



EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT

WINTER 2003

VOL. 11, No. 1

“If There Is No God, All Is Permitted”

Kent R. Hill

Spiritual as Well as Material Needs

Ironically, at the very moment when so many declare that Marx was wrong—when it comes to what economic system can best meet the needs of the masses—the Marxist understanding of human beings reigns supreme. Marx believed that if only physical needs could be met—the need for food, shelter, and physical security—happiness would result. He was convinced that religion, like the state, would simply wither away because religion was nothing but an escape into wishful thinking about the next world to make up for the poverty and misery of this world. Marx evidently never reflected on why the suicide rate is higher among the wealthy than the poor. Could this statistic perhaps be explained by the fact that the rich often understand better than the poor that having everything money can buy, including power, is not enough to provide meaning? Is it possible that Marx never really understood that we as human beings have spiritual needs as well as material ones, that we long to give ourselves, even sacrifice ourselves, to that which goes beyond our narrow self interest?

The Necessity of a Moral Citizenry

I am haunted by the writings of the early founders of the American democratic experiment. Virtually all of them insisted that the success of the democratic experience would depend on a moral citizenry and most of them felt that morality would most likely be rooted in religion. There was a rejection of the old European notion of an established Christian church or religion, though most assumed that morality was best rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. But my central point here is their assertion that democracy would almost certainly not survive without a moral citizenry. As George Washington, America's first president, put it, “of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.” Or as John Adams, the brilliant second U.S. president, observed, “it is religion and morality alone that can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. Religion and virtue are the only foundations of all free governments.”

Frankly, I think Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov was right in *Crime in Punishment* when he insisted, much as Friedrich Nietzsche did a few years later, that “if there is no God, all is permitted.” The history of the West demonstrates that when belief in God comes into question, when belief in a transcendent source of morality beyond human likes and dislikes is abandoned, it is only a matter of time until a belief in the existence of truth and morality disappears as well.

The most brilliant and prophetic critique of the twentieth century was written late in the nineteenth century by Fyodor Dostoyevsky within the pages of *The Brothers Karamazov*. The clash between the utopian, secular worldview of the Grand Inquisitor and the figure of Christ in the dock, the defender of human freedom and human dignity, provides wonderful insights into the sources of morality and the competing conceptions of how best to advance the good of humanity. Twentieth-century history, with the mass murders of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Tse Tung—all atheists intent on remaking the world according to secular utopian schemes—provides stark and tragic evidence as to what can happen when such purely human schemes are advanced in the name of humanity.

Morality is absolutely necessary if stable, peaceful, and economically prosperous societies are to emerge. I would further note that the often irrational passions, hatred, and bitterness that ignite and fuel conflict in, for example, the Balkans or the Middle East will require the championing of the values of forgiveness and reconciliation—values that force human beings somehow to escape the narrow bondage of material self-interest.

During the winter of 1991-92 my wife and I lived in Moscow. Jan taught English in a Russian elementary school and I taught graduate students at Moscow State University. For many years in the West I had worked on behalf of human rights and religious freedom for those who had suffered under Communism and now it was my privilege to work with these same individuals, many of them former dissidents, who had become members of the Duma and were writing new legislation guaranteeing religious freedom and human rights. Finally, freedom

(continued on page 2)

Contributing Editors

Canon Michael Bourdeaux

Keston Institute, Oxford

Dr. Anita Deyneka

Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, Wheaton, IL

Father Georgi Edelstein

Russian Orthodox Church, Kostroma Diocese

Rev. Viktor Hamm

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Winnepeg

Dr. Zygmunt Karel

Biblical Theological Seminary International, Poland

Rev. Nick Nedelchev

Bulgarian Evangelical Theological Institute, Sofia

Dr. Peter Penner

International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague

Dr. Walter Sawatsky

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN

Mrs. Katya Smyslova

Esther Legal Center, Moscow

Rev. Larry Thompson

Campus Crusade for Christ, International, Budapest

Mr. Larry Uzzell

Jamestown Foundation Waxahachie, TX

Dr. Alexander Zaichenko

Russian-American Christian University, Moscow

"If There Is No God..."

(continued from page 1)

of conscience was to be protected by law—something that ought not to be sacrificed on the altar of the illusory collectivist vision of the future.

Lenin's Imprint Linger

I remember one elementary school I visited had a mural of Lenin in the main entryway of the school. The decision was made to get a fresh start and paint over the picture of Lenin. At first the image disappeared, but in a few days it reemerged—less pronounced to be sure, but still recognizable. It was necessary to paint it again but, once again, his now fainter image reasserted itself. It took a third coat of white paint to get the desired result.

In many ways, the continuing presence of a materialist worldview in Russia is like that mural of Lenin—a legacy of the Marxist period that remains with us in the post-Communist era. Marxist economics may have been eliminated, but vestiges of central economic control linger. Still, in theory at least, Marxist economics has been repudiated. Marx's view of human nature is still dominant, though perhaps not acknowledged. Here it should be noted that the post-Communist world shares a very strong tie with the West. Though the West often claims to be religious, Christian or Jewish by ancestry, the West more often lives according to the materialist tenets of the Enlightenment which view religion as unimportant or as a superstitious relic of the past deserving only ridicule. As a friend of mine has put it, "We in the West may say we are religious, but, in fact, we are often functional atheists."

We must remind each other that we are far more than material beings. For if we are no more than material beings, capable only of thinking about ourselves and our own narrow self interest, we will never find the internal resources necessary to deal

with the problems [facing Russia and the United States]. Edmund Burke, the great eighteenth-century English thinker, once said that "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." We often underestimate what courageous individuals can accomplish.

Consider the tireless efforts in the nineteenth century of William Wilberforce who labored for over four decades in the English Parliament to convince his fellow parliamentarians to vote against their own economic self interests to abolish the infamous slave trade. Or consider the singleness of purpose, even obsession, of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, dedicated to the proposition that there must be an historical record of the millions who perished in the Gulag. Behind Solzhenitsyn's work is an indomitable belief that "a single word of truth" is indeed more powerful than an empire built on lies. He believes there is such a thing as truth and we must never forget that together, if we try and are honest, we can at least make progress towards realizing it.

It is time to challenge the narrow and restrictive views of human beings that fail to challenge us to reach beyond ourselves to think about the good of others. It is time that we recognize there is no lasting freedom without responsibility, no lasting economic prosperity that deprives any of participating, no solution for the most painful conflicts of society if we fail to appeal to what is deepest and most beautiful in the human soul. ♦

Kent R. Hill is assistant administrator, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and former president of Eastern Nazarene College, Quincy, MA.

Edited excerpt published with the author's permission from an address, "Truth and Social Good: The Keys to Peace, Democracy, and Prosperity," given at the Moscow School of Political Studies, 9 December 2002.

Funding Church Reconstruction

Irina Sandul

In 2001, Moscow spent 64 million rubles (\$2.1 million) on restoration of the city's churches. In 1999, during preparations for the 2000th anniversary of Christianity, the total expenditure on restoration from state and private sources in Russia was six times as high. Restoration work on St. Basil's Cathedral on Red Square is expected to cost the federal budget 100 million rubles (\$3.2 million).

Over the last decade Sergei Sitnikov, general manager of Tsar Pushka, a Moscow restoration company, has restored cupolas or iconostases of 20 Orthodox monasteries and churches in and outside the capital. He remembers better times, in the middle of the 1990s, when Russians rushed back into religion. The number of churches was small then

and, strange though it may sound, that was more lucrative for restorers: "Parish incomes were almost three times higher at the time," said Sitnikov's colleague, Arkady Sazonov. "Then, they sold a candle for 2-3 rubles and had some 300 visitors a day," he said, estimating an average church's monthly revenue to be about \$7,500 at that time. "Before, there was just one church per region, where [people] from half of Moscow used to go. Now they put up a cross, they find a priest, old women gather, and everybody comes to pray. The number of parishes has grown. The amount of money [that churches can spend on reconstruction] has decreased." ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from The Russia Journal, 16 August 2002.

It is time to challenge the narrow and restrictive views of human beings that fail to challenge us to reach beyond ourselves to think about the good of others.

