



EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT

WINTER 2004

VOL. 12, No. 1

Discerning Joy from Sorrow: Reflecting on Changes Among Ukrainian Evangelicals Since Independence

Mary Raber

"But many of the...old men who had seen the first temple wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people."
Ezra 3:12-13 (NGSB)

first students, whether at Odessa or any of the other schools and seminaries founded in the early 1990s, were less than ideal. But what the graduates remember is being privileged, making history, doing something daringly new. Only a short time before, coming together for theological studies would have been grounds for arrest. When the long-awaited opportunity arrived, no sacrifice seemed too much. At Odessa, for example, students with active ministries, secular jobs, or both, plus family responsibilities, traveled long distances to attend class three days a month for four years to earn a simple, unaccredited certificate.

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A Ten-Year Class Reunion

In the summer of 2003 the first graduating class of Odessa Bible School held their ten-year reunion and watched a video of their student days. For half an hour a lost world was restored as old friends with dark hair and slim figures appeared on the screen. Once again they bent over their books, ate their simple meals, and finally filed across a stage to receive their diplomas.

Fashions would inevitably change in ten years—but that much? The synthetic shoes, the badly-cut suits, and the coarse knitwear remind the viewer of a Soviet consumer's world that barely exists anymore, except for what can still be found spread on the ground for sale in a flea market. Then there are the old Baptist folkways: the smacking kisses between men, the fervent songs after a meal, and the elaborate homemade entertainment programs. Those things still exist, but have diminished.

When the lights go up, a decade has passed. Any alumni gathering in the world might grow a little thoughtful as its members consider how the world has changed since graduation. But perhaps a group of post-Soviet Evangelicals has more reason than most to be amazed, or even bewildered. Where else in the world have changes in worship, education, and opportunities for ministry taken place with such furious speed? Where else have Evangelical believers been called from relative isolation to creative engagement with a society that used to actively persecute them?

The chief memory the video calls to mind is the buoyant spirit of the early 1990s. Everyone in the film seems cheerfully willing to put up with discomfort, sitting for hours on hard chairs and eating outdoors in freezing weather. The physical conditions of those

Onrush of New Opportunities

Nor could Christians do enough to meet the sudden onrush of opportunities for ministry. Beginning about 1989 for believers doors suddenly flew open in every direction. Seemingly overnight, lending libraries, hospital and prison visitation, huge evangelistic meetings, sacred music concerts, Bible studies in the schools, summer camps, and all manner of other ministries multiplied. All of them were characterized by crackling enthusiasm.

"We burned for the opportunity to work as missionaries," remembers Valentina Chernova, director of Our House, a social rehabilitation center for children in Makeyevka in eastern Ukraine. "We didn't think about money or about how we were going to succeed. It was hard work, and there wasn't enough pay, and what we got didn't arrive on time, but we gave 100 percent and expected the Lord to take care of us."

Change the scene to September 2003, as members of 11 Kyiv congregations in the Association of Missionary Churches, the fruit of 13 years' diligent evangelism, gather for a joint worship service. The packed sanctuary still looks rough—construction is not quite finished—but balloons and flowers decorate the chancel. A youthful praise group featuring drums and accordion leads choruses projected in PowerPoint slides on the wall. One of the pastors, a young man in jeans, reads a series of prayer items from Christians enduring persecution around the

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world: Dubai, North Korea, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka. "In comparison with us, these people have nothing," he reminds us, "but they're willing to give everything they have for Christ." One cannot help but remember a time when Soviet Christians would have topped the list.

Ambivalence in Abundance

The service is energetic, world-aware, theologically sound, and tasteful. If this is typical of developments in Ukrainian churches since independence, it would seem that there is nothing to do but rejoice. Yet when asked to reflect on the changes they have experienced, many believers initially express more ambivalence than satisfaction.

"There's a lot of Western influence now," comments a Baptist pastor from Cherkassy. "We've lost reverence. You see it in fashions, in attitudes. People are getting accustomed to carelessness."

"Unfortunately, I see degradation at work in the church. I'm not totally pessimistic, but..." begins Pavel Grishchenko, a Baptist pastor from Korosten in central Ukraine. He cites a loss of sacrificial service among the casualties of freedom: "Earlier, we couldn't do enough. We carried heavy musical instruments for long distances through the snow to get to a meeting. Nowadays you can't get people to take communion to old women in the village unless there's a car available."

Chernova agrees: "It used to be that everybody wanted to help. Now everybody wants money. Everybody wants their career."

Less Overt Hostility and More Choices

What has happened? One big change is that Christians now have more choices in their lives. There was a time when the hard-pressed, isolated world of Soviet Evangelicals required total commitment from members. The best part of Christians' energy and creativity went into church life. Tatyana Sannikova, a teacher of Christian ethics in Odessa public schools, remembers: "We were separated. The surrounding society was Communist and atheistic and didn't accept us, so we had our own life. There was a stronger sense of unity and the need to provide mutual support. We were more active in getting together and helping each other. That's not so apparent now."

Now that the church's environment is less hostile, Christians, especially the young, are finding that there are other worthwhile things to do besides devote themselves to church activities. For many, the Christian community has become just one of many aspects of a believer's life, rather than its focus. For example, a Christian young person is now free to get a higher education, but that also means they are busy studying or earning money for schooling, and consequently less available to the church.

Not only that, but Ukraine's shaky economy requires that considerable effort go into making a living. One observer says, "In Soviet times everybody got their 80 rubles whether they worked or not. Now that there's freedom, you can work all you want, but there's not necessarily any pay." Making ends meet may take up time that once was spent in fellowship. For Christians who sometimes equated faithfulness with attending all the scheduled worship services offered each week (usually at least four two-hour services), the trend toward selective attendance is distressing. Moreover, as more demanding careers become available to Christians and as people's lifestyle expectations increase, many Christian organizations can no longer count on attracting and retaining capable personnel without offering at least regular wages.

Worship in Transition

The multiplicity of choices in society as a whole is reflected in a growing number of worship expressions, a change that some observers find unsettling. For example, at the worship service in Kyiv mentioned above, a pastor from Yenakievo in eastern Ukraine noted that only a portion of the congregation stood to pray, a time-honored expression of reverence. Others remained seated. "I know it's not a question of doctrine," he admitted, "But what happens when everybody just does what they want?" A culture war is raging in Ukrainian churches as believers sort out which religious practices are worth preserving and which should be accepted or rejected from other sources, especially the West, which is sometimes perceived as a shallow, cheapening influence.

Meanwhile, opinions differ on what constitutes legitimate Christian expression. Sometimes the discussion degenerates into nit-picking: Is it all right for Sunday school children to sing songs with hand motions? Should believers ever applaud? Yet one also senses real sadness over the erosion of traditional forms, and a genuine eagerness to preserve or create an Evangelical Christian expression that is truly authentic. "I'm not talking about nostalgia for the past," maintains Grishchenko, "What we need is real adaptation; not a worship revolution, but evolution. That takes much wisdom."

Westerners, accustomed to "celebrating diversity," may not be able to grasp what is at stake. Letting some Ukrainian Christians go one way and some another, even in matters of music preference and dress, portends more serious consequences in the minds of many. Grishchenko comments: "We're losing unity. Churches are getting more individualistic. Instead of submitting to church discipline, people just go somewhere else until they find what suits them. I remember one divorce that took place in the church when I was young—just one!—and it was a serious scandal! Now, there's every kind of disorder you can imagine. We're further than ever from the idea of submission."

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The Brain Drain . . .

Things might have been more stable if the so-called "old Baptists" had stayed in the country rather than emigrating. Yet another ambiguous change that awaits analysis is the brain- and energy-drain caused by the departure of thousands of Ukrainian believers to the West. The pastor from Yenakievo recalls, "When we were young, my friends and I went to all the funerals and weddings because that was our opportunity to witness. Our prayers were for freedom. Then, all at once, we could preach anywhere we wanted, and immediately everybody left! Everyone who prayed for freedom is now in Germany, the U.S., Australia, or Sweden!"

