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Protestant Missions in Russia Today

Edited by Mark R. Elliott

Editor's Note: Lawrence A. Uzzell, president of International Religious Freedom Watch, asked this editor on 20 July 2005 for impressions of Protestant missions in Russia today. As I was in the midst of a move to Southern Wesleyan University, Central, South Carolina, my response was necessarily abbreviated and impressionistic. I decided to share my comments, brief as they were, with a small group of missionaries and educators knowledgeable about church life in Russia, requesting their comments on the subject. One missionary, in turn, kindly solicited comments from several Russian and Ukrainian church workers. The following is a compilation of excerpts from this correspondence, dating primarily from August–September, 2005. Most of the comments on the especially hot topic of theological education have been grouped together at the end.

*Readers familiar with Protestant missions in post-Soviet states are encouraged to share their own responses with the editor at melliott@swu.edu. For additional analysis, see Lawrence A. Uzzell, "Politics, Propriety, and Proselytism in Russia," *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 3 (Fall 2005): 11-18; www.cfia.org.*

How Much (If at All) Has the Situation Improved?

Lawrence A. Uzzell to the Editor, 20 July 2005

Let me trouble you if I may for some of your insights. I'd like to get an update on your sense of western Protestant missionaries in Russia. How much (if at all) has the situation improved since the 1990s, when it was common for foreign missionaries to be ignorant of the Russian language? How widespread is the use of charitable aid to "bribe" people into attending religious gatherings? How often does one hear of displays of religious provincialism such as U.S.-style "prayer breakfasts" which ignore the particular styles and traditions of Russian Protestantism? Might one still say, as one particularly knowledgeable American missionary said in the mid-1990s, that it would be better for one-tenth as many foreign missionaries to be in Russia and for them to be ten times better prepared? Any further observations, reflections, anecdotes would also be welcome.

A Mixed Picture

The Editor to Lawrence A. Uzzell, 26 July 2005

Here are a few impressions.

1. Many missionaries are moving to Ukraine or other former Soviet republics either because it is easier to work outside Russia or they see great needs to share the gospel in other areas that are still Russian speaking.
2. While there still is a disproportionate number of missionaries in Moscow and St. Petersburg, my sense is that the provinces are receiving more attention than they did proportionately 10 years ago.
3. Missionaries may be somewhat less visible now than 10 years ago in part because many Russians have been trained well and now are taking the lead more.
4. Less visibility of missionaries today does not necessarily mean there are fewer because it is prudent to keep a low profile with the increased criticism and visa actions against them.
5. I think the picture is still quite mixed in terms of cross-cultural sensitivity: Many missionaries are very concerned at this point and still many others are totally clueless, making the former cringe.
6. Not relating so much to missionaries, but still worth noting: I suspect a crisis is looming in Protestant theological education for two reasons: a) there are way too many schools for the number of applicants, leading to a lowering of standards; and b) many, maybe most, Protestant pastors, are still profoundly wary of seminary graduates, either because of the social/educational distance that this schooling puts between the older and the younger clergy (a continuation of longstanding Protestant anti-intellectualism), or jealousy, or seminary graduates picking up Western liberalism and/or Calvinism, which are both abhorrent to the older pastors. Western missionaries are partly at fault for not emphasizing self-sustaining educational enterprises, which means the schools are less well connected with their own churches than with Western funders. Also, most Western missionary educators, consciously or unconsciously, have taught from a Calvinist perspective, which has led to divisiveness in Russian Protestant churches.

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Protestant Missions in Russia Today

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7. I personally believe what missionaries need to stress in tandem with the basic gospel message is microenterprise development projects.

The Advantage of a Low Profile

Lawrence A. Uzzell to the Editor, 27 July 2005

This is most helpful; many, many thanks! The more I think about it, the more it seems to me that the lower profile of American Protestant missionaries in Russia is going to be remembered as a classic instance of the law of unintended consequences. The effect is a greater leadership role for indigenous Russian Protestants, which makes their congregations more attractive to a broad range of Russians and more likely to win converts. Thus it would seem that one result of Russia's crackdown on American Protestant missionaries is to enhance the Protestant cause's marketability in Russia.

Bivocational Pastors in House Churches

Matt Miller, Evangelical Free Church of America International Mission, Moscow, to the Editor, 3 August 2005

Your impressions match what I have seen. I would be very interested to see more examples of microenterprise development. I know of a few programs, but they seem stretched too thin. For the larger cities, bivocational pastors in house churches may be a growing trend.

All in All, A Positive Read on Missionaries

Peter Penner, International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, to the Editor, 2 August 2005

I think that I can easily agree with your comments responding to Larry [Uzzell]. I feel that we have a different group of Western missionaries today in Russia and the former Soviet Union [compared to] the 90s when each mission agency needed to have someone in the region. That means that especially the long-term missionaries are much more contextually sensitive. I also think that the relation between nationals and expatriates has changed to more positive understanding on both sides. I can sense that even short-term missionaries are now more valued by the national churches and institutions than five years ago. But the ones who stayed in Russia and the former Soviet Union (FSU) as missionaries have also changed. In the early years we had more of the quite fundamentalist groups, taking the opportunity both in the positive and negative sense. Dispensationalism and Calvinism were going hand-in-hand with this kind of group. It seems that we now have some more balanced people who would not necessarily push their theological issues as much as serve first the churches in Russia and the FSU.

I am hearing from my colleagues that, in fact, there is a bit of withdrawal of missionaries from the region and that national institutions are sorry to see that. Then there is still this very specific way of

mission agencies working in the region, when missionaries are taken out of a good partnership work and mission agencies decide, for whatever reason, to move them to a different location or ministry without even consulting the partner church or institution. This often hurts and brings again a lot of questions from the national side toward some partnerships and joint projects. There are still some problems and I will not be able to name all. But overall, things have improved quite a bit in the areas that Larry refers to.

Few Western Missionaries Observed in the Provinces

Sharyl Corrado, doctoral candidate, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, to the Editor, 2 August 2005

Thanks for forwarding the note to Larry Uzzell. For what it's worth, here are my impressions based on the past year in both European Russia and the Russian Far East. From my experience in the provinces, I am surprised that you say they are getting more attention from Western Evangelicals now than ten years ago - although perhaps proportionately they are. In the six provincial cities I spend time in - Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk (population 160,000), Aleksandrovsk-Sakhalinskii (population 14,000), Vladivostok, Ekaterinburg, Nizhny Novgorod, and Lukoyanov (population 17,000) - I found very few Western Evangelical missionaries. Several of the cities have Western (and Asian) Catholics, and the larger cities have Lutheran parishes with funding from Europe (Vladivostok even has a pastor from Germany). But I didn't find Western Evangelicals. Korean Evangelicals were working in the Far Eastern cities. But while ten years ago Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Vladivostok, and Ekaterinburg all had a Western Evangelical presence, I found none this trip. Of course, if they were keeping a low profile, I could have missed them. I did find, however, Evangelicals from Ukraine, primarily Pentecostals, in all six cities, even the smallest (Aleksandrovsk-Sakhalinskii), Nizhny Novgorod, which as the third-largest city in Russia, can hardly be called provincial, was the only one of the six cities in which I found Western Evangelicals. In this case, all were American Charismatics affiliated with the Vineyard, Calvary Chapel, and the Foursquare Gospel.

Overall - not particular to the provinces - I noticed significantly more Russian-speaking Westerners than ten years ago, including a number of Westerners who preach in Russian now. All the Western Catholic priests whom I met preach in Russian (Americans in Vladivostok and Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk; Polish and Spanish in St. Petersburg).

Missionary Funding: The Low-Budget "Ukrainian" Model

Sharyl Corrado, Continued

I'd be interested in hearing more about your ideas for microenterprise development. I found it really exciting to see how much better the financial situation is in Russia now. So many people are going

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on vacations to Turkey or Vietnam, eating at cafes and restaurants, remodeling their apartments (or buying/building private homes), paying for their children's educations, buying cars. There was so little of that ten years ago. Now there seems to be very little unemployment. Those who aren't working seem to be unemployed because they aren't happy with the salaries offered or the type of work available. But for those who simply need work, and are willing to do almost anything, there's plenty available. It's amazing how many guest workers there are from Central Asia, Turkey, North Korea, and China who come to Russia temporarily, since they can earn so much more than at home. True, salaries are still low, and a lot of people have to work more than one job to make ends meet. But where the churches and Christian ministries have financial problems, it appears to me to be more a mindset problem than poverty in the congregation. They want to do things the expensive way, as they've seen Westerners do. They want sponsors from the West. And they want to get paid for what they're doing. I can't help but return to what I would dub the "Ukrainian model," where Ukrainians come to Russia, get jobs (construction work pays really well in Russia right now), start churches that meet in their own homes or rented accommodations, give generously, and see their congregations naturally do the same.

