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Standing Ground Through Repression and Revolution:

An Interview with Myroslav Marynovych of the Ukrainian Catholic University

As a young man, Myroslav Marynovych became a founding member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, formed in 1976 to monitor compliance with the Helsinki Accords on human rights that had been signed by the Soviet Union the previous year. In 1978 he was consequently sentenced to seven years in the Gulag and a further five years' internal exile for "anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation."

Now 70, Marynovych is vice-rector of the rapidly expanding Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv. Inaugurated in 2002, the university is the intellectual hub of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. While forcibly reunited by the Soviet authorities with the Russian Orthodox Church in 1946, members of this church continued to gather clandestinely until it was made legal again in 1989.

Myroslav Marynovych (G. FAGAN)

Today, the Greek Catholic Church is the largest Christian denomination in westernmost Ukraine, with over 3,600 communities there. Its practices are in line with the Orthodox—also numerous in westernmost Ukraine. As the church recognizes the Catholic Pope, however, it is in full communion with Rome.

The editor of the East-West Church Report *met Myroslav Marynovych at the Ukrainian Catholic University in late 2018. The conversation took place in English.*

Did your experience as a dissident during the Soviet period draw you to the Christian faith, or did a Christian upbringing contribute to your becoming a dissident? As a child, were you aware of the Soviet ban on the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in 1946?

I was certainly aware of the ban on the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. My grandfather was a Greek Catholic priest who was arrested in 1945 and forced to change his affiliation to Russian Orthodoxy. He did so in order to save his elder son, who was arrested by the Soviets. The Soviets promised to release his son, but—as always—they did not fulfill that promise. So my grandfather was already a priest belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate by the time I was born; he died when I was eight. Yet my family knew perfectly well that this was not his voluntary, personal decision, but one made under threat of arrest. I knew about that, and of course I was critical of the Soviet system because of it.

Did you attend an Orthodox church as a child?

Yes, that was possible to some extent. But before Easter, for example—when the *plashchanitsa* [embroidered icon of Christ's crucified body] was displayed in church, and many people in our city of Drohobych (Lviv Region) went there to pray—I would see some of my schoolteachers standing nearby. They were watching to see whether pupils from their school were attending church.

What would happen if they were?

The parents of those children would be invited to the school and subjected to an ideological conversation. [Grins]

Did you still identify as Greek Catholic within your family?

Officially we were Orthodox. But we remembered that this had been forced, and once the Greek Catholic Church was legalized in the late 1980s, our entire family moved back to being Greek Catholic. So I was raised in a religious family. But I lost my faith while at college. When I was arrested around that time, there was a question about

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my attitude towards religion during my interrogations. I remember answering, "I appreciate the fact that some Baptist communities announced prayers for us, the arrested members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, but I personally am neutral towards religion." I was able to exist without God. It was only when I was in detention in Kyiv that I had a very powerful religious experience—a personal revelation. I understood afterwards that I was different: a believer.

Did some particular event take place? Or did this have to do with the overall experience of being in detention?

I would need half an hour to explain this alone! But it was internal: I was reflecting upon the universe and the structure of the world when I experienced a blast of light and did not respond to my cellmate for three days. He grew afraid of me, thinking I had gone crazy. But it was really powerful. I had a second experience later, when I was in labor camp. Today it is obvious to me that I have a religious perspective; I feel God's presence very often. But I understand that many people have not passed through this experience, and for them this is just theory, myth and legend. [Chuckles]

Did this religious experience have anything to do with your observations of the Soviet system as a dissident?

I did not speak about the system as a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, because we were a human rights group. We spoke about human rights violations and the Helsinki Accords. But it had become more and more obvious to me that the Soviet system was wrong, that Soviet ideology was a false and even criminal ideology. I received plenty of proof of that when I was in labor camp. It is clear to me now that Communism and Nazism are equal evils. They differ in some elements, but not the main one—they were both anti-human.

I spent seven years imprisoned in a labor camp in Perm Region in Russia, and after that I was exiled to Kazakhstan. According to my sentence, this was to be five years of exile, but I spent only three years in Kazakhstan because of Gorbachev. He released around 200 political prisoners in 1987, including me. Our "guilt" was forgiven, and in 1991 I was rehabilitated, so there was no "crime" at all.

Were there other religious believers with you in the labor camp?

Yes. On the one hand, any religious activity was forbidden in the Soviet camp system. For example, at some point I was not allowed to wear my baptismal cross, because, "No, it's not allowed!" At the same time, it was a place where many people converted to faith. This was due to different factors—personal, as I told you in my case, and sometimes also for ideological reasons. For example, people were against the Soviet system. The Soviet system was atheistic, so they were against the atheistic system as well, and came to favor

Greek Catholic Church of the Holy Eucharist, Lviv (**G. FAGAN**)

religion. Sometimes this was a little funny, because people did not actually believe in God, but they still preferred to be considered believers!

Who were the religious believers in the camp?

We had different Christians: Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant. We also had Jews—some Jews were very religious and had contacts with Israel, which supported their faith while in labor camp. There were some Muslims, but they were not so religious.

I also remember the existence of a sort of "camp ecumenism." We understood very clearly that if we were separate, it would be much easier for the camp administration to persecute us. We therefore normally celebrated Easter and Christmas twice, according to the different church calendars. We would gather twice in order to support one another. I recall that in 1982 we were all punished for celebrating Easter together. In the list of those who were persecuted for celebrating Easter there were representatives of all three Christian confessions, and also Leonid Lubman, a Jew! But he joined us in order to support us, to be together.

Were you able to replicate any element of the traditional Easter celebrations?

No, that was quite unrealistic. There were 60 prisoners in our labor camp and around 120 guards. Everything was so visible that it was like sitting in the palms of their hands.

What kind of worship service did you have, in that case? Was there anything like the Eucharist?

No, everything was forbidden. We just had prayers—prayers people normally knew, like "Our Father." But even people who did not know joined the ones who were able to pray.

So you had no texts, no Bible or other religious literature?

No, no. I remember going on hunger strike for 20 days in the late 1970s for the right to have a Bible. I did not succeed.

By the way, there is an ending to the story about our prayers at Easter. They punished us by putting us in an isolation cell. We decided that we had to inform the world about that, because at that time—the early 1980s—the Soviet Union supported so-called Christian marches in Western Europe because they supported nuclear disarmament. The Soviet Union paid a lot of money to support such Christian movements. And there was a contradiction in terms, because on the one hand they were supporting these Christian movements, and on the other they were punishing Christians who had just prayed at Easter—nothing more, we were not committing any crime, only praying. We decided that we had to send a letter to Pope John Paul II about this, and I was selected to prepare a draft. Once we were released from the punishment cell I prepared this draft, the others approved it, and we smuggled the text to Moscow and from there to the free world.

A few months later I received a message in secret code from my mother, which said that the Pope had received our letter and celebrated a Mass on our behalf. We experienced such an explosion of very powerful emotions on learning this, because it was so important to us that we had been able to inform the outside world.

Downtown Lviv (G. FAGAN)

Extract from Marynovych and fellow prisoners' 1982 letter to Pope John Paul II:

Your Holiness,

In our weary world there are too many people who need your prayers and your help for us to dare to write to you about our difficulties. However, the time has come when all our doubts have vanished. So please hear us out, Your Holiness!

