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Christian Responses to Trafficking in Women from Eastern Europe

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Editor's Note: This article is an abridged and updated version of a paper given at the Lilly Fellows Program National Research Conference, "Christianity and Human Rights," Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, 13 November 2004.

In September 2004, at his swearing-in ceremony, before an assemblage of ambassadors, members of Congress, and White House and State Department VIPs, U.S. Ambassador-At-Large John R. Miller related the nightmare of Katya, "a Czech teenager lured to Amsterdam with a promise of a restaurant job, her passport seized, her two-year-old daughter threatened, so she would service 10 and 15 men a day in a brothel."¹ Could this possibly happen today in a civilized Europe? Or in the U.S.? The awful truth is that Katya's story is all too commonplace.

Trafficking - A Growth Industry

Today trafficking in women is widely reported to be the third most lucrative branch of organized crime, after international sales in contraband weapons and drugs.² Asia, historically, has been the major source for global trafficking of women, as well as the locus of international sex tourism. But the liberation of East European states from Communist rule in 1989 and the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the addition of another major stream of trafficking victims. Millions of destitute women from these regions have been led away in new chains fashioned by Russian organized crime, traffickers, pimps, and brothel operators worldwide.³

The Numbers

Estimates for global trafficking in women range from 600,000 to four million per year.⁴ Dr. Laura Lederer, a State Department senior advisor on trafficking, believes this modern-day slavery "is now on par with estimates of the number of Africans enslaved in the 16th and 17th centuries."⁵ The number of women and children from post-Soviet states subjected to international trafficking is in the neighborhood of 175,000 to 250,000 per year⁶ [with] "50,000 to 100,000 Moldovans, over 100,000 Ukrainians, and 500,000 Russians [currently] active in prostitution outside their home country."⁷ So many Slavic

women have been ensnared in the global sex industry that in many parts of the world, including Turkey, Israel, and England, "Natasha" has become the generic term for prostitute.⁸ One anti-trafficking NGO estimates that citizens of post-Soviet states now constitute one quarter of all women subjected to trafficking worldwide.⁹

The Destinations

Traffickers transport women from post-Soviet states to brothels and apartment lock-ups in Europe, the Middle East, even the Far East and the U.S.¹⁰

- The Russian mafia controls much of Israel's sex trade with up to 90 percent of trafficked women coming from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. "Police officials estimate that there are 25,000 paid sexual transactions [in Israel] every day."¹¹
- Women from former Soviet Bloc nations also work in brothels in Thailand, Japan, and South Korea.¹²
- Anywhere from 14,500 to 50,000 women are trafficked into the United States annually,¹³ including from Eastern Europe, often via Mexico. As an example, the *Kyiv Post* reported the case of a Ukrainian woman working in prostitution in a Silver Spring, Maryland, massage parlor owned by a Russian.¹⁴

The Profits

This modern-day slave trade has become an extremely lucrative business for organized crime, with estimates up to nineteen billion dollars annual profit.¹⁵ One NGO, the Angel Coalition, estimates sex trafficking yields seven billion in annual profits in Russia alone.¹⁶ The income of individual traffickers and pimps is stunning. In Bosnia, with an average annual income of \$4,400, a single bar owner working five East European women can earn \$240,000 a year from prostitution.¹⁷ A chief of undercover police operations in Israel has tallied typical pimps' profits from mostly Slavic women at up to a million dollars a month.¹⁸

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Rampant Corruption

Not only is trafficking a high-profit, low-overhead proposition, it is very low-risk as well. "Sadly, in most countries there's a greater penalty for dealing drugs than for dealing in human flesh."¹⁹ For example, trafficking in the Czech Republic is a misdemeanor.²⁰ Rampant corruption only compounds the problem. Trafficked women fleeing brothels rarely seek help from the law because the police are too often the johns—or are on the take—or both.²¹ To give but one example, Macedonian police reportedly earn \$750 every time they assist a trafficker, compared to a monthly salary of \$200.²²

Christian Responses

What has been and what should be the Christian response to trafficking in women? Having surveyed voluminous literature on trafficking and having conducted several dozen interviews, I can answer that Christian responses, though spotty and uneven, have been far more numerous and consequential than I originally expected. However, at the same time, it must be noted that Christian responses have not been nearly enough to help more than a negligible percentage of trafficked women and, to date, have been dwarfed by the research and work of non-faith-based NGOs and government agencies. And all anti-trafficking efforts to this point pale before the continuing escalation of the global sex trade.

U.S. Legal Efforts

Landmark U.S. legislation to combat international trafficking in women, passed in 2000 and strengthened in 2003, owed much to concerned Christians inside and outside government and their willingness to work together with equally concerned Jewish groups and feminist organizations. Two Catholic laymen in Congress, Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS), worked in tandem to lead efforts to pass legislation in 2000 and 2003 that commits the U.S. to a major role in combating global trafficking in women. Political scientist Allen Hertzke has written a fascinating account of truly "strange bedfellows" coming together to promote Congressional action against trafficking: "At a pivotal last stage of the legislative campaign, members of Congress received a letter from Gloria Steinem and other feminist leaders at the very moment that they were being lobbied by such figures as Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship, Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention, Richard Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals, and John Busby of the Salvation Army."²³

Christian Networking

Christian networking to combat trafficking is having an impact. The U.S.-based National Association of Evangelicals, for example, helped launch an Initiative Against Sexual Trafficking (IAST) in 1999 that in

2001 came under the auspices of the Salvation Army. This grouping of 28 church and parachurch organizations supporting anti-trafficking efforts is led by Lisa Thompson. She is a tireless, energetic, single-minded crusader who has been inspired by the 19th-century anti-slavery campaign of William Wilberforce and the compassionate ministries to prostitutes undertaken in England by Josephine Butler and Bramwell and Florence Booth.²⁴

Anti-Trafficking Public Letters

Increasing Evangelical involvement in an issue of international social justice is no better illustrated than in a string of anti-trafficking public letters with multiple signators. Examples include open letters to President Bill Clinton and congressional leaders to support U.S. anti-trafficking legislation (June 1999—130, mostly Evangelical, signators); to President Vladimir Putin opposing Russian legalization of prostitution (September 2002—185 signators); to Pope John Paul II urging greater Vatican efforts to combat trafficking (January 2003—146 signators); and to President Vaclav Klaus and other Czech officials, opposing the legalization of prostitution (May 2004—105 signators).²⁵

The Salvation Army

The premier Protestant denominational response to trafficking to date is seen in the concerted efforts of the Salvation Army. Around the world the Army works with women trapped in prostitution, including India, Tanzania, Switzerland, Australia, South Africa, Canada, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, The Netherlands, Britain, Ghana, Costa Rica, and Bangladesh. It also establishes microenterprise and microcredit projects to alleviate the poverty that breeds global trafficking. At-risk women and women emerging from brothels are given literacy classes, training, and work. The Army's Sally Ann Shop in Bangladesh sells crafts and clothes made by women in the care of the Salvation Army.²⁶

In Germany, the Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches staff some 20 counseling centers for victims of trafficking, helping women cope with trauma and assisting them in finding shelter and food.²⁷ A quite recent Protestant initiative is that of the European Baptist Federation, which, urged on by concerned Swedish Baptists, made counter-trafficking efforts the focus of their annual meeting in March 2005 in Budapest.²⁸ ♦

Editor's Note: The conclusion of this article, focusing on additional Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox efforts to combat trafficking, will appear in the next issue of the East-West Church and Ministry Report.

Mark R. Elliott is editor of the East-West Church and Ministry Report.