From "Blitz" to Career Missionaries

Western Missionary in Ukraine to the Editor, 3 August 2005

I feel you answered Larry [Uzzell] exceptionally well and moreover, you were objective about it. Larry's query demonstrated a somewhat anti-Western missionary bias. I have raised this subject with several key Russian indigenous missionaries, and I hope they can respond. Meanwhile, I send you my comments:

1. The excesses Larry described were true in the early 1990s and even then were not universal. Over the years the "blitz" missionary has been replaced by the career missionary. Today there are fewer missionaries overall, and they have invested their lives into this field: learned the language, married Russian spouses (or married their children to Russians), bought local residences, etc. Perhaps we now have five times less and they are five times better than 15 years ago.
2. More agencies, e.g., the Southern Baptists, have relinquished original plans to create "Southern Baptist" churches and are now partnering with indigenous churches in a support capacity. The Christian and Missionary Alliance, which always took a subordinate role, is now partnering with indigenous groups in addition to the Evangelical Christian Missionary Union, which it helped create.
3. The anticipated exodus of missionaries from Russia to Ukraine has not materialized. It always was only a trickle. It is more common to have missionaries leave after their two or three terms of service and not be replaced. In 2004 two agencies in Kyiv closed down their operations because they had

accomplished their mission — a wise decision, in my opinion.

4. There is still a great need for indigenous church planters. The Bible schools continue to prepare and graduate people, but there are few local sponsors to pay for the start-up costs of sending and supporting an indigenous missionary.
5. Russia has used its immigration laws to inhibit the activity of "indigenous" workers from the "near abroad," not just those from the West. Nevertheless, most of the missionaries in Russia are either Ukrainians who have become Russian citizens or locally trained Russians.
6. Mission agencies are making their Russian staff raise funds from local sources. Pastors balk because of limited resources. Tentmaking is a difficult option because most seminary graduates end up being academics with no marketable skills.
7. Although some groups continue to distribute humanitarian aid, Russian customs has made shipments prohibitive and so there is much less than ten years ago. Bribing is too strong a word; there will always be those who take advantage of the "free lunch." Nevertheless, the aid meets real needs, as when volunteer doctors and dentists provide medical care. On the other hand, there still are a few ministries that exist solely on the largess of the Western sponsor, and if the expatriate missionary were to leave, the whole ministry would collapse.
8. Right now the most effective ministries include work with children, youth work, and rehabilitation centers — areas in which only indigenous workers have proved capable.
9. Prayer breakfasts are extremely rare. They occur once or twice a year in Moscow, but I have not heard of them anywhere else. In reaching government officials at the local level, Protestants prefer to go to an official's office, present him/her with a Christian book, and pray for the official privately in his/her office.
10. Unfortunately, economics play a great part in the mission world. The indigenous players have the dedication and the talent but not the resources. The expatriates have the resources, but they are very expensive to support in this part of the world. The \$5,000 a month it takes to support a missionary family from America could support 20 missionaries in Russia, but the latter do not have the church contacts, nor the language to generate support for themselves. How could Christian charity bridge the gap?

East-West Mission Partnerships: What Works and What Doesn't

Response from Alexander Malov, Chairman of the Board, "Light of Resurrection" Mission, Donetsk, Ukraine, 8 August, 2005. Translated by Sharyl Corrado.

In considering the role of Western missionaries in ministry in the former Soviet Union, I would like to shift the emphasis somewhat. Currently a negative, critical attitude toward Western missionaries prevails

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Over the years the "blitz" missionary has been replaced by the career missionary.

East-West Mission Partnerships:

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among local Protestants, yet little or nothing is said about the responsibility of local leaders for what is taking place.

1. We need to understand that Western missionaries did not appear out of nowhere. All of them, without exception, have arrived at the invitation of local believers. In other words, we ourselves invite Westerners and then complain that they don't understand our culture and bring us "liberal" theology, foreign to our churches. The problem is in the lack of honesty and openness in inviting Western missionaries. It has become prestigious to cooperate with the West. We invite missionaries in the hope that we can use them as a source of financial support. And if financial assistance indeed arrives with the help of Western missionaries, we are willing to "put up with it," and condescend to the fact that their ministry contradicts our cultural norms. If the expected financial assistance does not materialize, conflict often develops.

The way out is in honestly discussing all aspects of cooperation before the missionary arrives. There must be discussion of principles, including theological principles, upon which cooperation will be based. Financial difficulties of local believers at times hinder such honest discussion, as believers fear that honesty could lead to withdrawal of desired financial assistance. Recently I faced a situation in which a young pastor from rural Ukraine met an American missionary and spontaneously invited him to come partner with him in his village. To his horror, the American accepted his invitation. Now the young pastor calls me regularly with questions about what ministry to give to the American.

Believers in Western Ukraine, in a region with a large population of devout Catholics and Orthodox, were more honest and open. The believers were planning a large evangelistic effort, in which they would visit each village in the region over the course of 78 days. Such a campaign, undoubtedly, costs a lot of money, much of which they had raised themselves. Nonetheless, a deficit remained in their budget. In discussions with Western donors, these believers clearly stated their conditions: The presence of Americans during the campaign could have a negative effect on its results, alienating conservative villagers. This position was stated clearly and led to the respect of the Western partner organization, which nonetheless covered the budget deficit. With this in mind, my advice to Western missionaries would be to find out what is really expected of your presence and not to provide false hope, especially concerning financial assistance.

2. It is important to remember that the circle of evangelical leaders in the countries of the FSU is tight knit and that there is constant exchange of

information at unofficial levels. One of the biggest frustrations that surfaces repeatedly in our discussions is the fact that Western missionaries often choose their closest assistants from among young believers who know English and make it into a career. These young people become leaders in ministry based not on their spiritual qualities but on their knowledge of the English language and American culture. Such leaders, cut off from the real needs of their people, are viewed by local believers as "slaves" of the Americans. Recently I met with a young man in charge of youth ministry in one of the regions of Ukraine. In talking to me, he spoke Russian with a strong American accent and was happy about it. I asked him where he got such an accent. He answered that he worked a lot with Americans and could no longer speak pure Russian. It's a small thing - but unpleasant.

3. In my opinion, we need to be careful not to exaggerate the role of Western missionaries in what is taking place in the FSU. I can say with certainty that the majority of churches and ministries were started by national believers alone. The huge number of American believers arriving has no significant influence on evangelism in the FSU. One often overhears national leaders superficially evaluating the situation: "If we had the financial resources that they spend on sending American missionaries to us, we would be much more effective." This, as I noted, is a superficial judgment, and there is nothing worse than counting the money in someone else's pocket. But at the same time, it would be wrong to ignore such criticism.
4. It is my deep conviction that the most promising role for Western believers in the FSU is in sending specialists in areas in which we truly have a need. The needs may differ by region.
5. I also feel that a promising area for cooperation could be assistance in starting small businesses, which would serve as means of evangelism. Many goals could be served by such methods with minimal expense.

Missionaries: Useful in Certain Specialized Roles

Response from Evgeni Bakhmuty, Director, National Youth/Student Ministry, Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, 6 September 2005

On the missionary shift from Moscow and St. Petersburg to the provinces: "It's really true - much cheaper, more effective, better people."

On the shift from missionary to indigenous leadership: "From one side it's true. From another, Russian people are not so interested in Western missionaries now as before. But Western missionaries would be effective and useful among Russian youth because of the global youth culture that has reached Russia now."

On the role of foreign missionaries: "Become partners in the Gospel - not big

One of the biggest frustrations that surfaces repeatedly in our discussions is the fact that Western missionaries often choose their closest assistants from among young believers who know English and make it into a career.

brothers or bosses but co-workers. Many things that we face here [foreign missionaries] have already faced. They can share from their experience to help avoid mistakes and be more effective. Foreign missionaries can also teach – we still need good training – and can become part of evangelistic groups here in Russia. Some Russians still like foreigners very much.”