International Guarantees of Liberty and the Slippery Slope of Restrictions on Radical Islam in Kazakhstan and Russia

Lauren B. Homer

Radical Islam

For purposes of this article, the term radical Islam refers to the relatively new and emerging teachings of Osama Bin Laden, Al Quada, and their associates, often called "Wahhabis" in Russia and Central Asia and referred to as Islamists by other writers. Radical Islam advocates 1) holy war against Christians, Jews, and Western states who support them; 2) all possible efforts to bring down the governments of, among others, the United States and Russia, to destroy their economies, and to destroy their populations and armies; and 3) the creation of a theocratic state in which practitioners of other faiths are eliminated or severely restricted.

To date, expressions of radical Islam outside traditionally Islamic nations have included terrorist acts against innocent civilians, in particular, the bombing of buildings in Argentina, Africa, Russia, Israel, and the United States, most notably on 11 September 2001. Of course, there has also been recruitment of members and proselytization of the doctrines of radical Islam in those countries.

Another significant set of actions of radical Islam has involved attempts to overthrow moderate or democratic governments in nations with significant or majority Muslim populations. Its goal is to establish theocratic states that espouse and are subordinate to the views of radical Islam and that will eradicate all other forms of religious belief and believers, including moderate Muslims. In these cases, the primary means is more conventional guerrilla warfare and insurgencies, such as those in southern Russia (Chechnya), Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Indonesia, and the Philippines. A recent statement attributed to Osama Bin Laden called for the targeting of Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen for "liberation" (12 February 2003, translation by BBC, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/world/middle_east/2751019.stm). The desired result has to date been achieved in only one nation, Afghanistan, with horrific results for its population, particularly women and children.

Radical Islam fundamentally is a religious world view that seeks to return to a perceived past religious paradise that includes exclusive Islamic sway over specific land masses. It is not just terrorism masquerading under a religious banner.

Reexamining International Standards

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, many governments have begun to reexamine how international guarantees of religious freedom are

applied to religious groups that openly seek the overthrow of "enemy" states and the elimination of adherents of opposing religious views. This article looks in detail at new laws in Kazakhstan and Russia that address these issues. It is important to keep in mind that the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Russia, and many other countries have enacted new laws designed to prevent further terrorist acts. In the U.S., bans have been lifted on domestic intelligence operations. The FBI is now permitted to infiltrate and monitor religious groups and religious charities. Assets of religiously motivated charities have been seized and donors who are not U.S. citizens have been threatened with jail and deportation. Borders are more zealously guarded and persons of particular religious and ethnic backgrounds are more closely screened. Non-citizens are subjected to preventive detention, special monitoring, intrusive testing (DNA), and of course, reduced access to visas. Within the U.S., aliens and citizens of particular ethnic and religious backgrounds face monitoring of their communications.

Restrictions on such expressions of religious belief are supported by international human rights and religious freedom standards under the "public emergency" and "public safety" exceptions. At the same time, these new laws put the future of international religious freedom and the campaign to support it in the United States at a serious crossroad. It is critical to ensure that new rules and regulations are not so broadly applied as to destroy the basic rights of newer, nonviolent religions and that they do not go beyond restrictions permissible under international human rights accords and the constitutional restraints of the applicable nation, particularly of the United States.

Three premises can inform our reflections on radical Islam and the protection of freedom of conscience. First, many religious beliefs provoke fear and anxiety in practitioners of other faiths or in the minds of atheists and agnostics. Therefore, a line must be drawn carefully between 1) religious beliefs that openly seek to overthrow democratically elected governments and to harm religious opponents and 2) religious beliefs that enrage merely because they are different from those of the majority, or a perceived historic majority. Here a distinction must be made between beliefs that truly threaten the lives and well being of others and those that threaten simply because they provide a different religious world view.

Second, advocates of religious freedom and democracy must recognize that in order to preserve democracy and the rule of law, limitations upon

A distinction must be made between beliefs that truly threaten the lives and well being of others and those that threaten simply because they provide a different religious world view.

(continued on page 4)

Advocates of religious freedom and democracy must recognize that in order to preserve democracy and the rule of law, limitations upon threatening beliefs are necessary.

International Guarantees of Liberty...

(continued from page 3)

threatening beliefs are necessary. Espousing the view that all religious ideas are equivalent or that even violent and threatening religious beliefs must be tolerated actually imperils religious freedom and the maintenance of democratic forms of government that sustain it. Christians are called to resist evil, not to submit to it.

Third, in a world of instant communication and transnational activity, traditional barriers of national boundaries, language, time, and distance no longer impede the spread of new religious ideas. Instead, international air travel, telephone, fax, E-mail, mass media, the Internet, and population migration ensure that new ideas will not be kept out even if activities of foreign practitioners and organizations can be restricted. It is thus unrealistic to think that new ideas can be eliminated. Instead, they must be dealt with under a system of laws that pays attention both to legitimate expressions of faith and to the risks to national well-being posed by terrorist groups.

United Nations Agreements on Religious Tolerance and Freedom

It was only after the calamities of the Second World War and the advent of the United Nations that nations began to accept the concept that tolerance and mutual coexistence must become universal standards. Let us briefly review two key documents.

The most significant international human rights document is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 and amended in 1976. Its importance derives from its being a covenant (or contract), not a declaration, and has been signed by most of the states at issue. Article 4 states:

In time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation... States Parties to the present Covenant may take measures derogating from [setting aside] their obligations under the present Covenant... provided that such measures... do not involve discrimination solely on the ground of race, color, sex, language, religion, or social origin.

And even in times of public emergency, Article 18 upholds "the right... to have or adopt a religion or belief... individually or in community with others, and to manifest it in worship, observance, practice and teaching," whether in public or in private, and the right not to be coerced to reject or adopt a religious belief.

A second international protection for freedom of conscience is the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, passed by the United Nations General Assembly, 25 November 1981. It provides a ringing proclamation of the importance of "freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief." Nonetheless, Article 1.3 states: "Freedom to

manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others."

Thus, in times of public emergency, signatory nations may derogate from [set aside] their responsibilities under the Covenant related to, among others, rights to freedom of expression, rights of assembly, and freedom of association, and even freedom of conscience. However, they may not discriminate solely on the basis of religion or ban possession or expression of faith altogether even in times of emergencies, unless this is necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals, or fundamental rights and freedoms of others. Thus, the terms of the Covenant and the Declaration do not allow governments to ban stupid ideas, ideas that are disagreeable to existing religious structures, and ideas that promote religious beliefs not traditional to a nation or a group within a nation. In the contemplation of international standards, the latter type of disagreements are to be debated in the public square. Part of the inherent dignity of people is their right to decide for themselves what and whether to believe.

Applying United Nations Standards to Radical Islam and to New Central Asian and Russian Laws

Taking into account the basic tenets of radical Islam, it would appear that its distinctives of incitement to war, violence, religious hatred, the killing of non-combatants, the overthrow of governments, and the formation of armed military or terrorist units are clearly subject to limitations by the Covenant and are indeed ordered to be prohibited by law in signatory nations.

In light of the creation of states of public emergency in the many nations adversely affected by the activities of radical Islam, it also appears that restraints on freedom of expression, including the creation of religious literature, speeches, Web sites, assembly, and association may be restricted as long as they do not discriminate solely on the basis of religion. By this, the drafters presumably mean that an entire faith cannot be banned but that the law must specify a type of activity. With these standards in mind, let us examine new laws in Kazakhstan and Russia.

Kazakhstan

On 31 January 2002, over the objections of many religious groups, the Kazakh legislature, in secret session, adopted a new law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organization" as part of a package of urgent counterterrorism legislation. Among other provisions, the law requires at least 50 followers to register a congregation and unregistered congregations are forbidden to rent property. This provision is of concern to the Russian Orthodox Church, among others, since it has many fledgling

congregations in small towns. Significantly, Muslims are singled out for special regulation. Approval of registration of groups not affiliated with the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Kazakhstan requires the endorsement of the Spiritual Directorate. The law also bans activities of all unregistered religious groups and requires the registration of all missionaries (already required under a presidential decree). Other controversial provisions are that local congregations are to choose their own leaders, a practice at variance with traditions of many religious organizations, including the Russian Orthodox. Article 7 contains a provision that the activities of "foreign" religious organizations in the republic should take place through religious centers in the republic of which there should be one for each faith. Since the Russian Orthodox Church would be considered "foreign" in Kazakhstan, this would mean that it might not be free to appoint its own church leaders in Kazakhstan. For foreign religious groups with more than one "competing" set of missionaries in the republic, it would mean that only one could be registered. This would put severe limitations, for example, on various Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim groups.

