham, England: Open University Press, 1997).

<sup>5</sup>Mark R. Elliott, "Theological Education After Communism: The Mixed Blessing of Western Assistance," *Asbury Theological Journal* 50 (Spring 1995), 70.

<sup>6</sup>R. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); A. G. Harkness, "De-schooling the Theological Seminary: An Appropriate Paradigm for Effective Ministerial Formation," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 4 (2001), 141-54.

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Missiological, rather than Marxist, economic determinism is at work. One East European church leader, observing the power of Western aid in the wake of failed Soviet rule, called to mind a perversion of the Golden Rule: "He who holds the gold, makes the rules."

## Crisis in Protestant Theological Education

or have been perceived to emphasize, academics over practical, pastoral training. Thus, Jason Ferenczi, vice-president of Overseas Council International (OCI), links the enrollment crisis, in part, to inappropriate curricula lacking relevance to ministerial practice.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Anatoly Prokopchuk (Kyiv Evangelical Christian-Baptist Seminary) speaks of the danger of "the exclusively academic approach" to theological education.<sup>19</sup> Too often in Orthodox seminaries as well, a tragic "divorce between Christian theory and praxis" prevails, according to Archbishop Hilarion.<sup>20</sup>

### A Lack of Practical Emphasis

In Insur Shamgunov's 2008 dissertation, based on interviews and surveys of graduates and administrators of four Protestant schools in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, respondents "gave generally positive appraisals of their training, but they noted little connection between their studies and the capabilities needed to succeed in ministry."<sup>21</sup> Central Asian church leaders as well noted "a disconnect between current theological training and real-life vocational skills...need[ed] in church ministry."<sup>22</sup>

One of Shamgunov's most surprising findings was that

Only a quarter of graduates interviewed pointed to cross-cultural issues as bearing any significance for effective learning. Rather, the majority were more concerned with the practical application of what their teachers taught, which in turn was linked not to their teachers' cultural background, but primarily to their practical experience, personal spiritual maturity, and teaching expertise.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore,

The majority of criticisms from graduates were directed not at culturally un-contextualized theological training, but at the larger issue of the theory-practice divide, which is relevant not only to Central Asia, but to theological education everywhere.... The challenge seems to be not so much contextualizing theological education for Central Asia, but contextualizing theological education to real-life ministerial practice, regardless of the locale.<sup>24</sup>

### Church Distrust of Graduates

Lax admission standards and tenuous church-school ties thus have produced many graduates whom churches and church leaders often deem too young, too inexperienced, too headstrong, and too uncertain of their ministerial call to be trusted in the pulpit. Exacerbating the generation gap and the problem of placement has been an often deep-seated wariness of theological education among pastors and denominational leaders who typically had no chance for formal training in the Soviet era.<sup>25</sup> Further alienating seminary graduates from those they are trained to serve has been the suspicion of churches and church leaders that the new seminaries harbor the pox of theological liberalism and Calvinism.<sup>26</sup> The fear has been that graduates might infect mostly conservative Arminian congregations with one or the other contagion of Western origin.

### The Disadvantages of Western Funding

Protestant church leaders also frequently distrust seminaries because the schools have been financed

(continued from page 16)

overwhelmingly from Western sources. Paradoxically, Western funding has increased the church-school gap, resulting in fewer church placements for graduates, which in turn has meant fewer students enrolling in programs that may not lead to employment.

Except for some small, church-based Bible schools, the vast majority of residential training facilities have been underwritten by Western and Korean denominations and missions. Likewise, operating budgets have been heavily dependent upon outside funding. Fortunately, Jason Ferenczi of Overseas Council sees "considerable progress" in the past 12 years in schools developing indigenous sources of support.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Ray Prigodich, former academic dean at Donetsk Christian University, estimated in early 2008 that local funding had advanced to account for some 12 percent of the operating budget at the Moscow Evangelical Christian-Baptist Theological Seminary, 30 percent at Donetsk Christian University, and over 50 percent at Zaosky Adventist University.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, despite some progress, the great majority of Protestant seminaries in the former Soviet Union would quickly close if shorn of Western or Korean support.<sup>29</sup>