Western Missionaries in Russia: Not Whether, But How

Response from Insur Shamgunov, Director, Eurasian Missionary College, Kazan, Russia, 6 September 2005

In general, I agree with the comments, especially the evaluation of current Protestant theological education. Let me summarize a few points, which are strictly my current (it could change in the future) and subjective opinion. I must admit in the past I used to be generally quite negative towards Western missionaries for their lack of sensitivity, etc. However, recently, my attitude has softened much. Russia is an extremely difficult place to live and to understand. It also has a history of xenophobia and is often hostile towards foreigners (especially missionaries). So, a certain amount of their insensitivity, perhaps, is only natural. However, it is always good to grow and learn.

First of all, I think that there is a place for foreign missionaries in Russia. It is based on a simple theological conviction that the Church is universal and international in scope; those members who have something to share with others must do so. Therefore, the key issue to me is not whether Western missionaries are needed in Russia but how they could be more effective. Along these lines I would suggest that they:

1. not work independently but always work alongside local churches, prioritizing building relationships with national leaders;
2. be willing to support missionary projects of national churches more than their own;
3. work in a genuine partnership with the local church – on the organizational decision-making level, budgeting, etc. – so that the national church would be truly included;
4. help with the development of counseling (a huge need in Russia), recovery groups, etc.; and
5. help to develop the national church economically by training lay people in various business activities.

Finally, the importance of wise financial support of the growing national church must not be underemphasized. Both extremes (creating dependency or not giving at all) could be avoided, in my opinion, by establishing genuine partnership with local indigenous leaders, including their voice in financial planning.

Protestant Seminary Woes: Difficulties with Recruitment and Placement

From a Western Missionary in Ukraine, 8 September 2005

I have learned through my channels that the “crisis” (the word used here) among the residential Bible schools in the FSU continues.

- Enrollments are down drastically.
- Women make up the majority of students (whereas in this culture only men can be pastors).
- Standards are lowered. Now even those with less than a one-year Christian walk are being accepted.
- There is little accountability to the local church or denomination. Going to Bible school is an individual matter.

Fortunately, the extension school programs are still holding their own.

From Evgeni Bakhmutsky, Director, Youth/Student Ministry, Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, 6 September 2005

I think I can write a big article about this problem. Shortly speaking, this guy is right – too many schools, plus so-called liberalism, plus differences in theology, plus jealousy. But I see there are two much bigger problems than he has mentioned. First, most of these schools are not really church-oriented. They show themselves as teachers of theology, but the teaching doesn't reflect the reality that Russian churches face day by day. And second, pastors and churches don't see the advantage of education. They see many difficulties and divisions that are caused by graduates. But they don't see graduates' commitment and passion for the Lord, the Gospel, and sacrificial ministry. It's possible to change.

From Sharyl Corrado, doctoral candidate, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, 2 August 2005

I agree with what you said about theological education – that the standards are being lowered since there are not many applicants. But no one seems to be considering the idea of closing or cutting back on programs. Instead, they are trying to raise enrollment. They seem caught in a cycle – they have to keep their programs going because otherwise they'd lose their sponsors, but their programs aren't meeting the needs so applications continue to decline. In a couple of places, where they seem to be attempting financial self-sufficiency (which I applaud), they still look to the West. For example, they try to recruit American study-abroad students who pay Western tuition rates or rent out rooms to Western organizations at higher rates. I'm not sure these as long-term solutions. ♦

Both extremes (creating dependency or not giving at all) could be avoided, in my opinion, by establishing genuine partnership with local indigenous leaders.

Russian Orthodox Social Ministry in Post-Soviet Society

Roman Lunkin

In Orthodoxy, social ministry has not become an independent, integral, and obligatory part of church life. Instead, social work has rather been a burden for the Russian church, which believes that concrete material aid for the needy in an Orthodox state should be provided by the government. In contrast, Peter the Great, whom many Orthodox equate with the Antichrist, required the church, clergy, monasteries, and convents to take a role in socially useful charity. However, this does not mean that Orthodoxy does not have a certain sense of social responsibility that is present in every Christian communion.

"The main thing is to help people; the stones can wait."

Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Charity

Every Orthodox churchgoer considers Russia an Orthodox country filled with citizens who are, in varying degrees, believers. From this point of view, Orthodox social ministry in Russia is not a missionary endeavor as it is with Catholics and Protestants. Furthermore, Orthodox consider non-Orthodox distribution of humanitarian aid to be proselytism and tantamount to buying believers. The Catholic Church has developed an expansive program of charity through its churches and orders and through Caritas, its aid agency. Most of the time social work in Protestant churches is based on "expecting a miracle," such as deliverance from disease, alcoholism, or drug addiction, or the miracle of prosperity. Unlike Western Christianity, Orthodoxy in Russia operates more through compassion and mercy, not with the expectation of a specific result of prayer, as is the case with charismatics, but with sympathy and salvation for the suffering soul, the sick, or the poor. From the theological point of view Orthodoxy calls a sufferer to be like Christ. That is why special honor in the Orthodox tradition belongs to those who totally gave themselves to the needy, such as the Grand Duchess Elizaveta Feodorovna who at the beginning of the twentieth century founded the Convent of Martha and Mary. It means that Orthodox activity possesses a specific "charisma." Unlike the developed social theory of the Catholic Church, Russian Orthodoxy, lacking clear church social policy, has found its meaning and expression in practice at the parish level.

Who in the modern Orthodox Church strives to realize the social ideals of Christianity and what difficulties do they face? The most vivid examples of social ministry are local and diocesan initiatives carried out by individual priests and laity. Social work at the congregational level consists of three types: projects promoted by the Moscow Patriarchate; projects initiated by parish clergy, with

or without episcopal support; and projects undertaken by Orthodox believers, but without formal ties to the church.

Projects Actively Supported by the Moscow Patriarchate and Encouraged by Church Authorities

Among the projects of the Department of Charity and Social Ministry of the Moscow Patriarchate is the Orthodox Hospital of Saint Alexey of Moscow, founded with support from the various government health ministries. But such efforts are extremely rare.

In Saraktash in the Orenburg Region, Archpriest Nikolai (Stremskikh) has created a unique social outreach including an Orthodox orphanage, gymnasium, Sunday school, and nursing home. The Orthodox gymnasium and orphanage, with its 48 children, are under the patronage of the Patriarch who has been to Saraktash and personally approved the work of Father Nikolai. With the help of sponsors, Father Nikolai sends the children to Greece, Jerusalem, and Italy on a regular basis.

Father Superior Triphon (Plotnikov) of the Antoniev-Syiski Monastery of the Archangel Eparchy is extremely active and open to fresh ideas. He is well liked by government authorities and local businessmen, with the latter providing him with material aid. Under his leadership, the monastery has revived the tradition of social ministry and enlightenment typical of northern cloisters. Over ten years the monastery was minimally restored and refurbished, but its social activity, rare for a semi-destroyed monastery, is remarkable. As Father Triphon says, "The main thing is to help people; the stones can wait." The monastery cares for poor families, needy and autistic children, and those ill with cancer. At any one time, dozens of homeless live in the monastery. There they are provided with shelter, food, and work. In neighboring villages, monks periodically have services and distribute religious literature. The monastery supports an orphanage in Emetsk and has even organized agricultural production which, in the opinion of Father Superior Triphon, "must become an example and school for local peasantry, a form of mission and preaching of the Christian attitude to work because we do need a close and genuine connection with local peasants. Otherwise, what kind of Christians are we?"

Archimandrite Kirill (Pokrovskiy) of the Blagoveshensky Monastery in Nizhnyi Novgorod is another representative of a socially oriented monastic. Considering himself to be in the tradition of Father Iosif Volotskoi, he thinks that at present the monastery must be active with social ministry and religious enlightenment: "Now is not the time

for hermitage [contemplative retreat]." The monastery serves meals to the poor. Monks also minister in prisons, orphanages, hospitals, and schools. The Blagoveshensky Monastery also cooperates with a Catholic parish in Nizhnyi Novgorod in matters of charity.

The wide-ranging social outreach of the Blagoveshensky Monastery requires large financial support, which comes from local businessmen. However, this relationship draws the disapproval of some in the community.