On 11 April 2002 the Kazakh Constitutional Council ruled that it is a violation of the Kazakh Constitution to restrict free propagation of religious beliefs and to require prior approval of the Spiritual Directorate in order for Muslim organizations to register or set up houses of worship. President Nursultan Nazarbayev decided not to appeal the decision, and thus, the law is inactive for now. Nonetheless, there have been numerous reports that local authorities are acting as if the law is in effect, shutting down unregistered congregations, refusing to allow the rental of worship space, etc.

Russia

Article 14 of the 1997 Russian Federation Law, "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations," contains a series of prohibitions on activities of religious organizations. Some appeared rather irrational when the law was enacted, but today appear very sensible, such as prohibitions on the formation of military units. But the new law dealing with propaganda of religious extremism passed in 2002 goes beyond this. It has as its stated goal "recognition of the inadmissibility of dissemination of ideas of religious extremism in any form." It prohibits calling for or acting in ways that undermine social order or the security of the state; changing the secular character of the state or trying to impose norms of religious law instead of norms of current legislation; creating armed units; inciting social, racial, national, or religious dissension or intolerance or hatred; allowing inequality or discrimination of citizens due to race, nationality, religion, or sex; forcing families to disintegrate; violating the rights of the family and its members; infringing upon the rights and freedoms of

citizens; and inflicting damage on the health or morality of citizens, including by use of stimulants, narcotic or psychoactive substances, and hypnosis.

The law also disallows depraved or disorderly actions, "knowingly providing false information with the aim of attracting new members to the given organization, or restraining a person who wishes to leave the organization," and "hindering the lawful activity of state organs, persons in authority, or state-recognized political, social, religious, or other organizations or calls for [their] unlawful liquidation." These activities are then characterized as religious extremism if they stem from religious motivation or employ religious slogans.

A Critique of the Laws

Based upon the above cases, certain provisions appear clearly acceptable, while others continue to be problematic. For example, the Kazakh law appears to overreach by making one religious organization, the Spiritual Directorate, a quasi-governmental arm of the state empowered to eliminate all rival Muslim religious groups by its refusal to authorize their registration or construction of worship centers. Language that creates a special governmental commission that receives expert advice in analyzing new branches of Islam in light of their propensity to threaten others or the state would be preferable. There are many branches of Islam and not all are bent on the destruction of enemies. The same type of provision could also be used to restrict Christians of a given confession to a single hierarchy or theological position. As examples, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and Old Believers would not be able to form congregations separate from those of the Moscow Patriarchate and all Baptist churches would have to register as part of one religious center. Also, arbitrarily requiring registration of all religious organizations and increasing the size of needed founders to 50 appears designed more to eliminate smaller religious groups than to achieve any legitimate public security goal.

The language in the new Russian law in many respects appears totally consistent with the Covenant and the Declaration. However, certain points stand out as questionable, such as knowingly providing false information to prospective converts. The fact that information may be false cannot alone be enough to ban or outlaw an organization, particularly since most religious beliefs are not objectively verifiable, but are questions of faith. ♦

Lauren Homer is an attorney at law and founding president of Law and Liberty Trust, St. Louis, MO.

The fact that information may be false cannot alone be enough to ban or outlaw an organization, particularly since most religious beliefs are not objectively verifiable, but are questions of faith.

Attempts to “Manage” Islam in Central Asia

Martha Brill Olcott

When Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev started talking about cultural renewal in the late 1980s, people throughout the Soviet Union began to press for a new relationship between religion and society, one which allowed an individual the freedom to practice his or her traditional faith as the dictates of conscience defined it. With independence, Russians and most other Christian populations of the Soviet Union have been reasonably successful at realizing this goal.

The same has not been true in the Muslim-dominated regions and the suspicion with which most of Central Asia's rulers regard Islam has increased over time. This attitude is quite characteristic of the Central Asian elite, not just those who are in charge, but of many who are in opposition as well, and it is one that often plays well with Western audiences. The Central Asian elite, of course, is not formally against Islam, but it is very wary of revivalist or fundamentalist Islam, of people who are eager to live by “the exact teachings of the book.” They want to keep these republics as secular states and to prevent devout Muslims from forcing all of their coreligionists into public observance of the faith.

It is not difficult to understand the negative feelings of the Soviet-era elite—both Muslim and non-Muslim—toward revivalist Islam, as their lifestyles would be directly threatened by the imposition of Islamic norms, and their hold on power could be as well. The post-Soviet world is a unique one, as the colonial-era elite remains in power with the right to divide up all state property and is able to limit the political access of the next generation. In these conditions, Islam can be a useful tool for the state's opponents. Islamic revivalists are keenly interested in advancing the cause of social welfare and the state has real difficulty maintaining the level of social protection in a time of economic transition.

In the absence of a civil society, there are few secular political institutions around which opposition can coalesce. Islam, especially the mosque and the medresseh, is about the only organizational center available to those in opposition to the regime and it is very difficult to restrict popular access to it. As a result, advocacy of Islamic goals can be useful for both the regime's supporters as well as for its

detractors. All depends on the rules of the game and these are still in flux.

The challenge posed by Islam remains particularly acute in Uzbekistan. Islam is particularly deeply rooted in many parts of the country and the precedent of competition among Islamic fundamentalists, modernists, and conservatives is well established. All three traditions withstood the vicissitudes of Soviet rule. Some of today's radical groups even have their roots in an anti-Russian uprising that occurred in the Ferghana Valley in 1898 and a few of the leaders even studied with a holy man who witnessed the revolt as a young child and who, much to Soviet displeasure, survived to a very old age.

Uzbek President Islam Karimov believes that Islam can be managed, as do most of his colleagues. In fact, Central Asia's leaders all remain committed to the social engineering approach that characterized Soviet rule. They believe strongly that religion can be managed by the state, as can the development of Islam, and that governments are competent enough to influence the social evolution of society. The relationship of religion to mass belief is much more complex and interactive than the region's leaders credit it with being. Although the governments of Central Asia are in no position to regulate the religious beliefs of the masses, they may exert their influence on social processes. But in trying to do so, these governments could inadvertently trigger social explosions.◆

Martha Brill Olcott is senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, and codirector of the Carnegie Moscow Center's Project on Ethnicity and Politics. She is the author of Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002).

Edited excerpt reprinted by permission from Martha Brill Olcott, “Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia,” Working Paper No. 23, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Russian and Eurasian Program, September 2001.

In the absence of a civil society, there are few secular political institutions around which opposition can coalesce. Islam is about the only organizational center available.

Difficulties in the Orthodox-Western Encounter:

An Orthodox Ethicist Shares Two Contrasting Perspectives

Stanley S. Harakas

Editor's Note: A respected Orthodox ethicist takes both Orthodox and Evangelicals to task in this painful assessment of post-Soviet "soul wars." Readers should take care in quoting Harakas because points made are frequently followed by equally compelling counterpoints.

East and West at Odds

An exchange took place in the Geneva suburb of Chambesey in September of 1991 at the Inter-Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. It was a meeting of representatives of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches throughout the world and, of course, dominated by representatives of Orthodox Churches from Eastern Europe.

Almost all of the church leaders who spoke expressed themselves, roughly, in the following fashion:

We are very pleased that our church is now free from control and repression at the hands of the former regime. We rejoice in our newfound freedom. We look forward to a normalization of our church life. Yet we are disturbed by the inrush of foreign missionaries from various Christian and non-Christian churches and sects. They are creating division and fragmenting our national and ecclesial unity in a scandalous way. We ask you to protest this inappropriate activity, for our nation is an Orthodox nation by tradition and polity. Other churches should respect that and stop seeking to convert our people.

This was the almost unanimous stance from the leaders of the Orthodox Churches present at the meeting. In my role as a "theological consultant" I felt it necessary to speak to this stance. I began by noting that I was speaking as an Orthodox who shares in a traditional ethnic heritage, but also as an American. I repeatedly sought to point out that there seemed to be an inherent contradiction in statements celebrating freedom on the one hand and, on the other, demanding that non-Orthodox proselytizing activity be prohibited. I offered the opinion that these were mutually exclusive concepts. What was needed, I said, was an acceptance of the new realities rooted in a competitive effort to retain and regain for the Orthodox Church the peoples who were its traditional flock.

