



# EAST-WEST CHURCH REPORT

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## Maidan's Legacy to Ukrainian Protestants

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Many Ukrainian Christians threw their lot in with the mass protests on Kyiv's Maidan Square in late 2013, sparked when then-President Viktor Yanukovich, a Putin ally, reneged on long-standing promises to deepen Ukraine's association with the European Union. While not necessarily backing all aspects of the Maidan movement, they agree it was both justified and spontaneous.

"People were so fed up with Yanukovich," recalls Vitaly Sorokun, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in the eastern city of Kharkiv [Russian: Kharkov]. "He was saying, 'We're going to sign this EU agreement,' and then all of a sudden he said, 'We're not going to sign it, because we calculated it will cost five billion dollars of damage to our economy.' People were like, 'Really? You've been talking about this for years, and your prime minister only took out a calculator a week before signing? Do you really think we are that stupid?'"<sup>1</sup>

In Kyiv, Vladislav Golovin, an Orthodox parishioner of the Moscow Patriarchate who participated in Maidan, recalls his efforts to convince his mother that protests were not orchestrated by the United States, as alleged by Russian state media. "In the days after the massacre [20 February 2014, when snipers killed some 50 protesters], I took her to Maidan and showed her the glass boxes where people were donating hundreds of hryvnia [Ukrainian currency] to the wounded protesters. I said, 'Mama, do you really



**Part of a memorial near Kyiv's Maidan Square to those who died during the 2013-14 pro-democracy protests there. Depicted is Serhiy Baidovskiy, killed on 20 February 2014, aged 23. (G. FAGAN)**

think the CIA put these hryvnia in these boxes?"<sup>2</sup>

### New possibilities

Prayer led by a broad spectrum of Ukrainian church leaders—including senior Pentecostal Mykhailo Panochko—was a striking feature of the Maidan movement.<sup>3</sup> This was not lost on some Russian media, which claimed that "radical Pentecostals, Charismatics and other sects" were behind the political changes across the border.<sup>4</sup>

Under Yanukovich, religious freedom was generally respected in Ukraine. "I cannot say that we were under some mega pressure," admits Pastor Petr Dudnik of Good News Pentecostal Church in the eastern city of Sloviansk [Russian: Slaviansk]. Yet thanks to a radical shift following Yanukovich's 2014 ouster—termed the "Revolution of Dignity" by its supporters—"what we have now, compared with the Soviet period, is as far as north is from south," Dudnik maintains.<sup>5</sup> The status of Protestants in particular has transformed: for several months in 2014, a Baptist pastor, Oleksandr Turchynov, was even acting president.

Among the new possibilities, Jaroslav Lukasik singles out a project by his ministry, Eastern Europe Reformation, to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. That year, he estimates having lectured on core Reformation principles to audiences totaling some 40,000 across Ukraine—including university and government personnel. Lukasik is certain that "we would not have had the same green light from the government under Yanukovich" as under then-President Petr Poroshenko.<sup>6</sup> He points in particular to an August 2016 presidential decree instructing different levels of government to engage with Protestant organizations in staging conferences, exhibitions, and concerts commemorating the Reformation anniversary: "We are not a 'sect' anymore."<sup>7</sup>

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## Maidan's Legacy (continued from page 1)

In Kharkiv, Pastor Sorokun agrees: “Poroshenko and his administration proved surprisingly open to Protestants. We are able to represent ourselves at the highest level of society.” He cites the now annual *Sviato Podiaki*—Thanksgiving holiday—initiated by Protestants as part of the Reformation commemorations and also enjoying government support—which sees 100,000-strong crowds in downtown Kyiv: “This says, ‘Look, we Protestants are a force too.’”<sup>8</sup>

While their approximately 9,000 registered congregations represent just two percent of the population, Ukraine’s Protestants are thus punching above their weight.<sup>9</sup>

### Civilizational choice

Protestant thinking is in turn contributing to a cultural shift in Ukraine. “We are not Eurasia,” argues Jaroslaw Lukasik, “we are Eastern Europe.” In making a civilizational choice to be open to the West in 2014, Lukasik believes Ukraine is encountering Reformation thinking as a key pillar of that Western civilization. Only core Reformation principles, in his view, can offer real solutions to Ukraine’s ongoing political, social, and economic crises.

One example is the rule of law. According to the Reformation principle of *coram Deo* [Latin: before God], “we are always in the presence of God,” Lukasik explains. “I submit to the law not because I fear the police, but because God is watching me. This is a crucial difference between Western—especially Protestant—culture, and that of Ukraine, he notes. “Here, the law has been a tool for the government to manipulate you, and people do not trust it.”

*Coram Deo* is a component of “Five teachings that changed the world—could they change Ukraine today?”—Lukasik’s Ukraine-wide presentation that formed part of the Reformation commemorations. (The others: *solus Christus* [Latin: Christ alone], *sola scriptura* [Latin: by scripture alone], personal vocation, and the priesthood of all believers.)<sup>10</sup>



Jaroslaw Lukasik (Source: J. LUKASIK)



Banner in central Lviv (G. FAGAN)

Lukasik has also observed significant shifts in attitude within Ukraine’s Protestant churches since 2014. Concerning secular authority, he notes a move towards recognition of rulers as fallible human beings rather than “little gods.” Concerning the Soviet legacy, he sees a greater appreciation for “de-Communization as a spiritual, rather than a political process.” And in contrast to previous pacifist leanings, he finds Protestants more willing to provide military chaplaincy and non-lethal aid to the armed forces.

Maksim Vasin of the Kyiv-based Institute for Religious Freedom—also an Evangelical—stresses that many volunteers in the broader humanitarian sphere are active members of Ukrainian churches. According to recent sociological research in Ukraine, volunteer organizations enjoy the highest level of public trust (67 percent), with the Church placing third (61 percent).<sup>11</sup> “But often sociologists forget to mention that most of the volunteers are from churches,” notes Vasin. “That is why the Church remains among the institutions afforded the highest trust by Ukrainian society.”<sup>12</sup>

Pastor Dudnik agrees that Ukrainian Protestants’ activist drive for local change has contributed to a rise in their public standing, including in his eastern city of Sloviansk. “Changes should happen here, in our way of thinking, our hearts. That is our position,” he explains, “and this position of the Protestant churches has created a new opinion in the East.” (For an example of the substantial social ministry undertaken by Ukrainian Protestants, see Dudnik’s separate interview in this issue.)

### Christian solidarity

A further striking aspect of the changed atmosphere for Ukrainian Protestants since Maidan is the spirit of solidarity among Christians. Jaroslaw Lukasik finds the emergence of unity among Protestant churches—with some 40 leaders collaborating in the 2017 Reformation commemorations—unprecedented: “The ‘Year of Reformation’ did it.” Poroshenko’s presidential decree supporting their events, he adds, “helped Christians to be more courageous, to go out into the public square.”

This spirit was indeed consolidated by the 2014 political crisis. Responding to the Russian state’s approval of military intervention in Ukraine, Protestant leaders joined with other members of the remarkably broad Pan-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations in condemning Moscow for “the possibly irreversible consequences of military conflict on Ukrainian soil.” (Signatories included the leader of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Patriarch of Moscow—then rotating chair of the Council—as well as Jewish and Muslim representatives.)<sup>13</sup>



**Ecumenical chapel complex on Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred Alley, Kyiv, renamed for protesters killed there by snipers on 20 February 2014. (G. FAGAN)**

One of the spheres of activity of Vasin's Institute for Religious Freedom is to facilitate such co-operation. He views it as a distinct achievement of Ukrainian society: "People from different denominations, professions, and regions want to cooperate to protect their rights, freedom, and dignity. They are able to think not just of themselves, but about the benefits for society in general."