In Novgorod Archbishop Lev supports energetic social outreach by clergy and laity. The Yuriev Monastery has been very active in sponsoring summer camps for orphans from St. Petersburg. One supporter of social reform, as outlined in the stillborn Council of 1917-1918, is Archpriest Nikolai (Ershov), senior priest of the Nikolskiy Cathedral in Kolmov, Novgorod Region. A member of the Synodal Committee on Social Issues, Father Nikolai considers himself to be a traditionalist in terms of clerical life who is opposed to close relations with Catholics. However, he supports the democratization of the Church, elections for appointment to the episcopacy, holding Orthodox Church councils on a democratic basis, and the gradual reformation of the Church through its openness to society, including the use of modern Russian in the Divine Liturgy. Father Nikolai's parish is quite active in social work. He and his parishioners visit a nearby hospital, feed the poor, and organize Sunday school classes for children. According to Father Nikolai, healthy change in the church and a rejection of "Soviet traditions" will allow the social ministry in his church to be truly effective.

In the Murmansk Eparchy Bishop Simon keeps in touch with Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish Lutherans via the Barents Region Cooperative Union of Christian Churches. While acknowledging their theological differences, Bishop Simon chooses to stress their cooperation in social, cultural, and even ecological efforts. The bishop has spoken in joint conferences devoted to spirituality and ecology. His call for tough pollution-control standards and his support for the expansion of forest plantations are not typical of a member of the Orthodox hierarchy. As for social projects, the Eparchy cooperates with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. state of Washington, which maintains a permanent representative in Murmansk. Theologically conservative Presbyterian churches in Alaska also actively cooperate in social ministries with Orthodox in Murmansk.

Finally, Sister Maria (Borisova) of Sophia Church, Kazan, holds a Candidate Degree in chemical science. She has a unique ministry among young Orthodox believers in Tatarstan, assisting them in a spiritual transition from nominal to genuine Christian faith.

Projects Initiated by Clergy With or Without Episcopal Support

Father Pavel (Adelgeim), senior priest of a Pskov parish, is a charismatic spiritual leader who is devoted to social ministry. He has been very active in restoring churches entrusted to him. Since the beginning of perestroika, he also has undertaken many social and educational projects. He founded an Orthodox school for general education and an orphanage for mentally retarded children. At the beginning of perestroika, Father Pavel played a prominent role in political life in Pskov and was even nominated to the Supreme Soviet in 1991. Bishop Evseyvi of Pskov, however, treats Father Pavel rather negatively.

In the Yaroslavl Region in the early 1990s a brilliant priest, Father Oleg (Cherepanin), gained wide respect for his charitable activity. He founded a center for gifted children in Semibratovo with the help of Sister Nikodima, an Orthodox nun from England, who became the project's primary sponsor.

Archpriest Pavel (Patrin), senior priest of Voznesensky Cathedral in Novosibirsk, is a man of a moderately conservative point of view, but at the same time, he is a supporter of independent, parish initiatives in educational and social work. Father Superior Philip (Novikov) and interested laity visit orphanages, boarding schools, and nursing homes. Also Voznesensky deaconesses feed the sick in a Novosibirsk hospital. Father Pavel considers active social work the task of every parish.

Projects Undertaken by Orthodox Believers Without Formal Ties to the Church

A lay community of Brothers and Sisters of Mercy of Grand Duchess Elizaveta Feodorovna emerged under perestroika in Ivanovo. It is led by an Orthodox layperson, Tatyana Leporskaya, a member of the city's intelligentsia who turned to Orthodoxy and aspired to live according to the teachings of the gospel. This charity chose to model its outreach on the ministry of the Martha and Mary Convent in Moscow's First City Hospital. Using their own apartments, members of the community feed the poor and the homeless. They also run a Christian bookshop at Kazan Cathedral and administer a shelter for the homeless, the retired, and the disabled. The community also assists an orphanage and distributes humanitarian aid provided by city businessmen. Initially blessed by Archbishop Amvrosyi of Ivanovo, it later became autonomous and practically independent of eparchy leadership. Conflict arose over control of the community's activities and finances. While Archbishop Amvrosyi did not deny his personal blessing for the activities of the community, the Eparch did withdraw its official support for the Brothers and Sisters of Mercy. Supporters of the charitable activities of the community were

Brothers and Sisters of Mercy of Grand Duchess Elizaveta Feodorovna in Ivanovo administer a shelter for the homeless, the retired, and the disabled. The community also assists an orphanage and distributes humanitarian aid.

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After ten years of freedom from Soviet-era restrictions, the Russian Orthodox Church still has not accepted social ministry as one of its responsibilities, despite the church's official publication of its social doctrine in 2000.

Russian Orthodox Social Ministry

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disappointed by church efforts to control their finances.

Tatyana Leporskaya concludes, "Social work, first of all, is church business. Therefore, we started off as part of the Russian Orthodox Church. But we were naïve. We thought since we were in the church, no one in the church would tell lies about us and everyone would follow the commandments. But now we have come to the conclusion that the church reflects general societal conditions, including aggressiveness."

A similar conflict arose over the charitable initiatives of the Orthodox Brotherhood of St. John of Kronshtadt in Ossetia, Northern Caucasus. From the outset a few priests criticized the brotherhood for its independence and accused it of being a sect within the church. At the beginning of the 1990s Archpriest Leonid (Akhidov) did not approve of the brotherhood's social and educational work because the brothers made an independent decision as to who was going to be their confessor. In time, a major part of the brotherhood turned to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad for support. Finally, the new Archbishop Vladimir (Samoilenko) abolished the brotherhood and deprived it of church offerings designated for its work. Nevertheless, the Brotherhood of St. John of Kronshtadt, headed by Natalya Dmitrieva, a teacher of mathematics in a technological university, continues its work with orphans and its educational efforts, including the publication of a newspaper.

Some Conclusions

After ten years of freedom from Soviet-era restrictions, the Russian Orthodox Church still has not accepted social ministry as one of its responsibilities, despite the church's official publication of its social doctrine in 2000. For example, Sergei Tchebotarev, a member of the Orthodox Youth Center in Tambov, notes, "There is no socially and intellectually active clergy in the eparchy. As a result, the eparchy is passive in social and missionary work. The activity of the Youth Center and some other Orthodox movements and organizations is done according to the initiative and powers of the laity, independent of the eparchy."

Social ministry in post-Soviet Russia lacks a clear focus, reflecting either the ideological policy of the Patriarchate and individual members of the clergy or the strivings of clergy and laity for energetic church-community activity. In the post-Soviet period, the church's liberation from tight state control has been only partial. The church gained its freedom but did not reject its connections with the state, in effect becoming a state within a state. After perestroika the Orthodox Church remained a slow-moving bureaucracy with all the traits of Soviet times, including a totalitarian hierarchical system with a lack of initiative from below. Historical precedents for the church's public ministry did not influence the formation of social ministries as a whole, with the exception of a few regions such as Karelia, Novgorod, and Arkhangelsk, where public activity of the clergy has been fairly pronounced.

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, after the church in Russia gained the freedom to act in public and economic life, social ministry had to start practically from zero. The issue of social ministry was not initially on the agenda of the Moscow Patriarchate. Since the beginning of the 1990s, it has remained a secondary consideration. The Patriarchate's primary concerns are the restitution of property; the restoration and construction of churches, for example, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow; and other issues relating to the material and economic provision of its eparchies, parishes, and monasteries.

In recent years the church's attitude towards social work has undergone change. It now is considered a matter of patriotic service to the new post-Soviet Russian state. That is why the accent in public ministry relates heavily to state institutions, including the military, the judicial system, and prisons. In these areas, the success of church social work depends at least in part on the good will of military and prison authorities. During the 1990s the church signed agreements with various federal departments, with church and state both lauding the importance of teaching citizens "patriotic and moral values."

Work in social institutions, including orphanages, nursing homes, alcohol and drug rehabilitation centers, and prisons, requires a great deal of time and effort. It demands close contact and active cooperation with all levels of society. It also requires an emphasis upon the role of the laity in church life, because social work in "unfavorable" spheres of society depends upon the personal initiative and the concern of average believers.

The Moscow Patriarchy has not yet worked out a consistent approach to social ministries. If work with the military and prisoners, at times, is blessed and directed by the higher clergy (as a job politically significant for cooperation with federal structures and local authorities), parish priests are in fact given total freedom in their charitable work in social institutions. This work at the local level requires a great deal of personal effort, especially in the absence of any significant financial support from church leaders and with Orthodox brotherhoods heavily focused on educational and publishing work, more than social outreach.