. . . And the Influx of New Believers

The lack of experienced leadership to disciple new believers is a critical concern. Yet some express the opinion that the departure of so many thousands is God's way of clearing out the old wineskins to make space for the new. Strikingly, in spite of emigration, the numbers of church members have remained stable: as long-time believers have gone, new ones have taken their place. For example, a Baptist church in Snezhnoye in eastern Ukraine lost nearly all of its several hundred members to emigration. Only a few individuals from the original families remain, but the numbers have stayed about the same.

Change is accelerated by the presence of members who joined in the 1990s but sometimes show different characteristics from those of longtime Evangelicals. The former may have more secular education; they may be less afraid to ask questions or challenge traditional structures. One woman who became a Christian in the mid-90s recalled a curious exchange with the pastor of the central Baptist church in her city. After a lengthy worship service that she found uninspiring, the pastor warmly exclaimed to her, "Isn't this wonderful? What is better than having the children of God all together in fellowship in one place?" Unable to hold back her feelings any longer, she blurted, "Actually, when I joined the church I expected more!"

She is not alone in longing for "more," meaning openness and honesty, real answers to life's questions, and non-judgmental acceptance. For as well as being close-knit and deeply committed, Soviet-era Evangelical churches also could be insular, petty, and authoritarian. More frequently now, churches and church organizations are making deliberate efforts to move away from destructive relational patterns and expressing their willingness to look practically and calmly at different approaches to conflict resolution and issues of leadership and authority. More attention is also being paid by church leaders to balancing their ministry and family responsibilities. Sergei Timchenko, director of REALIS, an apologetic and educational center in Kyiv, cites the elusive quality of vulnerability among younger leaders as a positive change, even if those leaders lack experience. "The traditional church leaders operated alone," remembers Timchenko, "Alone, they reached what were apparently unreachable heights of spirituality. They were always concerned for purity, but often that

caused them to mistrust others. They tended to control people, not mentor them."

Relating to the Wider Culture

Perhaps the biggest change of all, however, is the many ways that Evangelical Christians are now finding opportunities to relate to the wider culture. Sannikova states: "It's true that the world has more influence on the church than it used to. But the positive change is that the church is now free to influence the world." Most striking are the endeavors of Evangelical Christians in the area of social services. In Soviet time, Christians looked after their own but were prevented from doing any kind of charitable outreach in the community, which was considered the exclusive prerogative of the state. When the social services system began to deteriorate with the fall of the Soviet Union, Christians were among the people who could help pick up the pieces. Now it is not unusual for churches and missions to operate rehabilitation centers for drug addicts, raise orphans, provide home care for the elderly, or serve as advocates for people with physical disabilities. As ministries develop, so do skills in planning, bookkeeping, and reporting. Christians also pursue education in pedagogy, psychology, and economics with the specific intention of enhancing social service ministries.

Consistent, serious efforts to ease Ukraine's heavy social problems are usually welcomed by government authorities and serve as a powerful witness to God's grace, as well as a means of altering widely held stereotypes of Evangelical believers as backward, unenlightened elements. At the same time, social-service ministries have forced Christians to move out of their narrow circles to deal not only with people in need, but also with officials at many different levels. Sometimes stereotypes of bureaucrats have changed too. Valentina Chernova acknowledges her appreciation for some of her counterparts in government agencies who work with homeless children: "I used to think that it was 'us' against 'them,' but I've learned that there are officials who really care."

Recognizing a common cause with the rest of society, especially in the light of their decision to remain rather than emigrate, is leading many believers to think in new ways about their place in Ukraine. Evangelical Christians in the Soviet Union were treated as outsiders and developed a theology that kept them apart. Now, although they are often labeled as sectarians, outside the mainstream Orthodox culture, Evangelicals are also talking more about taking responsibility for their country and often describe their ministries, particularly among children and youth, as an important part of building a viable future. Grishchenko states, "We need to pray for Ukraine. We need to emphasize that we are not excluded from society."

In Summary: Mixed Blessings

Freedom has proved to be a mixed blessing for Ukrainian believers, with more ambiguities and complexities than perhaps anyone imagined in the

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exciting days of the early 1990s. Handsome Bible college campuses have replaced many of the plank benches of the old days; new church buildings stand in prominent locations in some towns; thousands of children annually attend church summer camps; Christian doctors offer free medical clinics in remote villages; and believing musicians perform on radio. All of these are signs of remarkable, healthy changes that nevertheless are still going through a lengthy, even painful process of absorption and validation. And although no one would go back, many feel some longing for a past that, though harsh, seems at least in retrospect to have been simpler, more confident, committed, and heroic.

The future, however, has already arrived. Every Sunday morning at the central Baptist church in Odessa, about 100 children are blessed before they leave the sanctuary for Sunday school. "Every now

and then I remember how life used to be and think about what a great thing it is that all these kids can freely learn about God," comments Olga Sergeyeva, one of the teachers. She adds, "There have always been more and less dedicated Christians, even in the old days. It's just that dedication looks different now. Maybe people now don't go to prison for their faith, but they give up their time and energy to make a summer camp happen." Tatyana Sannikova agrees, "This is the freedom we prayed for. We need to use its opportunities and be grateful." ♦

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Pentecostalism and Eastern Orthodoxy

Edmund J. Rybarczyk

Mutual Hostility

Pentecostalism and Eastern Orthodoxy are dramatically different in many ways (culture, ecclesiology, styles of worship, and missiological strategies, to name a few) and typically know little about the other. North American Pentecostals tend to view the Orthodox Church as the twin-sister of the Roman Catholic Church; Orthodoxy might still contain a remnant of Christian truth, but it is too mired in ancient culture, too caught up in icons and a static liturgical form of worship to be of any consequence to the modern person. Worse, Pentecostals have dismissed altogether the idea that people living in Russia, apart from the influence of Western missionaries, could ever be Christian. Predisposed by their own eschatological hermeneutic (Russia is the great anti-Christian nation, the "Gog and Magog" of Ezekiel 38-39 and Revelation 16:12), and equally predisposed by the Cold War between the United States and Russia (xenophobia plays no small part in many eschatological schemes), Pentecostals tend to view Russians as godless pagans, as though the entire country had accepted Marxist Socialism's atheism *in toto*.

Conversely, Orthodox, if they know anything at all about Pentecostals, lump them with Evangelicals and even non-Christian religions. Pentecostals might proffer a semblance of Christ's presence, but lacking Christ's apostolic priesthood and "the fullness of Orthodoxy," as the Orthodox like to state it, they are relegated to a shallow emotionalism that can never produce lasting change.

Both groups traditionally have been quite parochial in their unwillingness to recognize Christ in others claiming to be Christians but who are not

Orthodox or Pentecostal, as the case may be. We must be fair. Both Orthodox and Pentecostals are impelled by their convictions about Christian truth, and neither is rightly willing to sacrifice Christian truth for the sake of spurious fellowship. All is not relative. Christ is the only means of salvation. However, an historical examination of both churches bears out that both have allowed race, culture, nationalism, historical myopia, and tradition to obfuscate a recognition of Christ in others.

Characteristics in Common

Antagonistic sentiments aside, there are many characteristics that Orthodox and Pentecostals share. Obviously, both are not Roman Catholic; neither answers to the pope in Rome. Second, both traditions allow and encourage local ministers/priests to marry and have children. In addition, both resolutely assert that knowledge of God made known through His Son Jesus Christ is by no means limited to the intellectual domain of human existence, but that the human person can feel, sense, and hear God in visceral and profound ways. To be a Christian is far more than having one's legal slate wiped clean in heaven. The experiential realm—accurately defined as the mystical realm because it incorporates ineffable and mysterious elements—is affirmed by both traditions. Neither group has traditionally been concerned about deflecting charges of mysticism. In fact, it is clear that both groups have flourished because of—not in spite of—their mystical character.

Wesley's Experiential Religion as a Bridge

In recent decades scholars have been intrigued with the historical connection between—and theological

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similarities shared by—some of the Orthodox patristic fathers and the Anglican-turned-Methodist minister, John Wesley (1703-1791). Wesley is important for understanding the historical antecedents to Pentecostalism because the latter built upon his experiential foundations. Like a sieve, Wesley filtered Greek patristic theology so that some of Orthodoxy's experiential thrust was revived and reintroduced into eighteenth-century Christianity. Wesley studied several Eastern Orthodox fathers and even preferred to read them over Western fathers. Quite clearly, he borrowed from the early Greek fathers in developing both his own anthropological understandings and the ensuing experientially oriented doctrine of entire sanctification, something he also described as perfection. Both Pentecostals and Wesley are deeply concerned with what happens in the Christian and not just what happens *for* the Christian; in this regard Orthodoxy shimmers within both Wesley and Pentecostalism. Pentecostals, like both the Orthodox and Wesley, urge a divine-human communion that extends far beyond the moment of conversion.