Essentially I called for pastoral activism. This meant that it was necessary for the Orthodox Churches of Eastern Europe and elsewhere to accept that freedom meant anyone could proclaim their beliefs and seek converts, but the best defense by the Orthodox Church would be to minister energetically to its natural constituencies. I was repeatedly told, "I did not understand," and my comments essentially

fell on deaf, if not antagonistic, ears. This personal experience summarizes the challenge for Orthodox in the post-Soviet world.

Orthodox Assumptions and Distinctives

Orthodox assumptions for ecclesial life are not rooted in the Western post-enlightenment, secularist, capitalist, and individualistic ethos now so dominant in the modern world. In the face of Western rationalism, Orthodox emphasize human finiteness and the transcendent mystery of the ultimate unknowability of God. The East's stance is summarized in the title given to a translation and commentary of Gregory the Theologian's five theological orations by Fredrick W. Norris: *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning* (New York: Brill, 1991). In sharp distinction from the rampant individualism of the contemporary mindset, in Orthodoxy both theological and ethnic considerations play important roles in affirming, rather, the corporate reality of human existence. In the face of the fact that holiness is often thought of in individual terms, it is often forgotten that the presence of the Holy Spirit creates community.

An outgrowth of this perspective is the incarnational missionary perspective of Orthodox Christianity that historically sought to embody the Christian faith in the language, culture, ethos, and lifestyle of particular peoples and nations. This formation of "nations" (as distinguished from states), in a way that respected the local identities and cultures of believers, was characteristic of Byzantine missions from the earliest history of Eastern Christianity. James Stamoolis, an Evangelical Protestant scholar, in his work *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), emphasizes the importance of this approach for Orthodox Christianity. He says, "The incarnational approach, the translation into the vernacular, yet more than the translation, the very embodiment of God's truth in the language and culture of a people, has been the hallmark of the best of Orthodox mission work."

The Secular Assault on All of Christendom

In many ways, Eastern Orthodox Christianity is no different from Roman Catholicism and the various strains of Protestantism as they face the modern world. The secular character of the modern world's ethos and values militates against the values of faith.

There seemed to be an inherent contradiction in statements celebrating freedom on the one hand and, on the other, demanding that non-Orthodox proselytizing activity be prohibited.

(continued on page 8)

Many Orthodox Christians ask if the proselytizing influx of Western missionaries is spiritually and morally justifiable.

Difficulties in the Orthodox-Western Encounter (continued from page 7)

In like manner, numerous particular issues serve to challenge both thought and practice of the Orthodox Church in the post-Soviet period. The shock of having to deal with issues of public concern is great.

Numerous issues of popular culture, pastoral goals, and methodologies assault Orthodox Churches of the former Soviet bloc. Some of these, for example, are numerous sexual issues (such as birth control, homosexuality, abortion, venereal diseases, and AIDS), interfaith marriages, the family, child abuse, divorce, human rights, racism, criminal justice, war and peace, ecology, health and healing, death and dying, and euthanasia. These and numerous other moral and social questions challenge these churches in a unique way, since in the 70-year period of Soviet domination it was not possible even to reflect on most of them, much less address them pastorally.

Orthodox Temptations: Ethnic Infatuation and Political Conformity

There is an all-too-easy movement from a legitimate "incarnation of the Orthodox Faith in the ethnic cultures of peoples" to submersion of the Faith to ethnic interests—what could be called an "ethno-cultural caesoropapism." Thus, the danger exists for the Gospel of salvation, the integrity of ecclesial life, and the catholic vision of the Christian mission to be submerged in the deep waters of religiously sanctioned ethnicism or nationalism. True, this has been condemned frequently by Orthodox writers and even by an important Council of the Orthodox Church, which dealt with Bulgarian "ethnopleyeticism," yet it remains a thorn in the side of Orthodoxy.

The failures produced by an uncritical and too-close relationship of the Orthodox Church to its ethnic and cultural associations came to the fore precisely during the Soviet era. Both non-Orthodox and Orthodox critics have documented these failures and what might honestly be called betrayals. Thus, Carnegie Samuel Calian, a Presbyterian scholar and student of Orthodoxy, noted that the Orthodox Church under the Ceausescu regime in Romania was "an example of misapplied symphonia eclipsing Orthodoxy's prophetic responsibility and faithfulness to truth and justice. In retrospect, it can be seen that the Romanian Orthodox Church paid too high a price in its uncritical support of the state" (*Theology Without Boundaries: Encounters of Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Tradition* [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992], 73).

No one, however, on the American scene has been more critical of the Orthodox Church in these situations than the Orthodox priest and ethicist Alexander F. C. Webster, in his controversial volume, *The Price of Prophecy: Orthodox Churches on Peace, Freedom, and Security* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1993). Focusing primarily on

the Russian and Romanian churches, he severely criticizes both churches for the absence of a sufficiently distanced stance allowing for more ecclesial integrity before the militantly atheistic governments of those two nations.

Evangelicals and Indecent Proselytism

Many Orthodox Christians [also] ask if the proselytizing influx of Western missionaries is spiritually and morally justifiable. Seeking with extremely limited means to reevangelize their own peoples, instead of help and cooperation, these churches find their work undercut by every manner of proselytizing effort. It is as if the Orthodox Churches and their at least nominal constituencies in these nations are being treated as some sort of ecclesiastical carrion, to be picked apart while still on their knees after 70 years of battering by militant atheism. In the view of Orthodox, simple human decency in such a situation would seek rather to assist these fellow churches in ministering to their natural constituencies. I seek for what Ion Bria has called, in another context, "a time of grace" for the Orthodox Churches to assume their work in each of these nations, to address their problems, and to reevangelize their nations. Needless to say, such a "time of grace" cannot be limitless, but ethically and morally speaking, the Western world should recognize that simple human decency demands it.

Persuasion Versus Legislation

On the part of the Orthodox, however, there must come an acceptance one day of the truth that the old means of state/church accommodation will never return. This means that the means available to the Christian Church are those that it had available to it in the pre-Constantinian period. Jaroslav Pelikan begins and ends his book, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), with a quotation from Goethe. It summarizes the message that the Orthodox must hear and respond to in the post-Soviet period: "What you have as heritage, take now as task; for thus you will make it your own." This return to earlier traditions for Orthodoxy must also mean a renewed respect for freedom and a stronger commitment to the method of persuasion and spiritual example, on what should be a level playing field. There is a case to be made for a return by the contemporary Orthodox Church to an early church and patristic commitment to freedom. This is a commitment to the "Voices of Religious Liberty in the Early Church," as expressed [in] the title of an article by Everett Ferguson (*Restoration Quarterly* 119 [no. 19, 1976], 13-22). In that article, passages from early church writings provide what seem to be very contemporary and modern perspectives that need to inspire Orthodox to a renewed understanding of mission and ministry in the new millennium that is dawning. With some of these early Christian judgments on religious freedom, I conclude. From Tertullian: "It is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according

to his own convictions: one man's religion neither harms nor helps another man. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion—to which free will and not force should lead us”; from St. Athanasius: “The truth is not preached with swords or with darts, nor by means of soldiers; but by persuasion and counsel”; from St. John Chrysostom: “It ill befits Christians of all men to correct the mistakes of the erring by constraint. God crowns those who

refrain from evil by choice and not by necessity. The priest has much to do also in gathering up the scattered members of the church. The shepherd can recall a wandering sheep with a shout, but if a man errs from the true faith, the pastor has need of great effort, perseverance, and patience. The wanderer cannot be dragged by force or constrained by fear. Only persuasion can restore him to the truth from which he has fallen away.” ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Stanley S. Harakas, Wholeness of Faith and Life: Orthodox Christian Ethics (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1999).

The Polish Light-Life Movement and the Roman Catholic Church

Pawel Zalecki

The Light-Life Movement (*Swiatlo-Zycie*), or Oases, emerged in the 1950s as one of the manifestations of religious revival in Poland. In the 1950s the active policy of the atheist Communist state aimed to eliminate religion from the public sphere. It attempted to confine religious life to the private sphere as part and parcel of its overall goal of gaining total control over the political, cultural, and religious domains. In spite of the new social and political system in post-war Poland and the secularization policy of the Communist authorities, the Catholic Church began to build up religious life. The Episcopate of Poland formerly consisted of 20 bishops compared to more than 100 today.