The reasons for Orthodox passivity in social ministry stems in part from the church's understanding of Russia as its "canonical territory." Consequently, church restoration is perceived as a blessing for society, whose members are to come to church on their own, not as the result of active missionary and spiritual work with post-Soviet atheists. That is why officials of the Moscow Patriarchate demand state support for Orthodoxy as Russia's "traditional religion," including tax and other benefits in social and charitable spheres. At the same time, the Orthodox Church accepts humanitarian aid from foreign state and social organizations, both Protestant and Catholic.

Priests today are construction and budget managers, more than social workers. At the same time, the laity is not given the opportunity to express itself in the public sphere because church leaders want to

control its activities, both inside and outside the church.

Conservative priests even now express the opinion that social work is not a church responsibility and clergy should not have to do it. For example, Archpriest Vladimir Popov of Pskov says, "Social projects simply do not come to mind. However, with the help of the Dutch we have a charitable canteen. You cannot do everything. Social ministry is the business of the higher ruling clergy. Moreover, for Orthodoxy, social outreach is not of decisive importance. On the contrary, this work generates parasitic moods, Soviet power having corrupted all of us. The church cannot replace the state."

A parish priest can deny social obligations on principle and can refer the issue to higher members of the clergy. A prominent example is Father Andrey (Bogomolov) from Kaluga. He organized a parish consisting primarily of youth and intelligentsia. He sponsors Sunday schools and discussion groups for youth about the theology of the church fathers. In spite of his opposition to social work, Father Andrey, like many clerics of the Orthodox Church, constantly thinks of ways to make church work more effective, involving all levels of society. He has come to the conclusion that one cannot reject modern youth culture. Instead, it needs to be recast in an Orthodox way. His conservative monarchical beliefs notwithstanding, he speaks positively about rock music, including Pink Floyd, the Beatles, and B.Grebenshchikov.

The Community of Saint Antony the Roman in Velikiy Novgorod has the goal of reaching secularized youth. The community has its own student church. It sponsors lectures and meetings with Novgorod clergy, musicians, poets, and intelligentsia. Members of the community also maintain contacts with Catholics and Old Believers and they often go to the West for Christian youth meetings.

Today, the Russian Orthodox Church is being asked to define its social role in modern Russia. Given the effective social ministry in Russia performed by Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Pentecostals, and others, and the growing, independent social outreach of Orthodox laity, church leaders will not be able to avoid addressing this question. But to do so in a constructive manner will require significant changes within the Russian Orthodox Church. ♦

Edited excerpt published with permission from "Sotsial'noe sluzhenie Russkoi Pravoslavnoi tserkvi v post-Sovetskom obshchestve" in Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe, ed. by Jonathan Sutton and Wil van den Bercken. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2003. Translated by Tatiana Shelanova.

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Recommended Russian-Language Websites on Religion in Russia

Lawrence A. Uzzell

*<http://www.portal-credo.ru/> Probably the most useful of all Moscow websites on religion, with quick links to articles published in other publications, including hard-to-find provincial and ecclesiastical periodicals. Credo's own articles and commentaries strongly affirm religious freedom. Editor Aleksandr Soldatov usually favors "alternative Orthodox" groups and is now on a crusade against the reunion of the Moscow Patriarchate with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

*<http://www.religare.ru/> Second only to portal-credo in its usefulness. This site has a good range of links to other sources. It is not always aggressive in criticizing the powers that be, but nevertheless does carry a reasonably wide range of opinion.

*<http://religion.ng.ru/> The religion supplement of the Moscow daily *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. It normally is cautious about criticizing the Moscow Patriarchate, but is often sympathetic to religious freedom. It is intellectually curious about religions other than Orthodoxy and is unusual for a Russian source in providing a range of opinions.

<http://mitropoliya.org/> Information from Old Believers in the former Soviet Union with an emphasis on the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Kornili.

<http://iucecb.com/news/> Official site of the unregistered "initsiativniki" Baptists. This dissident group split from the registered Baptist Union in 1961 and to this day is scandalously neglected by most self-styled defenders of religious freedom among American Protestants.

<http://www.mk.ru/> *Moskovski komsomolets*, a stronghold of opposition to Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk. It frequently disseminates accusations of corruption in the Moscow Patriarchate. While sometimes biased, the site does provide useful information not easily available elsewhere.

<http://www.mn.ru/> Weekly *Moskovskie novosti*. Its main focus is on secular politics, but it does include religious news from the standpoint of Moscow's democratic intelligentsia, with strong coverage of "alternative Orthodox" groups. *Moskovskie novosti* has just changed ownership, raising fears among human-rights advocates that it may become much more servile to the government.

<http://www.newizv.ru/> The pro-reform daily, *Novye izvestia*, with only occasional coverage of religion. It is willing to criticize the Moscow Patriarchate and sometimes displays a liberal, secular bias.

<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/> Takes a nationalist, anti-freedom position. The site generally reflects the ideological stance of Moscow's influential Sretensky Monastery.

<http://www.radrad.ru/> Also nationalist and anti-freedom. *Radonezh*, however, is more articulate and interesting than the often bureaucratic website of the Moscow Patriarchate.

<http://www.religio.ru/news/index.html> Stronger on facts than analysis. This site provides a great deal of fresh news about a wide range of religions.

<http://religion.russ.ru/> The religion supplement to *Russki zhurnal*. Maksim Shevchenko's columns are always interesting. Guest columns range from spokesmen for the Moscow Patriarchate to Protestant pastors.

<http://www.sova-center.ru/> News and analysis from defenders of confessional pluralism. This site contains useful information about anti-Semitism and other dangers.

<http://www.an.mrezha.ru/zhizn/> A Russian anti-abortion movement website.

<http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/> The official website of the Moscow Patriarchate, accessible in English as well as Russian. It often is highly bureaucratic, but indispensable. ♦

*Highly Recommended

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Religious Education in Post-Soviet Latvia

Anta Filipšone

Editor's Note: The first half of this article appeared in the previous issue of the East-West Church & Ministry Report 13 (Summer 2005): 9-10.

Initial Debates

Schools that dealt with children belonging to various confessions found it very difficult to introduce the confessional approach in its pure form.

Religious education in state high schools was already operative in Latvia before World War II. Educational laws of 1919 and 1934 included provisions for confessional religion classes, both in primary and secondary schools, following the experience of Scandinavian countries.¹

Religion classes were reintroduced into Latvian public schools in 1991, immediately after independence and the restoration of religious freedom. The Law on Religious Organizations that guaranteed freedom of conscience allowed children to choose between religion and ethics or to study both.² From 1991 to 1996, Latvia's religion classes of various kinds were taught as electives on the initiative of the principal and/or individual teachers. Teachers of religion had to design their own curricular materials. Each school paid religion teachers according to its resources with teachers, more often than not, working for free.

In 1993, the Ministry of Education and Science established the Inter-Confessional Collegium of Religious Education in which leaders of the five traditional churches – Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, and Old Believers – together with officials from the Ministry of Education started a discussion on the common curriculum for religious education in public schools. Initially it was not planned to follow the confessional approach in state schools. Rather, members of the Collegium discussed the possibilities of designing a common ecumenical curriculum introducing the biblical and moral basics of Christian faith.³

The Confessional Approach

However, in 1994 Janis Cardinal Pujats changed his position and started active advocacy for the confessional approach. According to Juris Rubenis, "The other churches then had to decide whether to continue working along ecumenical lines, in spite of the fact that Christian unity had been disrupted, or to fall in with the denominational model offered by Catholics. They chose the latter course."⁴

In 1996, despite the disapproval of the Ministry of Education and Science, Latvia's Parliament passed an Amendment to the Law on Religious Organizations, which granted support to the confessional approach. Teachers of religion had to belong to and be certified by one of five traditional Christian churches – Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Orthodox, and Old Believer. Each church trained its own teachers of religion and developed its own curricular materials, which had to be approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.⁵

While the confessional approach was being repeatedly supported, advocated, and financed on the official level, its way into the educational practice in state schools was thorny. Schools that dealt with children belonging to various confessions found it very difficult to introduce the confessional approach in its pure form, except for some religiously homogenous regions such as Latgale (the eastern part of Latvia, which is predominantly Roman Catholic). In addition, the confessional approach was under constant pressure of a sharp critique in mass media.⁶

Alternative Models of Religious Education

At the same time, individual religious educators continue to work on alternative models of religious education in Latvian public schools. For example, Laima Geikina, a high school teacher of religion and ethics and lecturer in the University of Latvia, has developed and continues to advocate her own approach, according to which public schools should offer a nonconfessional course in "Christian Ethics" for grades 1 through 12 with an alternative in secular "Ethics."⁷ Also, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed curricula for courses in "History of Religions" for secondary schools (1998) and "Christian Ethics" for primary schools (1999).⁸ Today these courses are offered within the framework of the social sciences, thus bypassing ecclesiastical control.