So many Slavic women have been ensnared in the global sex industry that in many parts of the world, including Turkey, Israel, and England, "Natasha" has become the generic term for prostitute.

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The Russian Orthodox Church and the Problem of Modernization

Father Veniamin (Novik)

Modernization is such an unpleasant word to the Russian ear. Among us Russians, emotional and taste-oriented perceptions are quite common. We have words that are digestible and indigestible, and *modernization* is in the second category. The precise meaning (not the usual one!) is change on the basis of a new, rational, reasonable foundation. The mind has been given to us by God, and therefore we ought to develop this gift and use it. Rationalism is a methodological principle that became prevalent during the Enlightenment. When such a methodology begins to pretend to be self-sufficient, when means are substituted for goals, rationalism becomes an ideology with a limited worldview.

But why do we need to go to extremes? Because modernization in technology has brought about scientific and technological revolutions. In the socio-political realm, modernization engendered civil society and liberal democracy. In this case we have participation of all in the life of a society and respect for the freedom of the individual. These are human rights that are laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Constitution of the

Russian Federation. The law ought to protect even the smallest of minorities—the single human being—from other humans, from society, and from the state. Since only God is sinless, all others should be bound by the law. Thus rationalism, together with biblical and Christian foundations, contributes to the creation of societies whose goal is the total well-being of the population.

But can we speak of the modernization of religion? Probably not on the level of dogmas. Religion, however, whose socio-cultural sphere is the church, is not confined to dogmas. And this membrane surely can be subject to modernization. Examples of modernization in church life could include the reading of Scripture in language that people can understand, and parish decision-making in open meetings, rather than in secret. If such modernization (renewal) does not occur, church life becomes a ritualistic and magical show of religion. ♦

Edited excerpt published with permission from "Russkaya pravoslavnaya tserkov' i problema modernizatsii obshchestve," Religia i pravo, no. 3 (2002), 13-15. Translated by Oleg P. Turlac.

Modernization in church life could include the reading of Scripture in language that people can understand.

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Contemporary Religious Life on Sakhalin Island

Natalia Potapova

Editor's Note: Readers will not necessarily agree with all interpretations found in this article, but all will be much better informed about a region of Russia where Protestantism is surprisingly strong.

One common trend in post-Soviet Russia, as a result of the liberal legislation passed in 1990, has been an unprecedented burst of religiosity and a rapid growth in the number of religious organizations. These processes have been evident on Sakhalin as well, in part due to the revocation of the island's status as a border zone and the consequent arrival of representatives of a variety of confessions, both from mainland Russia and from abroad. Sakhalin's unique history (tsarist penal colony, 40 years of Japanese rule in the south, and the Soviet period), as well as the ethnic diversity of its population (including native peoples, Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, and Koreans), created a population devoid of religious tradition or confessional loyalties. These circumstances continue to influence the religious life of Sakhalin today.

Opposition to Missionary Activity

As in other regions of Russia, the burst of religiosity and the activity of foreign missions prompted new regional legislation. Already in 1993, social and political organizations had begun to appeal to People's Deputies of the region to limit the activity of foreign religious organizations. In 1996, the governor passed a decree to regulate "the growing stream of foreign missionaries onto the territory of the Sakhalin region," and their "violations of legal procedures." The decree called upon the Federal Security Service (UFSB), the regional Department of Internal Affairs (UVD), and the Justice Department to increase their vigilance in detecting those missionaries and religious organizations operating in violation of the laws of the Russian Federation. Missionary activity by foreign religious organizations lacking accreditation from the Justice Department was forbidden.

A harsh blow to the interests of believers was a clause requiring missionary activity to take place exclusively in cult buildings; missionary activity was forbidden entirely in state, municipal, and other educational institutions. However, due to protests, on 17 April 1997, the regional procurator amended the clause: now only government buildings, with the exception of institutions of higher education, were forbidden to lease their accommodations for missionary activity. From the point of view of the Russian Orthodox Church, the regional administration's actions were insufficient. In the 1990s, the population awoke to actions of foreign missionaries that from the point of view of Russian spiritual tradition were ambiguous and often unacceptable. "Spiritual security" was placed on the same level as "national security," and a number of organizations were founded to combat the influence of foreign religions and sects. A 1997 issue of *Missionerskoe obozrenie* [Missionary Review] noted

that "local sectarians focus their attention on middle and higher educational institutions and work closely with representatives of regional authorities and customs officials on the island."

Growing Religiosity

Research conducted by the Sociology Laboratory of Sakhalin State University showed a consistent increase in the population's religiosity, although not necessarily Orthodoxy. The percent of respondents referring to themselves as believers, according to surveys conducted in the regional center, are as follows:

Year	1988	1991	1993	1995
Percentage	18.6	38.6	42.1	43.0
Year	1998	2000	2001	2003
Percentage	44.8	45.2	46.3	49.2

The study indicated that the majority of believers were women (77.8 percent in 1997; 71.5 percent in 2003). Of believers surveyed in 1997, 19.8 percent identified themselves as Orthodox, while 28.9 percent belonged to various Protestant denominations. In 2003, respondents were, respectively, 27.1 percent Orthodox and 25.7 percent Protestant (including 15.4 percent belonging to the Christians of Evangelical Faith-Pentecostal). At the same time, survey results indicated that active religious searching among non-traditional religions had decreased and the authority of Orthodoxy had grown. In addition, in 2003, when asked why they chose to belong to a particular confession, only 4.5 percent of Orthodox responded that they were seeking meaning in life, while 35.5 percent chose the Russian Orthodox Church because it was the traditional religion: "To be Russian means to be Orthodox." At the same, the vast majority of Protestants surveyed indicated that their choice was the result of their search for meaning in life (from 33.3 to 100 percent, depending on the denomination). In 1997, 10.9 percent of respondents indicated that they wavered between belief and non-belief, while in 2003, that number had grown to 15.2 percent of respondents. In 1997, 12.7 percent of respondents considered themselves non-believers, while in 2003, 11.1 percent. In 2003, 2.8 percent of respondents (all men) identified themselves as atheists.

Research in 1997-98 and 2003 indicated an increased level of education among believers, an increase in the percentage of men in religious organizations, and a decrease in the average age of religious believers. There was also growth in the number of people for whom religion was not to be

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Orthodox believe that sectarians threaten the national security of Russia and are involved in espionage.

Editor's Note: The conclusion of this article, focusing on non-Orthodox groups, will be published in the next issue of the East-West Church and Ministry Report.

Adapted, with permission, from N.V. Potapova, "Religioznaya zhizn' naseleniya Sakhalina na sovremennom etape (90-e gody XX - nachalo XXI veka)," Kraevedcheskiy biulleten', No 2 (2003), 70-95. Translated by Sharyl Corrado.

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equated with Orthodoxy, but was of an amorphous nature, above all among students and members of the intelligentsia. Youth (up to age 20) indicated a higher level of religiosity than did the middle-aged, approaching the level of religiosity of the oldest age group. In 1997, 39.4 percent, and in 2003, 43.7 percent of youth identified themselves as believers. Growth in religious tolerance was also evident in the population: in 1997, 17.7 percent of respondents indicated a positive attitude toward the activity of foreign missionaries, while 22.1 percent viewed it negatively. In 2003, 33.3 percent viewed foreign missionaries positively, while 20.8 percent viewed them negatively.