On the Day of the Holy Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ, which we celebrated on April 18th, according to the Orthodox calendar, some fourteen prisoners, Orthodox as well as of other denominations, had gathered around our humble prison table, hoping to greet each other. Among us were devout Christians as well as those who hesitate to identify the voice of their conscience as the voice of God. One of us, Myroslav Marynovych, had just finished reciting a prayer, and his words about the resurrection of Love and Forgiveness had hardly been uttered when fate decided to test the sincerity of our convictions, and a team of guards banished those who had gathered, while political prisoners Myroslav Marynovych, Viktor Nekipyelov, and Mykola Rudenko were accused of organizing a prayer meeting, which is considered contrary to the rules of the regime. They were all thrown into an internal prison for fifteen days. Some of the others that had gathered were also detained, notably Leonid Lubman, a Jew who came to greet his Eastern-rite friends.

Obviously, the days when Eleanor Roosevelt was shown model prisoners who were reading the Bible and the Koran are long gone. Nowadays, even after many months of hunger strikes, the prisoners cannot even obtain a Bible (Ogorodnikov, 1980-1981). To go to confession is unheard of; in the internal prisons, crosses are being ripped off prisoners' chests, and all religious rituals and prayers are totally forbidden.

…Are members of the Easter [peace] processions in the West, who were so actively supported by Soviet propaganda, aware of the fact that on those same April days, in the Soviet concentration camps prisoners who are seeking the Holy Ghost are being incarcerated by that same Soviet Communist power? We beg You, Your Holiness, to apprise them of this.

How do you view what has happened in Ukraine more recently: the 2013-14 revolution centered on Kyiv's Maidan Square, known as the Revolution of Dignity, Russia's subsequent annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing Donbass conflict? What impact has all this had upon the Greek Catholic community?

First of all, the revolution did not change the Greek Catholic worldview, but rather confirmed our belief that the Soviet system was wrong, and that everything in the post-Soviet system, with its oligarchic and quasi-Soviet system of management, is also wrong and needs to be changed. This is nothing new for Greek Catholics, just confirmation that we are on the right road. Putin's reaction did not change our worldview either, because we understood quite clearly from the very beginning that Russia would never agree to Ukraine being independent.

The Belovezha Accords [1991 agreement ratifying the dissolution of the Soviet Union, signed by representatives of newly independent Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine] were possible only because the Russian delegation had its own clear vision of the future. I read some protocols from the Belovezha meeting indicating that the Russian delegation had decided they would agree to the dissolution of the Soviet Union because they understood Ukraine to be so close to Russia economically that it would be impossible to separate the two. After six months, they supposed, Ukraine would request reunification with Russia, and then there would be no more talk of violence, occupation, and so on, because it would be Ukraine's own decision to join with Russia. They had a very simple theory that Ukraine could not exist without Russia.

Well, it didn't happen. I like the metaphor of an apple tree. There is an apple—Ukraine—and Russia put a

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basket underneath it; when this apple is ready, it will fall into the basket of its own accord. It didn't happen. So for Russia, the Orange Revolution [of 2004-5, also centered upon Kyiv's central Maidan Square] was a very strong signal that they had to do something.

Shake the tree?

[Laughs] Shake the tree in order for this apple to fall down into the basket.

Church of the Holy Wisdom of God, Ukrainian Catholic University (G. FAGAN)

And so the regime of pro-Moscow President Viktor Yanukovych [2010-14] was an attempt to re-establish all those ties?

Exactly. I also read some materials indicating that a new version of the Soviet Union was being prepared. Putin and Yanukovych would have needed a month in order to establish it, together with Belarus. So the Revolution of Dignity came at the last possible moment.

Were you involved in the demonstrations on Maidan Square?

Yes, of course. But I am too old to be marching every day. I arrived and spent the night there, immediately caught the flu and returned to Lviv. It is not for me any more! I worked with the media a great deal, however, and I published many articles.

How have the Maidan events affected the younger generation, including the students here at the Ukrainian Catholic University?

They were affected, but not in the sense that very many of them became politically active. They were active during both Maidans [i.e. also during the Orange Revolution] and we even have an expression here: "the generation of the two revolutions." But there is a difference between the situation in Poland in the 1980s, when the *Solidarność* [Polish: Solidarity] workers' rights movement was established, and the situation now in Ukraine. As you see, no single, strong oppositional party was created as a result of the Revolution of Dignity. My understanding of this crystallized at a meeting of the board of the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, DC in 2015. I presented my own view of these revolutions and spoke about the lack of one oppositional party as our own, Ukrainian fault; our sickness, as it were, of *otamanshhyna* [Ukrainian: Cossack groups]; of having many factions rather than one commander.

There is that hackneyed saying about Ukrainians, "Wherever there are two Ukrainians, you will find three hetmans [Cossack leaders]."

Exactly. So I maintained that because we are Ukrainians we are unable to have one hierarchical command, unfortunately. But the Americans said, "No, it is not your fault as Ukrainians. There is a difference in the mindset of the younger generation." The younger generation involved in the Occupy Movement in New York, in the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, even the Arab Spring in the Muslim countries, all displayed the same character. They did not want to have one leader or commander, but to preserve their autonomy while also joining in one action. I was surprised when I heard this view, but it is correct. The Ukrainian Maidan was formed exactly according to these principles.

Diffuse centers of power but everyone working towards one goal?

Yes. And the Americans said to me, "Don't be too critical, because the Ukrainian Maidan was the only successful phenomenon among all these movements."

Do you envisage the Ukrainian Catholic University as contributing towards this newer kind of thinking?

Let me give you a comparison between the two revolutions. During the Orange Revolution, I recall our students being a little reluctant to get involved. In the early days, when the students at the National University here in Lviv were already active, our students were not. I remember discussing what to do with our rector. Why didn't our students declare a strike? The rectorate could not possibly insist that the students declare a strike! [Laughs] But we were alarmed—why were they so passive? At that point we had an interesting discussion with the students and we understood. They did

Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Center, Ukrainian Catholic University (G. FAGAN)

not trust the opposition politicians. They were afraid that the opposition politicians would misuse their activity. They did join the student protest a week later, however.

There was not so much reluctance during the Revolution of Dignity; our students were active from the very beginning. Our university and the Kyiv Mohyla Academy were the two most active universities. The first phase of the revolution, even here in Lviv, consisted purely of students; there were no older people or politicians involved. Politicians wanted to control the situation, but the students preferred to be left alone. Our students kept active during the whole revolution; many of them were present on Maidan Square in Kyiv.

A critical moment came during the night of 10-11 December 2013, when government forces attempted to destroy the Maidan encampment. Many people were beaten. I was woken up at around 1 a.m. "Are you watching Channel 5 [television channel not controlled by then-President Yanukovych]? Watch, because this is a very dangerous moment!" So I watched all night. At about 5 a.m., I understood that Maidan had survived, and I decided that we had to do something as a university. Via Facebook, I invited other staff members and our students to a 9 a.m general meeting of the university. By that time, I had already drafted a statement. The rector did not even want to check it, he just told me to read it aloud. My statement said that, because the government—the ruling elite of the country—had used violence against innocent young people—people who were peaceful, who had not used violence of their own accord—we as a university declared civil disobedience to the president and leadership of the country.

Wow.

Wow. Yes, it was strong! But we were under threat of closure. It was very clear to me that if we were afraid—if we did not protest and if Yanukovych survived—our university would have no chance of continuing its activities. So it was an all-or-nothing situation. There was a moment of silence when I read out my draft, because everyone understood this danger. But then there was applause, and the statement was accepted. I am very proud of our community because of this. We really tried to live according to our values.

How do you see Ukraine's position as a nation from a Christian perspective?