### **Stark contrast**

The contrast with places to the east and north is now stark. Beyond Kyiv's reach, the authorities of the pro-Moscow separatist territories within Donetsk and Luhansk Regions have rendered public Protestant worship illegal. Some congregations have suffered raids, court proceedings, and property confiscations. (A future issue of the *East-West Church Report* will feature a primer on the religious freedom situation in these areas.) "From our monitoring, it seems that believers there suffer from religious persecution much more than in Soviet times," observes Vasin. (Although strictly controlled, some Protestant churches were at least able to function publicly in the later Soviet period.) And while less oppressive, Russian law—now extending to annexed Crimea—punishes the sharing of religious ideas outside narrowly defined limits. As of mid-2016, merely inviting a non-believing friend to a worship service, for example, may prove sufficient grounds for prosecution for "unlawful missionary activity."<sup>14</sup>

For some religious communities, the disparity is even more dramatic. On an Indian summer day in central Kharkiv in 2018, a group of local Jehovah's Witnesses manned a small literature stall undisturbed. Just 50 miles away across the Russian border, police in the city of Belgorod raided the homes of 16 Jehovah's Witnesses that spring, confiscating Bibles and detaining two men for 48 hours. Sergei Voikov and Anatoli Shalyapin are now suspects in a criminal extremism case, along with some 200 Jehovah's Witnesses—including three in Crimea—who face similar charges under Russian law. Thirty-five are being held in detention at the time of this writing.<sup>15</sup>

The Jehovah's Witnesses are similarly banned in the separatist-held territories within Donetsk and Luhansk Regions.

### **Reformation's legacy**

There is a further discrepancy with Belarus, as Jaroslaw Lukasik well knows. Originally from Łuków in eastern Poland, Lukasik moved to Belarus as a student of the Belarusian language in 1993. He has long experience of working with Protestants there promoting the Reformation's legacy in Belarusian culture. "Belarus was a precursor of what is happening [in Ukraine]," Lukasik recalls. "But in Belarus, we did not have such freedom for this." Back in 2003, four Protestant denominations joined to mark the 450th anniversary of the Reformation in Belarus with an international conference in the capital, Minsk. Local government refused the organizers permission to rent a public venue, however, and consequently to advertise the event.<sup>16</sup> In 2017—shortly after the arrest and overnight detention of his friend, Pastor Antoni Bokun of Minsk's John the Baptist Pentecostal Church—Lukasik was deported for "activity aimed at bringing harm to the national security of the Republic of Belarus in the sphere of interconfessional relations."<sup>17</sup> He and his family moved to Kyiv.

Lukasik's hope is to utilize Reformation history as an introduction to faith: "Parliamentarianism, democracy, civil society... we have our Biblical argumentation to take part in all these things, to be very conscientious, to hold authority to account." In Ukraine he finds a similar Reformation heritage to that of Belarus, including Protestant influences on local Orthodox culture. Here, he cites the foundations of the Ostroh (1576) and Kyiv-Mohyla (1632) Orthodox academies as having occurred in response to the strength of Calvinism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. All of modern-day Belarus and a large part of modern-day Ukraine belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the time.

The freer atmosphere in today's Ukraine—and the much larger Protestant community there—has allowed Lukasik to repeat his Belarusian experience on a grander scale. He is now on the steering committee of the Eastern European Leadership Forum, which gathers some 600 Evangelical leaders in Kyiv annually to co-ordinate networks in 12 spheres, including evangelization, art and culture, business, youth ministry, and civil society.<sup>18</sup> While designed for Protestants, it features several Catholic and Orthodox speakers. "We are very open for co-operation among confessions," Lukasik notes.

Ukraine entered a new chapter in 2019 with the election of professional comedian Volodymyr Zelensky as president. Zelensky is guarded when it comes to faith. So far, he has offered publicly only that he believes in and speaks to God; never discusses this, even with his family; and does not attend any place of worship. At the same time, he is adamant that, "we should interfere less with human freedom."<sup>19</sup>

Whatever Zelensky's degree of sincerity, Ukraine's Protestants have reached a point where such interference would be difficult. ♦

*(Notes on page 4)*

## Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Interview with the author, Kharkiv, 18 October 2018.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview with the author, Kyiv, 7 October 2018.
- <sup>3</sup> [In Ukrainian] "Molytva Otche Nash na Vyche Evromaïdan 16.02.14h," *You Tube*, 16 February 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1USO8Zkpck>; "Panocho Mykhailo. Vystup na maidani 09.03.2014," *You Tube*, 9 March 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPkAla9GcQE&t=138s>.
- <sup>4</sup> [In Russian] "Glavnoe. Otkryti pokaz 'Lovtsy dush'," *Nika TV*, 17 November 2016, <http://nikatv.ru/tv/programs/glavnoe/u1ui2MDJhSuv8vHAOWme>.
- <sup>5</sup> Interview with the author, Sloviansk, 16 October 2018.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview with the author, Kyiv, 3 October 2018.
- <sup>7</sup> [In Ukrainian] "UKAZ PREZYDENTA UKRAÏNY N°357/2016," Office of the President of Ukraine, 26 August 2016, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3572016-20423>.
- <sup>8</sup> See also Mikhail Cherenkov, "Churches as Agents of Change in Eurasia," *East-West Church Report*, vol. 26, no. 3 (2018), 15-16.
- <sup>9</sup> [In Ukrainian] "ZVIT pro merezhu relihiinykh orhanizatsii v Ukraïni stanom na 1 sichnia 2017 roku," Culture Ministry of Ukraine, 29 March 2017, [http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?art\\_id=245234272](http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=245234272).
- <sup>10</sup> [In Ukrainian] "P'iat' idei, iaki koly's' zminyly svit. Chy zmozhut' vony s'ohodni zminyty Ukraïnu?," *R500*, <https://r500.ua/p-yat-propovidej-reformatsiyi-shho-sformuvali-suchasnij-svit-yaroslav-lukasik-video/>.
- <sup>11</sup> [In Russian] "Ukraintsy bol'she vsego doveriaut volonteram, armii, spasateliyam i Tserkvi – opros Tsentra Razumkova," *Interfax Ukraine*, 20 February 2019, <https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/567395.html>.
- <sup>12</sup> Interview with the author, Kyiv, 10 October 2018.

<sup>13</sup> [In Russian] "Zaiavlenie Soveta Tserkvei po povodu resheniia Rossii o voennom vtorzhenii v Ukraïnu," Pan-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, 2 March 2014, <http://vrciro.org.ua/ru/statements/381-council-of-churches-statement-on-decision-of-russian-military-invasion>.

<sup>14</sup> Lauren B. Homer, "Making Sense of the Anti-Missionary Provisions of Russia's 2016 Anti-Terrorism Legislation," *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2017), 1-7.

<sup>15</sup> Victoria Arnold, "Russia: Two criminal trials, three criminal investigations," *Forum 18*, 20 February 2018, [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2355](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2355); <https://jw-russia.org/prisoners.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Geraldine Fagan, "Belarus: Calvinists kept quiet," *Forum 18*, 31 October 2003, [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=172](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=172).

<sup>17</sup> Geraldine Fagan, "Belarus: Pentecostals raided at Pentecost," *Forum 18*, 28 May 2007, [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=964](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=964); Geraldine Fagan, "Foreign Protestants expelled for 'harming national security'," *Forum 18*, 17 May 2007, [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=958](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=958).

<sup>18</sup> Eastern European Leadership Forum Report 2016, [https://faithandlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/eelf\\_2016\\_report.pdf](https://faithandlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/eelf_2016_report.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> [In Russian] "Vladimir Zelenskii: Nam vygodno raspustit' Radu, no budem dumat' i postupat' po zakonu," *RBK-Ukraïna*, 18 April 2019, <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/vladimir-zelenskii-nam-vygodno-raspustit-1555546435.html>; [In Russian] "Kandidat v prezidenty Ukrainy Vladimir ZELENSKII: «Peregovory s Trampom? Nu my zhe iz odnogo biznesa!»," *Bul'var Gordona*, 20 March 2019, <http://bulvar.com.ua/gazeta/archive/s724/kandidat-v-prezidenty-ukrainy-vladimir-zelenskij-peregovory-s-trampom-nu-my-zhe-iz-odnogo-biznesa.html>.