Serious Challenges for Russian Orthodoxy

The Russian Orthodox Church began its renewal on the island under difficult circumstances caused by the particular historical development of the region. Never noted for its piety, Sakhalin, in prerevolutionary Russia, was settled primarily by criminals, while in the Soviet period, it was settled by devoted Communists, thus lacking a solid Orthodox tradition. For this reason, the 1990s were a period of painful and difficult growth for the Orthodox Church on Sakhalin. In June 1989, the first Orthodox service was held in an apartment in the regional capital of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. The first Orthodox priest, who arrived from Moscow in 1989, served for only a few months. The first Orthodox House of Prayer, like cult buildings of other confessions, was built in a private home on the edge of the city. One of the first tasks facing the Orthodox Church in the early 1990s was territorial expansion, including the organization of parishes, the legal registration of congregations, and the construction of church buildings. After the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk and Kuriles Eparchy was founded in 1993, 31 more parishes were opened in the region (creating a total of 41), the majority of which to this day meet in adapted accommodations. Four more parishes were opened after the 1997 federal law on religion was passed. Only five Orthodox Church buildings have been completed in the region.

Orthodox Shortages

Currently, the major activities of the Russian Orthodox Church on Sakhalin can be summarized as follows:

- Resolving problems connected with the lack of parish clergy. In 1997, only 30 parishes (of 41) had permanent pastors, the rest being served by clergy assigned to nearby parishes. In 2001, 36 priests were active in the region; by 2003, there were 40 priests. The majority have no theological education. Between 1998 and 2002, no priests were sent to the mainland for education; rather, the problem was solved in part by preparation and ordination of local parishioners. In 2003, four priests entered Moscow Theological Seminary. Currently, ten priests serving on Sakhalin have a higher theological education.

- The equally difficult task of developing monasticism. Before the 1917 Russian Revolution, the island did not have a single monastery. In the late 1990s, a monastery with three monks and a community of sisters with one nun and two novices were opened. A convent is planned for the future, along with the construction of another church building on the southern edge of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk.

Slow Orthodox Growth

If we take as criteria, not the ethno-cultural self-description of those who feel that "To be Russian means to be Orthodox" but seldom attend church, but rather consider the theological criteria differentiating between "practicing Christians" and "non-practicing"—namely, participation in confession and communion no less than once per year—Orthodox growth on Sakhalin has been small. According to official data, the number of parishioners who attend church regularly is approximately 2,500 people in the entire region. According to the eparchy's data, the five parishes of the region's capital (population 180,000) consist of only 1,000 parishioners. When the author visited a Sunday service at the Cathedral of the Resurrection, 120 parishioners were present, all Russian or Slavic. For major holidays, huge numbers of locals attend (over 1,000).

Orthodox Struggles in Summary

In the opinion of Sakhalin Orthodox clergy, the difficulties in establishing Orthodox life on Sakhalin can be attributed to the following reasons:

1. The Sakhalin population lacks spiritual roots, Orthodox tradition, and confessional loyalty.
2. The psychology of impermanence, common among Sakhalin residents (generally people with Communist or Komsomol backgrounds sent to the island to work during the Soviet period), does not allow the formation of a permanent or stable population with its own traditions. Economic difficulties have made the situation even worse. But people devoid of tradition form an easy foundation for the strengthening of non-Orthodox Christian confessions ("sectarians").
3. Some Orthodox believe legislation is overly favorable toward non-traditional confessions, creating an environment in which a multitude of "sects" can freely and successfully operate on the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church, especially those with financial support from abroad. In addition, some Orthodox believe that sectarians threaten the national security of Russia and are involved in espionage.
4. Insufficient financing (parishioners are poor and donate little) prevents the Russian Orthodox Church from competing with the charitable activities of Protestant confessions founded by missionaries.

It is worth noting that, despite the difficulties in this stage of Orthodoxy's rebirth, Bishop Daniil regularly participates in official events devoted to state holidays or commemorations. The regional government as well plays a significant role in the commemoration of church holidays such as Christmas and Easter.◆

Prophets & Patriots: Russian Pentecostal Social Doctrine

Scott Lingenfelter

"We are patriots for Russia, which should become a leading world state," said Sergei Riakhovsky in July 2004. Head of one of Russia's largest Pentecostal denominations (the Russian United Fellowship of Christians of Evangelical Faith, RUFCEF), and advisor to President Putin's Council on Cooperation with Religious Associations, Riakhovsky is, for many, the face of Russian Protestantism. In 2002, he and other Protestants drafted what became the basis for the Evangelical statement on social doctrine reviewed by this author in the previous issue of the *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 12 (Fall 2004): 3-5. Now, a separate Pentecostal social doctrine statement underscores Russian Orthodox influence and the potential dilemma Russian Evangelicals face in seeking to serve their homeland prophetically and patriotically.

Theologically, the Reformation doctrines of *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide* distinguish the Pentecostal statement from the earlier Orthodox one, just as its teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit separates it slightly from the Evangelical position. Throughout, the Pentecostal statement gleans the lengthier Orthodox work for structure, premises, and language. Sections on the mutual concerns of church and state, the theoretical basis for Christian ethics and law, and the demographic crisis are drawn almost whole cloth from the Orthodox document, something recently acknowledged by Riakhovsky. He stressed that the denomination's social activism accounts for its appeal among young professionals, who may not recognize that its social doctrine is drawn "in many points" from that of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Readers of the Pentecostal statement will also recognize traces of the Russian Orthodox conception of church and state. Assertions about individual

rights seem muted when compared to the Evangelical statement, and the Pentecostal document is more deferential to state power—odd since this community was so persecuted and so adversarial in its relations with Soviet authorities. The statement encourages participation in government as an aspect of Christian patriotism, but equivocates when it comes to civil disobedience. Pentecostal social initiatives include charity, extensive work among orphans, rehabilitation centers for at-risk groups, education to promote confessional tolerance, and detailed (now realized) plans for work among prisoners and members of the armed forces.

As in the other two statements, sections on Christian ethics reflect a deep concern about the moral state of Russian society. Abortion, cloning, euthanasia, and homosexuality are condemned. Sections on the economy and labor seek to promote free market competition, while education is seen as a means to effect a broad cultural rebirth of Christian values. All three statements argue the need to find a prophetic voice to articulate the moral demands of the moment, and to act to meet them. They also place a premium on patriotism, with the Pentecostal statement as vigorous on this point as the others. Could this become a problem? Recent pro-Putin comments by Riakhovsky suggest that the line between advice and advocacy can be a tricky one, something not unique to Russian Pentecostals as they fashion a social ministry that is relevant and effective.◆

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Pentecostal social doctrine underscores Russian Orthodox influence and the potential dilemma Russian Evangelicals face in seeking to serve their homeland prophetically and patriotically.

Open-Air Czech Bible Reading Draws A Crowd

Wesley H. Brown

Alexander Flek, who completed his Master of Theology in Biblical Studies at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, is the chief translator of a new contemporary Czech version of the Bible. When its revision was recently published, he and several colleagues came upon an idea for getting Czechs, who are predominately atheists, to read it. He and his friends decided to read the New Testament through—*aloud*—on the street near Prague's Mustek Metro subway station. During the 17-hour reading Czech radio personnel appeared to broadcast portions and to interview people. As volunteers read under a sign that said, "The Bible for All People," some ridiculed. However, Alexander invited some who

listened, including atheists, to read a paragraph or two aloud, as a part of the marathon reading, and some did. An actress came after her nightly theater performance, was invited to read a paragraph, and ended up reading six chapters from Hebrews. Many passers-by had never read or heard a paragraph of the Bible before. Numerous conversations and questions were answered on the sidelines, and copies of the New Testament distributed. Since surveys show that over 70 percent of Czech adults are atheists, this initiative may be seen as both innovative and courageous. Pray that many who heard a portion may be moved to read more for themselves and may be led to repentance and faith in Christ.◆

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The Romanian International Mission: A Case Study

Scott Klingsmith

Editor's Note: Previous issues of the East-West Church and Ministry Report 12 (Summer 2004): 9-12; and 12 (Fall 2004): 15-16, carried Scott Klingsmith's findings on Hungarian missions and a Romanian mission in Albania.