Ukraine is situated on the edge between two different civilizations: Western and Eastern Christian. Conflict between these civilizations was the typical fate of our land. In the past, for example, the Polish state viewed Orthodoxy as heresy and tried to convert the whole Ukrainian nation to Catholicism. Later on, Russia tried to eliminate all signs of Greek Catholicism in order to make us exemplary Orthodox. We Greek Catholics are traitors to both—we betray the purity of the faith. To overcome these differences is therefore our national mission, so to speak. We want to preserve our unity as a nation, and so we must have inclusive thinking.

Dining hall, Ukrainian Catholic University (G. FAGAN)

Do you therefore believe there to be an innate pluralism in Ukrainian culture?

Yes, it is natural for this land to have different sub-identities. And during our two Maidans I was happy to see people from different parts of Ukraine come together and stand united with one goal. I understood that, yes, it is in the nature of this nation to overcome difference.

With that in mind, what will the impact upon your Greek Catholic community be of Constantinople's awarding of autocephaly [independence] to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine?

Most Greek Catholics are in favor of this development, as it is very clear to us that every monopoly—including spiritual monopoly—is dangerous. According to our understanding, a future united Kyivan Church is possible—a Church consisting of the different branches of Christianity that are now in separation. In this unity, however, each church would preserve Eucharistic union with its particular ecclesiastical center. Each would bring its particular union to the common basket, so that centers which are not now united among themselves—Rome, Constantinople, Moscow—would be in unity via the Kyivan Church.

In that case, Ukraine would not be on the edge of Christian civilizations at all, but a hub?

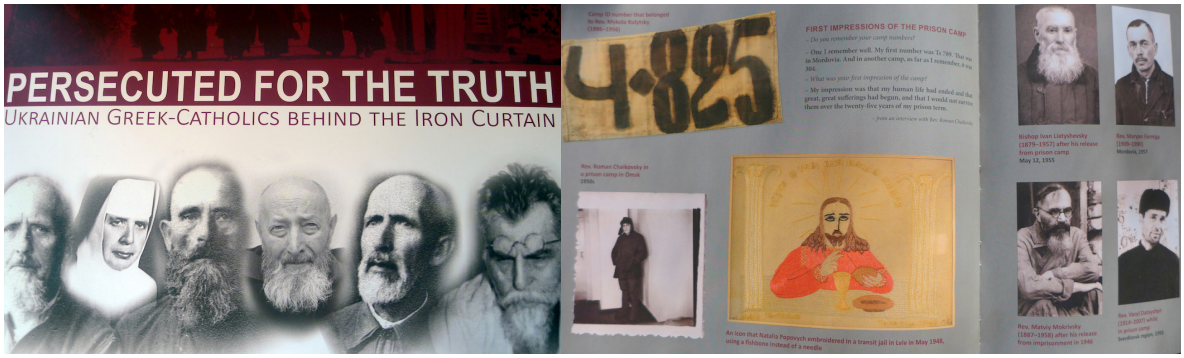
Yes. But according to Moscow's understanding, this all means that the Uniates [derogatory term for Greek Catholics] want to turn the Kyivan Church into a Uniate church! So when we have domination of distinctly confessional thinking, such a unity is not possible. Realistically, we will have a situation in which Ukraine has three nucleii: Orthodox in unity with Moscow—because there will always be some part of the population that wants to preserve this unity, Orthodox in unity with Constantinople, and Greek Catholics in unity with Rome. So we will wait. Our goal will be to co-exist, to co-operate, and if we establish routine forms of co-operation, unity at a higher level will become more and more realistic. ♦

An Unlikely Phoenix: the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv

GERALDINE FAGAN

The people of Lviv in far western Ukraine may be among the most traditionally observant Christian inhabitants of the former Soviet Union. As the editor of the *East-West Church Report* strolled through the city's cobbled streets one Sunday in late 2018, peals of church bells filled the crisp fall air. At St. Andrew's—one of numerous Greek Catholic churches downtown—some 400 parishioners flocked to the third morning service, many kneeling on the stone floor due to lack of pew space. Within half a mile, the far smaller community of Roman Catholics still has a choice of nine Sunday Masses at the Cathedral of the Assumption.

St. George's—Lviv's main Orthodox parish under the Moscow Patriarchate—offers three Sunday morning liturgies, with perhaps 400 attending in total. Celebrating their restoration to communion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople the previous week, parishes of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the Kyiv Patriarchate were also bustling when the *East-West Church Report* looked in. Several hundred faithful of all ages streamed out of the latter's Intercession Cathedral following its 11 a.m. liturgy, the third there that morning. This is even before one considers the dozen or more Evangelical communities beyond Lviv's historic center.



Cover and pages from UCU's 2017 publication, *Persecuted for the Truth: Ukrainian Greek-Catholics Behind the Iron Curtain* (G. FAGAN)

Polling suggests the same story. In Lviv and the other six westernmost regions of Ukraine, over 90 percent surveyed in 2018 identified as believers, according to the Kyiv-based Razumkov Center. Around 50 percent said they had attended worship that past week. In eastern Ukraine, these figures are markedly lower—around 60 and 10 percent respectively. A key reason for this discrepancy is that the westernmost regions of Ukraine formed part of independent Poland between the two World Wars, thus escaping the worst of the Soviet onslaught against religion.

Yet another is the tenacity of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), concentrated in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, and Transcarpathia regions. (Here and in the other three western regions—Chernivtsi, Rivne, and Volyn—Orthodoxy is also strong.) The UGCC's distinctive nature—holding to Orthodox customs, such as icons and married clergy, but recognizing the Pope—derives from a 1596 agreement to enter into communion with Rome made by local Orthodox bishops. Since then, Ukrainian Greek Catholics' relationship with Orthodox under Moscow has remained tense at best. In 1946 it was shattered by the UGCC's forced "reunification" with the Moscow Patriarchate at a synod orchestrated in Lviv by the Soviet authorities. This rendered Greek Catholic practice illegal in the USSR for more than four decades.

Following the UGCC's legalization under Gorbachev in 1989, its Lviv Theological Academy was revived and then inaugurated as the Ukrainian Catholic University in 2002. The original Academy had been founded in 1928 under Polish rule by then UGCC leader Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky. It was shuttered when the Soviet Union annexed the area in 1939 in accordance with the Molotov-Rippentrop Pact. Occupying Nazi forces permitted the seminary to function to a very limited extent from 1941, but it was again closed once Soviet forces recaptured the territory in 1944. In 1963 Sheptytsky's successor Cardinal Josyf Slipyj—also recognized as Patriarch by Ukrainian Greek Catholics—succeeded in founding a Ukrainian Catholic University in Rome. He had just been permitted to leave the USSR after 18 years in labor camps and internal exile.

While visitors to today's Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv might be most struck by its array of gleaming buildings erected over the past few years, this history remains the bedrock of the institution. In fact, it was "Profiles of Fortitude"—an oral history project documenting Soviet-era experiences in the underground UGCC—that sparked the initial stage of UCU's revival in the early 1990s, Roman Skakun of the university's Institute of Church History explained to the *East-West Church Report*. This has so far gathered over 2,000 testimonies.