Origins

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council met in the years 1962-1965. The Polish liturgy was reformed and the national language replaced Latin. The service became a dialogue between priest and parishioners. This religious revival resulted in new forms of religious associations and movements. One of them was the “Light-Life Movement” which developed fully in the 1980s. It emerged as an informal, spontaneous social group centered around Rev. Franciszek Blachnicki (1921-1987). From the 1950s on, the movement has continuously stressed its strong ties with the institution of the Roman Catholic Church.

From inception, the Light-Life Movement was meant to fulfill the following functions: 1) to transform the individual, spiritual life of its members as well as their immediate social milieu; and 2) to build a “new community” of “new people” who would create and share a “new culture” centered around the ideas of Jesus Christ. The Light-Life Movement did not have its own resources. The movement's communities, “Oases,” which were organized by local priests, were allowed to use Roman Catholic Church buildings [and] money to organize religious retreats during vacations. People were recruited by means of private, informal contacts, outdoor evangelization, the church's catechization in schools, and the occasional participation of nonmembers in community activities.

The accompanying chart indicates estimated

data on the number of permanent members according to the movement's official data.

The Movement's Two Currents

The movement split into two currents in the second half of the 1980s: the “liturgical-biblical” current and the “charismatic-evangelizing-ecumenical” current. The “liturgical-biblical” current is dominant and can be roughly described as “traditional.” Communities subscribing to it seem to focus on personal and communal self-improvement. When they engage in any activities aimed at the outside world, they make a special effort to avoid any social conflicts. Communities subscribing to the “charismatic” current willingly engage in activities aimed at the outside world, even if this results in conflicts. The practices of the charismatic current differ from practices within the Catholic Church. However, many of them, such as glossolalia, prophecy, and baptism in the Holy Spirit, are comparable to the everyday practices of many other Christian groups and movements. The final factor that helps distinguish between these two currents today is their attitude towards “self-sufficiency.” The charismatic current engages in various activities that drive it to financial independence from the institutional church.

At the present time, in the liturgical-biblical current, we can observe only a small increase of new members, while many are leaving. The traditional current clearly exercises a much stronger pressure on self-improvement compared to the charismatic. Its members develop strong feelings of sinfulness and imperfection. Since total realization of accepted values is impossible, many people become frustrated and abandon the movement. People older than 25 also leave the movement because of a strong attachment to their work and/or family duties.

The inflow of new members to the charismatic current is significant. As a movement, it covers children, parents, university students, single adults, and whole families. Withdrawals of regular members are rare. Some members of the traditional current move their “significant participation” to the charismatic

Estimated Number of Permanent Members of the Oases Movement between 1969 and 1992

1969	700
1970	1,000
1971	1,500
1972	3,500
1973	6,000
1974	9,500
1975	14,000
1976	20,000
1978	30,000
1979	30,000
1980	40,000
1981	45,000
1982	50,000
1983	53,000
1984	64,000
1985	70,000
1986	76,000
1987	77,000
1988	77,000
1992*	90,000-100,000

Sources: Central archives of Oases; J. Doktor, J. Kowalczywska, and J. Werbanowska, “Uczestnictwo w nowych ruchach religijnych a poczucie sensu zycia i poziomu niepokoju,” *Euhemer - Przegląd Religio-znawczy* Nr. 4 (1991): 133-46.

*Author's estimate.

(continued on page 10)

The Light-Life Movement was meant to transform the individual, spiritual life of its members and to build a "new community" centered around the ideas of Jesus Christ.

The Polish Light-Life Movement... (continued from page 9)

current. Reverse mobility does not take place.

Out of necessity, Light-Life had to function during the first three decades of its existence within the unfriendly, anti-religious political system. From the point of view of this system, the movement's activities were illegal. The movement was able to operate only due to the resources supplied by the institutional church. This situation gave the church a chance to control the movement. In its initial state of development, only very small tensions in the relations between the movement and the institutional church occurred. They had a rather local character: some parish priests did not like the independent and spontaneous activity of lay persons.

The Movement's Ambiguous Relationship to the Church

The systemic transformation in Poland created new opportunities for the emergence of new forms of public activities, including religious. The spontaneous aspect of the movement gained new opportunities for stronger expression. This gain in autonomy has not affected its symbolic and ideological dependence on the Roman Catholic Church, [which] strengthens

its self-definition as a Roman Catholic social movement. The church hierarchy, however, is clearly split in its evaluation of its new activities. During several National Conferences of the Polish Episcopate, especially in 1994, the "problematic questions" of several charismatic communities of the Light-Life Movement were discussed and, at the beginning of 1995, a local bishop excluded three charismatic Light-Life communities from the movement.

The movement itself is also split. Some leaders of the charismatic current have considered the possibility of an official withdrawal to create independent structures. In the 1990s an increasing economic and structural autonomy of the charismatic current became significant. The gradual withdrawal of many charismatic communities from the Light-Life Movement is ongoing. The possibility of withdrawal from the Roman Catholic Church, however, is not being considered. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Pawel Zalecki, "Religious Revival in Poland. New Religious Movements and the Roman Catholic Church" in Pink, Purple, Green; Women's, Religious, Environmental and Gay/Lesbian Movements in Central Europe Today, edited by Helena Flam. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs/Columbia University Press, 2001.

Polish Catholicism: Without Its Communist Opponent, Less Monolithic

Paul Froese and Steven Pfaff

National conflict allowed the Catholic Church of Poland to attain the highest levels of religiosity in all of Europe. Nearly all Polish adults surveyed in 1990 (97.6 percent) reported they had been raised in a religious household. [But] a new spirit of democracy in Poland has left the Catholic Church in search of its political and national voice. Having dispelled Communist rule, the public is less trustful and less obedient to the church. In 1989, 87.8 percent of Poles expressed confidence in the Catholic Church, but public confidence fell dramatically after the end of Communism to 73.5 percent in 1990 and to 52.9 percent in 1991. These changes in public opinion have surprised church leaders who expected to be rewarded with political and legal power for their role in unseating Communism. One Polish journalist explained that in seeking more political power the Catholic Church "burned its fingers, as we know, and it gave up part of these aspirations" (*Time International*, 1999). With newfound freedoms of democratic rule, Poles embraced the ideology of democratic rights over the hierarchical traditions of their church.

In 1994, not only did overwhelming numbers of Poles (93 percent) favor individual choice over church law on political matters, but over three-fourths

of the population believed that individuals need to decide for themselves whether divorce or the interruption of a pregnancy is appropriate. Church doctrines clearly take a back seat to individual choice, even among the world's most avid Catholics. By 1994, many Poles (44.4 percent) felt that the Catholic Church had amassed too much authority after Communism. These data indicate that high religiosity in Poland was truly an expression of opposition to Communist rule.

Compared to other East European countries, new religious movements in Poland have acquired substantially more adherents. On the other hand, mainline Protestant missionaries have been reluctant to pursue the opportunities of Poland's newfound freedoms, apparently daunted by the overwhelming size of the Polish Catholic Church. In fact, Poland has a lower proportion of Protestant missionaries for their population than any other East European country for which we have data. ♦

Paul Froese is a graduate student in sociology at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA. Steven Pfaff is assistant professor of sociology at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

Church doctrines clearly take a back seat to individual choice, even among the world's most avid Catholics.

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from "Replete and Desolate Markets: Poland, East Germany, and the New Religious Paradigm," Social Forces 80 (no. 2, 2001): 481-507.

Polish New Religious Movements

Pawel Zalecki

Almost all New Religious Movements (NRMs) found in Poland, even those of Oriental origin, arrived from Western countries. Only a few NRMs have no agencies or "headquarters" abroad. The best known that started in Poland due to a missionary activity of their representatives from the West are: 1) Science of Identity Institute "Chaitanya Mission" (in Poland since 1988, registered in 1990, ca. 1,000 followers); 2) International Society for Krishna Consciousness, ISKCON (in Poland since 1976, registered in 1988, ca. 12,000 followers and ca. 500 persons after the religious initiation); 3) The Family, The Children of God, or The Family of Love (in Poland since 1974, ca. 150 followers); 4) Bahá'í Faith (in Poland since 1989, registration in 1992, ca. 500 followers); and 5) Unification Church (in Poland since 1980, registration in 1990, ca. 500 followers).