**Geraldine Fagan** is editor of the East-West Church Report.

## "It is our responsibility to go wherever there is pain": An Interview with Pastor Petr Dudnik

*The previous issue of the East-West Church Report (vol. 27, no. 2) featured an interview with Pastor Petr Dudnik, leader of Good News Pentecostal Church in Sloviansk [Russian: Slaviansk]. This city in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk Region was held by pro-Russian rebels for three months in 2014, before reverting to Ukrainian government control. The front line is still only around 50 miles away.*

*In the previously published portion of the interview, Pastor Dudnik spoke at length about the impact of the armed conflict in Ukraine upon his church community, as well as members' efforts to offer a Christian response. In the portion published here, he outlines a key area of Good News Church's work that continues despite the conflict: support for orphans and children from troubled families.*

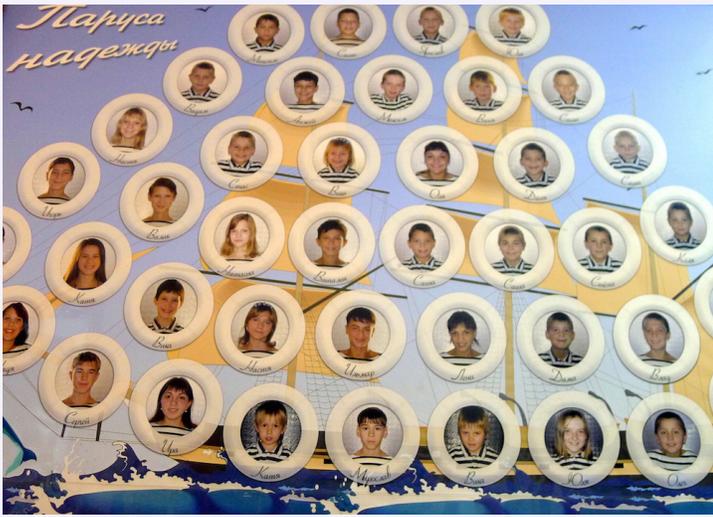
*The editor of the East-West Church Report met Pastor Dudnik at Good News Church in Sloviansk in October 2018. The conversation took place in Russian.*

### How did your orphanage, Sails of Hope, come about?

In the late 1990s there were very many street kids in our country. We simply started to feed street kids; we also clothed them and prayed with them. But it was a dead-end project, because at 6 pm we went home, while they returned to their sewers. This was painful, but we did not understand what God wanted from us, although we understood that He was pushing us towards this work. Then, one rainy autumn day, four children who were living under street kiosks asked if they could stay at the church after we had fed them. They slept on our dining tables. That is how our Sails of Hope Orphanage began. This was a very difficult economic time



Pastor Dudnik with his family (Source: P. DUDNIK)



**Alumni poster, Sails of Hope Orphanage, Sloviansk. (G. FAGAN)**

in Ukraine—there was very high unemployment and salaries were extremely poor for people who were still working—but God prepared us for more. We began the orphanage with around 50 children. It was extremely difficult, I repeat, because we also needed extensive expertise and documentation.

For three or four years we were fully responsible for these children. We took care of them, working alongside psychologists. But when the older children began to leave the orphanage aged 17 or 18, we found that a portion of them returned to their previous lifestyle. This was a shock for us. We could not believe how, after such an investment of time and effort and prayer and finances, we saw such a result. We did not set up our orphanage in the manner of a state institution; church members were deeply involved in this ministry. For instance, we encouraged church members to take the children with them on vacation, and we improved the orphanage building during that time ourselves, using either church funds or donations.

Then, 16 years ago, I received a revelation from God. During a worship service, God said to me that if we gave birth to another child, that child would save thousands. I do not use the words “God said to me” lightly; it has happened only a few times in my life that I knew for certain God was telling me something. We already had two children then, and I thought, “Wow, this is something special.” I thought someone would be born with a high calling; a great preacher. My wife became pregnant, but in the fifth month she had a miscarriage. This was a shock for us, and I thought at that moment that God had deceived me. Then, when she was in hospital due to associated complications, the story continued. There was a woman in the ward with her who had had an abortion, and another who was preparing to have one. Ukrainian law allowed abortions at any time due to so-called “social indicators”: for instance, if you already had three or more children, or could not support a child. When my wife talked with the woman who was about to have an abortion, she explained that her life was poor. My wife told her that this was because she broke spiritual laws; she said whatever she could to try to preserve this life. But this woman was resolved to have the abortion. She underwent

an abortion procedure in which an injection induces labor. Contractions suddenly started, and she began to give birth in the ward. Everyone else ran out, but my wife stayed and saw that a girl was born and started to move. Later on the head of the hospital—who was of retirement age—said to my wife that this was the only time she had ever seen a child remain alive after an abortion.

At this time I was travelling out of the country. I got a call at the border from my wife, who suggested that we adopt this baby girl. I could not say no at that moment. I told her to prepare the necessary documentation, and that we would make a decision after I got back. Three weeks later we went to meet the mother and collect the girl. The mother looked at my wife and said that she had decided she wanted to keep the baby. Then I began to understand what God had told me in the beginning. That was the first girl we saved. She returned to her mother, who asked us to introduce her to God and the church.

A few weeks later we were told about a mother who kept having children and abandoning them; she had just had another baby. If we were interested, we could go and see. And that is how Ramina appeared in our family—she is now 15. When a pastor adopts a child, he usually talks about what is in his heart. I began to go into this subject when I preached in church, and that began to inspire people to take the next step. I am not familiar with the culture in England, but I know that in American culture adoption is a perfectly ordinary subject. It is common and considered normal. Here in Ukraine, there was a completely different culture. We had the Soviet mindset that children in orphanages are the state’s children, and that the state should take care of them. We thought the maximum the church could do was to give gifts. But to take responsibility, to take these children into our families—that ran against our culture.

When discussion started about this, however, people began to accept the idea and to adopt children. Then God

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**Kindergarten classroom at Sails of Hope Orphanage, Sloviansk. (G. FAGAN)**

## Pastor Dudnik Interview *(continued from page 5)*

led us to the next stage: We should not just adopt children ourselves; we should change the mindset of the nation about adoption. Today, 15 years later, the most radical changes have taken place in our country. Adoption has become part of national culture. I am not opposed to foreigners adopting our children, but first and foremost we are inspiring our own people to take in those who have been abandoned. I now see that the salvation of children—what God said prophetically about giving birth—was in essence a revelation about adoption; that it would save thousands. This has shaped our relationship with God, the theology of our church, and our theology of life in general. I believe in spiritual laws, one being that if you are trusted in something small, God will entrust you with something greater. I certainly understood that God was preparing us for something greater. We adopted all the children in our orphanage. Together, our church and its five daughter congregations in this city have adopted around 130 children.

Then—around 10 years ago—we considered closing our orphanage due to its financial complexity. But God led us to the next stage. He drew our attention to certain texts in the Bible: the last chapter in the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, where it says He will “turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents” [Malachi 4:6], and that this would somehow happen in the spirit of Elijah. To us this sounded like a new direction towards the restoration of families. Today, there are very many so-called “difficult life circumstances”—families in a critical situation, where, for instance, the mother is a drug addict and unemployed, and so the children go hungry. We began to take such children into our orphanage, and we now have 32. We work around the clock with them five days a week, and in parallel we work with their parents. Our aim is to restore the family, to make the situation there safe for the child to return.

These are all families in the city and district of Sloviansk. The children are all with us at the request of their parents. This work is much harder than with a regular orphanage, because there you are responsible only for the children, whereas here responsibility also arises for the parents. For instance, the mother might be on a drug rehabilitation program with us or at some other center. But the greatest reward is when the child returns to the family. It is a joy to see. I don't recall the statistics for the last few years, but in 2013 we returned 18 children to their families.

If it is not possible to restore the family for some reason—if the child receives the status of orphan or is without parental support—then we find a family to adopt the child. In this way the next child appeared in my own family—that was Nastya, from our Sails of Hope Orphanage. Then came Dima, who was six; then Sergei, who was 17 already, also from our orphanage; and then Pavel and Rima. We took in the last two girls, Sasha and Anya, aged seven and eight, in August



**World Without Orphans around-the-world bike tour finish in Florida, July 2018 (Source: P. DUDNIK)**

[2018]. So we are starting first grade in our 50s! We already have three children who are married, and I am a grandfather twice over!

I recount this in detail because God prepared us for subsequent challenges through these particular spiritual stages. I certainly understand that we are in a process through which God is preparing greater challenges, and how the church should and can respond. That is, we hold in our theology that the church is responsible for the events taking place not only within its walls, but also outside.

Our church professes Pentecostal doctrine, and is open to innovations in serving people in different spheres. A great deal is oriented on the practical expression of our Gospel. We believe that you cannot love God simply for yourself; that God is for me—He saved me, He healed me, He helped me, and I am joyful about life because of that. Christ said that we are a reflection of His light; as He is, so we are. And so we orient people and we ourselves live in order to apply the Gospel in practice in life. It is our responsibility to go wherever there is pain in order to change the situation.