One characteristic account in a 2017 book derived from the project, *Persecuted for the Truth: Ukrainian Greek-Catholics behind the Iron Curtain*, relates then Metropolitan Slipyj's ordination of a priest in the Gulag in 1960:

Liturgy at St. Andrew's Greek Catholic Church, Lviv (G. FAGAN)

> When it had been arranged that the Metropolitan would ordain me, Rev. Drebitko said: "Hey, how are we going to do this without the vestments? We have to think of something." …I had a coat. We cut off the lining from the coat, cut off the sleeves. …To tell the truth, I was so deeply immersed in that ordination, I had such a desire to become a priest, that I did not feel anything at all during the ceremony—so great was my anxiety. ...The ordination itself took place between the two bunk beds, on the floor, in front of the locker. …It's difficult to express in words the full meaning of such an event happening behind barbed wire, when you could well get twenty-five more years to your sentence, if they found out about this.

In the early years of the UGCC's post-*perestroika* revival, "a counterintuitive vision for an educational institution built on the pillars of the 'two Ms'—the martyrs and the marginalized" was developed, UCU President Borys Gudziak affirms in his introduction to *Persecuted for the Truth*. This, he explains, is because such people "can teach us much about principles, endurance, and ultimately about liberty and joy. Thus, UCU started with and was built on the creative and hope-filled fortitude of spiritually free Soviet-era Christians, dissidents, and nonconformists."

Worship remains central to the life of the university: Greek Catholic students are expected to attend services at least weekly. The towering Church of the Holy Wisdom of God, consecrated in 2017, stands at the center of the main campus. Yet UCU also appears decidedly outward looking: its most popular subjects include politics, economics, and computer science in addition to theology. Numerous summer schools encompass various foreign languages, philosophy, and social thought as well as choristry and icon painting. UCU is also home to the Religious Information Service of Ukraine, a project of its Institute of Religion and Society. This produces reports in English as well as Ukrainian and Russian: https://risu.org.ua/en/index.

In his introduction to *Persecuted for the Truth*, Gudziak—Archbishop-Metropolitan of Ukrainian Greek Catholics in North America as of mid-2019—argues that Ukraine's ongoing struggle for dignity as a nation is also inextricably linked with the UGCC's witness as a cornerstone of civil society in the country. "How the feeble and defenceless defeated the greatest of tyrannies inspires hope… [that we] can win the campaign against corruption, injustice, invasion," he maintains. "In fact, with God's grace, we can overcome ourselves, our existential fears and moral frailties." ♦

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

New Martyr Bishop Vasyl Velychkovsky

One particular inspiration for today's Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is Bishop Vasyl Velychkovsky. When a priest-monk, he was arrested in 1945 after the Soviets recaptured Ukraine from the Nazis. Accused of "anti-Soviet propaganda"—partly due to a reference in one of his prayer books to "the wicked, red enemy horde"—his sentence of execution by firing squad was commuted to 10 years in the Gulag. Following his release in 1955, he effectively led the underground UGCC in Ukraine from his small apartment in central Lviv, which became a museum in 2007. There, Sister Epifania—a local young nun of the Greek Catholic Basilian order who is one of the curators—described to the *East-West Church Report* how the KGB would conduct frequent searches of Bishop Vasyl's home as well as eavesdrop from his neighbor's apartment.

Sister Epifania displaying New Martyr Bishop Vasyl's handmade priest's stole (G. FAGAN)

However, the neighbor—an elderly Jewish man—would warn the bishop that he was "expecting guests," and Bishop Vasyl would then conduct services in complete silence to prevent the KGB recording evidence of illegal worship. Despite the surveillance, he was able to ordain approximately 50 Greek Catholic priests at the apartment.

Icon of New Martyr Bishop Vasyl (G. FAGAN)

Although Pope John XXIII appointed Velychkovsky bishop in 1959, he could be consecrated only in 1963. That year, Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj was freed from the Gulag and permitted to participate in the Second Vatican Council in Rome. On his way through Moscow, he secretly anointed Velychkovsky in his hotel room. Following his return to Lviv, Bishop Vasyl was imprisoned for his religious activity a second time in 1969. He was finally deported from the USSR in 1972 and died in Canada the following year. Injections of unknown drugs administered to Bishop Vasyl during his second Soviet prison term are believed responsible for his death. He was beatified as a martyr during Pope John Paul II's visit to Lviv in 2001.

"We want to be an example of how people of different backgrounds can come together":

An Interview with Fr. Dr. Roman Fihas of the Ukrainian Catholic University

Fr. Dr. Roman Fihas is a Ukrainian Greek Catholic priest and co-ordinator of the English-language Distance Learning Master's Program in Ecumenical Studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University. In late 2018 he discussed the activities and ethos of this vibrant university while showing the East-West Church Report *around its campus in the western city of Lviv. The conversation took place in English.*

It is striking how many worship services there are in churches in Lviv, and the significant number of young people attending. Is this a growing trend?

It started in 1991, when Ukraine obtained independence and the Greek Catholic Church was coming out from underground. There was a religious boom—people were witnessing that they were against the totalitarian regime, and so to be religious was popular. Almost everyone came to church! Right now, this boom is diminishing a little, but we still have a lot of people attending church. Compared with central or eastern Ukraine, the number is much higher. This is because we only had 50 years of the Communist regime here, while the central and eastern parts of Ukraine had 20 years more—one more generation.

So in Lviv, for example, we have around 80 Greek Catholic churches. On Sundays in the big parishes they have a liturgy—which lasts between one and two hours—every two hours, starting from the morning until about six or seven in the evening. In the suburb of Sykhiv there is one parish dedicated to the Nativity of the Mother of God where eight or 10 priests minister. It has a catechetical school where around 1,500 pupils attend classes at least once a week. This church was built up from scratch. It is a very lively parish, offering assistance to those dependent on alcohol or drugs, general counseling services, and various programs for young people. Some parishes are more active, some less. Sometimes, of course, the older generation is more represented in church than the young. But usually people have a tradition of going to church.

Did you yourself grow up in a Christian family?

My parents are Christian but they were not so religious. They baptized my brother and me, but there were no Greek Catholic churches open for them to go to. Maybe once a year they attended some liturgy, but not often.

So you came to active faith after the collapse of the Soviet Union?

Yes. We started to attend liturgies in the 1990s when Ukraine had become independent and churches began to open. I then attended a Greek Catholic lyceum here in Lviv

Fr. Dr. Roman Fihas (G. FAGAN)

which had a very positive atmosphere—I had many friends and studied a lot of theological topics. This study of theology was like a revelation to me. It brought me to an understanding of my faith as more than just a custom. Afterwards I felt a calling to be a priest and I decided to go to seminary here. That study lasts seven years, and I graduated in 2004.

We now have around 200 seminarians in Lviv. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church also has three seminaries in the cities of Kyiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil. Greek Catholic monastic religious orders, such as the Basilians and Redemptorists, have their own seminaries as well.

I am a married priest—I have three children. We live in the Collegium building along with the students, here on campus. This is because we are trying to offer students a program of personal formation as well as study. They receive knowledge, but their personal formation and intercommunication are also important.

What is your teaching role here?

I work at the Institute of Ecumenical Studies, which was founded in 2004 by Fr. Iwan Dacko—who was a secretary to Patriarch and Cardinal Josyf Slipyj in Rome—together with Dr. Antoine Arjakovsky, an Orthodox professor from Paris. Ecumenism is a priority for our university. On the territory of Ukraine we have two Orthodox Churches, as well as two Catholic Churches—Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic. We have Protestants, also Jews, Muslims, and other religions. So dialogue is very important. We believe that if we want peace and to find one another, we must work towards this together.

We have a master's program in ecumenical studies on campus and via distance learning, including in English.

We see this as one way of spreading ecumenical awareness. We also see great potential for ecumenism in social issues.

By that, do you mean separate churches working together in different social spheres, rather than discussing ways to overcome doctrinal differences?