Romanian International Mission (Misiunea Internatională Romană—MIR), based in Cluj, Romania, encompasses the mission initiatives of a variety of churches, denominations, foreign and national mission agencies, and concerned individuals. It is not a direct sending agency itself, but many Romanian groups that do send out missionaries are active in MIR.

The Founding of METRO

In September 1999, Gavi Moldovan, president of the Romanian church-planting agency United World Mission (Misiunea Mondială Română—MMU), invited a variety of Romanian leaders and expatriate missionaries to a meeting in Cluj. He called this meeting to explore whether a Romanian cross-cultural missions agency should be founded. The result was the Romanian Evangelistic Cross-Cultural Mission (Misiunea Evangelistică Transculturală Română—METRO). A second meeting in November 1999 focused on reports prepared by various organizations that had an interest in sending missionaries from Romania. Discussions centered on proposals for a training curriculum, research on other mission organizations in Romania, development of publicity materials, and a METRO draft constitution.

From METRO to MIR

Despite a lack of agreement on whether METRO should develop as an organization or as a network of like-minded organizations, the group made the decision to seek legal registration, which took two years. Soon the name METRO was changed to Misiunea Internatională Romană (MIR), partly to avoid confusion with a chain of large wholesale outlets of the same name which had entered the country. The word *mîr* was also chosen for its positive meaning: it is the word used in John 12:3 for the perfume that Mary poured on Jesus' head. MIR desires to see Romanian missionaries going out to be "the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved" (2 Corinthians 2:15).

MIR was founded to encourage the selection, preparation, sending, and sustaining of Christian cross-cultural missionaries and to provide social-humanitarian help for people worldwide. MIR's current activities include a missionary training school, Scoala de Misiune M.I.R., based in Sibiu. Forty-five students participated in the first session, which lasted one-and-a-half years. A second two-year session followed with 12 to 15 students. In its wake, mission schools have been started in Constanta, Sibiu, Arad, and Timisoara. In addition, the Baptist Seminary in Bucuresti has begun a missions department.

Some Romanians believe that gaining official registration required so much of MIR's energy and activity that it currently is not doing anything significant. As one source said with ironic pride, "We have a stamp!" This relative lack of activity, however, does not disqualify MIR as one of the important mission case studies in East Central Europe, because many of the key people in MIR are important players in the developing missions scene across the country.

The MIR Coalition

Members of MIR include the director of an official mission in the Baptist Union, Sociatatea Internatională Baptistă Română (SIBR), leaders of the Baptist, Pentecostal, and Brethren Unions, the director of the Mission and Evangelism Commission of the Romanian Evangelical Alliance (MMU), some local churches, and Organizatia Studentilor Crestini Evanghelici din Romania (Organization of Evangelical Christian Students in Romania), which is affiliated with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Western mission agencies that participate in MIR include the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting, BEE International, CBI International, Church Resource Ministries, Evangelism Explosion, Greater Europe Mission, International Teams, OC International, Pioneers, Shield of Faith, and United World Mission, among others. Some non-Western missions participate as well, notably from Korea.

First Steps

MIR did not appear in a vacuum. It was the culmination of a process that had begun several years before. In November 1997, a group of mostly American missionaries and Romanians met for the first time to establish what they called Partners in Mission Training (PMT). They wanted to establish a network or partnership that would assist the emerging Romanian mission sending movement. Each shared what they were doing and planned ways to encourage Romanians to expand their missions vision and activity. They also started to develop a curriculum for a missionary training program. This network eventually merged with MIR.

Russ Mitchell

Under the auspices of PMT, OC missionary Russ Mitchell wrote a paper in 1998 promoting "Mission for Romanians," which survey respondents mentioned frequently as a significant factor in opening their eyes to the potential for mission. (This document is available in Romanian and in English under the title, "Mobilizing Romanians for Missions," at the OC

Missionary Russ Mitchell wrote a paper in 1998 promoting "Mission for Romanians," which survey respondents mentioned frequently as a significant factor in opening their eyes to the potential for mission.

International Web site: http://www.oci.ro/Missions/articles/misiune_pentru_romani.htm.) Mitchell argued that Romania had the personnel and financial resources to send at least 80 Romanian missionaries, without a great stretch of faith. At least one key pastor was gripped by the potential expressed and began to distribute this paper to other leaders. The Missions and Evangelism Commission of the Romanian Evangelical Alliance eventually published it under the title *Misiune pentru Romani*, which gave it an even wider audience. Other key mission sending motivators included American missionaries Stan Downes, Dwight Poggemiller, Steve Farina, and Tom Keppeler.

Vasile Talos

One of the first times the topic of foreign missions became public was at a national missions conference for Baptist pastors in fall 1998. Several times Vasile Talos, president of the Baptist Union, spoke passionately and convincingly of the need for Romanians to launch cross-cultural missions. He exhorted pastors to move beyond their old paradigms of ministry within the church, pushing them to think of outreach beyond their walls and their borders.

Gelu Paul

Gelu Paul, leader of a student movement in Timisoara, returned from theological studies at Gordon-Conwell Seminary in the United States with the vision to see Romanians involved in missions. One of the first young Romanian leaders to begin talking about missions, he worked for ten years to see the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* course translated and published in Romanian. (See the Impact-Media Web site, <http://www.impact-media.ro/impact/detalii.php?id=42>, for further information on the Romanian translation, edited by Jonathan Lewis, *O Introducere in Misiunea Crestina Mondiala Contemporana: Bazele Biblice si Istorice, 2001-2002*.) Now he is the pastor of a new church in Timisoara, which has already sent one young woman to India and has another woman preparing for service with Wycliffe. Several other people are considering missions, particularly to East Asia.

Gavi Moldovan

Gavi Moldovan, a Pentecostal layman, desired to see God use him in evangelism. After the 1989 Revolution, his goal was to see churches planted throughout his province. Gradually, through the ministry of MMU, he encouraged church planting all over Romania. Finally, through exposure to the outside world and hearing pleas for Romanians to come help in the Balkans, he saw Romania's potential as a mission force. Moldovan's vision led him to issue invitations to the first consultation, which ended in the initiation of MIR and his appointment as MIR's secretary.

Benjamin Poplacean

Benjamin Poplacean, an influential Baptist pastor and leader of a Bible school, was initially resistant to the idea of missions, seeing how great the needs in Romania still were. However, after reading the paper by Russ Mitchell and being challenged by missionary colleagues, he, too, began to catch the vision. As the leader of the Missions and Evangelism Commission of the Romanian Evangelical Alliance, Poplacean spread the vision through a variety of channels and became the president of MIR.

Romanian Missionaries Worldwide

What is important to note is that Talos, Paul, Moldovan, and Poplacean were already leaders with a broad national platform for spreading the vision. When they began to speak about the urgency of missions, they had a ready audience. Since the 1989 Revolution, Romania has sent short and longer term missionaries to a wide range of countries, including Afghanistan, Albania, China, Egypt, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Kenya, Libya, Macedonia, Moldova, Pakistan, Russia (particularly Siberia), Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. In addition, several people are working cross-culturally within Romania, particularly with Turks and Gypsies. Many Romanians also have been on short-term mission trips. The number of short-termers is undoubtedly in the hundreds. Many young people have served with Operation Mobilization and Youth With a Mission in various projects, and many of the mission schools and seminaries are encouraging or requiring a short-term experience as part of their program.