We did that with children, our own families, our city, and to influence the whole country. We are involved in an alliance called Ukraine Without Orphans—we are not some mega exception, there are also many others who are working in this area; other churches in other cities. This topic is non-denominational, one in which everyone can participate. There is also a movement called Russia Without Orphans, and today we have reached the level of World Without Orphans. A team of Ukrainian former orphans recently completed an around-the-world bike tour with family and friends promoting the idea of adoption. Starting in 2011, they crossed Europe and Asia—including the whole of Russia from the western border to the Far East—before finishing the California-to-Florida leg in July [2018]. So we have even crossed the whole of America with this message! ♦



Sails of Hope Orphanage, Sloviansk, after the battle for Karachun Hill (l) and later restoration (r), 2014 (G. FAGAN)

**S**ails of Hope Orphanage is housed in a former kindergarten building on the outskirts of Sloviansk. Since 2000 it has cared for approximately 300 children aged between three and 15. The children spend weekends with their families, but live at the orphanage on weekdays. This is “so that the parents can get on their feet, find work, take care of themselves,” Olga, the children’s nurse, explained to the East-West Church Report. “Then, when they are back on their feet, they can take the children back into the family.” The children are provided with meals, clothing, school supplies, medical care, and psychological support. The orphanage offers kindergarten activities for the youngest, while those of school age attend local schools.

From mid-April to July 2014 an intense battle between Ukrainian and pro-Russian forces sought control of nearby Karachun Hill, the site of a strategic television tower. Sails of Hope orphanage is among the nearest structures to the tower and was badly damaged in the bombing. (At the orphanage, photos of the devastation are accompanied by a quotation in Russian, attributed to Mother Teresa of Calcutta: “What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.”) The children had earlier been evacuated to the Kyiv area, but staff feared their building in Sloviansk would be impossible to restore. Yet volunteers from all over Ukraine—as well as the Czech Republic, Poland, the UK, and the US—traveled to rebuild the orphanage. The children were able to return by the end of August 2014. “Now we have such beauty!” Elena, the orphanage’s laundress, remarked to the East-West Church Report.

Olga, children’s nurse at Sails of Hope Orphanage, Sloviansk (G. FAGAN)



## “The Church’s authority has risen hugely because it has been able to show love”: An Interview with Pavlo Davydyuk

*Pavlo Davydyuk is director of Light in the East in Ukraine. Headquartered in Germany as Licht im Osten, this non-denominational missionary union was founded in 1920 in order to convey Christian literature to Soviet Russia. Co-founders Jakob Kroeker and Walter Jack had both ministered to Russian prisoners of war remaining in Germany following World War I. Kroeker (1872-1948) was a native of the Mennonite colonies in the southern Russian Empire—now territory in independent Ukraine, while Jack (1878-1939) was a German Reformed pastor who had ministered in prerevolutionary Russia.*

*Davydyuk discussed the work of Light in the East in Ukraine with the editor of the East-West Church Report in late 2018. The interview took place in Russian in his native Kyiv.*

### **What was the impact of Light in the East after its foundation in 1920?**

When the prisoners of war were released and allowed home, the mission provided each man who had repented with a set of Christian literature. They then spoke about their faith using these books. They were on fire for Christ. Around 2,500 churches were founded in Ukraine alone; this was the most fertile soil. Today we are a family of partner organizations with equal status serving in 10 countries [Armenia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, and the USA]. Each organization has the right to determine its service independently, but we are all united in one aim: to preach the Gospel.

*(continued on page 8)*

## Davydyuk Interview (continued from page 7)

In Ukraine, we have one office here in Kyiv with 35 staff, and two missionaries serving in Poltava and Zhytomyr Regions. The largest service we do is printing Christian literature. We believe that books and magazines are missionaries that can enter homes where we cannot go, and that God will work through them. We publish the magazines *Faith and Life* [Ukrainian: *Vira i Zhyttya*, Russian: *Vera i Zhizn'*] and *The Little Path* [Ukrainian: *Snezhinka*, Russian: *Tropinka*] in two languages. We have around 85,000 subscribers in Ukraine.

### To what extent is your work charitable?

In order to receive six issues per year, we propose a charge of \$2.66, which covers the printing and mailing costs.

But around 50,000 people still receive our publications free of charge. We also have a recording studio here where we record our magazines and books in audio format, and we send those to the blind. That service has around 1,400 subscribers. In practice, the post-Soviet Ukrainian state has not taken care of blind people. That means that many of them do not know Braille and require recordings. For that, we hire a professional narrator from Ukrainian radio, because we want to offer the best that there is.

Our children's service also includes puppet and theater shows; we organized a festival of *The Little Path* children's magazine at Lesia Ukrainka, the top theater in Kyiv.

### In Ukraine, does *Light in the East* work with a particular Protestant church or churches?

We are registered as a religious organization founded by the Baptist Union of Ukraine. But we have had Orthodox and Pentecostals working here; the mission itself does not belong to any particular denomination. We preach the Gospel to all, and we work with any church that is interested in working with us.

We have subscribers who are Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran, and also many who do not affiliate with any church. When we put *Faith and Life* magazine together, we always try to ensure that it is interesting and simple to understand for non-believers as well as believers; it is a missionary magazine, after all. For example, one year *Faith and Life* was devoted to the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure in heart," "Blessed are the peacemakers." We tried to examine a particular Beatitude per issue. In another issue we looked at the Lord's Prayer. For example, what does, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us," mean? After this issue was published, I

began to think seriously about whether I wanted God to forgive my sins in the same way that I forgive those who sin against me. If I have not truly forgiven them, I am condemning myself.

### Did you or your forefathers become Christian through *Light in the East*?

I know that both my grandfathers were not believers prior to this mission, but I am not sure whether their repentance was connected specifically with *Light in the East*. My two grandfathers became pastors of churches, and my father too is a pastor. I know that God has no grandchildren, only children! But it turns out that I am the third generation of believers.

### In Russia it is very common for Protestant pastors and missionaries to have Ukrainian roots. According to recent polling [Pew Research Center, 2017], 16

percent of Ukrainians attend worship services every week, while the corresponding figure for Russians is around half that, or seven percent. Do you think people are more religious in Ukraine?

I would distinguish between the concept of religiosity and faith in God. I am skeptical about statistics. For example, one of my friends preached about Jesus Christ to a young man on the street. This young man said to him, "Why are you telling me about God? I was baptized as a child, I wear a cross." My friend asked, "When Christ returns, will you be on the side of God or the devil?" He replied, "Do you really believe in those fairy tales, that there is God and the devil?" That is, this person was baptized and regarded himself as a believer, but he didn't believe in God.

I don't pretend to have the absolute truth, but I will give my opinion. Ukraine has gone through very serious trials, such as the famine in the 1930s. Life has been crushing. It is possible that because of that Ukrainians are more receptive to the Gospel; somehow God grants a special blessing. Very many missionaries went from Ukraine to Russia and served there until the well-known events of recent years [i.e. the 2013-14 Maidan protests followed by Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for pro-Russian separatists in the Donbass region]. Now they are being sent out [Editor's note: For example, Yevgeny Peresvetov—a Ukrainian citizen and Pentecostal pastor of Moscow's Restoration Christian Center—was barred entry to Russia in November 2018]. I can only connect this missionary zeal to the fact that our people are open to God's action—God directed them, and they obediently followed through.



Pavlo Davydyuk (G. FAGAN)

**Do you find that the subscribers to your publications are evenly spread across Ukraine? Or is there more interest in particular areas?**

It seems that the western part of Ukraine is more active and receptive than the eastern part.

**There was a shorter period of Soviet rule in the far western part of Ukraine.**

Yes. However, I cannot distinguish according to the degree of influence of the Soviet Union. For example, there are churches in Dnipropetrovsk Region [in eastern Ukraine] that are on fire for Christ, not only those in western Ukraine. Also, we had a project offering our publications to all secular libraries in Ukraine. There was one senior woman at the National Library of Ukraine in Kyiv; she received the Hero of Ukraine award from President Yushchenko. She was in her 80s when our project started, and she agreed to help us. We told her, “You know we are not Orthodox. We are Protestant, while you are Orthodox, and the country is Orthodox. Won’t you have problems?” She answered, “So what if I am Orthodox? I am not afraid of anything. Apart from anything else, I’m over 80—What can they do to me?” She wrote a circular letter to all libraries in Ukraine explaining that we were distributing books free of charge and asking that they be displayed prominently. Thanks to that project, more than 5,000 libraries received our books.