Yes, and in most cases this works much better than dialogue at a high level! For example, once a year we organize an ecumenical social week where we gather representatives of the different churches and business representatives from Lviv city and region. We discuss important issues that we need to influence or change. In 2018 we discussed youth—how young people find their place in the world, their challenges in following a calling to a particular profession, positive experiences that the Church has had in communicating with young people.

Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Center (G. FAGAN)

Is the Ukrainian Catholic University primarily intended for Greek Catholic students and theological study, or does it have a broader remit?

Everything started from theology, but we understood that we could not hide this treasure and keep it for ourselves. So the university is an open community anchored in this Christian background. We have students of IT and business analysis, journalism, history, social pedagogy, psychology, and other subjects, as well as theology.


Collegium chapel, Ukrainian Catholic University (G. FAGAN)

Does the university belong to the state system or is it private?

Our university is a private university, although all our programs—from theology to IT—are accredited by the state. But we do not receive any finance from the state. All our funding comes from private donors around the world.

Does that mean that students either have to pay from their own funds or take on loans? Are the fees the same for every subject?

We would like the legal situation to change so that state educational funding goes not to institutions but to individual students, and so to wherever each student decides to study. In the meantime, students have to pay, but around one third of our students have scholarships—we have schemes that support students. Even those who do pay for their studies themselves pay only around 20 or 30 percent of what the university has to spend—we cannot make the fees very high, because otherwise people would be unable to come. However, the rate for IT is around three times higher than subjects such as history and theology, because those students will easily find a well-paying job after they graduate.

What is life like for students at the university?

We have around 2,000 students here. There is currently room for around 300 to live on campus in the Collegium building, alongside mentors such as myself. In this building there is also a chapel, and the Emmaus Center for people with special needs. There are places such as workshops for their own activities, but we are also able to meet with them over tea and help them with anything required due to their special needs. This is the spirituality of Jean Vanier, the French founder of L'Arche, who dedicated his life to living with such people and who recognized their special gifts. For example, they teach us transparency—what they want to say, they say without any masks. This is something very positive—we have only just started to learn how to interact with such people in Ukraine.

We also have a small convent; there are three nuns who live in the Collegium building. The students liaise with them in organizing different events.

You also have a splendid new library here in the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Center, opened in 2017.

Yes, it must be a big surprise to come here and to see all these buildings! This is probably the first library to be built in Ukraine in the past 25 years. It was built in order to attract young people to come and meet with books! It also hosts famous speakers and different cultural events. Anyone can join the library for 50 hryvnia [around $2] a year. The cafeteria and children's room are also open to all.

How would you describe the ethos of the university?

Our founder and president, Borys Gudziak [as of June 2019 overseeing all Ukrainian Greek Catholics in the

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USA as Archeparch of Philadelphia] says that we build our identity on three Ss. In Ukrainian, they are *svidchyty*, *sluzhyty*, and *spilkuvatysya*.

Svidchyty is "witnessing," above all the witness of our New Martyrs, who with their lives witnessed that it is possible to know truth and to stand for truth. It is also important for us to be witnesses to the truth in this 21st century.

Sluzhyty is "serving." As Jesus came to serve us, so we will serve Him. If we want to see changes, we also have to be aware that we will have to put in a lot of service.

UCU's 2018 ecumenical social week on youth issues (Source: R. FIHAS)

Spilkuvatysya means communication. In the USSR people did not trust one another, because your neighbor could go to the KGB and say bad things about you, and you could be imprisoned. Communication was ruined. But at this university we invite many different people to this campus to build up communication and trust between people. We want to be an example of how people of different backgrounds can come together to create a unique university.

So the university is not only for practicing Christians?

Yes. But being in a community which prays gives people the time and space to get a taste of the Christian faith. Sometimes working here seems like sowing grain. You do not know what the fruit will be in one, five or 10 years time. There are some who do not practice, and there are some cases when people come here without any religious background and who become Christians. It just depends.

Bohdan Solchanyk memorial plaque, Ukrainian Catholic University (G. FAGAN)

What was your experience of Ukraine's recent past—the pro-democracy Maidan demonstrations of 2013-14 in Kyiv?

What we experienced during those three months of Maidan was something very rare. There was sweetness, but also fear. We had no idea how it would all turn out. Many of the people at Maidan said they could not come back home, because the regime would know where to find them and they would be finished. So everyone knew that they had to press on. But the spirit of Maidan was not against somebody: it was for freedom, for change, and against corruption. There was also constant service. It was a cold winter, and people constantly asked those coming to Maidan if they needed something to eat and then brought food, or told them where they could find something to keep warm if they were cold. It was like the early Church, when everyone helped each other.

I understand one of the UCU staff was among those killed in the demonstrations.

Bohdan Solchanyk. He was a history lecturer at the Ivan Franko National University in Lviv, but he also taught here. He was killed in the final days of Maidan, aged just 28. It was a tragedy.

Do you think the determination for change is still strong?

During Maidan it seemed as if we were taking part in a sprint over a short distance, because we were running very fast. We thought we had reached the finish line, but then we realized that we needed to keep going forward. There was disappointment for about a year after Maidan, because we did not see immediate change. But then we understood that we were actually running a marathon. All those steps may look very easy, but time is needed.

We also understood that it is very important to follow this path and not to stop—to be faithful to the end. There is the problem of populism now—not only a Ukrainian problem!—and it is easy to blame somebody as guilty, or to say that you just have to change this or that and then we will have paradise! [Laughs] In Ukraine we are also in a bad economic situation because we lost seven percent of our territory, and the continuing war demands a lot of resources. But we have made progress in areas such as education and medicine; we have begun to live as an independent state.

Bohdan Solchanyk and others who died are an example telling us not to step back; we have to move forward. We have good examples and we have—not saints, but people who help us to continue our progress. We still have a lot of work to do. We just started to change our country. ♦

Empowering Women in the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church of Russia

GALINA OBROVETS

Editor's note: Russia's Justice Ministry has dismissed the scale of domestic violence against women in the country as "quite exaggerated" and disputed that the majority of victims are women rather than men.[1] As recently as 2013, however, Russia's own Interior Ministry calculated that 12,000 women die annually as a result of domestic violence, with 97 percent of cases failing to reach court.[2] The problem is clearly not being addressed. Indeed, it may possibly be exacerbated by measures decriminalizing first offences of domestic violence that do not lead to hospital treatment, signed into law by President Putin in February 2017.[3]

*For Russian Christians, this subject remains largely taboo. In the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church of Russia, however, Galina Obrovets has been raising awareness about domestic violence—along with the marginalization of women more generally—for over 20 years. In 1997 she co-ordinated a Moscow conference on the role of women in church, family, and society which proved to be the major impetus for her further involvement in women's ministry.[4] This work has included counseling, outreach, and 10 years publishing Sestra [*Sister*]—a Russian-language Christian women's magazine.[5]*

The following article is adapted from Galina's 2019 doctoral thesis: "Empowering Women in Evangelical Christian Baptist Churches in Russia for Leadership in Transforming the Culture of Relationships in the Church and Family" (Bakke Graduate University, Dallas, Texas).

Much was prohibited under the totalitarian Soviet regime. We were not allowed to hold a personal opinion, or to develop an individual identity—even to maintain self-respect. Growing up in a Christian family, I rejected the way Soviet people communicated with one another, as this was typified by mistrust, aggression, and intolerance. Yet as I later began ministry in the Evangelical Christian-Baptist (ECB) denomination, I came to realize that our own members often demonstrate the same behavioral patterns as Soviet non-believers. I then understood that such destructive behavior—in particular towards women—is not just a consequence of Soviet atheistic ideology. Its roots lie much deeper in our history and culture.