Sadly, with outside dependency comes outside control, even if the language of partnership is employed by funders. Theological educators Cheryl and Wesley Brown cite the case of an American mission withdrawing its funds and faculty from a fledgling East European seminary because the school could not in good faith subscribe to its benefactor's doctrinal position on eschatology. The Browns characterize such heavy-handed control as "Western theological imperialism."<sup>30</sup> But even outside funders who strive not to be overbearing still exercise a quiet, sometimes even unconscious, check on the prerogatives of indigenous seminary leaders. Unfortunately, what might be termed missiological, rather than Marxist, economic determinism is at work. One East European church leader, observing the power of Western aid in the wake of failed Soviet rule, called to mind a perversion of the Golden Rule: "He who holds the gold, makes the rules."<sup>31</sup>

In sum, church distrust of seminaries jeopardizes their existence because it undermines their ability to recruit students. That distrust, in turn, is partially a function of seminaries answering ultimately to Western donors, rather than to the churches they exist to serve. Respected educational specialist Ted Ward writes,

When the program is treated as if it were property of the outsiders, local "ownership" and true contextualization become highly unlikely.

Westerners in general and Americans in particular seem to prefer high-control management.... But we must find ways to encourage those with whom we serve to share in the responsibilities and initiatives of decision-making. To do less is not Christian; it is colonial.<sup>32</sup>

### Seminary Degrees and Unemployment

Protestant residential training programs, then, face an uncertain future because of their overabundance, declining church growth, and weak church-school ties exacerbated by lax admission policies, curricula that appear to be insufficiently practical, and church distrust and lack of ownership of seminaries.<sup>33</sup> Finally, schools are at risk because fewer and fewer

prospective students and their parents see reason to invest years of study in programs that rarely lead to self-sustaining employment. More and more, those considering seminary are asking, "Why should I invest three to five years in full-time study so that I can remain poor?"<sup>34</sup> ♦

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Miller, former missionary to Russia, email to author, 29 November 2009.

<sup>2</sup> William Yoder, "The Future of Theological Education in Euro-Asia," news release, Department for External Church Relations of Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, 22 August 2009; meeting with Ekaterina Smyslova, Haggai Institute, 5 December 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Jason Ferenczi, Overseas Council International, phone interview, 27 October 2009; Anthony Rybarczk, Assemblies of God, phone interview, 3 November 2009; Harold Brown, OMS International, phone interview, 17 November 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Insur Shamgunov, "Listening to the Voice of the Graduate: An Analysis of Professional Practice and Training for Ministry in Central Asia," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oxford, 2009, pp. 19, 29, 34, and 36.

<sup>5</sup> Mark R. Elliott, "Protestant Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 18 (January 1994), 14; Mark R. Elliott, "Theological Education after Communism: The Mixed Blessing of Western Assistance," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 50 (Spring 1995), 67-73.

<sup>6</sup> Alla Tikhonova, ed., *Spravochnik bogoslovskie uchebnye zavedeniya v stranakh SNG i Baltii* (Moscow: Assotsiatsiya Dukhovnoe Vozrozhdenie, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Rybarczk, phone interview, 3 November 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Yoder, "Future," 1.

<sup>9</sup> David Hoehner, "Letter to the Editor," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 15 (Winter 2007), 6.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Harris, "Needed: A Revolution in Pastoral Training; Pitfalls of Western-Created Leadership Training in Russia," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 20 (Fall 2003), 82.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Mitskevich, "Problems I See with Theological Education," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 12 (Fall 2004), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Wally C. Schoon, "The Lure of the West," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 4 (Spring 1996), 1-2; Susan W. Hardwick, *Russian Refuge: Religion, Migration, and Settlement on the North American Pacific Rim* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Shamgunov, "Listening," 23, 26, 29, 31, and 35; Jason Ferenczi, phone interview, 27 October 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Rybarczk, phone interview, 3 November 2009; Jason Ferenczi, phone interview, 27 October 2009; Yoder, "Future," 2.

<sup>15</sup> Charley Warner, Euro-Asian Accrediting Association, email to author, 27 October 2009. See also Harris, "Needed," 83.