**Do your person-to-person missionaries find a similar reception across Ukraine?**

This year we had missionary expeditions to 46 small towns, and our tent stood in each one for a week. We held gatherings in the tent, but we also went around the towns and preached the Gospel wherever people were willing to listen. But it is true that when we go into the easternmost regions—Donetsk and Luhansk—it is always a great test for us. We have been in situations in which people tried to set fire to the tent, and our missionaries were beaten.

**Did that occur in the territory seized by pro-Russian separatists?**

Light in the East in Ukraine headquarters, Kyiv (G. FAGAN)



A street mural in downtown Kyiv recommends the Ten Commandments to school pupils (G. FAGAN)

We went there before it was occupied; now we would not be allowed into it. It was particularly hard for our missionaries there. In Donetsk Region, people placed a canister of gasoline next to our tent and said, “If you don’t take this down and leave today, we will torch it.” But God performed miracles. Right after that there was such a downpour that they would not have managed to torch anything!

**Yet Donetsk and Luhansk Regions also have many Protestant churches—over 850 are registered with the Ukrainian authorities. How is the situation in the parts of the regions that are under separatist control?**

There are many Protestant churches there, and I know many pastors who have not left, although they could have gone to America as refugees. They stayed there in order to serve, and they are very dedicated. I recently spoke with a pastor from Donetsk. He told me straight: “The times now for Protestant Christians in Donetsk have become much worse than in the Soviet Union.” [Although strictly controlled, some Protestant churches were at least able to function publicly in the late Soviet period.] The legislation there means that, in practice, all Protestants are faced with the danger of their buildings being seized. They are all living in fear that the authorities could confiscate their premises and ban them from meeting. They have not registered any Protestant church that has submitted registration papers. It is not just that the majority has been weeded out; not one has been registered. They are now thinking about how to divide into small groups, so they can continue to worship in private homes. They have been living in such a state of stress for two years. Plus, the churches are constantly being checked. Someone from the security services comes and insists that you open up the safe, or checks your documentation. The churches there have become used to that.

**But Protestant churches are active along the front line, in the Kyiv-controlled parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions?**

Starting in 2014, people became very active. In western Ukraine people filled their cars with sugar, potatoes, onions, diced pork, and brought it all there. Some churches just turned into warehouses where all this aid was brought, and the church then allocated it to people. The Church’s authority has

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## Davydyuk Interview *(continued from page 9)*

risen hugely because it has been able to show love in practice, not just in theory.

This still goes on. There are a lot of very active churches; for instance, Light of the Gospel Church, 25 miles from the front line in Druzhkivka. I have visited several times: the church is piled high with clothes, groceries, sugar, and flour, and people come in a steady stream. The churches have taken a very pro-active position.

### **How has the political conflict between Kyiv and Moscow affected your co-operation with Light in the East in Russia?**

We used to have about 4,000 subscribers regularly receiving our magazines and books in Crimea. We distributed there until the last possible moment. And then, when it became impossible, the solution proved easy, because we have a relationship of trust with our partners in Russia. We asked them to take on those subscribers and gave them the database of addresses. They continue the work.

### **In Russia, is Light in the East also under the Baptist Union?**

Yes.

### **Given Russia's legislative restrictions on missionary activity—the so-called Yarovaya Law—that status must help.**

Yes, but formally they could be visited at any moment and told, “You are violating the law here, here, and here.”

### **The authorities can always find fault using some technicality?**

Yes. But I am delighted with our Russian partners. They are so dedicated and enthusiastic, and they have not slowed down. This situation has not scared them; they continue to serve as they did before. How long it will last, only God knows. But that is how things are now.

### **And how is co-operation among churches within Ukraine?**

We have our own internal council of Protestant churches, but there is also a public organ including Orthodox, Catholics, Jews... that is, representatives of all faiths [the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations]. It meets regularly and makes joint statements on spiritual issues, which the president of Ukraine takes into account.

### **It was striking how this body—including the Moscow Patriarchate representative—issued joint statements during the political crisis of 2014.**

To me this is a very serious indicator of how Christians can unite. There are things that we will never agree upon, of course, but they are of secondary importance. This is something I really like about Ukraine. I have not contributed any effort towards it, but I see that in Ukraine people are able to come to an agreement and somehow stand united. So it seems that the concept of unity does exist for the Ukrainian people, including in religious affairs. When everything is going well in a country, some kind of sickness starts, and the churches divide: “We believe this, you

believe that; you are wrong.” But when tragedy came—what is still happening in the east of Ukraine, in connection with what began in 2014—it firmly united us. In Ukraine there was even a joke that Putin has done more for our country than any Ukrainian president has been able to do! He has united our people. And this has definitely also affected religion. We came to a point when all the religious leaders reached out to one another to try to do something together.

### **Are there particular problems in Ukrainian society where faith is especially needed?**

I don't know any sphere of life where faith is not needed. But people have become very poor—in fact, I still do not understand how people survive. And I recall that in 2014 people had very great hope that something would change in connection with the fact that Yanukovich had left his post. I even heard this from many people: “We are ready to go through the greatest difficulties, we are prepared to put up with deprivation, to live on breadcrumbs, as long as there are prospects, the possibility of an upturn.” But nothing happened. It is no secret to anyone that everything has worsened. Corruption in Ukraine is colossal, and emigration is a huge problem. So people's last hope fell through.

Clearly, there are also many positive signs—very many. If someone were to ask me, “If you knew that everything would turn out as it has done, would you repeat what happened in 2014?” I would say that I would repeat it. For one thing, we have unprecedented freedom to preach the Gospel. If the events of 2014 had not occurred, they would be turning the screws here as they are in Russia now.

Those in power have not coped with many things, and people have lost hope. Yet if we link our dreams only with this life—with “at least things will be good for our children, our grandchildren”—if we put our bets on that, then we will still lose. It will be hard going for us, for that path leads to depression, to no hope at all. I believe our homeland is not on earth but in heaven, and when God fills our lives, and they are dedicated to Him, we are able to be happy irrespective of the circumstances that surround us. This means people need the Gospel and to know God in order to see this terrible situation which Ukraine is in from God's perspective, from the perspective of eternity. Then everything will change. ♦

Light in the East publications in Russian and Ukrainian



# Theology for a Select Few: Soviet Déjà Vu for Russia's Protestants

ROMAN LUNKIN

The Russian state's policy on religious education has become a mirror image of its sweeping control over all social initiatives and non-governmental organizations. While theology is now an academic subject in secular institutions of higher education, it is theological education oriented towards the Russian Orthodox Church that has seen rapid development in practice. Educational institutions founded by other faiths and denominations—above all, Protestants—function under the pressure of constant inspections, and have even faced closure. The campaign against such institutions forms a logical part of the state's policy of restricting non-Orthodox mission, banning worship services in private homes, and barring Protestant church construction. It would be strange, after all, if the authorities looked kindly upon Christians receiving higher theological education unimpeded, while at the same time placing fines on them and confiscating their property.

So far, the most prominent closure has been that of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union's Moscow Theological Seminary in 2019. This seminary is the oldest institution of its kind, having grown out of theological courses conducted for pastors in the 1970s by the Soviet-era All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. During the 1990s, the seminary became a leading Protestant educational institution and a flagship of Baptist education in Russia. It has provided study courses to pastors from all over the country.

In October 2018 an inspection by Rosobrnadzor [Russia's federal education inspectorate] identified legal violations in the work of the seminary. On 2 July 2019 Rosobrnadzor suspended the seminary's educational license until

10 September. The seminary had already had its activities suspended for 60 days in January 2019, on the grounds that it had failed to rectify earlier violations. [Editor's note: On 18 September on-site inspectors at first found no fault with the seminary, but they were overruled by their superiors, seminary staff member Alexey Markevich told the *East-West Church Report*. He expects a court to consider revoking the seminary's license.]