A growing number of (particularly young) people are gaining an interest in missions. This can be seen by increased attendance at regional mission conferences, and by the attendance of around 50 people at the TEMA missions conference in Holland, despite difficulties in getting visas. Further, around 500 students participated in the missions conference *Explo Domi* in Timisoara over New Year's 2000, and large numbers have participated in short-term trips. ♦

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Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Scott Klingsmith, "Factors in the Rise of Missionary Sending Movements in East-Central Europe," Ph.D. dissertation, Trinity International University, 2002.

Since the 1989 Revolution, Romania has sent short and longer term missionaries to Afghanistan, Albania, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Kenya, Libya, Macedonia, Moldova, Pakistan, Russia (particularly Siberia), Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

Advantages Romanians Bring to Missions

Scott Klingsmith

Many Romanian mission leaders were involved in outreach within Romania before they discovered cross-cultural missions. One pastor said that all church members were taught the importance of personally sharing the gospel with non-Christians, so the extension to cross-cultural ministry was natural for them. Some church planters who started hundreds of new churches after 1990 were motivated to go to a different part of the country, where the number of Evangelicals was small. They received a taste of cross-cultural ministry in this way. Most came from Transylvania in the north and west, and went to the south and east of the country, which is seen as culturally quite different. Out of this experience, some have seen the possibilities of moving to new opportunities outside the country.

Language Facility

Another advantage compared to Western missionaries is that many Romanians already speak three or four languages. They also benefit from political ties with the Muslim world continuing from Communist days. A large number of people have experience in the Middle East and North Africa, where they served as engineers or technical consultants. They have a wealth of knowledge that they can share with potential missionaries. Because of past historical ties, Romanians are not seen as a political threat and do not come with any "colonial" or power baggage.

Lifestyle

A third advantage concerns lifestyle issues. Coming from a poor country, Romanians are not used to a high standard of living, so they do not have to learn to get by on less. They are much closer to the lifestyle of most of the countries in which they serve. Culturally they are also much closer to eastern countries than are missionaries from the West, serving as a sort of East-West bridge. Finally, the Romanian church has a rich history of endurance against opposition, giving it the ability to relate to those who suffer under persecution. The Romanian church has a good reputation and has one of the largest evangelical populations in Europe.

An American missionary who teaches in the Romanian International Mission (MIR) school says that Romanians have been challenged to go where Westerners cannot. One missionary wrote: "A number of people have sensed that the Lord is telling them that Romania is to be a major missionary sending nation. The idea is that Romania has a destiny to fulfill. God wants it to become a leader in missions in Europe much as Korea and Brazil have become leaders in Asia and South America."

Financial Dependency...

Unfortunately, many Romanian Christians feel that since they suffered during Communist times, they

deserve to receive financial help from the West now. Romanian pastors frequently make financial appeals during visits to American, British, and Scandinavian churches, and to churches of the Romanian diaspora in Europe and America. Since 1989 hundreds of church buildings have been constructed, many much larger than needed and largely financed from the outside.

...And Financial Potential

On the other hand, nearly every respondent mentioned that after the 1989 Revolution leaders who traveled outside the country saw and heard of churches which were sending missionaries, despite being poorer and weaker than Romanian churches. Moldova was mentioned as an example of a country much poorer than Romania that spontaneously sent dozens of missionaries across the former Soviet Union. Romanians began to see that they had the human and financial resources to get involved. Not only did church leaders hear and see the needs, but they received invitations to come to other countries to help. This happened most dramatically at the Hope for the Balkans Conference in Sophia, Bulgaria, in 1996, where Romanian leaders heard what they perceived to be a Macedonian call from those present, "Brothers, come and help us."

A Vision for Missions

Against the view that Romania is too poor to support missions stands the view that money goes with vision. These people claim that God will provide if people are faithful to the vision they have received. The secretary of MIR states emphatically: "If we want to develop cross-cultural missions, to the extent that the vision is there, the resources will be there." Respondents point to the calculations published by Russ Mitchell in 1998 which seek to demonstrate that Romanian churches could raise a million dollars a year for missions through minimal contributions of each member (around \$2 per person). This would be enough to send some 80 missionaries to surrounding countries.

Mission Education

Education and training for missions has now taken a high priority for missions leaders. Many Bible schools were started in the first five years after the 1989 Revolution. Now mission schools are springing up around the country. The Betania Bible College and Missions School in Sibiu, the Dobrogea Missions and Evangelism School in Constanta, Team Action Missions School in Arad, and a mission school in Timisoara are just a few examples of new programs preparing potential missionaries. In addition, the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* published in Romanian by BEE will be studied in church-based training programs across the country.

Against the view that Romania is too poor to support missions stands the view that money goes with vision. "If we want to develop cross-cultural missions, to the extent that the vision is there, the resources will be there."

Most missions training is taking place in the missions and Bible schools and in non-formal programs run by Western missionaries.

On the one hand, the impact of theological education on missions motivation is seen to be negligible. With the exception of an introductory missions course, missions is not found in the curriculum of most theological institutions. On the other hand, some seminaries and Christian universities are starting to adjust their programs in response to the mission interest of students. For instance, the Baptist Seminary in Bucharest has begun a mission department, offering a double major in cooperation with the University of Bucharest. Currently 11 seminary students are enrolled, as well as at least 50 from the university. Emanuel Christian University in Oradea has begun sponsoring short-term experiences in nearby countries, some of them led by professors. The curriculum itself has not been changed, but interest in missions is growing.

The Example of Western Missionaries

Contact with Western missionaries is generally seen by respondents as a positive factor in the rise of missions interest, although there are naturally some more negative voices. On the positive side, two main reasons are given. The first simply is that they are there. The value is not as much what they do as just the fact that they came to help. This was especially encouraging for Romanians who have visited the United States and seen what missionaries had given up. The second and more important reason is that many missionaries have recognized the Romanian church's potential for missions and have repeatedly encouraged Romanians in missions.

On the negative side are concerns about ineffective missionaries. First, not all missionaries are good models of service. Many have not bothered

to learn Romanian and after a number of years continue to work through translators. Often they have little understanding of the historical and religious context of Romania and harbor a condescending attitude toward the churches. Sometimes they steal church leaders, offering finances and taking responsibility from Romanians. Second, economic issues come into play. Some missionaries live very well by Romanian standards which creates false expectations about the lifestyle that missionaries should maintain. In addition to a large number of missionaries from the West, missionaries from Brazil, Argentina, Korea, and other non-Western countries are active in Romania. This has challenged some Romanian Christians who see other poorer countries sending missionaries. For some people this has included a shame or competition factor which has motivated them to want to become involved in missions.

In summary, a vision for what God intended for the Romanian church came 1) through contact with Western missionaries who were encouraging them to think about missions, 2) through experiences in other countries, where they saw needs and heard of ways that they could help meet those needs, 3) through seeing what other, non-Western countries were doing in missions with fewer resources, 4) through a desire not to be left behind in what God wanted to do, and 5) through a desire to obey the command Jesus gave to go into all the world and preach the gospel. ♦

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Missionaries from Brazil, Argentina, Korea, and other non-Western countries are active in Romania. This has challenged some Romanian Christians who see other poorer countries sending missionaries.