<sup>16</sup> Mitskevich, "Problems," 5-6; Sergei Golovin, "On Hopping Caterpillars, Spiritual Gastarbeiter, and Theological Education in Former Soviet Union Countries," 28 October 2009; <http://www.scienceandapologetics.com/eng/g15.html>; Harris, "Needed," 83; Mark R. Elliott, "Recent Research on

Evangelical Theological Education in Post-Soviet Societies," *Religion in Eastern Europe* 19 (February 1999), 33 and 35.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Sawatsky, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, phone interview, 26 October 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Jason Ferenczi, phone interview, 27 October 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Mitskevich, "Problems," 6.

<sup>20</sup> Archbishop Hilarion Alveyev, "Theological Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," <http://en.hilarion.orthodoxia.org/print>, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Shamgunov, "Protestant Theological Education in Central Asia: Embattled but Resilient," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 17 (Fall 2009), 5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 149-50, and 152; Elliott, "Protestant," 19; Cheryl and Wes Brown, "Progress and Challenge in Theological Education in Central and Eastern Europe," *Transformation* 20 (January 2003), 2; Jason Ferenczi, phone interview, 27 October 2009; I.P., email to author, 8 September 2005; Mark Harris, "Proposal for a Contextualized Educational Program for the Training of Russian Spiritual Leaders," [www.markharris.us](http://www.markharris.us).

<sup>26</sup> Shamgunov, "Listening," 28, 150, and 286; Linda Eilers, "When Calvinist and Arminian Beliefs Collide: Facilitating Communication between North American Professors and Russian Bible Students," master's thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1998; Nicholas Holovaty, "A Moscow Case Study: Mixed Reviews for the Korean Pastor's School," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 8 (Fall 2000), 8.

<sup>27</sup> Jason Ferenczi, phone interview, 27 October 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Meeting with Ray Prigodich, former dean, Donetsk Christian University, 2 February 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Ted Rodgers, Russian Leadership Ministries, phone interview, 26 October 2009; Elliott, "Recent Research," 32, quoting David P. Bohn, "A Comparative Study of the Perspectives of Evangelical Church Leaders in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Russia on Theological Education," Ph.D. dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1997, 193; Jason Ferenczi, phone interview, 27 October 2009; Dieumeme Noelliste, "Theological Education in the Context of Socio-Economic Deprivation," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29 (October 2005), 276.

<sup>30</sup> Brown, "Progress," 10. See also *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>31</sup> Mark R. Elliott, "The New, Non-Western Chapter in Christian History," *Prism* 8 (November/December 2001), 10.

<sup>32</sup> Ted Ward, "Effective Development of Intercultural Leadership," Maclellan Foundation Policy and Position Document, 4 May 2003, 8. See also Oleg Turlac, "The Crisis in Evangelical Christian-Baptist Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 15 (Winter 2007), 19.

<sup>33</sup> Hoehner, "Letter," 6.

<sup>34</sup> Marsden, "Post-Soviet," 1-3.

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# The Current Crisis in Protestant Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union

Mark R. Elliott

## Falling Enrollment...

From 1993 to 2007 New Life Bible College in Moscow graduated more than 200 students in a program focused on evangelism, missions, and pastoral ministry. However, this Campus Crusade-sponsored seminary closed its doors following its May 2007 commencement.<sup>1</sup> In 2009 two other Moscow seminaries, one headed by Gennady Sergienko and another headed by Vladimir Lee, also ceased operations.<sup>2</sup> Across the former Soviet Union many residential seminary buildings, built at great expense, are now nearly bereft of full-time students. From the Baltic to the Pacific one finds Protestant schools struggling with an enrollment shortfall that threatens their survival. Making matters worse, beleaguered Protestant seminaries from Moscow to Siberia report increasing pressures from local authorities, the mafia, and Russian Orthodox.<sup>3</sup> Because conditions are so difficult for Bible colleges in Central Asia, several are contemplating closure or a move to a less hostile environment.<sup>4</sup>