The misdemeanors of which the Moscow Theological Seminary stands accused are purely bureaucratic. They include incorrect formulation of curricula and activities, insufficient

confirms that the activity of a particular higher educational institution conforms to federal educational standards; educational programs may also be accredited individually. Accreditation also grants the right to issue government-recognized diplomas.<sup>1</sup>

The Russian Orthodox Church's only educational institution whose teaching of secular subjects has been awarded state accreditation is St. Tikhon's Orthodox University in Moscow. The Church's Moscow and St. Petersburg Theological Academies have been accredited to teach and award bachelor's and master's degrees



Left: Baptist Seminary staff and graduates, 2017. Rector Petr Mitskevich holds a blue book in the front row. Right: Seminary door sealed by court order, 2019  
(Source: MOSCOW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)

teaching qualifications, and health and safety violations, which have become significantly stricter in recent years. Seminary representatives insisted in court that they had rectified all of these, and that it was their right to draw up their religious educational programs as they wished—all to no avail.

Religious educational institutions such as the Moscow Theological Seminary typically hold a license to conduct educational activity. Such a license grants the right to organize educational processes and to accept students, all under the legal framework of "Education and Training of Ministers and Religious Personnel."

In contrast to a license, a certificate of state accreditation

in theology, as has its Sts. Cyril and Methodius School of Graduate Studies in Moscow. The political decision to introduce theology into secular education was taken back in 2009, during a meeting between Patriarch Kirill and then-President Dmitry Medvedev. In practice, however, theology became an academic specialty only in 2015. Its standards were drawn up in consultation with the Russian Orthodox Church; Protestant representatives were not invited to discuss the issue.<sup>2</sup>

In the interests of fairness, it should be pointed out that most Protestant institutions of higher education have not attempted to obtain accreditation for their theology teaching,

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as they usually lack personnel qualified to teach secular subjects. Educational institutions belonging to the Seventh-day Adventist Church are notable exceptions here. In 2016 the Adventists' Zaoksky Christian Institute of Humanities and Economics in Tula Region to the south of Moscow was accredited to teach a number of secular subjects to bachelor's level, in addition to theology. Zaoksky Adventist University was similarly accredited in 2019. This occurred not only due to the political loyalty of Adventist leaders, but also because the Zaoksky educational complex has become established as an institution teaching secular subjects to a high standard. State accreditation of theology at Zaoksky should not be considered a Protestant breakthrough into theological teaching in the secular sphere, however. Adventist theology is quite specific, and differs from the general Evangelical worldview uniting most other Protestants.<sup>3</sup>

### Semi-underground

If a Protestant institution of higher education has its license suspended or annulled, it is forced to scale back its activities. The maximum it can do is to teach religion in the form of courses or seminars to people who are already followers of the associated church. While this does not require a license, churches must avoid using terms such as "institute," "academy," or "seminary," as these imply study by a wider circle of students. Instead, courses and seminars must take the form of "Sunday school," as this is fully covered by "teaching religion to existing followers." Anything more is deemed to be "religious education," which requires a license under Russian law. Petr Mitskevich—head of Russia's main Evangelical-Christian Baptist Union and rector of its beleaguered Moscow seminary—has suggested to this author that churches are consequently forced to conduct Bible courses semi-underground, just as in Soviet times.

Mitskevich's Baptist seminary is not alone. The Pentecostal Eurasian Theological Seminary in Moscow also had its license suspended in August 2018. In November 2018 the Baptists' North Caucasus Bible Institute was fined 150,000 rubles [approximately \$2,300] and prohibited from accepting students.<sup>4</sup> In the same month, the largest Protestant higher educational institution in southern Russia—the Kuban Evangelical Christian University in Krasnodar—also had its license suspended. Some have been more fortunate. Both the Moscow seminary and theological institute under the Pentecostal union led by Bishop Eduard Grabovenko succeeded in passing all inspections. St. Petersburg Christian University and the Baptists' Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary have also held onto their licenses, as has the Theological Institute of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Ingria in St. Petersburg.

While the picture therefore appears mixed, the recent actions by Rosobrnadzor were not the first attempt to "regulate" the sphere of Protestant education. In the early



Worship outside partially demolished Holy Trinity Pentecostal Church in Novokosino, Moscow, September 2012 (G. FAGAN)

2000s the courts began to prosecute churches for holding religious study without a license. In 2008 a regional court even ruled to dissolve a Methodist church in the western city of Smolensk for operating a Sunday school. [Editor's note: Prosecutors judged that the use of sea creature symbols—"five points—whale or starfish; four points—dolphin or octopus; three points—fish; two points—shark"—amounted to a formal grading system, therefore requiring a license.] Russia's Supreme Court overturned this decision, however, affirming that teaching religion to existing followers does not require a license.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that a number of Protestant institutions of higher education were prosecuted in 2018-19 might be blamed in part upon their administrators. Rosobrnadzor bureaucrats expect documentation to be drawn up by the experts they have recommended. Protestant institutions like the Moscow Baptist Seminary insist on their independence, however, and thus have ended up adopting a confrontational approach. Nevertheless, there is also an atmosphere of suspicion when it comes to non-Orthodox—and especially Protestant—churches. Discrimination is finding particular practical expression in two areas of the state's religious policy: restriction of missionary activity and the right to hold property.

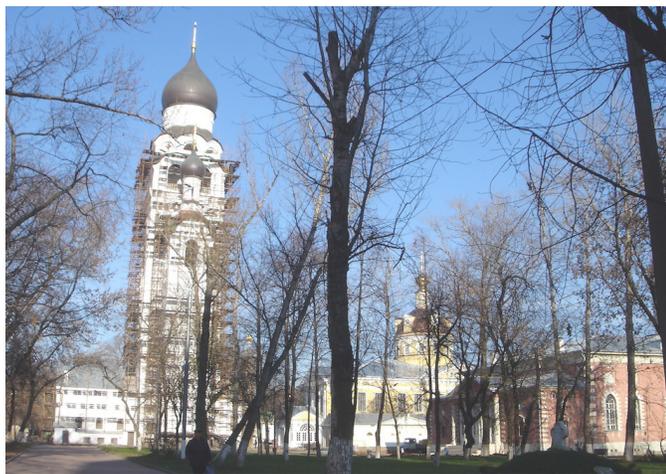
### "Missionary tax"

The so-called Yarovaya Law—a packet of legislation sponsored by member of parliament Irina Yarovaya in 2016—introduced control over missionary activity [in the broad sense of advocating religious ideas] through fines for engaging in such activity without authorization or on residential premises. In the course of the past three years, human rights' defenders on Russia's presidential Human Rights Council have repeatedly asked for these provisions to be reviewed. However, they have not been able to win a clear response from either the Constitutional or Supreme Courts, which promised to issue practical guidelines on this legislation. According to the Moscow-based Sova Center for Information and Analysis, some 460 persons had been prosecuted for "illegal missionary activity" as of late 2018, with fines paid amounting to \$125,000.<sup>6</sup> Fines are levied for a myriad of reasons: failure to notify the authorities in advance of religious gatherings; distribution of religious literature; preaching in public places; river baptisms; a children's playground next to

a church; the absence of signage with the full, legal church name on buildings where worship takes place. Most frequently hit by this distinctive Russian “missionary tax” are Baptists and Pentecostals.

### Property problems

Attempts to confiscate properties used for worship on the grounds that they are not being used for their legally designated purpose—or at least to ban religious gatherings on residential premises—are also becoming more frequent. This comes on top of an established practice according to which the state blocks Protestants from constructing designated houses of worship, obstructs the return of historical houses of worship, and does not allow private homes to be re-classified as places of worship. In 2018 a Pentecostal church was thus demolished in Novorossiisk, while in the nearby settlement of Verkhnebakansk a Baptist community was prohibited from gathering at a private residence in 2019.<sup>7</sup> (Even prior to the Yarovaya Law, a Pentecostal church was demolished in the Moscow neighborhood of Novokosino.)<sup>8</sup> Similar situations have arisen in Krasnodar and Oryol Regions, as well as the Republic of Tatarstan. In Tula, the authorities are moving to demolish two churches belonging to Baptists and Pentecostals. The Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists—whose communities have declined to register with the state since Soviet times—is a particular target, and faces massive fines.<sup>9</sup>



Rogozhskoye Old Believer Complex, Moscow (G. FAGAN)

While the Yarovaya Law is applied broadly in most Russian regions, local officials prefer not to apply the 2010 law *On Restitution of Property of Religious Significance to Religious Organizations* to churches other than the Russian Orthodox Church. Catholics are most affected. Despite decades of requests, the building of Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Moscow has not been returned, even though a court recognized the building’s religious significance in 2017. The authorities have also refused to return churches to Catholic communities in Barnaul, Belgorod, Blagoveshchensk, Chita, Kaliningrad, Kirov, Krasnoyarsk, and Smolensk. Such refusals are formally ascribed to budget constraints, but there is in fact a lack of political will to return these churches to Catholics [as demonstrated by the fact that the historical Catholic chapel

in Belgorod was “returned” to the Russian Orthodox Church].<sup>10</sup>

The authorities have also failed to return historically Lutheran churches in Krasnodar and Smolensk to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Russia headed by Archbishop Dietrich Brauer. For unclear reasons, a particular situation has arisen in Crimea, where the Church staked its claim to historical Lutheran churches after the 2014 annexation. Yet the authorities there are refusing to return them in Simferopol, Sudak, Yalta, and also Evpatoria, where the historical Lutheran church is now on territory belonging to the Russian Defense Ministry.<sup>11</sup> During 2017-18, however, the authorities did transfer churches in Moscow and Yaroslavl into the ownership of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Russia.