The State of the Church in Romania: Divergent Views

Tim Prochnau

Editor's note: The present article is based on the author's interviews with four individuals: a Romanian Evangelical Christian from Bucharest studying theology in the United States, an American Evangelical missionary in his thirties who has been in Romania more than four years, a young Romanian Evangelical Christian who has spent the majority of his life in a village, but eight years in the cities of Cluj and Timisoara, and a Romanian Orthodox youth from Curtea de Arges.

Eastern Orthodoxy is the majority faith in Romania, claiming the allegiance of some 70 percent of the population. The Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations account for about seven percent each. Newer cults have arisen since the fall of Communism from both the East and the West. A tremendous pressure exists for Romanians to affiliate with the Orthodox Church: from family and friends, from tradition, and from politics. Culturally, one needs to be Orthodox to be considered a good Romanian. The Orthodox Church also has been campaigning to be the official national church.

The West vs. Tradition

The fall of Communism in 1989 granted a sudden freedom to the churches, so that all the various denominations experienced revived activity. Some results included a marked increase in publications and the advent of private schools, some religious. However, it also opened the door for disagreement between socially more progressive advocates of West European culture and traditionalists who distrust western values. Overall, churches distrust each other a great deal and rarely cooperate, resulting in a

The State of the Church in Romania

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competitive and combative atmosphere.

Family, community, and tradition are highly valued in Romania, but a feudal worldview enduring from nineteenth-century serfdom also prevails. In conflict with and in direct contrast to the western worldview, the feudal worldview holds that people are not able to fend for themselves, or alter their status or condition in society. Thus they must ally themselves with those who are more powerful who will be their protector. Any dissension from this system is considered a threat and must be resisted. Combined with the feudal worldview is European animism and fatalism, western materialism, and the Communist legacy of distrust. Additionally, Romanian education emphasizes rote memorization, but not practical application. As a result, in Romania the westerner encounters a lack of initiative, a lack of education, and a lack of thinking for oneself.

A Positive Picture . . .

The respondent from Bucharest painted the most positive picture of the condition of the churches. The Romanian Evangelical Alliance is an association of about 1.5 million Evangelicals whose main purpose is Christian mission and evangelization. Some social programs include visitation to orphanages and seniors. Evangelistic efforts are varied and include mission groups, concerts, and youth meetings. Beyond local churches, parachurch agencies have ministries to orphanages, prisons, and schools, as well as music and Christian radio ministries. Larger urban churches sponsor missionary groups and have planted satellite churches.

. . . And Bleaker Outlooks

However, the other three interviewees presented a much bleaker scene. They consider only a few of the more evangelical organizations to be true believing churches that seek to faithfully follow Jesus Christ in belief and practice. Everyone talks about having a personal relationship with God, but few have it. Local churches are doing almost nothing to meet people's social needs. Different denominations are antagonistic towards one another and few show much interest in sharing the good news through evangelism.

Some Protestant churches are consciously patterned after western models. Romania needs to work at a more contextualized, indigenous church for people of eastern persuasion.

Tim Prochau, from Curtea de Arges, Romania, is an M.Div. student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.

One of the most effective ways to reach people with the gospel has been to send missionaries to villages to start church plants, an approach encouraged by the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting. Methods for proclaiming the message include evangelistic preaching, gospel movies, and Christian radio. Individual evangelism has worked best while mass evangelism with famed foreign leaders has been mostly ineffective. While they can draw large crowds, those in attendance are mostly curious. Foreigners are not trusted, few conversions result, and little follow-up for spiritual development is the rule. Also, methods calling one to "make a decision for Christ" are counter-cultural from the perspective of an eastern worldview.

Orthodox Opposition

The Orthodox Church is opposed to Evangelical efforts to share the gospel in Romania. Orthodox priests are particularly active in leading opposition; at times this has led to physical conflict. Orthodox publications and preaching are against "proselytizers," who are accused of "stealing sheep" out of the true fold.

Evangelical Legalism and Universal Distrust

But antagonism is not one-sided. Whatever church is predominant in an area, it slanders other denominations. Slander may be the worst element of Romanian society that has permeated the church and threatens to destroy its purity. The presence of legalism also prevents the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Other difficulties face the church as well. An unstable economy means that little money is available for funding buildings or projects. This has encouraged young, gifted intellectuals to study abroad and many do not return to Romania. Lack of training has impeded leadership.

Some Protestant churches are very western in feel, being consciously patterned after western models. This is a case of under-contextualization, making the church seem imported and foreign. Romania needs to work at a more contextualized, indigenous church for people of eastern persuasion. ♦

Edited excerpt published with author's permission from "Romania: State of the Church," www.ibiblioteca.ro/stateofthechurch.html.



Book Review

Nassif, Bradley et al. *Three Views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism*. James J. Stamoolis, gen. ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004.

Reviewed by Don Fairbairn.

Editor's Note: A longer version of this review will be published in the Westminster Theological Journal.

This commendable book addresses the question of whether Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism are compatible, and in the process it exposes the difficulty of undertaking serious dialogue between these two groups. Of the five contributors, only two, Bradley Nassif and Edward Rommen, who argue the "yes" and "maybe" positions from the Orthodox side, seem to this reviewer to have ample theoretical and experiential knowledge of both traditions.

In spite of these difficulties, all five contributors do have something important to say. Nassif lays out persuasively the areas of common ground between Evangelicals and Orthodox, especially in the area of soteriology. Michael Horton identifies some unexpected areas of agreement between Reformed Evangelicalism and Orthodoxy and also articulates Protestantism's most significant criticisms of Orthodoxy: its view of the fall and its denial of the centrality of legal categories in the Bible's depiction of salvation. Father Vladimir Berzonsky calls attention to what may be the most insurmountable barrier separating the two traditions: different understandings of human capacity to cooperate with God in salvation. George Hancock-Stefan's vivid personal reminiscences remind the reader that Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe and in the West may be very different entities. Rommen gives the clearest discussion of what Orthodox-Evangelical "compatibility" might actually mean in fact.

While all the participants make contributions, the most serious theological reflection comes from Horton and Nassif. Horton openly expresses his admiration for many aspects of Eastern theology, but he still charges that Orthodoxy denies Reformed Protestantism's view of regeneration through God's grace and its doctrine of justification. Nassif recognizes the seriousness of these charges, and he goes to some length to show that justification by faith is a vital component of mature Orthodox thought. I doubt Horton or very many other Protestants agree with Nassif on this point, but it is worth mentioning that I myself have heard other Orthodox theologians saying the same thing. Another of Nassif's valuable contributions is his explanation of what he calls an "incarnational Trinitarian" model for understanding salvation. Too often, Evangelicals have glossed over the great realities of the Trinity and the incarnation in order to focus on the application of Christ's work to individual believers. Nassif is correct to call us back

to an understanding of salvation that is explicitly tied to our understanding of God as Trinity.

The book deals with many theological and practical issues, but I believe one of the most significant is the issue that it exposes only indirectly: the question of which version of Orthodoxy is normative. The various contributors all discuss the question of what constitutes "true" Evangelicalism, but they do not discuss the diversity of Orthodoxy to any significant degree. Even if Orthodoxy in various parts of the world does have a uniform worship practice (which I readily grant) and a fairly uniform theology (which I grant with a bit more reluctance), one must recognize that the emphases within that theology, and especially the attitudes toward non-Orthodox Christians, vary radically from place to place and person to person. In light of this, discussion of those differences needs to be as much a part of any ecumenical dialogue as discussion of the well-known variations within Evangelicalism. The absence of such discussion from this book must be regarded as a major way in which it is incomplete.