Galina Obrovets
(**Source: G. OBROVETS**)

One such problem is domestic violence. As doctoral candidate Elena Cherynak and assistant professor Betty Jo Barrett—both of the University of Windsor in Canada—have indicated, in Russia men utilize the inferior status and heightened vulnerablity of women as a means of maintaining a patriarchal hierarchy in the family.[6] Irina Lukianova suggests that "the level of aggression in Russian society is off the scale; moreover, aggression is not even recognized as aggression [but] is considered the norm of communication. …and it seems to be also one of the traditional values."[7]

During my 25-year tenure ministering to Russian women both inside and outside the ECB church, I have seen such behavior ruin the lives of many individuals and families. My doctoral thesis attempts to gauge the extent of domestic abuse against ECB women and suggest possible remedies. As well as published sources, my research draws upon my own ethnographic studies, a survey questionnaire completed by 27 respondents, and an ECB focus group. The focus group consisted of 14 people, including a denomination leader and pastors, the administrative director of the national ECB women's training program, a female representative of the ECB's women's ministry department, and a representative of the ECB's Moscow seminary, as well as educators, youth, and NGO leaders, both male and female. The age of participants varied from 24 to 59, with a majority (80 percent) having completed higher education.

Difficult topic

Domestic violence is not a popular topic for discussion among ECB believers, especially men. However, I and other Christian family counselors have long observed numerous cases of women in ECB church families being subjected to domestic abuse, including verbal and physical attacks, beatings, and threats of violence. My survey asked, "Are you aware of cases in which the dignity of women was denigrated by physical beatings, verbal abuse, and psychological intimidation?" The majority of both male and female respondents—80 percent—answered yes to this question, while only 10 percent were not aware of such cases.

What gives rise to physical beatings, verbal abuse, and psychological intimidation? Among male respondents, one maintained that these phenomena are universal, while others suggested that they occur because of prevailing negative male attitudes towards women in Russian society, the low level of male education, and men's intolerance of opposing opinions. One male respondent contended that cases of disharmony arise due to women becoming independent.

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By contrast, female respondents consider prejudice against women to be one of the most important explanations for domestic abuse of women in ECB households. They pointed to a still popular Russian belief that a wife should fear her husband and be obedient to him in all respects. They also expressed regret at the lack of opportunity to address this issue. One respondent noted that she had not heard a sermon on family relations in her ECB church in the past 20 years.

In the course of my research, I conducted ethnographic studies with three women belonging to ECB churches in the Moscow area: "Vera" (47), "Nadezhda" (60), and "Lyubov" (37) [These pseudonyms are the Russian for "Faith," "Hope," and "Love."] Two of the women agreed to interviews in the presence of a counselor and one in the presence of a psychologist. All three were born in the Soviet era within the context of female subordination in ECB churches; from childhood they were taught to be in full submission to their pastors and spouses. Yet their ECB husbands demonstrated spiritual immaturity in their relationships with their wives, including physical and emotional abuse. All three wives asked their pastors for help, but they instead counseled the women to accept their lot without protest. In the case of "Nadezhda," ministers and the church council threatened her with excommunication for her lack of submission.

International Interdenominational Women's Conference, Moscow, 2000 (Source: G. OBROVETS)

Domestic violence happens not only in the lives of ordinary ECB members, but also in the families of ministers, both pastors and deacons. Such cases are carefully hidden or hushed up, and as a rule the husband does not not receive a church punishment.

An ECB woman who has suffered abuse and who asks her pastor for help is usually invited to tolerate violence and pray quietly about the situation without divulging the problem in church or elsewhere. In rare cases, a woman decides to divorce and leave the family. Shirinai Dosova, the female pastor of an independent Evangelical church in Moscow, relates that "older ministers often side with the husband and teach that the wife should accept suffering for the sake of her children and for the sake of her husband's salvation."[8] Evangelical missionary Natalia Turlac has a similar observation: "Male church leaders tend to support husbands while encouraging women to submit."[9]

Pursuing theological education

A significant factor contributing to the ongoing discrimination against ECB women is the lack of opportunities for spiritual growth. Rarely are they permitted to use their gifts in the church due to the lack of available spiritual programs for women in churches and seminaries. Men discourage women from obtaining a seminary education. In some cases, Moscow ECB pastors have denied a blessing to female members desiring to study at a seminary.

Since 1999 Biblical Education by Extension—now known as Intrust—has offered training to ECB women. According to educator Elena Boretskaya, as of mid-December 2018 its 20 educational centers in Russia had granted diplomas and certificates to 1,200 women.[10] Yet here too options are restricted: Women study practical subjects such as how to have a Christian marriage, to manage a household, and to have a discerning heart. Women can participate only with the consent of their pastors and husbands, moreover.

Even then, ECB pastors in many parts of Russia forbid women in their churches to participate, considering the training to be dangerous. Female focus group participant "K" shared the opinion that even if women receive a theological education, they are not welcome to lead any ministry. At the ECB church some 45 miles outside Moscow attended by "K", the pastor told her that she could study anywhere she liked, but that she should not come back to his church, and if she did, he would not let her use her knowledge in ministry to other women there. A key problem here is that many ECB pastors have not studied themselves despite the opportunities that exist in post-Soviet Russia, and they are not interested in theological education for others.

In most ECB churches women do sing in choirs, pray aloud during church services, and teach in Sunday schools. But they are not welcome on church boards and do not participate in church decision-making more broadly. Fraternal (all-male) councils in ECB churches are therefore held without female participation, even though women constitute 80 percent of the church membership. Formal references to the ECB denomination as a "brotherhood" testify to women's inferior status within it. As Mennonite missionary Mary Raber observes, "there still remains an ambiguity about women in the ECB Churches as most church members are women, but they are not always acknowledged as stakeholders or decision makers."[11]

Demographic disparity

Another important factor contributing to the disadvantage of ECB women is demographics. Since World War II the population of Russia has been characterized by a significant disparity in the number of men and women. Of Russia's total population of approximately 146 million in 2018, women continued to outnumber men by eight percent.[12] Sociologist Irina Kargina observes that women also outnumber men in the religious space in Russia by an even greater degree.

In the case of Protestants, this is by 70 to 30 percent, even as those who occupy key church posts are almost exclusively male (99.8 percent).[13]

Despite the vastly greater number of women in ECB churches, their male leaders typically prohibit them from marrying non-believers. (There are no similar restrictions for men, but this situation rarely arises for men since the overwhelming majority of believers is female.) While this ban is not officially enshrined in writing and is less strictly enforced in large cities, it is still the norm in rural Russia. If an ECB woman marries a non-believer, she is commonly excommunicated or not allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper for six to 12 months. This punishment of women is based on the New Testament verse, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). I have found that many ECB women remain single as a result. The demographic situation makes this near ban on marrying outside the denomination especially painful for single women. Among the 10 female church friends of my youth, for example, four never married, two married after 40, and two after 50. All of the latter four are childless because of their advanced age at marriage.