Baptists and other Evangelicals have very few historical houses of worship. Even so, Baptists in Kaliningrad Region were refused the building used for worship there until 1945. Mitskevich’s Baptist Union has failed to obtain—and even to obtain access to—the building in St. Petersburg where the Evangelical community of Ivan Prokhanov gathered in the early years of the 20th century. There is not even discussion about compensation for houses of worship demolished during the Soviet period (usually private homes), not least because gatherings in private homes today would result in fines and bans under the Yarovaya Law.

So-called “traditional” faiths may also have problems. Old Believers are unable to get back their historical property in Kirov, St. Petersburg, and Saratov, for instance, as well as Moscow, where local officials refused their August 2019 request to hold a prayer service outside the historical Dormition Old Believer Church on Marxist Street.<sup>12</sup> In Sochi, an Old Believer church under construction was sealed in June 2019 when it became apparent that it would be taller than a nearby educational center whose patron is one Vladimir Putin; it is now under threat of demolition.<sup>13</sup> The largest branch of the Old Believers were promised support, however, after President Putin visited their Moscow complex of Rogozhskoye in 2017; the restoration of that complex has attracted government assistance.

It is clear from these religious policy trends that officials often understand protection of the Russian Orthodox Church as necessitating discrimination of other religious communities. State representatives are also irritated by the

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Former Lutheran church, Smolensk (G. FAGAN)

independent stance of many churches. The Baptist Union, for example, publicly defended its members in November 2018 by condemning the authorities' "operation of intimidation" when a pastor in Tatarstan was fined for performing baptisms in a local river.<sup>14</sup>

In a recent interview with this author, Baptist Union leader Petr Mitskevich characterized what is happening in the following terms:

Any law can result in benefit or harm, and unfortunately the Yarovaya Law has brought much harm; it has in essence become an anti-missionary law that has instilled fear among believers and created problems for churches. I am a doctor by profession, and I often think about how not to cause harm but instead to help. Yet the first thought of our security agencies is usually to look for guilt and a concrete reason why someone may be prosecuted. The Church's calling is to spread faith—that is what missionary activity is about. Yet how often are we not healed, helped, or warned here, but forced into a corner straight away, as when Rosobrnadzor suspended the activity of our Moscow Theological Seminary in early 2019.

Our country must try to walk the path of prayer with God and trust for one another, but we are ruled by suspicion, fear, and doubt. There is no desire for reconciliation; everyone is shut away from everyone else behind iron doors. The Yarovaya Law has become a law of intimidation that can be used at any moment against any preacher, whereas there should be an enlightened and respectful attitude towards religious believers.

Periodically, the author hears from Protestant ministers that the problems faced by one or another church depend upon its leaders' attitude towards the Kremlin. In practice, however, churches belonging to those unions whose leaders are most loyal to the authorities do not avoid fines and bans. Congregations belonging to the Pentecostal union headed by Bishop Sergei Ryakhovskiy are a striking example. Bishop Ryakhovskiy participates in numerous official events and travels with delegations of religious leaders to help children in Syria, yet the Eurasian Theological Seminary belonging to his union was still closed, and its pastors have been fined under the Yarovaya Law.

Members of the Baptist Union are becoming much more vocal in their demands for freedom of conscience. A 31 July 2019 open letter from the Verkhnebakansk congregation states: "Such lawlessness is happening because the authorities do not hear us and do not wish to conduct interconfessional dialogue."<sup>15</sup> Soviet authorities refused to allow such believers to attend institutions of higher education. As a result, Evangelicals in the Soviet period were characteristically straightforward and lacking in formal education. Further education cannot be taken away from the post-Soviet generation of Protestants, however. As active citizens, they are ready to fight for their theology and place in Russian society. ♦

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Victoria Arnold, "Russia: Obstructions to Protestant theological education 'systemic, intentional'?", *Forum 18*, 25 March 2019, [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2465](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2465).

<sup>2</sup> [In Russian] "Dmitrii Medvedev podderzhal predlozhenie of prepodavaniia v shkolakh osnov religioznoi kul'tury i svetskoi etiki," Office of the President of Russia, 21 July 2009, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/4864>; [in Russian], Svetlana Solodovnik, "Teologiya v svetskikh vuzakh," *Sova*, 28 October 2015, <https://www.sova-center.ru/religion/publications/2015/10/d33126/>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://zda.zau.ru/about/1>.

<sup>4</sup> Arnold, *ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> Geraldine Fagan, "Russia: Methodist church dissolved for having Sunday school," *Forum 18*, 26 March 2008, [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1104](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1104); Geraldine Fagan, "Russia: Reprieve for Methodist Sunday school—but for who else?", *Forum 18*, 30 June 2008, [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1151](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1151).

<sup>6</sup> [In Russian] "Opublikovany dannye o primeneniі stat'i o «nezakonnom» missionerstve za pervoe polugodie 2018 goda," *Sova*, 24 October 2018, <https://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/harassment/intervention/2018/10/d40192/>.

<sup>7</sup> [In Russian] "V Rossii vlasti snesli zdanie piatidesiatnicheskoі tserkvi," *Invictory*, 19 March 2018, <https://www.invictory.org/news/society/6989-v-rossii-vlasti-snesli-zdanie-pyatidesyatnicheskoj-tserkvi>; [In Russian] "V Novorossiiske sorvano prazdnichnoe bogoslužhenie baptistov," *Sova*, 8 April 2019, <https://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/harassment/intervention/2019/04/d40861/>.

<sup>8</sup> Felix Corley and Geraldine Fagan, "Russia: Shock at Moscow church demolition," *Forum 18*, 6 September 2012, [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1738](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1738).

<sup>9</sup> [In Russian] "Obrashchenie Tul'skoі tserkvi MSTs EKHB," Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, 1 March 2019, <http://iucecb.com/news/20190301-1605>.

<sup>10</sup> Geraldine Fagan, *Believing in Russia—Religious Policy after Communism* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 89-90.

<sup>11</sup> Roman Lunkin, "Religious Politics in Crimea 2014-2016," *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2017), 7-10.

<sup>12</sup> [In Russian] "Vlasti Moskvы ne razreshili staroobriadtsam provesti moleben u zdaniia byvshego khrama," *Sova*, 26 August 2019, <https://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/harassment/places-for-prayer/2019/08/d41386/>.

<sup>13</sup> [In Russian] "Eto i nazyvaetsia 'zazhravshaiasia putinskaia elitka'," Deacon Andrei Kuraev's blog, 1 June 2019, <https://diak-kuraev.livejournal.com/2456113.html>.

<sup>14</sup> [In Russian] "Otrkytoe zaiavlenie Rossiiskogo Soiuzа evangel'skikh Khristian-baptistov," Russian Evangelical-Christian-Baptist Union, 28 November 2018, <https://baptist.org.ru/news/main/view/article/1485287>.

<sup>15</sup> [In Russian] "Otkrytoe informatsionnoe pis'mo," Russian Evangelical-Christian-Baptist Union, 31 July 2019, <https://baptist.org.ru/news/main/view/article/1512752>.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### *North American Churches and the Cold War*

edited by Paul Mojzes

Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018

593 pp., \$70.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-8028-7526-6

MATTHEW LEE MILLER

This weighty and wide-ranging collection of essays by church leaders, historians, and religious studies scholars explores the diverse attitudes of North American churches to the Cold War. Events between 1945 and 1990 form the focus for the most part, but several authors address earlier developments and more recent legacies. The volume's 31 chapters are gathered into six sections examining the various positions adopted by groups of churches and organizations: Canadian Protestant, US mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Evangelical, and Christian pacifists. The contributors have themselves adopted a variety of analytical approaches: a number present personal reflections on their own organization's involvements, others offer focused studies which rely on primary source documents, and several depend on multiple published works to survey the assigned topic. The contributors also explore a wide range of activities: theological and philosophical reflection, political debate and activism, and East-West church relations and ministries.