It seems to me that this book has two primary accomplishments. First, it lays out many issues on which Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism are not as far apart as we might think. Therefore, we should be able to benefit from the way the other side formulates and expresses Christian faith. Second, the book exposes aspects of theology that are underemphasized by one side or the other, thus giving us further opportunities to be corrected by the other's emphases. For example, it is probably fair to say that the relation between the person of Christ and salvation is under-explored in Evangelical thought, whereas the relation between the fall and salvation is under-appreciated in Orthodox thought. A willingness to learn from the other tradition on these points might bring both groups to a fuller expression of biblical truth. This book makes a valuable contribution toward that laudable aim. ♦

A willingness to learn from the other tradition might bring both groups to a fuller expression of biblical truth.



Book Review

Sannikov, Sergei Viktorovich. *Dvadsat' vekov Khristianstva [Twenty Centuries of Christianity], Volumes 1 and 2; Kto, chto, gde v istorii Khristianstva [Who, What, Where in the History of Christianity], Volume 3.* Odessa: Bogomyслиe, 2001-02.

Reviewed by Gregory Nichols.

Sergei Sannikov has completed a monumental work in the Russian language with his three-volume history of Christianity. The first volume begins with the biblical narrative and follows Christianity to its first major split in 1054. It also includes an extensive appendix featuring Russian translations of primary sources. The second volume covers the Middle Ages to the present, including an examination of Christian culture in the twentieth century, as well as a

bibliography. The third volume consists of a valuable index to the 1300 pages of text, and special sections that locate references to important primary sources.

The author's stated purpose is to trace the course of the whole of Christianity in both the East and the West and to document the impact of Christian culture on world history. "It is important," Sannikov writes, "to see the effects Christianity has had on political history, science, art, and music."

The most important feature of this work is its incorporation of the Eastern Orthodox story into the overall saga of Christian history. These volumes do not isolate the Eastern Church in a separate chapter, but rather give Russian readers a truly indigenous and balanced examination of the whole of church history. Because it is the first indigenous post-Soviet text in the field, it has already become the standard reference work for most Russian-speaking Protestant

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The most important feature of this work is its incorporation of the Eastern Orthodox story into the overall saga of Christian history.

Book Review: Sannikov, Sergei Viktorovich

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seminaries and Bible schools. Sannikov's history will prove invaluable to visiting professors from the West seeking to understand the Russian church context. On a very practical note, these volumes also provide a convenient location for accepted Russian translations and spellings of Western terms and names, standardized spellings of Russian names, and Russian translations of key texts.

Another noteworthy feature is the excellent physical quality of the volumes. The publishers can take pride in a well-crafted product with an attractive layout and excellent color photography and graphics. *Twenty Centuries of Christianity* was produced entirely in Eastern Europe and deserves to be regarded as one of the finest scholarly achievements of the region's Evangelical community.

Sannikov, who has published extensively in Russian and Ukrainian history, received a Doctor of Ministry degree from Kyiv Theological Seminary in 1998. As well as teaching and editorial work, he has extensive experience in theological education administration as president of Odessa Theological Seminary (1990-99) and as executive director of the Euro-Asian Accreditation Association of Evangelical

Schools since 1999. His Evangelical Christian-Baptist affiliation notwithstanding, his work is evenhanded in its treatment of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christianity. One can see at times the author's Evangelical orientation, but this does not stand in the way of a balanced handling of all branches of Christianity. Sannikov's strong background in theology shows in his careful rendering of the theological aspects of the development of church history.

Unfortunately, the volumes lack footnotes and the bibliography is uneven. The latter follows an older Soviet academic style that does not include publishers and uses abbreviations for cities of publication. While several sections do treat Christianity in the Americas, Asia, and Africa, the perspective is still decidedly Eurocentric.

I highly recommend Sannikov's text to any Russian readers with an interest in the history of Christianity and to anyone considering ministry in the Russian-speaking world. It will instill a new respect for Christians of the East and their role in church history, as well as provide insight into the ever-elusive Russian soul. ♦

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Book Review

***Evangel'skii tekst v russkoi literature XVIII-XX vekov [Gospel Texts in Russian Literature of the 18th-20th Centuries].* Petrozavodsk: Izdatel'stvo Petrozavodskogo Universiteta, 1994.**

Reviewed by Oleg P. Turlac.

Gospel Texts in Russian Literature of the 18th-20th Centuries is a collection of materials from an international conference on this theme held at Petrozavodsk State University, Karelia, Russia, 7-12 June 1993. Contributors to the volume shed new light on modern themes in Russian literature.

In the introduction, Professor V. N. Zakharov of Petrozavodsk State University writes that most publications on the history of Russian literature fail to understand its spiritual essence. Although much has been written in the last century about the uniqueness and national distinctiveness of Russian literature, its Christian essence rarely has been acknowledged. Yet, Zakharov writes, "Christianity was as natural to the soul of Russians as the fact that the Volga falls to the Caspian Sea."¹

The very concept of Russian literature is tied to Christianity. In contrast to those cultures that possessed a written language before adopting Christianity, Russian Christianity and language, and thus literature, are inseparable. In fact, Zakharov employs the term *slovo* (word/logos) instead of *literature* in his references to Russia's historic acceptance of the *slovo* (the Word) of Christ.²

Modern Russian literature resonates with the themes of God, Christ, and Christianity. In the eighteenth century, Mikhail Lomonosov wrote in his odes of the greatness of God. Who in Russia does not know Gavriil Derzhavin's odes entitled *Bog* (God) and *Khristos* (Christ)? And in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Fyodor Tyutchev, Afanasii Fet, Alexander Blok, Boris Pasternak, and Anna Akhmatova are filled with Christian imagery.

Russian writers frequently chose Christian names for the heroes of their novels. They also treated religious holidays such as Christmas, the Transfiguration of Christ, and Easter as inseparable parts of Russian life. The image of Christ's Transfiguration is deeply enmeshed in Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*. The very name *Zhivago* is taken from the Gospel account of the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-11), when Jesus was revealed to the disciples as the Son of the living God. The word *living* is translated into Russian as *zhivago*.³ Thus the name *Zhivago* implies the image of change, transformation, and transfiguration.

In Dostoevsky's *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (*Crime and Punishment*), Rodion Romanovich Raskol'nikov, who struggled deeply with spiritual issues, placed a New Testament under his pillow. It was this precious book that he asked Sonya Marmeladova to bring to him in the most difficult moment of his life.⁴

In *Bratya Karamazovy* (*The Brothers Karamazov*) Alyosha has visions of Father Zossima and Christ in the context of the wedding at Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-12). Dostoevsky states, "Christ visits people not only

when they are grieving, but also when they experience joy. By performing a miracle he increased their joy.... Whoever loves the people, loves their joy as well."⁵

Even during the Soviet period, Zakharov argues, Russian literature was not systematically and wholly anti-Christian. Though despised and rejected by the mainstream Soviet literary establishment, Boris Pasternak, Anna Akhmatova, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn managed to depict Christian values and imagery in their writing.⁶ Since the fall of the Soviet Union their works have been in great demand.

Gospel Texts in Russian Literature of the 18th-20th Centuries serves as an extremely helpful tool for the study of Russian literature, culture, and mentality. Those who have had conversations with Russians know how much their language is filled with examples, metaphors, and analogies taken from the classical literary works of such revered Russian writers as Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, and Bulgakov. Rarely a conversation passes without comparing the present

realities of life to ones depicted in the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy.