Women's Conference in Saratov 2003
(Source: G. OBROVETS)

Kargina, the sociologist, notes that surveys of the overwhelmingly female Protestant community reveal that most still oppose women serving as pastors (92 percent), teaching men (86 percent), or preaching in church (80 percent).[14] During my study, however, it appeared that some women were paying lip service to established female roles due to the presence of male church leaders in the focus group. Privately, these same women shared how much they suffered from submissiveness and restrictions. They revealed that they were not pleased by the contrast between their subordinate position and their greater opportunities for creative, professional, and personal development outside the church. Georgian Baptist Malkhaz Songulashvili also notes:

> In most former Soviet countries women have gained higher status in all spheres of social life—except religion. There have been female prime ministers, presidents, governors, and university presidents in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic republics, and Georgia. However, leadership positions in most faith groups are still denied to women.[15]

In a church context, ECB women still primarily provide comfort for the brothers (serving tea, cleaning, and washing dishes).

The failure to empower women in the ECB denomination fuels a host of related problems:

- As noted, domestic violence against women in Christian families remains a taboo subject, causing much suffering to its victims.
- Women receive few opportunities for spiritual development through theological education, particularly due to restrictions placed by male church leaders.
- Women are unable to utilize their talents fully in the church.
- Despite being the vast majority of the church membership, women have no voice in decision-making.
- Facing such discrimination, female ECB members are leaving churches.

This failure therefore becomes a hindrance not only to personal, but also to congregational growth.

Moreover, the problems faced by women in churches in Russia are in direct contravention of the spirit of Jesus's teaching of love for one's neighbor in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:43-48). Such a situation can no longer go unnoticed; it is necessary to take steps and set goals to improve the quality of life for women through the cultivation of civility in situations of conflict. In April 2016, at a conference organized by St. Petersburg Christian University entitled "Woman: Christian Perspectives, History, Theology, Practice," I called upon the Baptist community to reconsider the unspoken rules that exist in many churches regarding attitudes toward women and women's ministries. I believe that these rules prevent the women of many Evangelical churches in Russia from developing their spiritual gifts and evangelizing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yet improving the status of women appears not to be a priority for many male members of the ECB. One denominational leader whom I invited to participate in a focus group session declined, citing a busy schedule. Approximately 10 ECB leaders and pastors in the Moscow area who received personal invitations in writing did not respond, participate, or send their assistants. However, others who did take part in my research project recognized the necessity of transforming the existing culture of relationships within the church, family, and society, and showed readiness for dialogue with female leaders in this sphere. Participating ECB male leaders from the Moscow area admitted that gender inequality was a serious problem, with one male respondent referring to it as "the historical humiliation of women." Most of the men surveyed acknowledged that women are not given a voice in decision-making, and that too many restrictions are in place preventing women from exercising their spiritual gifts. Some men also appeared ready to afford women more opportunity in ministry.

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Greater awareness

The ability to post information about my research on the Russian ECB website in December 2018 is just the beginning of a greater awareness by male leaders of the need for change in family relations and of the longing of ECB women for a different attitude towards them and their ministries. Male respondents in my study—all from the Moscow area—believed that talented Christian women should be permitted to preach, teach, and lead programs and projects, including evangelism. In other parts of Russia, however, ECB restrictions upon women remain the rule rather than the exception.

Based on the results of the data-gathering phase of my project, as well as the focus group and a seminar, I have developed collaborative strategies to pursue major changes to the ways in which a variety of relationship problems are resolved. I see my research to date as a prologue for further, much-needed transformation in the culture of communication between genders in ECB churches and families. I intend to utilize this project as a catalyst for the creation of new training programs on relationships with the participation of Christian psychologists and counselors. Parts of the project may also be adapted for use in courses and lectures in Bible schools and seminaries.

I will suggest to new ECB leaders that new forms of education for Russian women be introduced in churches, including the organizing of self-help groups aimed at empowering them to work with one another to overcome culturally based gender discrimination. I will also propose programs on preparation for marriage, monthly couples' fellowships in churches, and training in family counseling. Such programs would follow the compassionate ministry to others of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and encourage spiritual formation "rooted and established in love" (Ephesians 3:18). ♦

Women's Conference in Saratov 2003
(Source: G. OBROVETS)

Notes:

[1] These claims reportedly featured in the Ministry's October 2019 response to a query from the European Court of Human Rights, which is currently considering a relevant application brought jointly by four Russian women. See, "Russia's Domestic Violence Problem Is 'Exaggerated,' Justice Ministry Says," *Moscow Times*, 19 November 2019, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/11/19/russias-domestic-violence-problem-is-exaggerated-justice-ministry-says-a68233.

[2] [In Russian] "Domashnee nasilie v Rossii," *RIA Novosti*, 29 January 2013, https://sn.ria.ru/20130129/920211298.html.

[3] "Russia: Bill to Decriminalize Domestic Violence," Human Rights Watch, 23 January 2017, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/01/23/russia-bill-decriminalize-domestic-violence#.

[4] See themed issue "Focusing on Women in Ministry," *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1998); [In Russian] G.A. Obrovets, *Rol' khristianki v sovremennom obshchestve*, Moscow: Institute for East-West Christian Studies, 1998.

[5] [In Russian] G.A. Obrovets, "Iz opyta zhenskogo sluzheniia v evangel'skikh tserkvakh," *Bogomyslie*, no. 18 (2016), 78-85, http://www.bogomysliye.com/index.php/zhurnal-onlajn/book/96.

[6] Elena Chernyak and Betty Barrett, "A Chicken is Not a Bird, Is a Woman a Human Being? Intimate Partner Violence and the Russian Orthodox Church," *Currents: Scholarship in the Human Services*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2011), 2, 11, https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/currents/article/view/15921/12613.

[7] [In Russian] Irina Luk'ianova, "Priuty dlia zhertv est', a slova 'nasilie' net – pochemu Tserkov' molchit, kogda v sem'iakh b'iut i unizhaiut," *Pravmir*, 14 August 2018, https://www.pravmir.ru/priyutyi-dlya-zhertv-est-a-slova-nasilie-net-pochemu-tserkov-molchit-kogda-v-semyah-byut-i-unizhayut/.

[8] Mark R. Elliott, "Has the Role of Women in Evangelical Churches in the Former Soviet Union Changed in the Past Two Decades? An Interview with Pastor Shirinai Dosova," *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2016), 1.

[9] Natalia Turlac, "Women's Ministry in Evangelical Churches in the Former Soviet Union: A Response to Shirinai Dosova," *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, vol. 24, no. 4 (2016), 3.

[10] [In Russian] Elena Boretskaia, "Muzhchina i zhenshchina v XXI veke v tserkvi i sem'e: dialog ili monolog?", Russian Union of the Evangelical-Christian Baptists' website, 16 December 2018, https://baptist.org.ru/news/main/view/article/1487153.

[11] Mary Raber, "Before and After: Baptist Women in Post-Soviet Ukraine," *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, vol. 24, no. 4 (2016), 8.

[12] https://countrymeters.info/en/Russian_Federation#population_2018.

[13] [In Russian] Irina Kargina, "Protestanty v Rossii – sovremennye tendentsii (po rezul'tatam sotsiologicheskikh issledovanii)," *Materialy II Vserossiiskogo sotsiologicheskogo kongressa*, 2003, http://krotov.info/library/11_k/ar/gina_02.htm.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Malkhaz Songulashvili, "A Merging of Protestant and Orthodox Theology and Practice: Evangelical Christian-Baptists of Georgia," *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, vol. 24, 4 (2016), 12.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Dangerous God: Christianity and the Soviet Experiment

edited by Dominic Erdozain
DeKalb, Illinois, Northern Illinois University Press, 2017
277 pp., $39.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-87580-770-6

MATTHEW LEE MILLER

Dominic Erdozain, research fellow at King's College London, has assembled a remarkable collection of essays which explore the dynamic conflicts of Christianity and Communism in Soviet Russia. *The Dangerous God* brings together senior and junior scholars from the fields of history, literature, religious studies, and political science for a lively conversation on multiple aspects of this interaction. The book does not provide a comprehensive review of church-state conflicts in Russia, but it combines helpful introductions to issues along with pathbreaking studies of new topics. The authors address three overlapping themes: the Soviet government's assaults on religious faith and activity, believers' wide-ranging responses to these pressures, and literary reflections on the presence of the divine in the modern world.