For both groups Christianity is—indeed life is—comprised of experience. This holds true for each, not only as it concerns Christian living but for both groups' theology as well. Neither tradition is much interested in doing theology for the sake of intellectual exercise. Neither automatically makes the brightest of its thinkers into saints or heroes, and neither has much use for those who want to reduce Christianity to the realm of the abstract. To be a Christian, as both express it, is to live for, and in, Christ. How one explains that life, or even more starkly *whether* one bothers to explain that life, is always secondary to the Christian life itself.

More Common Ground

Like the Orthodox, Pentecostals are not content to relegate their faith to the intellectual area. The mind is important, but one's affections, one's existential core, is critical too. Consequently, both traditions manifest an anti-intellectual character and are noted for a lack of concern for systematization regarding theology.

Both also perceive themselves as the great defenders of pneumatology. Pentecostals, in light of their own experiential spirituality, believe they are reintroducing and refamiliarizing the universal church to the Holy Spirit. Orthodox, similarly, believe they are the true pneumatologists, especially in light of their historical rejection of the Western church's addition to the Nicene Creed of the *Filioque* (the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son).

The two also hold very congruent views of anthropology. Orthodox do not believe the fall caused humans to cease being who God created them to be. It is just that they ceased being *all* God had initially created them to be. Vladimir Lossky said that in the fall, "Man closed up within himself

the springs of divine grace." For Orthodox the fall did not eradicate those springs of grace; instead it corrupted, perverted, and fractured them.

Along with the fact that Scripture ascribes God's image to fallen humans (Genesis 9:6; I Corinthians 11:7; Colossians 3:10; James 3:9), Pentecostals follow James Arminius and do not believe that the *imago dei* (the image of God) was destroyed by the fall. That Scripture describes post-fallen humans as beings created in God's image, that even evil and hateful people still do good and loving things, and that people still interact with their God-given consciences, all testify to the fact that the image was not destroyed. Humans are not totally depraved (again, they can do good and even though they are fallen they reflect something of God Himself), but they are depraved. Original sin is a spiritual and moral handicap, "a tendency or bias to sin," as Myer Pearlman said, which makes sin quite natural—and indeed inevitable—for every person.

Orthodox, especially Russian Orthodox, frequently talk about *kenosis* (Jesus' self-emptying, Philippians 2:5-11) in their spirituality. Pentecostals do not use that precise word, but some of their discussions markedly resemble the Orthodox kenotic tone. Writing in 1930, Mary Lowe Dickinson noted that it is normal for Christians to be outraged at incidents of personal injustice, "undeserved condemnation, unmerited abuse, misconception of our motives, [and] calling our good evil." In fact, she argued, these incidents of personal insult are the rule in life, not the exception. The authentically Christian response to these things, she instructed, is to yield to them. Such yielding is neither to be done in a self-congratulatory way, nor should one call attention to one's own humble response. Moreover, the Christian is not to waste time making explanations or vindicating oneself.

Within their own historical contexts, these two traditions emphasize a personal encounter with God. They do not find mystical-existential manifestations embarrassing, but see them as normal and necessary. Indeed, as the two express it, to allow Christ's Spirit to transform the depths of one's being will necessitate mysterious and nearly inexpressible experiences. Each presents that mystery in ways that draw human persons to Christ: Orthodox through aesthetics, Pentecostals through kinesthetics. Both emphasize that the human person was created for a transforming fellowship with God. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Edmund J. Rybarczyk, "Beyond Salvation: An Analysis of the Doctrine of Christian Transformation Comparing Eastern Orthodoxy with Classical Pentecostalism," Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999.

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Christian Magazines in Eastern Europe

Sharon Mumper

A vision for harnessing the power of the press in the service of the Kingdom drives most of the publishers, editors, and staff members of Christian magazines in the region.

"You cannot imagine the chaos and poverty of Romania now," wrote the editor of an on-again, off-again Christian magazine. "The worst thing you can do is produce and sell a Christian magazine." In e-mail correspondence last year he mourned in bitter and disappointed tones the approaching demise (for the third or fourth time) of his magazine. He could not imagine that any Christian magazine could survive in Romania, and complained that the magazine directory on our website was misleading "the naive people of the West" who might assume that there was a "wonderful and dynamic Christian magazine market." His disappointment was understandable, but his viewpoint was skewed.

True, it has not been easy for any of the country's new Christian publishers, few of whom have been publishing for more than 14 years. But today, at least 50 Christian magazines are being published in Romania, serving denominational and church members, women, children, teenagers, Sunday school teachers, professionals, and church leaders, among others.

Funding: From Issue to Issue

The challenges faced by Romanian publishers are similar to those encountered by Christian magazine publishers throughout East/Central Europe in the countries of the former Soviet Bloc.

Although start-up funding is essential to the success of any magazine in any country, most Christian magazines in the region have been launched with minimal upfront financing. In many cases this was due to an excess of enthusiasm and lack of knowledge on the part of the founders. Other times, pure desperation drove publishers to at least make the attempt to launch a magazine, despite the odds against them. As a result, many, if not most, Christian magazines struggle from issue to issue, depending on volunteer staff and using funds from the sale of the previous issue to pay for printing the following issue.

The catastrophic economic situation of many of the countries in the region also complicates efforts of Christian magazines to become financially stable. Many people simply do not have extra funds necessary to buy magazines. Some Christians fed on the free distribution of smuggled literature during the Communist years still believe that Christian literature should be free. However, that attitude is weakening as time passes and as a new generation of Christians enters the market.

Financially stable magazines, East and West, rely heavily on advertising income. Although most Christian magazines in the former Soviet Bloc would like to have advertising, there are still few Christian schools, book publishers, music companies, church suppliers, camps, and other ministries with the funds and vision to advertise. As a result, this source of revenue forms a negligible portion of overall magazine income.

Many Christian magazines in the West are subsidized by the denominations or organizations they represent, and often those magazines are distributed free. While some magazines in East/Central Europe receive partial subsidy from their denominations or organizations—sometimes in the form of free office space or part-time use of an already overworked staff member—they still must count on magazine sales for a significant portion of their financing.

In most cases this means single-copy sales, since the concept of magazine subscriptions is still relatively new in many countries. Who would be crazy enough to pay a year in advance for a magazine, goes the reasoning. And if it is a new magazine, will it still be around in a year—or even six months from now? Better to buy each copy as it is produced—if it can be found.

Overcoming the Hurdle of Distribution

Making sure potential buyers can find the magazine is one of the most difficult problems faced by Christian publishers. The region boasts few Christian bookstores, so the main avenue of distribution is the local church. This automatically limits distribution to Christians, and often Christians of a particular denomination, since church leaders serve as the gatekeepers of the literature sold in the church. If a pastor decides to permit the distribution of only the denomination's magazines, publishers of other magazines will knock on the door in vain.

For magazines that want to reach the unchurched, the problem is especially severe. Twelve percent of the magazines about which the Magazine Training Institute has information declare their primary purpose as evangelization. Many more magazines consider non-Christians as a desired secondary market. But that audience will never enter a church in order to buy a magazine.

In most cases, kiosk sales are out of the question. Because of the small size of the potential market, many distributors refuse to take Christian magazines, which they feel would only take up valuable space while yielding few returns. Kiosk sales are so poor that most Christian magazines cannot afford to even consider this outlet, since unsold magazines are usually destroyed. Who can afford to print an extra 500 copies for distribution to newsstands that may sell only 10?

Some magazines have tried to sell on the street, using volunteers or paying representatives a commission to sell copies to passersby. This method has been singularly unsuccessful, even where it has been legal. In most countries, it is necessary to buy an expensive vendor's license to sell on the street.