In the post-Soviet era, as Russian Christian culture and religious consciousness experience revival, Russians are able to recover their spiritual roots in part by reacquainting themselves with biblical themes reflected in literature. Missionaries working in the former Soviet Union certainly should familiarize themselves with Russian literature and tap this rich resource of spiritual insight. ♦

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Sources:

1. V. N. Zakharov, "Russkaya literatura i khristianstvo" in *Evangel'skii tekst v russkoi literature XVIII-XX vekov* (Petrozavodsk State University, 1994), 5.
2. *Ibid.*, 6.
3. *Ibid.*, 10.
4. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (New York: Random House, 1956), 492-93.
5. A. E. Kunil'skiy, "Problema 'Smekh i khristianstvo' v romane Dostoevskogo 'Bratya Karamazovy'" in *Evangel'skii tekst v russkoi literature XVIII-XX vekov* (Petrozavodsk State University, 1994), 195.
6. Zakharov, "Russkaya literatura i khristianstvo," 11.



Letters to the Editor

After reading the article by Paul Mojzes, "The Destruction of Serbian Orthodox Holy Places in Kosovo," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 12 (Summer 2004), 1-3, one definitely detects a prominent pro-Serbian slant to every single issue mentioned. Whether history, the land, prior ethnic cleansing, Slobodan Milosevic, or UNMIK's role, the Albanians are definitely the bad guys. I would hope that the *East-West Church and Ministry Report* would either stay out of partisan politics, or at least provide opposing viewpoints. In this case, I have found discussing history with Serbians to be fruitless—this includes their Russian cousins—when it comes to Kosovo. Perhaps we could have articles in the future about Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, and all Serbian historical land grabs. Of course, the Balkans are extremely divisive, but this author is not objective whatsoever. I only want to add that, though I felt the writer was definitely biased in his observations, I also agree that some of the issues he brought up are valid and need to be discussed.

Jeff Thompson
Eastern European Outreach
Murrieta, California

Editor's Response

I have tremendous respect for the ministry Jeff Thompson has had with Eastern European Outreach over many years. At the same time, I also have tremendous respect for the longsuffering labor of Paul Mojzes on behalf of ethnic reconciliation in the Balkans. I solicited the Kosovo article in order to highlight a tragic violation of freedom of conscience and human rights.

Unfortunately, Jeff Thompson's letter to the editor seems not to have taken to heart the following two sentences from Paul Mojzes' article. Over the centuries, "the usual pattern was that Serbs oppressed Albanians or vice versa. And in recent years when either side has been ascendant, the desire for revenge for former real or alleged atrocities has led to bloodshed." I think this is accurate and I think it is balanced.

The reason Mojzes confronts Albanians in his article is because in Kosovo today they have the upper hand and they are merciless in their treatment of the Serbian minority. However, Mojzes is perfectly capable of criticizing Serbs for their earlier crimes of ethnic cleansing when they have had the upper hand. See, for example, his *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans* (1994); and "The Camouflaged Role of Religion in the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina" in *Religion and the War in Bosnia*, ed. by Paul Mojzes (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 82-89.

Christians need to champion human rights and human dignity for all. In this case, I believe Paul Mojzes is justified in championing the hard-pressed Serbian Orthodox minority in Kosovo. I, of course, appreciate what Larry Uzzell (International Religious Freedom Watch) said in a previous letter to the editor on the same article: "Most of the self-proclaimed defenders of religious freedom in the Protestant world would have simply ignored the subject—all too often they seem to care about religious persecution only when it affects their fellow Protestants. (My fellow Orthodox are, of course, often equally guilty of such selectiveness.) Keep pursuing the truth whether it is popular or not" *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 12 (Fall 2004), 14.

Readers will be interested to know that Paul Mojzes (Rosemont College, Pennsylvania) was born in Yugoslavia to parents who were both Methodist pastors and who were neither Serbian nor Albanian.

Mark R. Elliott, editor

The *East-West Church and Ministry Report* rocks. It's far and away the best for Eurasian ministry. I've been a very satisfied and enriched reader for many years.

Scott Carter
Association of Baptists for World Evangelism
Odessa, Ukraine

Hungarian Church Ministries Among Roma

Mónika Csiszér

Ethnic Hungarians and Hungarian Gypsies have the same task: to accept the shared responsibility to find new, productive ways to live in peace and love.

Budapest's Protestant Institute for Mission Studies sponsored a mission study trip in May 2004 focusing on Hungary's Roma minority. The purpose was to become better acquainted with Roma culture, religion, and social conditions, and to recognize what God is doing among them today. The group visited different churches, institutes, and mission centers supported by Reformed, Greek-Catholic, Roman Catholic, and Evangelical Pentecostal churches in cities and villages throughout Hungary. Students met Roma living in modern surroundings and other uneducated Roma living in shanties in isolated districts and settlements. The latter reminded participants of the Roma's vagabond life of the past. At each stop the group met Roma Christians who were unfailingly generous and deeply devoted to being God's instrument among their people.

It was a memorable and vivid experience for the group to see an initiative undertaken by Father Gabor Gersei, a Greek Catholic priest who established a Roma church and cultural center in the village of Hodász. Local children refer to the center as their "second home." The building complex also includes a home for the elderly and the disabled. The goal is to bring Roma and ethnic Hungarians together in a meaningful way. In addition, the center offers training for Roma women who want to find employment. This thriving community is an attractive example of the long-term Christian commitment of a priest and his devoted Greek Catholic Gypsy parishioners.

We also were deeply impressed by the work of Father Jozsef Lankó, a Roman Catholic priest in Alsózentmárton, an entirely Roma village close to the Hungarian-Croatian border. The priest and the Roma villagers have found creative ways to overcome serious economic difficulties and to shed God's light

on harsh realities. We much admired the creative steps toward economic self sufficiency undertaken by the local Roma and supported by Father Jozsef. He also established a kindergarten and an after-school program for Roma children where one could truly sense the compassion and love of God. This proved to be an attractive model of Christian mission to the Roma that involved care for both spiritual and economic needs.

We also visited a secondary school complex in Pécs and its student dormitory in Mánfa, where Hungarian Gypsies and non-Gypsies live and work together. Roma students, with encouragement from parents and teachers, are able to complete their studies, pass the school-leaving examination, and by this means, overcome social and economical disadvantages. The school's goal is to integrate these young people into Hungarian society and to support them so they can become valuable members of their community.

As a result of this mission study trip among the Roma, participants understand more fully what an enormous challenge it is to translate beliefs into righteous actions, including creative approaches to Christian social care. Ethnic Hungarians and Hungarian Gypsies have the same task: to accept the shared responsibility to find new, productive ways to live in peace and love and to learn how to accept one another. Is this not our obligation as Christians to help realize God's Kingdom? ♦

Mónika Csiszér is a master of theology student at the Protestant Institute for Mission Studies, Budapest, Hungary.

Church Planting: A Compliment and a Warning

Recently I visited a church near Budapest, which actually came into being through concern for a minority, for a group of 20 former alcoholics. It is, therefore, no surprise that in four years time, this church has grown to over 130 people. Last year, about 20 young families joined after a meeting was started for mothers with young children. In the kitchen, I had a chat with the pastor's wife. It is something I often hear, "Actually, we are at the end of our tether! My husband is so busy with church work that he hardly has time for his family. It is very difficult to involve church members." ♦

Source:

Anne-Marie Kool, Signs of Life from Hungary 12 (4 December 2004): 2.

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