## ...Following Dramatic Growth

The current phenomenon of Protestant seminaries under siege stands in stark contrast to the earlier dramatic flowering of formal pastoral training programs as the Soviet regime tottered and then collapsed. Programs grew from not a single Protestant residential seminary in 1986 to 42 programs by 1992, to well over 100 by the end of the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> A 1999 directory of theological institutions listed 137 Protestant, 57 Orthodox, and 4 Catholic schools.<sup>6</sup> Growth appears to have continued into the new century. Even today, the Assemblies of God report 135 Pentecostal Bible schools in Russia and Ukraine<sup>7</sup> and the Evangelical Christian-Baptist (ECB) press service estimates 150 ECB-related seminaries and Bible schools across the former Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

## Overbuilding

In accounting for the current troubles in theological education, however, the large number of Protestant institutions looms large. "Over-saturation of evangelical schools," as David Hoehner, former academic dean at Donetsk Christian University, calls

it,<sup>9</sup> stems from many decades of pent-up demand, a "time is short" mentality, willing Western donors, and the preference of myriads of Western churches and ministries for "their own independent training programs."<sup>10</sup> Duplication and overbuilding would appear to be the consequence. For example, can Donetsk, Ukraine, with a predominantly secular or Orthodox population, sustain five evangelical pastoral training programs?<sup>11</sup>

## The Waning of Church Growth

Initially, new Protestant seminaries benefitted from growing numbers of converts and new churches opening their doors. But denominational reports and mission newsletters have been better at counting those coming in through front doors than in counting those leaving through back doors. Perhaps a half million Evangelicals have emigrated to the West from the former Soviet Union; in addition, some worshippers only darkened church doors temporarily out of short-lived curiosity.<sup>12</sup> With overall church growth waning, enrollments naturally suffer.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, where church growth continues, as with Pentecostals in Ukraine, Siberia, and the Russian Far East, seminary enrollments have not declined as much, or they continue to rise.<sup>14</sup>

## Shortcomings in Seminary Candidates

Charley Warner, an advisor to the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (E-AAA), traces the origin of the current enrollment crisis as far back as 1993. At fault, at least in part, he argues, has been competition for students undermining the ability of programs to graduate mature, capable pastors.<sup>15</sup> Peter Mitskevich, now president of the Moscow ECB Theological Seminary, and Western missionary Mark Harris have noted various shortcomings in some seminary candidates whom they have observed firsthand. Some students:

- are too young to fully absorb instruction;
- are too inexperienced to apply their learning;
- lack a clear call to ministry and lack direction in their lives;
- require elementary discipleship;
- lack vital connections with home churches;
- are less concerned with an education than with a diploma;
- are fascinated with the West, seek to practice English, obtain scholarships to study abroad, and/or emigrate to the West; and
- have no interest in pastoring, aspiring instead to careers in teaching.<sup>16</sup>

With all the pitfalls in student selection, it nevertheless should be emphasized that many godly students have enrolled, have taken their studies to heart, have learned, have been faithfully mentored by their teachers, and have gone on to labor successfully in the Lord's vineyard. However, with so many students uncertain of their call to ministry and lacking strong ties with a local church, it is no wonder that a seminary-church disconnect exists. For missiologist Walter Sawatsky it is a case of "free floating" schools lacking substantive relationships with the churches they seek to serve.<sup>17</sup>

## The Church-School Divide

The church-school divide has been especially pronounced in those seminaries that have emphasized,

With so many students uncertain of their call to ministry and lacking strong ties with a local church, it is no wonder that a seminary-church disconnect exists.

The quarterly *East-West Church & Ministry Report* examines all aspects of church life and mission outreach in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe as a service to both church and academia. Letters to the editor are welcomed. Annual subscription rates are \$49.95 (individuals, U.S. and Canada); \$59.95 (individuals, international); \$53.95 (libraries, U.S. and Canada); \$63.95 (libraries, international); and \$22.95 (e-mail). Reprint and photocopy policy: 1) Quantity photocopies or reprints of up to three articles from a single issue may be distributed or reprinted at no charge. 2) Written permission is to be secured for each distribution or reprinting. 3) The following statement is to be carried on each photocopied article reproduced and each article reprinted: Reproduced (or Reprinted) with permission of the *EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT*. Currently indexed by American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies (ABSEES), OCLC Public Affairs Information Service (formerly PAIS), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Zeller Dietrich (formerly Zeller Verlag), and Christian Periodicals Index.



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