Distribution remains one of the thorniest unsolved problems of Christian publishing in East/Central Europe. With so few sales outlets, how do new publishers let potential readers know about their magazines? Mailing lists are not easy to come

by and postage is expensive. With kiosk sales out of the question and subscription options limited, new publishers are forced to go from church to church and conference to conference, displaying magazines and talking about them.

Magazines launched by an ongoing organization have a slight edge because they can approach their constituents. However, even these magazines have to depend on word-of-mouth advertising for growth beyond their natural constituency. For most magazines growth is hard fought and measured from one issue to the next in tens or twenties, not hundreds or thousands.

Modest Circulation Figures

The average circulation of Christian magazines in East/Central Europe about which the Magazine Training Institute has detailed information is less than 2,000. If it were not for the distribution problems outlined above, some of them would be much larger. However, because of the size of their market, some will never be able to grow much beyond their current size. After all, how many Hungarian-speaking Baptist youth are there in Romania? *Mustarmag*, founded in 1990 and with a circulation of 1,100, is probably reaching a larger proportion of its market than many Western magazines. Croatia, with a Protestant population of some 40,000, supports at least 14 Evangelical (including Pentecostal) magazines. In Bulgaria, at least 20 Evangelical (including Pentecostal) magazines serve a Protestant population of some 90,000. With such small markets, most magazines will not grow to the size necessary to make them profitable.

Motivation from Vision More than Profit

However, while virtually every Christian magazine in the region would like to be able to cover expenses, dreams of profit are not what sustain the publishers who founded the magazines and labor to keep them alive. It is a vision for harnessing the power of the press in the service of the Kingdom that drives most of the publishers, editors, and staff members of Christian magazines in the region. Few staff members receive a salary. They work for the magazine because they believe in the vision of the editor or publisher. For this reason, a key task of the editor is keeping volunteers motivated. Most have another job as well as family and church responsibilities. The magazine is another activity and responsibility on top of many others. Many of those who begin with enthusiasm wear down with late nights and busy weekends, month after month.

The editor of a Polish magazine for Baptist women wrote recently to ask for prayer for co-workers. "Of course, we have an editorial team, and we stay in contact by e-mail," she wrote. "But punctuality is a problem and I am the one who has to ask, call, write, remind. I understand, because we do this whole work as volunteers and I know that all the women have the same problem as I, 'How can I find the time to do this?' I am tired with many responsibilities, as a

wife, mother, teacher, and church member."

Another problem, she said, is that when she took over the magazine three years ago she had no previous editing experience. In that regard, she is typical of most magazine staff members, who generally are not professionally trained journalists. Nor do they come to the magazines with rich experience in publishing. Under Communism, Christians were not allowed to study journalism, and in most countries Christian publishing was severely restricted or even prohibited. In the years since Communist governments fell, Christians have entered university journalism programs. Some have complained that many of the university programs do not offer practical courses on writing, editing, and journalism, but continue to focus on social studies and politics, much as they did under Communism, when political correctness was as important as journalistic skill.

Strong Motivation to Excel

Regardless of their level of education or experience, Christian publishers in the former Soviet Bloc are strongly motivated to learn and improve their skills. Over the last 14 years, hundreds of staff members of about 150 Christian magazines from the region have attended conferences and courses organized by the Magazine Training Institute (MTI). Two-thirds of the magazines have sent staff to more than one conference. Nearly 50 Romanian magazines have sent staff members to MTI courses, with 10 magazines sending staff to five or more conferences, and one magazine sending staff to 12 conferences. More than 25 Polish magazines have sent staff to MTI conferences, with six sending staff to five or more. Because most staff members of Christian magazines work at other jobs, attending an MTI course means taking vacation time or unpaid leave from work, paying their own travel expenses and a small tuition fee, and covering part of their conference accommodation expenses. Clearly, the motivation to learn their craft is strong.

Dogged Determination

By and large, the people who work on Christian magazines in East/Central Europe are intelligent, highly-motivated, dedicated Christians who desire to grow professionally and who want their publications to be an effective means of teaching, inspiration, and evangelism. They face daunting obstacles and, like the Romanian publisher mentioned earlier, they may become tired and discouraged. But remarkably few magazines are ever given up completely. A publisher may have to reduce the number of issues published in a given year or even take a year off before gathering new resources and starting again.

"I have hoped that God will give me what I need," wrote one Polish editor. Like many Christian publishers, she had too many responsibilities and too few resources. But she had hope. Despite distribution difficulties, inadequate funding, catastrophic economies, lack of trained staff, and just about every other resource a publisher needs, what keeps Christian magazines going is hope. ♦

Over the last 14 years, hundreds of staff members of about 150 Christian magazines from the region have attended conferences and courses organized by the Magazine Training Institute.

Sharon Mumper is director of the Magazine Training Institute, Baden, Austria, which has been providing training and resources to Christian magazine publishers in East/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union since 1989.

Christian Magazines in East/Central Europe: A Profile

Editor's note: Findings are based on a Magazine Training Institute (MTI) database of more than 150 magazines.

Christian magazines in East/Central Europe are meeting a critical need as they reach out to their churches and societies.

- Christian magazines in East/Central Europe generally have limited circulation. Our records show that perhaps as few as 16 percent of Christian magazines are able to print and distribute more than 5,000 copies of each issue.
- Some 40 percent of magazines are published quarterly, a wise budget choice considering the high cost of paper and postage. However, most editors, perhaps influenced by the frequency of secular magazines, believe their magazine should appear more often. As a result, some 50 percent are published more than four times a year. Nearly a third of the magazines are published 12 or more times a year. Such frequent publication can bring a crushing economic burden on the magazine.
- Although foreign—especially English and German—authors are highly respected and most magazines carry at least some translated articles, most editors aim for as much local input as possible. Because of a dearth of experienced indigenous Christian authors, editors must work hard to develop and train writers. Nevertheless, more than 60 percent of Christian magazines say that fewer than 25 percent of their articles are translated. Seven percent say they use no translated material at all.
- Nearly every magazine depends to some extent on sales (as opposed to subsidies) for financing and most give away at least a few copies of each issue, often as samples. However, nearly 70 percent must sell most of their copies, while 30 percent can give most away.
- Although most magazines have at least 10 pages, the average length tends to be shorter than

that of many Western magazines. Forty-two percent of the magazines have 26 pages or more, while 46 percent have 10 to 24 pages. Only 11 percent have more than 50 pages.

- Christian magazines represent a wide variety of audiences and purposes. The largest single category is discipleship and teaching magazines aimed primarily at Christians. Some 14 percent of magazines serve a denomination. Many of these would also provide teaching, but their main purpose is to communicate the goals, plans, and news of the denomination to members.
- Magazines which claim evangelism as their primary reason for existence comprise 12 percent of the total. They have an especially difficult time since channels of distribution to the unchurched are limited. Some of these magazines are sold to churches, which use them in evangelistic outreaches.
- Eleven percent of magazines in the MTI database aim to reach women and families; 10 percent are geared to youth or students; eight percent to children. Five percent are dedicated to leaders of children and youth ministries and another three percent to theologians or church leaders.
- Ninety-nine percent of today's Christian magazines have been published 14 years or fewer, most are less than 10 years old and many are only three or four years old. It will take years to catch up with Christian magazines published in the West. Nevertheless, despite their small size and financial limitations, Christian magazines in East/Central Europe are serving an important function and meeting a critical need as they reach out to their churches and societies.

Defining Proselytism

Elizabeth Kendal

In a report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (17 September 2002) the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia, Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, raised the contentious issue of proselytism. His observations are extremely significant because they cut to the very core issue of religious freedom, an issue that relates to Protestants as much as Catholics.

Kondrusiewicz said the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches have a different understanding of the concept of proselytizing. The Catholic Church does not automatically consider all native-born Russians to be Russian Orthodox: "You can hardly call an atheist who was baptized in the Orthodox Church but [who has] had no relations with any church during his life an Orthodox believer. If at some point in his life this person chooses to

become a Catholic, it can't be called an act of proselytizing," Kondrusiewicz said.

Aleksandr Abramov, an official with the External Affairs Department of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, disagrees with the Catholic point of view and says Russia was and is an Orthodox country and has its own traditions of Christianity: "We consider everyone who was baptized in an Orthodox way or has Orthodox roots to belong without any doubt to the Orthodox tradition. And we consider these people to be in our fold and we are against such a development when our [believers] are being taken away from us, very often by indecent means."◆

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Elizabeth Kendal, "Defining Proselytism," World Evangelical Alliance Web site (http://www.worldevangelical.org/persec_russia_26sep02.html).