The rapid increase in the number of NRMs in the early 1990s has now subsided. A statement

of one of the highest spiritual leaders of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in Poland captures past and current trends well: "When the system transformation started in Poland in 1989, the movement developed very fast. People were interested and joined.... It can be said there was a real Krishna Movement boom. Now, after eight to nine years, we notice this interest has diminished and the number of followers is not growing as rapidly. In fact, quantity seems to have been replaced by quality." This is perhaps true for many other NRMs. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Pawel Zalecki, "Religious Revival in Poland. New Religious Movements and the Roman Catholic Church" in Pink, Purple, Green; Women's, Religious, Environmental and Gay/Lesbian Movements in Central Europe Today, edited by Helena Flam. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs/Columbia University Press, 2001.

The rapid increase in the number of NRMs in the early 1990s has now subsided.

A Russian Note on Protestant Theological Education

I.V. Podberezskii

Editor's Note: The author evaluates the activity of Evangelical theological schools in Russia which are often controlled by overseas Christians and which, he argues, do not take into consideration Russian believers' viewpoints.

I do not agree with the statement that our fellow believers from overseas came to us with the goal of "planting a [new] way of life." They evidently are trying to behave themselves correctly, and even if there are some sad failures, these are very few and are not a result of well-thought-out politics. They don't have a goal of "correcting" our faith. Quite the opposite. They show by consensus that "We cannot touch the faith of Russian Protestants." However, not everyone can resist the temptation to "convert" us to the truth.

We cannot say that our fellow believers in overseas countries do not realize the arising difficulties. For example, in the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* reasonable articles are published that highlight such issues. It correctly writes about the ineffectiveness of interdenominational theological schools in Russia and about the weak connection of schools with churches from which students are being recruited and in which students should work after completion

of their studies. The *Report* also writes about local churches, especially in the provinces, not accepting seminary graduates because they have been Westernized and "modernized." ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted from the Web site of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church of Russia: http://baptist.org.ru/2/255_1.html.

Translated by Vitaliy Bak.

I.V. Podberezskii, author of *Byt' protestantom v Rossii* [To Be a Protestant in Russia] (1998), holds Kandidat and Ph.D. degrees from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations with a specialty in Philippine history, culture, and languages. He is a member of the Central Moscow Church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.



Trofimchuk, Nikolai and M. P. Svishchev. *Ekspansiya [Expansionism]. Moscow: Akademiya Gosudarstvennoi Sluzhby, 2000.*

Reviewed by Lawrence A. Uzzell.

Trofimchuk and Svishchev depict American religious, political, and economic models simply as different facets of an integrated whole—with an agenda of pushing Russia (in the authors' view) to adopt America's grotesquely exaggerated emphasis on individual freedom in politics, consumerism, and popular culture.

Are American missionaries in Russia mere agents of American political and economic interests? The question sounds both insulting and absurd. Those who have chosen to preach the Gospel in a cold, poor, and sometimes violent country believe they are serving a kingdom not of this world. They probably feel, rightly, that they have less in common with the typical American diplomat or businessman than any generation of missionaries since the republic was founded. But many Russians would disagree with them. The late Nikolai Trofimchuk was one of the most articulate.

Trofimchuk's book *Ekspansiya*, coauthored with his junior colleague M. P. Svishchev, is perverse, but not stupid. Its authors are not simple-minded bureaucrats obsessed by fantasies that every American missionary is on the CIA payroll. Their position is more subtle and therefore more dangerous and increasingly influential. The average Russian official who wants to know what makes foreign missionaries tick has probably read this book, or at least has attended briefings shaped by it. After all, Trofimchuk was head of the religion department at the Academy of State Service (*Akademiya Gosudarstvennoi Sluzhby*), the most important institution in today's Russia for training the growing ranks of officials who specialize in advising mayors and governors about church-state relations. The book's full text remains on the Academy's Web site (www.state-religion.ru).

What Trofimchuk and Svishchev offer is a deterministic model, like Marxism, in which social forces dictate what the individual missionary imagines to be his free choices. In their model the decisive forces are not economic, but cultural and political. It is no accident, they insist, that the activities of missionaries nearly always fit well with the geopolitical strategies of the countries from which they came. The authors are skillful at finding evidence from the age of European colonialism, such as quotations from missionaries who consciously saw themselves as advancing the interests of their particular countries. (They ignore cases such as the Jesuits who resisted the conquistadors' exploitation of South American Indians.)

According to this model, today's American missionaries have no greater claim than their

European predecessors to see themselves as servants of a world religion. Indeed, Trofimchuk and Svishchev seem to deny there can even be such a thing as a "world religion" not decisively shaped by a specific national culture. They depict American religious, political, and economic models simply as different facets of an integrated whole—with an agenda of pushing Russia (in the authors' view) to adopt America's grotesquely exaggerated emphasis on individual freedom in politics, consumerism, and popular culture.

They anticipate obvious objections. They concede that most Western missionaries are consciously devoted to the salvation of souls, not to their own governments' foreign-policy agendas. But they insist that this does not matter, since "the consequences of their multi-faceted activities are largely unforeseeable even by the missionaries themselves, sometimes, as Max Weber observed, directly opposed to their intentions." Trofimchuk and Svishchev are much indebted to Weber and also to Western geopolitical theorists of the World War One era—applying geopolitical concepts such as "sphere of influence" directly to religious life.

The authors show strong traces of Soviet mentality. They obviously regret the demise of the Soviet Union and assume that anyone who was anti-Soviet must also be anti-Russian. They perform stunning acts of guilt-by-association, for example, linking Radio Liberty to the Moonies without providing one shred of evidence beyond the fact that both set up offices in Russia at the end of the Cold War.

It would be a mistake to dismiss Trofimchuk's and Svishchev's ideas altogether. They include some real insights: For example, many American missionaries do indeed fail to see when they are acting as propagandists not just for the Gospel but for "the American way of life," with both its strengths and its weaknesses. In my own experience, some (by no means all) of the most provincial expatriates in Russia have been the missionaries who pour huge budgets into flashy, American-style prayer breakfasts and broadcasts while shoving aside the unique traditions of Russian Protestants. For their own sake, American Protestants interested in Russia should try to understand Nikolai Trofimchuk and his school more clearly than he understood them. ♦

Lawrence A. Uzzell is a free-lance writer who has specialized since 1989 in the study of religious freedom in the former Soviet Union. Former director of Keston Institute, Oxford, England, he now resides in Waxahachie, TX.



An Ambitious New Study of Religion in Russia Today

Reviewed by Nathaniel Davis.

Keston Institute of Oxford, England, is in the throes of completing a monumental project of assessing religion in Russia today. Its researchers have traveled throughout the Russian Republic, have published bits and pieces of their findings in *Religion, State and Society* and other publications, and have now brought forth a book in Russian, edited by Sergei B. Filatov, the project director, entitled *Religiya i obshchestvo; ocherki religioznoi zhizni sovremennoi Rossii* [*Religion and Society; Essays on the Religious Life of Contemporary Russia*] (Moscow, St. Petersburg: Letni Sad, 2002, 487 pp.). Negotiations are being completed for the publication, so far only in Russian, of an encyclopedia of contemporary religion in Russia, which will be the capstone work of Keston's project.

Essentially, Filatov and his coresearchers and authors have traveled from region to region, producing a chapter or two on each area and each confession. The result is a vast panorama composed of numerous mosaic chips forming a composite picture.

The European North

Filatov is flattering to the Orthodox leadership in Russia's far north-Novgorod, Archangel, Syktyvkar (Komi Republic), Petrozavodsk (Olonets), etc. Here, Orthodox are charitably inclined and tolerant of Protestants and other minority religions. Moreover, the people of the North are historically independent-minded and democratically inclined in questions of church government. During the 70 long years before 1990, the weakness of the Russian Orthodox Church throughout the North was its lack of leadership. Even the historic dioceses of Kareliya and Novgorod had no resident, ruling bishop. There was also a presence of minority religious communities in the North, including Old Believers. The result was that Kareliya had 61 Protestant church societies in 1999 compared to 45 Russian Orthodox parishes; Murmansk had 38 of each; Komi had 45 Protestant church societies and 65 Russian Orthodox parishes; and Kaliningrad, another remote, somewhat northerly province, even now without a resident, ruling bishop, had 74 Protestant church societies and 53 Russian Orthodox parishes. Only Nizhni Novgorod bucked the trend to some degree, with 18 Protestant church societies and 84 Orthodox parishes.