Debates Continued

In 1998, a group of officials of the Ministry of Education and Science submitted a petition to Parliament asking for the introduction of a nonconfessional course on Christianity in elementary and primary schools and a descriptive course on world religions in high schools. Confessional religious education could remain as an optional, non-credit subject. As an alternative to religion, schools could offer ethics. The goal was a more open, descriptive, and ecumenical curriculum, which would introduce the basics of Christianity, rather than present the doctrine of a particular confession.⁹ This petition rekindled debates and caused an open controversy between church leaders and the Ministry of Education and Science. Yet Parliament once again chose to support ecclesial leadership by refusing to change the law and by granting state financial support for the confessional approach.

At that point both Lutheran Archbishop Vanags and Roman Catholic Cardinal Pujats appeared

unconcerned about the low level of popularity of confessional religion classes in public schools. According to statistics, in 1998 they were only taught in approximately 20 percent of all schools, mostly in grades 1 through 4.¹⁰ Even though churches were concerned with maintaining the link with society through the schools, they were ready to do that only on their own terms, regardless of public opinion and the practical effectiveness of their chosen approach.

To support the confessional approach, an appeal was also made to the experience of those European countries where the religious education classes in state schools are still confessional: Finland, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Luxemburg, and parts of Germany and Switzerland.¹¹ However, opponents pointed out that in other European countries such as Great Britain, Sweden, and the Netherlands, the confessional approach has been abolished in favor of more open Christian ecumenical or even inter-religious curricula, so while it can be argued that some kind of religious education is an established tradition in Europe, it is not automatically the confessional approach.

The Nonconfessional Approach

As a result of an unexpectedly sharp discussion in the mass media and considerable public opposition to a purely confessional approach to religious education in public schools, leaders of the five traditional churches, including Cardinal Pujats, softened their position and agreed to replace the five confessional curricula with one common nonconfessional Christian curriculum. This event marked the formal end of the debate and the beginning of a pluralistic period in religious education in public schools in Latvia. The resulting joint program, "Christian Faith," for grades 1 through 4, focused on the basics of Christian faith from a nonconfessional, biblical perspective.¹² However, teachers still had to be approved by their churches. It was also emphasized that these changes in the curriculum of religious education in public schools had been initiated, authorized, and controlled by the bishops of traditional churches, and not the Ministry of Education and Science. Since direct ecclesiastical control was preserved, in a broad political sense, teaching religion in public schools is still regarded as implicitly confessional.

Finally, in 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science, in consultation with churches, introduced in grades 1 through 4 an obligatory choice between two courses, "Ethics" and "Christian Faith," and initiated the process of developing new curricula for both subjects. This was intended as a compromise between those who insisted on compulsory Christian education in state schools and those who opposed it. This decision has not fundamentally altered the basic framework of pluralism of approaches because the optional courses, "History of Religion" and "Christian Ethics," remain in place.

Current Situation

Today, all schools must offer a choice between a nonconfessional course, "Christian Faith," and a course in "Ethics" in grades 1 through 4. Ideally, they also can offer a nonconfessional course, "Christian Ethics," as an alternative to secular "Ethics" in grade 7 and an elective course, "History of Religions," in high school. However, students are not required to study religion in any grade, provided they study ethics in elementary school and grade 7.

Teachers can acquire certification to teach religion and ethics at the Professional Program of Teachers of Religion and Ethics at the Faculty of Theology, University of Latvia. However, teachers of the course "Christian Faith" still have to be approved by their churches.

Despite the achieved compromise along ecumenical lines, confessionalism is still strong in Latvia, with mainline churches seeking to consolidate their identities after 50 years of forced atheism. Even though the debate is officially closed, religious educators in Latvia still have to be prepared to deal with the confessionalist mentality in their daily work, especially in religiously homogenous regions such as Latgale (the eastern part of Latvia, which is predominantly Roman Catholic).

Even though there has been certain progress in the field of religious education due to increased governmental support, in reality, the existence and form of religious education in a public school are still highly dependent on the attitude of its administration. It is still possible for principals to influence the decision of parents of elementary school students in favor of ethics, as well as to choose to offer the electives, "Christian Ethics" and "History of Religions." This situation allows for a wide range of experience with religious education in different schools: in some of them religious education flourishes, in some it barely exists, and in others it is completely ignored. ♦

Edited and updated excerpt reprinted with permission from Anta Filipsons, "A Critical Analysis of Approaches to Religious Education in Public Schools of Post-Soviet Latvia," Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 2002.

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As a result of an unexpectedly sharp discussion in the mass media and considerable public opposition to a purely confessional approach to religious education in public schools, leaders of the five traditional churches . . . softened their position and agreed to . . . one common nonconfessional Christian curriculum.

I have the conviction that a servant structure can be a check on the tendency toward hierarchy and control.

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Albanian Evangelical Leadership

Alfred Gollosi

Leaders with Parental Virtues

Albanians historically have suffered from rigid, abusive, totalitarian leadership. In contrast, evangelical leadership can be relevant in Albanian society if it has parental qualities. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, who lived very close to Albania, "We proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children" (1 Thessalonians 2:7). The model of a mother and father who are compassionate, supportive, and protective of their children serves as an alternative to a dictatorial and abusive leadership style. It may be offensive in an individualistic Western culture, but it works well in Albania. Leaders with the stature of caring mothers and fathers do not depend on titles to be approved, followed, and heeded. Albanian leaders with compassionate parental virtues will serve as models to their followers.

The Value of Diversity and Individuality

Albania also needs leadership that nurtures diversity and individuality. Communists and Albania's various religious traditions taught uniformity. Because of the collective mindset and uniformity of the Communist past, people can be hostile towards differences of any kind. Rather than dictate uniformity through power and coercion, new evangelical leaders should challenge the mentality of intolerance, allowing for creativity and freedom of expression. Leadership is needed to nurture a tolerant culture and to foster genuine, independent thinking. Albanian leaders should help people discover their gifts, which will bring riches, joy, and fulfillment.

Corporate Leadership

Albanian tradition and history illustrate how wrong it is if only one person is all powerful. Pluralism in leadership is more faithful to Scripture and to the faith community. Albanian church leaders must recognize that every member is a priest before God. As Paul Beasley-Murray notes, "Leadership within any given church is always called to be a corporate affair" (*A Call*

to Excellence: An Essential Guide to Christian Leadership [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995], 44).

Flexibility and Creativity

Albanian leaders, in addition, should have freedom to shape and structure the church as they see best. Albanian Baptists struggle with too much structure, while Pentecostals-Charismatics struggle with uncertainty as to the best approach to leadership. New Testament scholar Gordon Fee points out that Scripture does not provide clear norms on leadership and church structure. I believe that the New Testament, by not prescribing a particular structure, gives the church freedom and responsibility to organize itself. Albanian evangelical churches should exercise freedom and creativity in organizing themselves, guided by Paul's vision that every member possesses gifts. Albanian leaders need to build flexible structures based on servanthood in order to best minister to their churches. I have the conviction that a servant structure can be a check on the tendency toward hierarchy and control. The structure is a vehicle that takes us as a community to journey together as the people of "the Way." It is wrong to create structures that keep people in one place, unchanging and static. Hierarchical power systems become self-serving and repress the mass of believers.

Servant Leadership

Albanian leadership should also be the servant to the whole people of God. Servant leadership goes against power and hierarchy. It is there to assist and enable people. One of the struggles of Albanian society today is corrupt secular leadership. Servant leadership for the Albanian church is the alternative to abuse of power. An emphasis upon servant leadership is the cure to manipulation. The Albanian Christian community has to see that the candidate for leadership is mature enough not to take advantage of others'

weaknesses, is humble, has the integrity to endure the hardship and agonies of service, and, though not perfect, will follow the model of Jesus as a servant leader.