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The Lord's Prayer Across Cultures: Ever Comforting, Ever Convicting

Mark R. Elliott

Editor's Note: Originally delivered in Beeson Divinity School Chapel, Samford University, Birmingham, AL, 1 April 2003, and at the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association conference, Kiilov, Ukraine, 16 October 2003. The concluding portion will be published in the next issue of the East-West Church and Ministry Report.

Prolific Commentary

Never have so few words meant so much to so many. And never have so few words prompted so many pages of commentary. From the first Christian century to the present, and from one end of the globe to the other, it has generated a library's worth of reading. Some claim church fathers addressed the Lord's Prayer earlier, and with more frequency, than any other topic. We also have Catholic commentary from Thomas Aquinas, Cardinal Wyszyński, Simone Weil, and Leonardo Boff. Many Protestant reformers, including Jan Hus, Martin Luther, and John Calvin, have added their reflections as well. Every generation discovers the Lord's Prayer anew, such that one bibliography on the prayer runs to 608 pages; and an Internet search today can easily produce over a thousand titles. The Web site of the Convent of the Pater Noster provides texts of the prayer in 1,221 languages.

Who Prays It?

But more important than who has written about or translated the Lord's Prayer is who has prayed it. And the answer is believers of many tongues, down through the ages, in all possible circumstances. German theologian Helmut Thielicke stressed that the Lord's Prayer sends no one away empty-handed. "It can be spoken at the cradle and the grave. It can rise from the altars of great cathedrals and from the dark hovels of those who 'eat their bread with tears.' It can be prayed at weddings and on the gallows. And the fact is, that it has been prayed in all these places."¹

A Distillation of Christian Theology

These many uses of the Lord's Prayer suggest a way that we can appreciate its cross-cultural dimensions. First of all, from the church fathers to the present, the Lord's Prayer has been recognized worldwide as perhaps the most compact distillation of Christian theology. In the third century Tertullian called it a "compendium of the whole gospel." In the twelfth century Thomas Aquinas called it "the perfect prayer."² And in the twenty-first century Russian Christian economist and educator Alexander Zaichenko calls it an "abstract" of the gospel, while Bulgarian pastor and educator Nik Nedelchev simply notes "it contains everything an individual needs when worshipping the Lord."

In the fall of 2002 I asked Christian friends around the world the meaning of the Lord's Prayer

in their context. In their responses I learned that many congregations recite it every Sunday, including Mennonites in Zaporozhe, Ukraine; Pentecostals in St. Petersburg; Baptists in Romania; and Methodists and Congregationalists in Bulgaria. In Baptist churches in Ukraine, Poland, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic the Lord's Prayer is used in worship, but not typically on a weekly basis. The same is true in Nazarene churches in Russia. Use of the Lord's Prayer in Evangelical churches in rural Ukraine is seen as a counter to the Orthodox accusation that Baptists are a cult. In contrast, in Croatia not reciting the Lord's Prayer weekly in worship is reported to be a reaction against its stylized, liturgical use in the Catholic Church.

The Tie That Binds Across Confessional Lines

Nevertheless, despite charges and countercharges of its neglect or its misuse, the Lord's Prayer is what Christians of all confessions and all continents and all centuries have in common. It's what we share as a tie that can bind our hearts in Christian love. Romanian Evangelical theologian Emil Bartos calls the Lord's Prayer "a common ground in spirituality between Evangelicals and Orthodox. All Orthodox know this prayer and give a lot of respect in reciting it. At the funeral service, it does not matter if you are Orthodox or Evangelical, you join the entire congregation in reciting the Lord's Prayer." Russian Baptist layman Alexander Zaichenko shared that many Orthodox, sad to say, will not pray together with Evangelicals, with the one exception of the Lord's Prayer: "So during conferences and public meetings, when Orthodox clergy find themselves among representatives of other churches, the only way to preserve, if not unity, at least 'spiritual courtesy,' is the Lord's Prayer."

A Saving Grace for Rote Memorization

One misuse of the Lord's Prayer, many would argue, is its employment in such a repetitive fashion that it becomes a "dry ritual," "empty words," a mindless mantra. Yet oddly enough, there can be a saving grace for even rote memorization of the Lord's Prayer. Alexander Zaichenko notes that an understanding of the Lord's Prayer as a repetitive exercise is so deeply rooted in Russian culture that even Communism could not root it out. He gives two examples: (1) special elevators imported by the Soviets from the West are called Paternosters (from the Latin "Our

(continued on page 10)

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The Lord's Prayer Across Cultures

(continued from page 9)

Father"). Yet no Russians, past or present, recognize that this strange foreign phrase derives from the parallel between a chain of elevator compartments and a chain or repetition of the "Our Father" prayer; (2) "In modern Russian, some sayings from the Bible became proverbial." Zaichenko notes, for example, "We have a saying, 'to learn as Our Father,' meaning to learn by heart or memorize very well. I remember," he recalls, "how a professor of Marxist-Leninist philosophy in my university instructed us students, 'Comrades, you must memorize the work of Lenin, as Our Father.'"

A Prayer in Case of Emergency

Unfortunately, the Lord's Prayer as a prayer of last resort is a sign of the modern era's pervasive secularism. Czech theologian Jan Lochman tells the story of the captain of a sinking ship who cries out, "The only thing to do is to pray." The ship's chaplain replies, "Are things that bad?" Too often we moderns resort to the Lord's Prayer only in cases of emergency. But even in an emergency, if the Lord's Prayer is resurrected from a person's deep subconscious, who would want to begrudge its heartfelt use? And the world is full of examples, not only of foxhole religionists, but of devout believers in distress leaning on the Lord's Prayer.

A Prayer "To Whom It May Concern"

Mary Raber, a Christian Church missionary seconded to the Mennonite Central Committee, shared the case of a Russian soldier in great misery. He was delivered from harm's way after repeating the Lord's

Prayer nightly, "not really knowing what he was praying, or to whom, but wanting help.... He would lie on his back in bed and whisper the prayer into the air.... What impresses me about the story," Mary Raber says, "is the graciousness of God who hears and answers prayer, even when it's addressed 'To Whom It May Concern.'"

So we see that in moments of great distress and in our great yearnings for meaning in life, the Holy Spirit can use the Lord's Prayer to bring His children to faith. Mary Raber also recalls her conversation with a certain Anna Ivanovna, now in her 70s, a nurse-midwife, and a very active volunteer with the Zaporozhye Chapter of the Christian Medical Association. "She was reminiscing about her childhood and told me that her grandmother taught her the Lord's Prayer and said that she should recite it if she was ever in trouble. She recited it throughout her life, retaining certain words from Old Church Slavonic, not ever quite knowing what she was saying, or to whom, merely knowing that it was somehow 'powerful.' She became a believer after Ukrainian independence. I've heard other stories along the same lines: ... the Lord's Prayer... passed along in whispers to a grandchild in Soviet times. Often, if people 'knew' anything about God [under Communism] it was the Lord's Prayer." ♦

Mark Elliott is director of the Global Center, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, AL, and editor of the East-West Church and Ministry Report.

Sources:

1. Christopher G. Weeramantry, *The Lord's Prayer, Bridge to a Better World* (Liguori, MO: Liguori/Triumph, 1998), 78.
2. *Ibid.*, 14; Nicholas Ayo, *The Lord's Prayer, A Survey Theological and Literary* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 5.

RESOURCES

Rough Justice: Law and Human Rights in the Russian Federation. (AI Index: EUR 46/054/2003), released by Amnesty International on 2 October 2003, surveys legal reforms instituted since the creation of the Russian Federation in 1991. While noting progress in some areas, the report highlights inequitable administration of justice in many cases, especially those involving ethnic minorities, women, and children. Chapter six focuses on ill treatment of nearly 50,000 mentally disabled youth confined to 155 children's homes and *internats*.