The volume's editor, Paul Mojzes, professor emeritus of religious studies at Rosemont College in Pennsylvania, begins this conversation with a preface which explains the roots and guiding principles of the project. Norman A. Hjelm continues with a brief review of literature on the topic and a presentation of five "tensions" which recur throughout the book: the debate within the ecumenical World Council of Churches on the fundamental nature of the relationship between Christianity and Communism; the analogous experience of the Christian Peace Conference based in Cold War Prague; the debate within the Roman Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council on the best response to Communism; the reflections within Eastern European churches on the mission of the church in a socialist society; and the influence of the Cold War beyond Europe and North America.

The first section of the book focuses on the experiences of mainline Protestant Christians in Canada. James Christie introduces the four main chapters and also provides a concluding summary. Lois Wilson, a prominent leader of the United Church of Canada (UCC), presents a detailed review of denominational and ecumenical efforts to promote peace from 1975 to 1990, when multiple educational and political projects opposed the proliferation of nuclear weapons and highlighted human rights and social justice issues. In the same vein, historian Gayle Thrift examines the opposition of J. R. Hord, a prominent UCC leader, to continued involvement in the conflict in Vietnam, and Bill Blaikie—UCC minister and Canadian parliamentarian—writes about the 1980s debate on disarmament. Gordon L. Heath, a professor of church history, contributes a focused study of the energetic anti-Communist activities of Watson Kirkconnell—professor of English, university president, and Baptist denominational leader. The conclusion of

this section notes that during this era many mainline Protestant Canadian churches expressed far more concern about US military and political action than possible aggressions of the USSR.

Professor Jill K. Gill opens the section on US mainline Protestant activities by focusing on the National Council of Churches (NCC). She attempts to explain (and assertively defend) political choices made by ecumenical movement leaders and to respond to criticism received from those connected to Evangelical and fundamentalist Protestant groups. The following chapter by Bruce

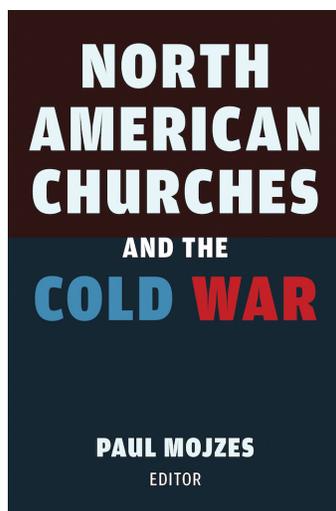
Rigdon, Barbara Green, and John Lindner focuses on US-Soviet church relations from 1956 to 1991. This essay looks at work supported by the NCC and describes an evolving series of intercultural and interconfessional meetings. The locations and participants of these gatherings, which often centered on world peace, are helpfully included. Professor Gary Dorrien shifts the conversation to an analysis of the ethical reflections of Reinhold Niebuhr, "the most influential US theologian of the twentieth century" (155). As Dorrien explains, Niebuhr attempted to "establish a progressive and realistic form of anti-Communism" (167), which took a very cautious approach to the use of military force and nuclear deterrence. Frederick R. Trost, a leader of the United Church of Christ,

provides a chapter on the history of the UCC's efforts to establish full communion with the Evangelical Church of the Union in divided Germany. Historian Peter Eisenstadt looks at the role played by Marxism in the thinking of Howard Thurman, professor at Washington, DC's Howard University and mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr. The final two chapters of this section provide additional reflections on ecumenical activities from scholars James E. Will and Charles West.

Four chapters explore aspects of Roman Catholic approaches to the Cold War. Dianne Kirby discusses several sources for the strong Catholic anti-Communist movement of the 1940s and 50s, including Pope Pius XI's 1937 encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*—which emphasized the need for believers to battle the "fatal plague" of Communism (232); devotion to the Virgin of Fatima; and the actions of Joe McCarthy, who was directly influenced by church leaders. Michael Graziano explores links between the Catholic Church and US intelligence agencies, while Todd Scribner analyzes the decline in support for anti-Communism among US bishops after the Second Vatican Council. Raymond Haberski, Jr., reflects on the Catholic intellectual debates of the Cold War era through the prism of the debate on just war theory between George Weigel and Fr. J. Bryan Hehir.

The section exploring Eastern Orthodoxy and the Cold War includes several especially valuable contributions. Fr. Leonid

*(continued on page 16)*



## Mojzes Review *(continued from page 15)*

Kishkovsky of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), an active participant in the ecumenical movement, presents an insightful historical account of the OCA's challenging path. On one hand, it maintained a close relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarch; however, it also acted on "its moral obligation to stand with those targeted for persecution by the Communist system in the Soviet Union" and challenged "the injustices of the Soviet system" (309). Professor Nicholas Denysenko analyzes the political theology of martyrdom presented by two Ukrainian-American memorials, St. Andrew Memorial Church in South Bound Brook, New Jersey, and the Taras Shevchenko monument in Washington, DC. Historians Andrei V. Psarev and Nadieszda Kizenko write on the beliefs and actions of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) in relation to the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches (WCC). ROCOR did not participate in the WCC as a member, but it occasionally sent observers to meetings; this church body "could not tolerate the pro-Socialist or pro-Communist tendencies they sensed at inter-Christian meetings" (341). Professor Lucian Turcescu examines the causes and legacy of the schism that developed among Romanian Orthodox believers in the US. Dellas Oliver Herbel, an Orthodox military chaplain, presents a history of the unsuccessful 1950s attempt to gain recognition of Orthodox Christianity as a "fourth major faith" in the US (361).

Professor Axel R. Schäfer opens the fifth section with an intricate analysis of the rise of Evangelical Protestant Christianity after World War II and its diverse responses to the global involvement of the US government. Daniel G. Hummel explores the influence of dispensationalist theology on the political opinions of Evangelicals during this period. Historian Jeremy Hatfield contrasts the views of two leading Evangelicals, Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell, in the debate on nuclear weapons during the 1970s and 80s. Professor Steven M. Tipton looks at controversy generated by the anti-Communist Institute on Religion and Democracy, based in Washington, DC, and its criticism of the political activism supported by leaders of the United Methodist Church. Professor Mark Thomas Edwards concludes this section by reflecting on Cold War-era connections between Evangelical and mainline Protestants.

The final section of the book examines a variety of peace activities supported by North American believers. Professor Walter Sawatsky offers an insightful survey of Mennonite, Brethren, and Quaker programs in Eastern Europe. Special attention focuses on the work of the Mennonite Central Committee, for which Sawatsky served as a research scholar from 1973-2010. Professor Joseph Loya provides a chapter on Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe, an organization with links to the Christian Peace Conference in Prague. For the final chapter of this section, Paul Mojzes reflects on Christian-Marxist dialogues in several settings, as well as his personal involvement in international discussions during the 1970s and 80s.

In the outstanding summarizing chapter that concludes the collection, Professor David Little emphasizes that the Christian groups discussed in the volume "interpreted the Cold War as religious conflict very differently" (535). Notably, his analysis considers disputes among Christians holding "ardent" and "moderate" stances of anti-Communism (544) in the light of the significant debate between prominent US diplomats John Foster Dulles and George Kennan over the "containment" of the spread of Communism (537).

*North American Churches and the Cold War* brings together an extraordinarily diverse range of political assumptions, religious values, and writing styles. Researchers and students will find detailed presentations of multiple opinions on how Christians responded to the philosophical, moral, and political challenges of this period. Some readers may question the absence of an anticipated topic of discussion, but the chapters provide many leads to additional resources. Nearly 30 years have passed since the close of the Cold War, but the debates of this time continue to stir conversations today. This volume will serve as a valuable reference work for students, researchers, and leaders of churches and organizations with connections to the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. It may be most beneficial to readers who did not experience the Cold War directly and need an introduction to challenges which have shaped our world. ♦

**Matthew Lee Miller** is book review editor of the *East-West Church Report*.

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