Vision

Vision is not the common language of Albanians, whether their background is Muslim, Catholic, or Orthodox. They are used to talking in practical terms of immediate needs to be met today or tomorrow. Concerned primarily with physical survival, Albanians do not think in terms of dreams and vision. A visionary leader is like a skillful football player. "The traditional definition of 'most valuable player' is one who helps every other teammate perform better" (C. Jeff Woods, *Better Than Success; Eight Principles of Faithful Leadership* [Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001], 1). Because of their history and past experience, Albanians will not easily trust a leader's vision if they do not also see commitment and serious concern for implementing it.

Discipleship

Albanian leadership, in addition, should encourage discipleship. A good leader promotes neither a passive, consumer church, nor a church of militants and fanatics. The answer to some who accuse Albanian Evangelicals of fanaticism is simply life-transforming discipleship. Albanian evangelical leadership should make disciples and enable growing Christians to live worthy of Christ's witness, being genuine, self-aware followers of "the Way."

Proactive Leadership

Knowing Albanian history and culture, I argue for a proactive type of Albanian leadership. I believe leaders should be tactful and kind but also straightforward. Our Mediterranean mentality has not been and still is not individualistic but rather community focused. Albanians are tightly bound to their families and communities. Ottoman and Communist rule forced Albanians into the shadows, to be passive, and as a result we suffer from low self-esteem. People are more imitators than initiators. Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, and Communist traditions all taught that leaders or priests knew best and should not be questioned. In contrast, Albanian evangelical leaders have to seek ways to participate in people's lives in order to enable them to be active followers of Christ. It is my personal experience that an invitation to serve is not enough for Albanian people. For an Albanian, proactive, personal involvement in the lives of believers is a sign of interest. For example, when people visit an Albanian home, it is customary to offer guests something to eat or drink. If guests decline the offer, they are to be asked at least three times until they accept food or drink. This is why aggressive leadership should be implemented in Albania.

The Witness of a Simple Lifestyle

In a context like Albania, leaders should also live modestly. It is not wise for leaders to live at a higher standard than others because this could cause divisions. Western missionaries, who are used to a much higher standard of living, struggle at this point. If leaders live in luxury or even better than the rest, they will not be

trusted. Desperately poor people may come to the church for help. In such cases I argue that Albanian leaders should not provide economic help in order to manipulate others to convert. Rather, leaders should imitate God, who cares for all, and in this way they can open great opportunities for sharing the message of the Bible.

Financial Independence

Next, I argue for a modest leadership that does not depend on financial help from outside Albania. I am not against a true partnership in God's work, but Albanian leaders who depend totally on outside material and financial support are not relevant for Albanian society. They should depend on the living God, who cares for the poor, including Albanians.

Language That Builds Bridges

Albanian leaders should also speak the language of the people. Sometimes using religious language means identifying with one group and excluding others. If Christian leaders cultivate a pious language of their own, they create their first division and detachment from the rest of Albanian society, possibly fostering opposition and misunderstanding. Speaking the same language as the people does not mean conceding to the secular. Instead, it means communicating and applying language people understand. Building such bridges aids the sharing of Christian insights and the Christian message. In the process Albanian culture, language, and traditions can be redeemed.

The Value of Unity and Peace

Finally, Albanian leaders need to work for unity and peace. Albanian history is replete with religious divisions which have badly split the nation. In addition, missionaries fall prey to their own denominational fragmentation. Albanian Evangelicals should be aware that some of the present frustrations and struggles have their roots in the denominationalism of the founding missionaries. That is the case with structure and ordination among Baptists. Albanian Pentecostals-Charismatics suffer from poor relations with other churches, fear of institutional structure, and some resistance to higher education.

A narrow-minded, dogmatic leadership, which divides and alienates, is not what Albania needs. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Albanian evangelical movement successfully identified with the Albanian national cause and, at the same time, remained faithful to Christ. The current Albanian evangelical leadership should do the same by challenging fragmentation and division. Albanians have experienced more than enough separation and isolation. A sensitive, compassionate leadership needs to work for unity and peace by joining together love of country and faithfulness to Christ. ♦

Edited excerpt published with permission from Alfred Golloshi, "Leadership in the Albanian Evangelical Community: A Theological Assessment of Paradigms, Practices, and Vision," M.Th. thesis, University of Wales, 2003.

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Letter to the Editor

I don't intend to go to great lengths justifying what I wrote in the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* in response to Mr. Jeff Thompson's critique —see 12 (Summer 2004): 1-3; and 13 (Spring 2005): 15. In 2002 I addressed many of those issues at greater length in my "Religion and Armed Humanitarian Intervention in the Former Yugoslavia" in *Religion, Law and the Role of Force: A Study of Their Influence on Conflict and on Conflict Resolution*, ed. by J.I. Coffey and Charles T. Mathewes. As I see it, our basic disagreement is at the level of our premises. Mr. Thompson appears to hold that Albanians are good and Serbs are bad and that the government of Slobodan Milosevic would have eliminated the Albanian population from Kosovo had NATO not saved them by means of war.

As I see it, both Serbs and Albanians engaged in mutual atrocities, both over the centuries and during recent times. Milosevic is a war criminal whose fate ought to be decided by the International Court in The Hague.

Albanians in Kosovo were brutally oppressed by the Milosevic regime and this escalated sharply after the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army began its terrorist activities — they too perpetrated crimes against humanity and some of their leaders will keep company with Milosevic in The Hague. Ethnic cleansing greatly escalated after the NATO attack. And while much has been written about it under Milosevic, very little is being reported about it since reverse ethnic cleansing became almost completely successful under a UN-approved administration with U.S. soldiers on the ground. But, of course, we rarely use the same criteria when it comes to abuses by others and when they are carried out under our watch. The alternating nature of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo over the centuries can be clearly demonstrated. In my opinion, it is not qualitatively better when it takes place under the nose of NATO/UN than when it took place under a war criminal.

Paul Mojzes

The CoMission's role in the social transformation of Russian Protestantism cannot be measured with mathematical accuracy. However, it is perfectly apparent that the CoMission project chose a strategic audience and made a weighty contribution to the development of the evangelical movement in Russia.



Book Reviews

Zhuk, Sergei I. *Russia's Lost Reformation*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, John Hopkins University Press, 2004.

The subtitle of the work, *Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine*, clearly describes the thrust of the work. From a multitude of sources, the author develops the thesis that religious sects in Ukraine in pre-revolutionary Russia were widespread and, by and large, radical in their religious, social, and political views. In turn, they prepared the way for revolution in 1905 and 1917.

The author, a former resident of the Soviet Union, has used his linguistic skills to utilize an amazing array of bibliographic sources from both East and West. He lists not only a number of printed primary and secondary sources, primarily in Russian and English, but also archival sources found in Russia and Ukraine. The work shows the diversity and complexity of Russian sectarianism, as well as Ukraine as a breeding ground for populist movements.

With a multitude of facts, *Russia's Lost Reformation*, however, will leave most readers rather bewildered because of a lack of a clearly developed story line. The account tends to become something of a jumble, a repetitious recital of sects and leaders buttressed with numerous quotations. In spite of some attempt at differentiation, the book tends to put the sects in one mold. Although all sects have some impact on social life, including the most low profile, because of different theological roots and views of society, their revolutionary impact may differ significantly. The author attempts to make

some distinction between Stundists and native Russian sects, but he also draws them into his scenario of radical sectarianism, even though he points out the moderating influence of German Baptists on them.

The author fails to evaluate the trustworthiness of quotations from political and ecclesiastical enemies of the sects. He also tends to highlight not only their social radicalism, but also their sexually aberrant behavior. Although the text gives the impression that radical sectarianism was rampant in Ukraine, the book's statistical appendices show, even with possible underreporting, that the number of sectarians was relatively limited compared to the total population.

This work on reformation in Ukraine is like writing the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century as if the main forces were the peasants in the Peasant's War and radical Anabaptists. Both reformations indeed had social consequences, but many other facts need to be evaluated for a proper balance. ♦

Reviewed by Albert W. Wardin, Southern Baptist Historical Commission, Nashville, Tennessee.

Johnson, Paul H., ed. *The CoMission*. Chicago: Moody, 2004.

In the 1990s American evangelical missionaries chose to target a key social group — school teachers. It was a risky decision due to the fact that Russian school teachers represent an occupational group in which atheism and indifference toward religion are prevalent. At the same time, evangelism in Russia desperately needs a work with this particular audience. During the years of state atheism, Christian faith disappeared from young people, teachers, and altogether from a wide strata of the

intelligentsia. The return of faith to the educated and socially active strata of the population is necessary and critically important for the spiritual enlightenment of Russia.