Amnesty International reports that in Russia, while a few children with mental disabilities, autism, and cerebral palsy are living at home, most are restricted to state care for life. These children are not considered fit to be educated and some are kept in cruel and degrading conditions. Investigators discovered that state authorities encourage parents of children with learning disabilities to renounce their parental rights in favor of state custody. "These children are consigned to an utterly meaningless life," states Lesley Warner of Amnesty

International UK, "and unlike prisoners, they have no chance of review or release" (Tom Parfit, "Care of Learning-Disabled Russian Children Condemned," *The Lancet*, 18-25 October 2003).

The report recommends: 1) "independent judicial oversight of the decision to place children with mental disabilities in institutions; 2) continuing impartial review of all such placements, with a view to discharging where this is in their best interests; and 3) the provision by Russian authorities of greater educational, health, and rehabilitation services and recreational activities, appropriate to the age and abilities of the child." This entire report may be accessed from the Amnesty International web site: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR460542003?open&of=ENG-RUS>.

For instructions for writing letters of concern to Russian authorities, consult "Russian Federation: For a Full and Decent Life—Action to Promote the Rights of Children with Mental Disabilities"

Rough Justice (continued)

(Index: EUR 46/091/2003). Released by Amnesty International on 14 November 2003, it may be accessed at: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR460782003?open&of=ENG-RUS>. Readers are advised that Amnesty International now has a Russian language Web site.

Also note that the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 9 (Spring 2001) published a theme edition dedicated to ministry to Russian children at risk. This issue may be accessed and downloaded at no charge at <http://www.samford.edu/groups/global/ewcmreport/tableofcontent3.htm>.

Authority as a Political Resource of the Russian Orthodox Church

Alexander Zaichenko

Political Authority

The most important political resource is authority that relies on tradition, ethnicity, and cultural and religious affiliation. The Russian Orthodox Church has this type of authority as guardian of Russia's national, cultural, and spiritual heritage. Political elites of all sorts try to tap Orthodoxy's reservoir of authority and influence, managing various demonstrations of their close ties with the church, especially during elections. Politicians attend services, light candles, take the Patriarch or other church ministers into their arms, proclaim their faith, and talk about God and Orthodoxy. Naturally, all of this is done before TV cameras and floodlights that have the intended effect—people start to recognize and approve of these political elites. What happens is pure manipulation.

By these means a politician communicates the following message to voters: "I share the same values and traditions that you, my citizens, share. I go to the same church you go to, pray to the same God you pray to, speak the same language and keep the same traditions as you. That is why you can recognize me and show me your favor. That is why you must respect me, listen to me, and vote for me." But this cultural identification may be a facade that conceals immorality devoid of any spirituality or culture. In fact, such misrepresentations by politicians are less and less convincing due to the continuous modernization of Russian society, the growth of civil society, and increased political and economic stability.

Spiritual Authority

After political authority, one should take into account the spiritual authority that is said to reside in Orthodoxy, "the only true faith." But its political importance is insignificant because it has an effect only on Orthodox believers, who constitute only five to eight percent of the population. Furthermore, even among these people, Russian Orthodox spiritual authority cannot be used as an instrument of pure political influence because the Church officially prohibits its priests from engaging in politics.

Moral Authority

In the first years of political transformation in Russia, the political elite craved another type of authority that the Church possessed—its moral authority. Indeed, the Church was once considered the guardian of true morals. This was the highest form of authority the Church possessed. It is in the heart of the Church that absolute morals were born and passed on to future generations. That is why the political elite consider the Church capable of passing on to various government bodies its moral authority. As a result, a new tradition has been born: the Church bestows blessings on favored politicians and consecrates new plants, public buildings, commercial centers, even ships and submarines. The transmission of moral authority can even take place through television coverage of public officials conversing with Orthodox hierarchs.

Under Soviet rule it was dangerous to hold to any morality other than Communist, whereas now holding such morals is considered economically unprofitable. For new Russian businessmen the remnants of Communist moral values have been discarded in favor of the principle of prosperity at any cost.

One means of judging the Church's political authority is to estimate the number of people who consider the Church to be the guardian of national, cultural, and spiritual wealth. Based on the results of recent polls, 80 percent of Russians express such sentiments towards the Russian Orthodox Church. A relatively new method the Russian Orthodox Church has employed to enhance its authority has been to organize protests against those outside its ranks who are perceived to be a threat, namely Catholics, Protestants, and atheists. The Church, with help from the State, is trying to preserve its authority through Orthodox educational programs that target the new generation of Russians.

Alexander Zaichenko holds a candidate degree in economics and is vice-chair of the board of trustees of the Russian-American Christian University, Moscow.

Political elites of all sorts try to tap Orthodoxy's reservoir of authority and influence, managing various demonstrations of their close ties with the church, especially during elections.



Book Review

Kizenko, Nadieszda. *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People*. University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2000. 376 pp. \$22.50.

Reviewed by Sharyl Corrado.

Historian Nadieszda Kizenko has done a great favor not only to the academic community but also to believers in her work on Fr. John of Kronstadt (1829-1908), a controversial pre-revolutionary Russian Orthodox priest canonized in 1990. Unusual for his time, Fr. John's enthusiastic ministry—social service, charismatic prayer, liturgical revival, and miraculous healings—soon attracted national and international attention, turning Kronstadt into a pilgrimage site and establishing Fr. John as a "religious celebrity." His unique devotion to asceticism and personal holiness, centered on prayer, fasting, and marital celibacy, combined the spirituality of Russian holy men (*starsy*) with involvement in every aspect of society.

Unlike the majority of works on Fr. John, many written in connection with his eventual canonization, Kizenko explores not only his successes, but also the controversies associated with his life and ministry. She details the internal struggles Fr. John faced as his popularity grew, and explores what appeared to be hypocrisy in his life as he struggled with temptation. His conservative politics led to statements and actions that many today, as then, would not identify as befitting a Christian. In addition, the cult that has sprung up around him has taken on a life of its own,

interpreting and misinterpreting his teachings in ways damaging to his reputation and cause.

Part of the Lived Religious Experience series of the Pennsylvania State University Press, *A Prodigal Saint* describes not only the events of Fr. John's unusual life, but through use of diaries and private correspondence, explores the spiritual experiences of both Fr. John and his parishioners. Herself the daughter of an Orthodox priest, Kizenko never disparages the Christian faith, never ridicules what some may describe as fanaticism or naiveté, nor questions the legitimacy of miracles and answered prayer. Yet as a historian, she remains true to her profession, readily acknowledging contradictory sources and interpretations. She does not shy away from modern or post-modern theory insofar as it helps to better understand the experiences of Fr. John and his followers, yet she knows equally well Orthodox theology and liturgy. Her combination of academic expertise with firsthand knowledge of the faith allows insights from multiple perspectives seldom seen in combination.

A Prodigal Saint is valuable to all who seek to understand Russian spirituality, the role of religion in Russian society and culture, and the story of a man extremely influential in Russian Orthodoxy even today. At the same time, the book provides the reader with a role model for personal spirituality and public ministry, as well as important lessons to be learned from Fr. John's mistakes, failures, and even sin. Kizenko's refusal to simplify a complex life provides a service to all who face the contradictions and challenges of the Christian life in today's society. ♦

Sharyl Corrado is a doctoral student in Russian history at the University of Illinois, Urbana, IL.



Book Review

Paulson, Hank. *Global Partnerships, Networking and Nationals; The Third Paradigm in Missions*. Colorado Springs, CO: New Hope International, 2002. 108 pp. \$14.95.

Reviewed by Anita Deyneka.

Christ's command to go into all the world and preach the gospel is clear in Scripture. More difficult to discern are specific directives for developing missiological strategy—how the Great Commission should be carried out. The author of *Global Partnerships*, Hank Paulson, is a veteran missionary and president of New Hope International, formerly East European Bible Mission (www.newhopeinternational.org/bookorder). Emphasizing networking, and especially relationships between nationals and foreigners, Paulson considers questions critical to contemporary mission strategy and day-to-day implementation of the Great Commission.

Three possible paradigms are explored: sending people, sending money, and sending both through partnerships. *Global Partnerships* strongly presents a case for the third paradigm and then more closely examines ways such a commitment can be carried

out in such areas as accountability, dependency, and cross-cultural differences—which inevitably arise in any partnership.