Erdozain introduces this conversation with thoughtful and striking reminders of the significance of the book's topic: "the harshest episode of religious persecution in human history." The destruction of church buildings, the murder of priests, and harsh treatment of ordinary believers were all results of "a breathtaking experiment in the reordering of a civilization" (3). This venture ended in failure, but led to a variety of remarkable outcomes, such as the "interpenetration of religious ideas within a hostile Soviet culture" and the "permeation of Soviet ideology within the Russian Orthodox Church."

Erdozain points out that the most widespread response of believers was "a resolute and radiant humanity" (4). More specifically, he argues that the evidence presented by the book's authors demonstrated four themes in Christian resistance to Soviet persecution. First, believers consistently exhibited an "overriding concern for human dignity" (7) through an attractive practice of non-violence and compassion. Second, they committed themselves to truthfulness, which stood in stark contrast to the empty slogans and false claims of government officials. Third, the creative arts provided subversive alternatives to required perspectives. Finally, multiple accounts in the book highlight leadership of laypeople in resistance when ordained leaders had been arrested or eliminated.

Chapters by Scott Lingenfelter, Julie deGraffenried, Michael Bourdeaux, and Geraldine Fagan explore attempts by the Soviet state to eliminate, weaken, or control Christian influence among the Soviet population. Lingenfelter analyzes the Soviet approach to Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant bodies and describes the Bolsheviks' internal debates, legal decrees, foreign policy strategies, arrests, and executions. His central argument connects the Orthodox revival which had developed before 1917 to repression. In the early twentieth century parish priests, laypeople, theologians, and intellectuals contributed in a variety of ways to an outburst of energy in the empire. Lingenfelter "argues that early Soviet religious policies did not imperil faith: they empowered the faithful.... persecuted believers planted the seeds of a culture of dissent that flourished far beyond the parishes themselves." (13).

DeGraffenried's fascinating chapter focuses on the high value placed by the Bolsheviks on forming socialist values in children and the resulting campaign to combat the influence of religious grandmothers. She analyzes the strategy of propaganda posters from the 1920s to the 1970s and concludes, "the Soviet state may have won several battles over seventy years, but God and Grandma won the war" (50).

Bourdeaux, an experienced and vocal advocate for Russian believers since the 1960s, provides a personal account of the experience of Orthodox believers under the Soviet regime from the Stalin era until the time of Gorbachev. He discusses museums of atheism, manipulated religious publications, state-controlled church involvement in diplomatic and ecumenical programs, and government responses to dissenting believers. These accounts serve as a necessary introduction to an engaging description of public events in 1988 which marked a millennium of Eastern Slavic Christianity.

Fagan, editor of the *East-West Church Report*, provides a detailed account of Russian Orthodox collaboration with the government of the USSR. She reviews each stage of the church's experience from the time of Patriarch Tikhon until the current time, providing meticulous documentation from Russian- and English-language sources in her footnotes. This chapter focuses special attention on the controversial statements of Metropolitan Sergii (Stragorodskii) in the 1920s and 30s, and critical reactions from his fellow bishops. Fagan explores the circumstances surrounding the re-establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate and the close relationship between KGB and hierarchy following the war. She notes information revealed since the 1990s by archival documents and the ongoing debate over the nature and necessity of collaboration. In 2007 the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia announced reconciliation after

Erdozain Review *(continued from page 15)*

stating mutual disagreement with Metropolitan Sergii's 1927 declaration of sincere loyalty to the USSR. However, Fagan states that recent material on Sergii published under the authority of the Patriarchate "has bordered on the hagiographical" (203).

Wallace Daniel, Lauren Tapley, John P. Burgess, and Xenia Dennen each look at specific responses by believers to Communist persecution. Daniel provides an insightful biographical portrait of Father Gleb Iakunin, an Orthodox priest, human rights activist, and poet. In 1976 he founded the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights, and four years later he was declared guilty of "parasitism" and "slandering the Soviet state" (77). Throughout his career he worked closely with like-minded clergy, such as Fathers Aleksandr Men, Dmitrii Dudko, and Nikolai Eshliman.

Tapley analyzes the connection between Orthodox Christian dissidents and the Soviet human rights movement, which developed alongside one another. She explores their common roots, linking relationships, and mutual goals. For example, she notes their shared rhetoric which emphasized human dignity and freedom—values promoted in theory by the USSR, but often denied in reality.

Burgess writes that Orthodox believers in the USSR were usually not formally allowed to conduct the educational, social, and outreach activities often practiced by churches in other countries, but they were permitted to celebrate the Divine Liturgy—their primary activity. The author argues that this service functioned as a key to endurance and survival: the Orthodox liturgy "offers not a concrete political program, but rather a vision of freedom before God. In worship, people encounter a God who delivers them from every human ideology" (169). This chapter describes the influence of Father Alexander Schmemann, whose sermons were broadcast into the Soviet Union for three decades.

Dennen's chapter examines the resilience of Gulag inmates and centers on the story of poet Irina Ratushinskaia, who suffered the brutal realities of a labor camp and received assistance from Keston College, a British organization which assisted many Christian prisoners.

Dominic Erdozain and Josephine von Zitzewitz explore literary responses to the Soviet experiment. Erdozain analyzes Boris Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* and reflects on the spiritual values which undergird the work's critique of the Bolshevik revolution. He shows how Pasternak draws on Christian personalism to respond to Lenin's ideology and its manifestations: "It was a work of demystification: a great unmasking of the Soviet Utopia performed under the modest rubric of love, decency, and human survival" (97).

Von Zitzewitz focuses her attention on the role of biblical imagery in the work of five poets who wrote in the 1970s and 80s: Olga Sedakova, Ivan Zhdanov, Viktor Krivulin, Elena Shvarts, and Vasilii Filippov. Pasternak had served as a role model with the biblical themes of his poetry. These poets each drew on the Christian Scriptures to inspire creative reflection on life in ways that exceeded the narrow materialistic boundaries of Soviet reality.

James W. Warhola and Roy R. Robson provide thoughtful conclusions for this book by reflecting on the contemporary significance of Soviet conflicts between politics and faith. Warhola, a political scientist, explores contemporary Russian government actions to identify connections between past and present. He begins by summarizing that "the post-Soviet government has increasingly turned to religious leaders and institutions to buttress its authority at home and to project influence abroad" (210). Throughout his chapter he highlights how Vladimir Putin's administration has collaborated with the Russian Orthodox Church and other traditional religious institutions to address the perceived need for morality, build a stronger sense of national identity, increase the perception of legitimacy for the regime, regulate civil society, and control opposition to the government (212).

This book makes an outstanding contribution to the study of Christianity and culture in Russia. These authors have carefully analyzed an enormous range of archival and journalistic sources and provided insightful and thoughtful reflections. The research is scholarly, but the presentation is accessible and useful for anyone who wants to expand their understanding of faith and life in this part of the world. Students, scholars, journalists, and all interested readers will value the expertise and spirit reflected in this exceptional book. Highly recommended. ♦

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

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