A conservative, authoritarian Orthodox observer might make a case that the very liberality, openness, tolerance, and good will of the hierarchs in the North have contributed to the ability of Protestants to make inroads. Keston's researcher even comes close to implying that virtue may not always have

had material rewards in terms of interconfessional advantage. This is a somewhat melancholy thought.

The Volga Region

In the region of the lower Volga, the ascendancy of Russian Orthodoxy has been vitiated by the presence of Lutheran Volga Germans for centuries and the historic presence of a wide variety of other minority religious communities, many of whom were deported during World War II. More than a million Volga Germans have since emigrated to Germany. Orthodox leadership in the region has been varied in quality, with closed-mindedness, anti-Protestantism, and anti-Catholicism visibly prevalent. In Tatarstan Muslims essentially rule and Bashkirs hang on as an Islamic enclave even though they constitute only about 25 percent of the population of Bashkortostan. Kalmykiya has long been a center of Buddhist tradition in European Russia, despite Stalin's deportation of the Kalmyks during World War II. In Asia the centers of Buddhism have been Buryatiya, Tyva, and a few other scattered places.

Muslims in North Caucasus and Pagans

The North Caucasus is mostly Islamic in its religious loyalties. Among the Chechens there is a symbolic union between Islam and the nation. The mountain people further west are historically less strongly Muslim and more influenced by pagan beliefs. In European Russia as a whole paganism is strong in the western parts of the North Caucasus, in the Chuvash Republic, in Mari-El, and in Udmurtiya. In Asian Russia, particularly Siberia, paganism is relatively strong throughout the regions inhabited by indigenous people, including Sakha (Yakutiya), Khakasiya, Tyva, and the Altai. The great unanswered question is whether pagan manifestations are largely national, traditional, and symbolic, or whether paganism is a fully developed family of religions that is competing effectively with Orthodoxy. Filatov, his expert on Shamanism (David Lewis), and his other knowledgeable colleagues seem to straddle the issue.

Protestantism on the March

In the first issue in the year 2000 of the publication *Frontier*, Philip Walters, chief of research for Keston Institute, wrote: "One thing is becoming clear: Russian Orthodoxy does not predominate outside the European Russian heartland." In his *Essays* Sergei Filatov is more circumspect—and no doubt more accurate. Filatov writes, "In many cities (particularly in the Far East and Siberia) more

(continued on page 14)

Filatov writes, "In many cities (particularly in the Far East and Siberia) more believers are now present in Protestant churches at regular Sunday services than in Orthodox churches."

Filatov's Essays present a deeply informed, penetrating analysis of religion in Russia.

Nathaniel Davis is professor emeritus of humanities at Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, CA, and author of *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy*.

An Ambitious New Study...

(continued from page 13)

believers are now present in Protestant churches at regular Sunday services than in Orthodox churches." Using Russian Ministry of Justice statistics, I did an analysis of the number of Protestant and Orthodox church societies in each diocese east of the Urals. In about half of these dioceses there are more Protestant communities than Orthodox parishes, but these are mostly smaller dioceses that do not include the great jurisdictions of Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk), Chelyabinsk, Krasnoyarsk, and the historic provinces of Omsk and Tomsk. Whether the average-sized Orthodox parish is larger than a Protestant church society is difficult to answer because the Orthodox parish has a great many more occasional attenders at services and nominal Orthodox people, while Protestants have a higher percentage of deeply engaged and committed members.

In any case, Protestant communities clearly are growing and seem to do better than Orthodox at attracting youth, men, specialists, and businessmen. Pentecostals now outnumber Baptists and have become the most active Protestants in Russia. Evangelical denominations appear to be more successful than traditional Protestants, although Methodists have had extraordinary growth. In general, native-born Russian Protestants appear to have been having greater successes than foreign missionaries, particularly

American ones. Part of the problem for Americans has been mediocre or absent Russian language training. Another difficulty seems to have been attitudinal, as some missionaries appear to understand their mission as winning souls for Christ in what they regard as a pagan land without a Christian history extending over a thousand years.

One difficulty Orthodox have encountered in the Russian East is a weakness of episcopal leadership in some places. About a third of the bishops in dioceses east of the Urals have been removed or severely criticized for personal or official transgressions. Such is the importance of the role of the ruling bishop that a weak appointment can become inordinately serious in the fate of his diocese.

Conclusion

Filatov also addresses Buddhism, Rerikhism (a home-grown, syncretistic faith), totalitarian sects, and other minority religions. Filatov's *Essays* present a deeply informed, penetrating analysis of religion in Russia at the present time. If I find fault with the book, it would be Filatov's fascination with minority religious movements at the cost of a more lengthy and penetrating analysis of the current state of Orthodoxy. Some of the minority religions seem in Filatov's analysis to be more important and perhaps more competitive with Orthodoxy than I feel they really are. I hope that Keston's encyclopedia, when it appears, will give Orthodoxy its full due. ♦



Book Review

Valliere, Paul. *Modern Russian Theology - Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.

Reviewed by Scott Lingenfelter.

In this book, Paul Valliere traces the development of a lesser known "Russian school" within Russian Orthodoxy. McGregor Professor in the Humanities at Butler University, Indianapolis, IN, Valliere analyzes the defining works of three often abstract thinkers and their quest "to promote the engagement of Orthodox believers with the modern world" (p. 7). The result is a very fine, persuasive statement of how important it will be to devote attention to their legacy.

According to Valliere, views of Orthodoxy currently lack balance, focusing as they do almost exclusively on an influential "school" within Orthodoxy, led by Georges Florovsky, that stressed unwavering faithfulness to the church fathers. Valliere writes that the contribution of this Neopatristic school to modern theology is significant but limited, particularly when dealing with social questions. By contrast, the Russian school consisting of Alexander Bukharev (Archimandrite Feodor), Vladimir Soloviev, and Sergei Bulgakov confronted modernity with a blend of patristic thought and contemporary Western, particularly German, philosophy that most of the

lights from Russia's theological academies found objectionable. The trio's biographies are as intriguing as their thought, and Valliere tells their stories well.

Bukharev (1824-1871) was the biblicist of the three. His insightful commentary on Isaiah inspired a critique of the Russian Orthodox Church's passivity and isolation—a real achievement since it was written while he held faculty positions at the Moscow and Kazan theological academies and was a member of the church's censorship committee in St. Petersburg. Soloviev (1853-1900) grew up in one of Imperial Russia's most distinguished intellectual families. To refine his apocalyptic vision of a theocratic Russian society, he traveled in Europe and the Near East. As poet, philosopher, and emblem of Russia's exuberant Silver Age of culture, Soloviev inspired a circle of young Marxists to abandon historical materialism and class conflict for religious philosophy and a path back to the church, none more high profile than Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944). According to Valliere, the Russian school matured with Bulgakov. As apostle to the Russian intelligentsia, Duma deputy, key lay member of the Church Council of 1917-18, and priest and theologian in exile, Bulgakov tried to solve the Russian school's central question: how to "reconcile an ecclesiastical culture which regards modern civilization in hostile terms...with a secularist culture which asserts human rights without reverence for nature or God" (262). However, Bulgakov's

answer, a speculative personification of God's wisdom at work in the world (Sophia), was problematic. Valliere's work has the merit of pointing out specific shortcomings. As the book suggests, Bulgakov's most straightforward and promising attempts to ground modern Orthodoxy's social ministry are to be found in his early writing.

Their shortcomings aside, Valliere finds in these three thinkers something unique in Russian Orthodoxy: openness to modernity, yet faithfulness to Orthodox roots. The concerns of current Russian

theologians reflect this as they research patristics, European phenomenology, and Karl Barth's theology of the Word, though direct connections are hard to make. In fact, what students of the Russian church will likely take from Valliere's 400-page work is the lack of continuity in twentieth-century Russian theology. Even so, Bukharev, Soloviev, and Bulgakov addressed social and political issues still timely in Orthodox countries struggling to shed the past. Valliere argues that, like the times, their answers now come to us in a new key. ♦

Scott Lingenfelter is a doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Chicago and adjunct instructor of Russian and European history at Columbia College, Chicago, IL.