Paulson offers several specific suggestions to make partnerships profitable for God's kingdom and for both national and foreign partners. These include

- taking time to "date" before "making a commitment" (relationships need time);
- explaining and agreeing upon goals and procedures from the start;
- establishing structure and guarantees for accountability and communication;
- avoiding the danger of buying one's way into a superficial relationship; and
- encouraging networking, even though it was discouraged under Communism and does not come naturally, especially for the older generation.

Paulson also advocates seven practical principles for effective partnerships: Christ's lordship, mutual respect, mutual accountability, local accountability, long-term commitment to partnership, the development of unity and respect within the local

culture, and the need for a vision and purpose beyond partnership.

With a command as compelling as Christ's Great Commission and the challenge of a world so unevangelized, it is only logical to cooperate in partnerships whenever possible. And, as Paulson notes, the advantage of partnerships is readily appreciated in the business community and also appealing to the younger generation.

Although partnerships along the lines of Paulson's third paradigm are now widely advocated among missions—especially in the West—a gap often exists between intention and implementation.

While partnerships can provide possibilities for more extensive and effective ministry, the kinds of relationships Paulson promotes almost always mean some loss of control and credit for both partners. These costs probably slow the formation of profitable partnerships. However, new ministries in and to the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe may have an advantage in forming

partnerships because it may be easier for organizational founders to launch creative, collaborative projects than for longstanding ministries.

Even when partners are prepared to relinquish some degree of control and credit for the greater good, difficulties still lurk in the details. For example, while Westerners may completely agree that accountability is foundational to a partnership, they may have considerably different concepts of what accountability actually entails. Sensitivity in cross-cultural communication is another area that may readily bring agreement in principle, but with perceptions of what constitutes "sensitivity" frequently varying widely between Western and non-Western partners.

Hank Paulson has done missions a great service in raising many issues that merit deeper consideration. ♦

Anita Deyneka is president of Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, Wheaton, IL.



Book Review

Getz, Howard G. *The CoMission: One View*. Privately published. 2003.

Reviewed by Perry L. Glanzer.

Howard Getz's self-published book on the CoMission covers ground previously not chronicled in other books about the largest missiological partnership of the twentieth century (Paul Eshleman's *The Touch of Jesus*, New Life Publishers, and my own *The Quest for Russia's Soul: Western Evangelicals and Moral Education in Post-Communist Russia*, Baylor University Press).

Getz's account tells the tale of the CoMission from the perspective of a small mission agency (World Team) involved with this outreach. Consequently, Getz provides a great service by detailing the missiological side of the CoMission experience.

This account describes a range of "nuts and bolts" issues involved in all 12 cycles of the CoMission including recruitment and training of teams, the set-up process of the World Team mission, support of teams on the fields, and various stories of individuals from the field. In fact, he offers a bit more detail than needed. For example, he writes about what each World Team group did during their vacation time in Switzerland, who met someone at the airport on certain trips, and other unnecessary details.

Since Getz did not stay in the country as an actual CoMission member, the book contains only a small number of personal stories of relationships with Russians, ministry activity, or training of Russian teachers that would make the book of broader interest to outsiders wanting to learn more about missions in Russia. Indeed, the best nuggets in this account come from prayer-letter excerpts from ground-level participants that describe such interactions. These narratives also include a number of the quirky incidents and events foreign travelers to Russia often

experience which make the movie "*Trains, Planes, and Automobiles*" seem tame by comparison.

Since Getz helped manage teams, his account does provide an honest and accurate account of the general difficulties experienced by the average CoMission participant. He describes difficult living situations, team disagreements, emotional ups and downs, health problems (depression, injuries, etc.), cross-cultural adjustments, and housing/food issues that CoMissioners faced. If not for the unnecessary details, the book would serve as a good source for future Russian missionaries and workers.

Despite Getz's honesty about the difficulties of working in Russia, he does not add reflections about the lessons mission agencies might learn about using teams for missions, forming large-mission partnerships, working with government entities, or undertaking missions in Russia. For example, he uncritically relates stories detailing CoMissioners teaching in the classroom. These are actions prohibited in the CoMission agreement with the Russian Ministry of Education. In fact, the Russian Ministry of Education eventually revoked its agreement with the CoMission because of such actions in another city.

Getz remains satisfied to tell the story as accurately and in as great detail as possible without offering any further reflections. Consequently, in light of the book's dearth of stories related to ground-level ministry, its overly detailed narrative, and the lack of critical analysis, it is doubtful the book will be of interest to a wide audience. The book will primarily prove interesting to World Team and other CoMission participants as a wonderful resource for bringing back memories of a unique historical and missiological experience. ♦

Perry L. Glanzer is an assistant professor in the School of Education, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Editor's Note: Orders for The CoMission: One View by Howard G. Getz may be sent to the following address: 609 Glen Avenue, Morton, IL 61550; 309-266-9603; hodgetz@cs.com. Cost: \$5.00.



Romanian and Russian Responses to Vladimir Solodovnikov

(See "Made in America: Or the Self-Evident Truth That Russians Aren't Savages," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 11 (Summer 2003), 12, 14.)

Sometimes I wonder which is better: to be loved by many pagan friends whose souls in the end will be lost forever or to be hated by many pagan neighbors due to stupid and inadequate cultural sensitivity, but with at least one bound for heaven?

A Romanian Response:

Valentin Teodorescu

In my opinion Vladimir Solodovnikov is in many respects too harsh and unfair to Western missionaries working in Russia. Even if many of them may be insensitive, or not sensitive enough, as the article states, it still seems to me harsh and unfair to omit the fact that probably the vast majority of these missionaries came to Russia because they really love the country and its people.

As a Romanian who is studying in the United States and who happened to be close to some American missionaries who worked in my country, I realize what a great price they pay. They renounce their comfortable lifestyles in the United States in order to move to Romania with its foreign language, low standard of living, and depressing buildings and streets. Many times these missionaries experience the same feelings East Europeans feel in their first years of living in the West (if they immigrate there): deep depression and isolation. What would motivate these missionaries to come to Russia or Romania if not their genuine love for God and for our people? Even if some missionaries come to us for other reasons, I imagine these are few.

I would like to believe that many missionaries coming to Russia have read some of Nicolai Berdiaev. And I would also like to think that many Russians

coming to the United States are reading some of Reinhold Niebuhr. But unfortunately not all people have an interest in deep theology. Still, the question to ask is this: Is it legitimate to expect this level of interest from every missionary going to a foreign culture? Probably the history of missions would prove that not many missionaries have been highly educated theologically. And yet God has worked through them.

By this I do not mean to say that it is unimportant for missionaries to understand theology and the culture where they minister. On the contrary, such understanding is essential if they really want to communicate the gospel. But sometimes I am afraid that many highly educated and culturally sensitive Christians who criticize other Christians who are less culturally sensitive, rarely proclaim the gospel to others themselves. And to me this elitist attitude does not seem legitimate. Sometimes I wonder which is better: to be loved by many pagan friends whose souls in the end will be lost forever or to be hated by many pagan neighbors due to stupid and inadequate cultural sensitivity, but with at least one bound for heaven? ♦

Valentin Teodorescu, a native of Pascani, Romania, is a student at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, AL.

A Russian Response:

Vitaliy Bak

After reading the article written by Vladimir Solodovnikov I have been depressed and sad for quite some time. The reason for my disappointment is not only the author's complete failure to understand and properly evaluate Russian life, but the fact that the opinion he expressed might reflect the thinking of some other people in Russia as well. I found the article superficial and lacking in objectivity.

Although Solodovnikov expressed much passion and anger, I think most of his conclusions are wrong and logically inconsistent. For example, he states in his refutation of "Stereotype 1" that Russia is not a godless, but rather, a spiritually problematic country. But in the twentieth century alone the Soviet regime martyred millions of people, either for being insubordinate or simply for being faithful to Christ. How, then, can one explain a nation with such a rich Christian heritage becoming so godless as to kill many saints? If Russia was not godless, how do we account for so many ungodly atrocities since 1917?