The testimonies of CoMission participants gathered here underscore the depth of the cultural differences between the U.S. and modern Russia. A spirit of skepticism, despondency, and lack of faith in one's own strength prevails now in Russia, in contrast to American enthusiasm, optimism, and creative energy. American spirituality both frightened and attracted Russians. Tatyana Molodyk, a pastor of the Russian United Methodist Church who came to God under the influence of American missionaries, shared with me: "I always considered that people become believers due to sorrow, illness, and failure; grief is a sister of Christian faith. Getting to know American missionaries, I saw an opposite concept — faith as a fruit of joy, the fullness of life, and gratitude to God for self-realization on earth. In the beginning, it amazed me and scared me, and then I started seeking that particular faith, and I have found it."

The most important characteristic of the CoMission's ministry, as well as of many American Evangelicals in Russia, is the key role of prayer while serving. CoMission participants focused on Bible study, the preaching of Christian moral values, and prayer. This emphasis in evangelical missions contrasts sharply with so-called "traditional

religions" that mainly emphasize ideological and political values in their preaching. As a result, many Russians who endured Soviet rule and who lost any conception of true Christian faith now perceive Christianity as one more ideology. But people do not always make their way to faith through a set of ideological constructs. A tremendous contribution made by the CoMission and other American evangelistic projects is the sharing of faith and prayer unswayed by ideology.

How successful was the CoMission? For the past 15 years, thousands of new evangelical churches and groups have emerged in Russia. The occupational composition of Protestant congregations has radically changed. In Soviet times, Protestants included virtually no intelligentsia. Now, educated people account for a significant portion of Russian Protestants. The CoMission's role in the social transformation of Russian Protestantism cannot be measured with mathematical accuracy. However, it is perfectly apparent that the CoMission project chose a strategic audience and made a weighty contribution to the development of the evangelical movement in Russia. ♦

Reviewed by Sergei B. Filatov, an Orthodox layman who holds a candidat (doctoral) degree in history, works for Moscow's Institute of the United States and Canada. Translated by Asya Arushanyan.

Tension existed between the way the CoMission depicted itself to Western Evangelicals who constituted its prayer and financial base and the way it described itself to the Russian Ministry of Education.

CoMission Shortcomings

Donald Fairbairn

The CoMission was a consortium of 83 evangelical organizations that worked together with the Russian Ministry of Education to provide biblically based moral and ethical education in the public schools of Russia and a handful of other neighboring countries. From 1992-97, the CoMission raised more than \$60 million to send over 1,500 short-term missionary educators to Russia and its surroundings. What is most noteworthy about the CoMission, however, is the fact that it was a partnership not between Western Evangelicals and indigenous Protestant believers (as one might expect) but between Western Evangelicals and a secular government. This partnership eventually dissolved as the tension between the Westerners' evangelistic goals and the Russian state's educational goals began to mount and as the Russian Orthodox Church (at first favorable toward the CoMission) began to voice its opposition to the Western infringement on its historical territory.

Tension existed between the way the CoMission depicted itself to Western Evangelicals who constituted its prayer and financial base and the way it described itself to the Russian Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education stipulated that the Christian ethical instruction brought by the International Schools Project (the precursor to the CoMission) be voluntary (that is, not a part of the required school curriculum) and inter-confessional. Western Evangelicals were initially successful in meeting these requirements to the satisfaction of both the Ministry of Education and the Russian Orthodox Church.

The CoMission billed itself to its Russian partners as a provider of a Christian-based morality and ethics curriculum. However, providing moral education was far

from the only goal of the CoMission. The major purpose was to engage in evangelism and discipleship and, in fact, the overall thrust of the Christian ethics curriculum was that in order to live by Christian morality, one needed to receive Christ as Savior. Moreover, the CoMission continually depicted itself to its Western constituencies as the largest evangelistic outreach in history, one in which anyone (educator or not) could participate. This tension between the two visions of CoMission's purpose eventually drew the fire of the Russian Orthodox Church, whose officials believed that the Westerners sought to pull people out of Orthodoxy and make them Protestants.

Far too often the CoMission has either been portrayed in glowing terms as one of God's most extraordinary works in history or derided as a clumsy and ill-thought-out act of American religious imperialism. In actual fact, much good has come of the CoMission. Surely it has helped in bringing Christian morality to Russian students, and unquestionably it has brought many people into close contact with the message of Christ. But this good has come at a high cost, including questions of integrity raised by different ways of depicting the project to different audiences, the angry reaction of the Russian Orthodox Church, and the CoMission's tragic act of ignoring the three million indigenous Protestants in the former Soviet Union. ♦

Source: Donald Fairbairn, Review of Perry L. Glanzer, The Quest for Russia's Soul: Evangelicals and Moral Education in Post-Communist Russia (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2002) in Religion in Eastern Europe 23 (October 2003), 51. Edited excerpt from the summary section of the book review published with permission.



Haste Makes Waste

Johannes Reimer

A total of 82 ministries determined to work together to advance the cause of Christ, rather than promoting their own organization.

"We must do it now because soon the doors will close again." This has become one of the main motivating statements for fund-raising in Euroamerica. Missions establish a sense of urgency and push their programs through while getting bigger and faster. Whole armies of missionaries have been motivated in this way, in most cases poorly equipped for their task. A case in point is the CoMission Project. Promising the Russian people to teach their children sound Judeo-Christian ethics, CoMission workers were granted permission to enter the former Soviet Union to an unimaginable extent. And what came of it? We created a very superficial 11-lesson course, taught this in a couple of weeks to thousands of mostly young people ready to teach the Russians, and sent them over. One leader told me, "Time is short; they will not allow us to stay for more than five years anyway. We can't spend our time on training real ethics teachers."

CoMission cheated a whole nation by promising ethics and actually doing simple evangelism. What kind of Christian ethics is this? Yes, there should always be an urgency in missions, but the speed and method we use cannot be determined by our sponsors or boards. Is it not the Lord and only Him who should set our timetables? And didn't He teach us differently? The myth of ungodly urgency must be destroyed. ♦

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Johannes Reimer, "Mission in Post-Perestroika Russia," Missionalia 24 (April 1996), 16-38.

Johnson, Paul H., ed. *The CoMission*. Chicago: Moody, 2004.

God often does the powerful and miraculous through the available and willing. *The CoMission* is the testimony of God's amazing work through those who made themselves sacrificially available and saw Him do the unbelievable. Those who served with the CoMission were used by God to share the Good News in thousands of public schools in the former Soviet Union and lay the foundation of ministry to the educated class in hundreds of cities and towns between 1992 and 1997.

The CoMission relates the story through the eyes of the executive committee, with chapters devoted to each of the 11 committee members' area of responsibility. These chapters collectively reveal the heart, sacrifice, faith, and courage exhibited by leaders and those who went as "CoMissioners" to Russia and Ukraine. They took bold steps following God's lead into the unknown. In the process, they won thousands to Christ, pioneered a new paradigm of doing missions and ministry, and saw Russians and Ukrainians disciplined in the faith. Most importantly, they followed the Spirit's lead in obedience and brought glory to Christ. The stories and principles in *The CoMission* are compelling.

The CoMission based its work on 15 principles that are spread throughout the book and listed together in Appendix One. These principles are key to spiritual and Kingdom ministry regardless of context. As executive director of the CoMission Training and Materials Committee (chapter 5), I can attest to the accuracy of these principles. More than just nice words, they were the life-blood of the movement. The leaders lived them and the movement embodied them. Collectively, we regularly met God and saw Him do the miraculous as we applied these principles.

The CoMission is a worthy example of Kingdom service in unity. A total of 82 ministries determined to work together to advance the cause of Christ, rather than promoting their own organization. This book opens the secrets to Spirit-led ministry partnerships.

Many lay men and women on some of the earliest CoMission teams were the first Westerners to go to closed Russian and Ukrainian cities in decades - and the first to share the Good News. They fumbled, they made mistakes, and yet they saw God's hand at work. The book shares some of these stories. I am convinced that in eternity the real story will unfold and the stories of faith and courage of lay men and women who served in the CoMission will put many in vocational Christian work to shame. If you seek a deeper awareness of missions and ministry, the wisdom and stories in this book will give you a mark to strive toward and shape the development of your ministry for the good.

Reviewed by Stacy T. Rinehart, International Director, MentorLink International, Raleigh, North Carolina.

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