Book Review

Avgustin (Nikitin), Archimandrit. *Metodizm i Pravoslavie [Methodism and Orthodoxy]*. St. Petersburg: Svetoch, 2001. 223 pp.

Reviewed by Sergei V. Nikolaev.

Methodism and Orthodoxy by Archimandrite Avgustin (Nikitin) is a unique and important book for anyone interested in a serious history of the Orthodox-Methodist relationship in the context of the Russian-American church connection. This is the first book of such detail and scope by a Russian Orthodox scholar since the late nineteenth century. Archimandrite Avgustin's volume deserves to be considered on the same level as the works on Methodism by Bishop Ioann (Mitropolski) and Professor A.I. Bulgakov (*Ocherki istorii metodizma [Topics in the History of Methodism]*, Kyiv: 1887).

In his study, Fr. Avgustin chooses to focus on the Russian Orthodox Church as the most prominent component of Russia's church life, and on the Methodist Church because it is seen by Russians as the church that "counts among its members those who direct the fate of the United States." The author sees the goal of his book to trace the history of Orthodox-Methodist relations in order to promote a further Russian-American church relationship and deeper mutual understanding between Russians and Americans. The work is aimed at promoting an appreciation among Russians of the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and non-Orthodox churches.

In this work, Fr. Avgustin extensively quotes and summarizes the writings of other, mainly Russian, scholars, and publicists who have dealt with the topic. Consequently, the footnotes in the book provide perhaps one of the best bibliographies on the almost two hundred years of history of Orthodox-Methodist relations available in Russian. Fr. Avgustin not only quotes other authors extensively, but also builds the structure of his book around the studies of various authors. This results in a certain structural unsoundness: the topics tend to repeat themselves when the author moves from one source to another. Although he keeps to the historical progression of events, it is not easy to follow the flow of Fr. Avgustin's narrative.

The author's reliance on secondary sources sometimes leads to his endorsing views that are not accurate in light of current Wesleyan studies. For instance, Fr. Avgustin, following a discussion in Bishop Ioann's work, interprets the episode of the ordination of John Jones and a few others in 1763 by the Greek Orthodox Bishop Erasmus as "the presence in the Methodist ministers' hierarchical succession not only of the Anglican line but of the Orthodox line as well." It seems as if Fr. Avgustin has not read the primary documents concerning this episode. From John Wesley's *Letters and Journal* we know that these ordinations caused troubles in the Methodist movement. To resolve these difficulties, Wesley later had to have John Jones ordained by an Anglican bishop and had to remove others from ministry who had been ordained by Bishop Erasmus.

On the other hand, Fr. Avgustin offers quite insightful analysis when he works with the primary sources. Evaluating the demise of the Methodist Church in Russia shortly after the October Revolution in 1917, he points to two key reasons. First, with the beginning of World War I the majority of local Methodist churches were cut off from the central Methodist Church in St. Petersburg because they were located in territory that was occupied by the German Army. Second, many key positions in the early Methodist Church in Russia were held by non-Russian citizens. When foreigners had to leave Russia under Bolshevik pressure, the Methodist Church in Russia lost its primary leaders and could not recover from this loss.

Fr. Avgustin clearly sees the nadir of the Orthodox-Methodist relationship in their conflicts in Alaska in the nineteenth century, a subject that is still awaiting thorough study. On the other hand, YMCA secretary John Mott's life and his involvement with Russian Orthodoxy are seen as the zenith of the relationship. Often the Methodist Mott is called "the great friend of Russian Orthodoxy."

Fr. Avgustin's book begins to fill the void that exists in the Russian-speaking world of material related to Methodism. It is barely a year since the first publication of his book and the publishers are discussing a new edition. This survey of the Orthodox-Methodist relationship is arguably the best available introduction to the topic in Russian. ♦

Methodism and Orthodoxy is a unique and important book for anyone interested in a serious history of the Orthodox-Methodist relationship.

Sergei V. Nikolaev is a doctoral candidate at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.

It Is a Twelve-Round Bout... And We Have Just Entered the First Round

Constantin V. Lysakov

In Russia these days, the evangelical church belongs to the great world of "have-nots," and thus finds itself in a very similar place with the first century church.

Saul Alinsky in his famous book, *Rule for Radicals*, writes: "The basic requirement for the understanding of the politics of change is to recognize the world as it is. We must work with it on its terms if we are to change it." In Russia these days, the evangelical church belongs to the great world of "have-nots," and thus finds itself in a very similar place with the first century church. Now I do not want to mislead you and hint that the church is going through persecution in Russia today. It does not face any major threats and, quite frankly, I do not believe it will in the near future. However, the Evangelical church does not have the opportunity to just walk into any government building and be presented with a chance to share the Gospel. That kind of freedom is long gone and it is a good thing! It is a good thing because, for one, the church has to adjust its strategies in order to meet the felt needs of individuals and institutions.

Athletes in Action director Carl Dambman and current college student Valeriy Vihor (a three-time intercontinental champion in professional boxing) were asked to give out awards to weight lifters and boxers from the Moscow Institute of Steel and Alloys. Prior to giving out the awards, Valeriy was given a chance to address over 400 students who gathered at this special event. He was strongly encouraged not to say anything about God or Christianity because that could ruin future opportunities to work at the school. But God gifted Valeriy as an evangelist and I nervously watched how upset the head of the physical education department was when Valeriy encouraged students

to be winners not just on a field, but also off the field, while placing special emphasis on the importance of finding the right relationship with God. I must admit I assumed the door would be shut in our faces after Valeriy's address. But during the ceremony he did something that redeemed the situation: he hugged every athlete who came up to receive his award. Thus, he showed he really cared about these young men. After the ceremony Valeriy and Carl had a chance to get to know some of the instructors better at the special banquet where they gave out Sports New Testaments. As a result of this special occasion, we are now in charge of sports activities at the Steel and Alloys Institute during the winter break. It means that we get to use sports facilities free of charge for almost six hours a day. What is even more important, this gives us a chance to serve the school in a very real way and to share the Gospel with students in a personal setting.

Acts, Chapter 14, contains a passage that troubled me for years. It is one of those passages that fits the category of "What in the world do you mean?" This chapter contains a brief report about a portion of Paul's first missionary journey, namely, his ministry in Iconium. It was so "successful" that we read that the angry mob was about to stone Paul and Barnabas (verse 5). After this incident, Paul and Barnabas fled to Lystra and Derbe where once again the Lord "blessed" their ministry so much that Paul was stoned and dragged out of the city because he was presumed dead (verse 19). One could say, "Another day on the job, just punching in the clock." But here is what really astonished me; in verse 27 we read, "When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles."

The church in the first century belonged to the world of "have-nots," as is the case in ministry in Russia today. They defined the open door as the openness of people to hear the Gospel, their openness to be honest with themselves, and ultimately, their openness to repent of their ways. It is a dramatically different understanding from what we have today when we often define the open door as the public opportunity to say what we want to say "up front." Let us remember that it is a 12-round bout and we have just entered the first round! ♦

Constantin V. Lysakov is a staff member with New Life Bible College, an International Leadership Academy of Campus Crusade for Christ, located in Moscow, Russia.

EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT, published quarterly by the Global Center, seeks to encourage Western Christian ministry in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that is effective, culturally relevant, and cooperative. It also serves as a forum for the exploration of a variety of issues relating to Christianity's presence in Europe's formerly Marxist states. Letters to the editor are welcomed. Subscription rates are \$44.95 per year (U.S. and Canada); \$54.95 (international); and \$19.95 (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 with no royalty 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 EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT.** Currently indexed by OCLC Public Affairs Information Service (formerly PAIS), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and Zeller Dietrich (formerly Zeller Verlag).

Editor.....Mark Elliott
Assistant Editor.....Jena Abbott
Designer.....Jennifer Myers

EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT

The Global Center
Beeson Divinity School
Samford University
Box 292268
Birmingham, AL 35229
Tel.: 205-726-2170
Fax: 205-726-2271
E-mail: ewcmreport@samford.edu
Web site: <http://www.samford.edu/groups/global/ewcmreport>



©2003 The Global Center. Printed in Samford University Print Shop. ISSN 1069-5664