Starting with Peter the Great, the tsars introduced European customs and traditions that fueled the growth of secularism. This is especially evident in

the nineteenth century since many Russian nobility, influenced by European free thought, became estranged from Orthodoxy. By the reign of the last tsar, Nicholas II, many Russians, especially among the *intelligentsia*, had adopted a secular outlook highly critical of an Orthodoxy it considered hopelessly corrupt. Needless to say, after 1917, with the coming of militant atheism, secularism became the norm, with the extremely rare exception of a handful of Orthodox believers and some Evangelical Christians. This changed only after 1988, with the celebration of the millennium of the baptism of Rus'.

In my opinion, in condemning American theology and evangelism Solodovnikov makes a very sloppy mistake in equating the Calvinist persuasion of a certain, insensitive missionary and of many Southern Baptist missionaries from the U.S. with the overall position of American Christians. American society, like Russian, is very complex and diverse. American Christianity is not only Southern Baptist. Anyone familiar with the religious spectrum in America knows that Calvinist theology does not represent all believers. Churches there that do not hold to

Calvinist theology include Catholics, Orthodox, Methodists, Mennonites, Free Will Baptists, and some Anglicans/Episcopalians. This makes quite a large group and we cannot dismiss it easily.

Of course, Russian Baptists would not like to associate with Christians of other denominations in evangelism, which is understandable. But why could they not cooperate more with Free Will Baptists, for example? It seems that the influence and wealth of American Southern Baptists have an important role in the decision-making process of Russian Evangelicals. It probably felt good to have a big brother like Southern Baptists helping restore Russian Baptist churches, but with such help comes the paying of debts. I do not want to be cynical, but we have a Russian saying, "The one who pays, orders the music."

For the sake of argument Solodovnikov creates a bigger problem for himself by blurring the lines between Russian Baptist culture and the larger world of Russian—especially Orthodox—culture. Specifically, I am not sure his affirmation of such great religious philosophers as Lossky and Berdiaev would be welcomed by all Evangelical believers. Maybe some of the Evangelical *intelligentsia* would appreciate them, but definitely not the average Baptist or Pentecostal believer. There have been many tragic misunderstandings between Russian Orthodox and Russian Protestant Christians, and this makes it quite difficult for many Evangelical

Christians to appreciate the wealth and breadth of the Orthodox cultural and theological heritage. With this in mind, I am amazed that Solodovnikov can so readily join Russian Orthodox and Evangelical Christians together to indulge his anti-Western bias.

I personally have great respect for early Russian Evangelical leaders such as Ivan Prokhanov and Ivan Kargel. But with all due respect, I have to say that they just started Russian Evangelical theology. We have to accept the fact that, in spite of their brilliant ideas and sermons, Soviet repression essentially froze the development of Russian Protestant thought in a very early stage of development. Again, Solodovnikov overstates the case. I am proud of my Russian Baptist heritage. However, I am also convinced that in spite of the fact that some missionaries from the West do more harm than good, we need to learn to work together. If East and West can overcome pride and join hands to work for God, we can achieve great things! By the way, Prokhanov, Kargel, and other leaders of the Evangelical movement in Russia were greatly influenced by Western Christians, and they did not object to that. ♦

Vitaliy Bak, an Evangelical Christian-Baptist from Moldova, is a doctoral student in Old Testament at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. He has worked as an interpreter for American-Russian ministries for several years, including interpreting for church services, evangelistic crusades, social work, and theological schools.

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Letter to the Editor

I continue to enjoy and be enlightened by your many contributions through the *East-West Church & Ministry Report*. You have done such a remarkable job over the years. Thank you so much.

I have especially been reading the many articles on Orthodoxy over the past few years with great interest. At one time we had a lot more going with the Orthodox Church in Russia and in fact did a joint project with Campus Crusade for the Millennium celebration of the Church in Russia. At that time we had contact with a number of priests and even helped to establish some Orthodox Bible study groups. Over the years

the situation has changed, with the more aggressive attitude of the Church toward anything not Orthodox. This has not been true in the less restrictive Orthodox countries like Armenia and Georgia, where we do have some very good opportunities.

Again, thanks so much for your contribution to the work in Eastern Europe over all these years. I really am sincere in saying that your ministry has been a tremendous blessing.

Al Akimoff, Youth With A Mission Slavic Ministries, Salem, OR.

Teaching Cross-Culturally

(continued from page 16)

questions wherever we are teaching. A student in Timisoara, Romania, gave us a walking tour and movingly recounted her own experience of the 1989 revolution that ended Communist rule. In Moldova, I learned that the hall rented by the church where we worshipped had previously been used for Communist Party meetings. In that space a cross now hangs where Lenin's picture previously hung. Recently in the center of Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina, we visited Peace Park, a block from the Baptist Church, where 23 young Muslims were buried after

they and others were killed in a surprise attack on a defenseless crowd.

We have tried to communicate our need for help in understanding the culture where we teach and have been blessed by eyewitness accounts of Central and East European history. We humbly believe that this has enabled us to contextualize our cross-cultural teaching—and we continue to learn. The Lingenfelters offer wise counsel to us all: "Ask others for help." ♦

Wesley H. Brown is chaplain and lecturer in contextual missiology at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, Czech Republic.

An International Educator Reflects on Teaching Cross-Culturally

Wesley H. Brown

Editor's Note: The East-West Church and Ministry Report 11 (Fall 2003), 16, 15, published an excerpt from Judith E. Lingenfelter and Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, Teaching Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Learning and Teaching (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003). Chaplain Brown writes in response.

Many teachers face the temptation to just take notes of a course previously taught and repeat the lectures. We have consistently sought to first learn as much as we could about the local situation.

For better than six years my wife, Dr. Cheryl Brown, and I have learned and taught in 13 seminaries, universities, and colleges, most founded since the end of Communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe. We find the Lingenfelters' book relevant, helpful, and applicable to these many cultural settings.

Before Teaching, Study the Context

"One must learn the other-cultural perspective...[and] become a learner in the new cultural context," they write. Many teachers face the temptation to just take notes of a course previously taught and repeat the lectures. We have consistently sought to first learn as much as we could about the local situation, the culture, and the characteristics of local churches and worship. In some contexts, the repressive role of a Communist government has been replaced by the mafia. In others, the Orthodox Church has branded all Baptists and other Evangelicals as "sectarians" and has sought to limit religious freedom. In still others, the Muslim majority culture amounts to a cultural facade more than a strong faith commitment, but it has at times forced limitations on worship and witness. These different cultural settings have made an impact on us and what we teach, since we are firm believers in the importance of contextualization. We're still learning.

Teachers Learning From Students

A teacher needs to know what the important issues

are for Christians in a given culture. I have taught the course, "Foundations and Contemporary Issues in Christian Ethics," in many institutions. To help me learn more about the cultural context, I break classes up into small groups and ask each to list the seven most significant ethical decisions they believe Christians face in their culture. When the class comes together again, I ask each group to give their list of seven, noting which ones are listed more than once. We often conclude with a list of 20 or more important issues.

It has been interesting to compare the list from Moscow, for example, with the list from Beirut, Lebanon. Some issues such as abortion, divorce, and remarriage have appeared on all lists. But certain issues have been very dissimilar. In Moscow, students listed as ethical dilemmas the purchase of pirated CDs and computer software and keeping two sets of accounts—one for the tax inspector and one as a "real financial record." With taxes so unjustly high, they said, no one can make a living wage if accounts reveal actual income and business expenses. In Beirut, people asked if a believer of Muslim background with multiple wives should divorce before being baptized and joining the church. And if so, what should be the fate of other spouses and children? By this means we not only learn a good deal from our students, but we are able to focus on ethical issues that are of genuine local concern.

The Lingenfelters mention different cultural interpretations of cheating, which is an issue in many countries. In some cultures people believe it is wrong only if the person is caught. In some contexts students seem to feel that sharing information is an act of loving one's neighbor as oneself, an adaptation of the Golden Rule: giving information to others as you would want fellow students to give to you!

Cross-cultural teaching is often complicated by language because of limited fluency or the need for interpreters. Because we have taught in so many countries, we generally have had to use an interpreter. We try to minimize misunderstandings by using short, simple sentences and by consciously avoiding illustrations and examples from our American life and folklore that can easily be misunderstood.

Ask For Help

The authors correctly emphasize the importance of gaining a basic understanding of the political context through helpful books, news sources, and the Internet. We also have learned by asking non-threatening

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).

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EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT
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