

EAST-WEST CHURCH REPORT

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Special Issue: Christian Education in the Baltic States

A half century has passed since Lithuanian Catholics first asserted their right to organize seminary and Sunday school education by documenting Soviet restrictions to religious freedom in an underground publication that found international renown, the Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. By the spring of 1989 their efforts had prevailed, and the Chronicle ceased its 17-year publication. A year later, Lithuania became the first Baltic state to declare independence from the USSR, closely followed by Latvia in May 1990, and Estonia in August 1991. Over the following three decades, Baltic Christians raised within Communist confines have been free to revive traditional Christian education as well as to innovate, even as the freedom to engage in such activity has markedly shrunk for disfavored Christians in other former Soviet states [see Mark R. Elliott, "Increasing State Restrictions on Russian Protestant Seminaries," East-West Church Report, vol. 29, no. 2, 6-11.]

This issue of the East-West Church Report introduces three examples of how Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christians in each of the three Baltic states have fully utilized the unprecedented opportunities of post-Soviet freedom. In each case, they have developed dynamic Christian educational programs at the heart of national life, even managing to expand despite the challenges of the recent pandemic.



Young Lithuanians socialize as the sun sets beyond Vilnius Cathedral, August 2022. Some sit at the foot of a monument to Grand Duke Gediminas of Lithuania, believed to have founded Vilnius as his capital in the early 13th century. (G. FAGAN)

**“If you want to make sure your beliefs are true,
you need to encounter a different opinion”:**

An Interview with Fr. Vytautas Sadauskas

Fr. Vytautas Sadauskas has taught theology for almost three decades at Vilnius Jesuit High School, whose historic complex lies within the maze of alleyways forming the Old Town quarter of the Lithuanian capital. Born in 1966, Fr. Vytautas spent his formative years in then-Soviet Lithuania, where the Communist authorities’ control over Catholic life was considerably tighter than in neighboring Poland. Meeting Fr. Vytautas in August 2022 at St. Casimir’s Church in central Vilnius, the editor of the East-West Church Report learned about his path to the priesthood and the Society of Jesus [Jesuits] despite Soviet roadblocks, as well as his role in restoring Catholic education in Lithuania after 1991. The interview took place in English.

Was your family practicing Catholic?

Yes—particularly my grandparents, who took care of my First Communion. But my parents were also religious people. My father usually attended Mass early on Sunday mornings at St. Nicholas, a small church near here. He was professor of economics at Vilnius University. When I entered seminary, he was pressured so much that he had to leave his job—having a son in seminary was a bad example.

What made you want to become a priest?

During the summers when I was growing up, my parents brought

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Fr. Vytautas Sadauskas (G. FAGAN)

me to see my uncle, who was a forest ranger near the border with Poland. In the Soviet period the most active priests were usually sent away to small village parishes in this corner of Lithuania. So there I was able to meet very good priests with whom my uncle was in contact, especially Fr.—now Cardinal—Sigitas Tamkevičius...

...The founder of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.

Exactly. At that time [1975-83] he was parish priest in a very small town called Kybartai. My uncle and I spent time nearby, so we visited him and other local priests. I became inspired by this forest area and began to read the *Chronicle* as a teenager. This was a very important part of my formation and my decision to become a priest. I imagined myself doing the brave activities of those involved in the *Chronicle*, even spending the rest of my life in prison somewhere in Siberia!

I was inspired by the bravery of those parish priests who were courageously speaking the truth; saying what was happening in Lithuania at that time. I remember one sermon preached by Fr. Tamkevičius that was published in the *Chronicle*. He delivered it in a small village, at a service to commemorate three priests who had been murdered by the KGB. He bravely described the circumstances of their deaths and what the KGB had done to them. I was so inspired that I copied this sermon from the *Chronicle*.

When I entered Kaunas Seminary in 1986 things were still quite tough. We had to pass through KGB interrogation, but those brave priests instructed us in how we should behave: what we should say and what we should not say. I followed their instructions, and my application was accepted.

What sort of things would have been problematic if you had mentioned them to the KGB?

That I listened to Vatican Radio or Voice of America, for example. My father listened to BBC World Service, Voice

of America, and also Vatican Radio almost every evening—the lasting image I have of him is straining to listen to the radio despite a great deal of noisy interference. So I was instructed to deny that I listened to those types of radio stations. Of course, I was also instructed not to sign anything—to appear naïve, to say that I do not know anything, that my health is not good and so I wish to enter seminary—to give the impression that I am just some poor guy whose only option in life is to be a priest.

In Soviet Lithuania there was no formal Catholic education except at the seminary in Kaunas. Were parishes nevertheless able to organize Sunday schools?

Some brave priests took care of those children who wanted to take their First Communion. Fr. [Juozas] Zdebskis, for example, was imprisoned twice because of such catechism—he often featured in the *Chronicle*. He was killed in 1986, in a car accident staged by the KGB. But all activities were limited to the sacristy, I would say—nothing went on outside the walls of the church building.

Did the Soviet authorities permit any Catholic religious orders in Lithuania?

No. While I was in seminary I knew nothing about the Jesuits, because they and other religious orders were underground at that time. But I suspected that some of my friends could be Jesuits, and after a few years I discovered that this was indeed the case. In those conditions there was no

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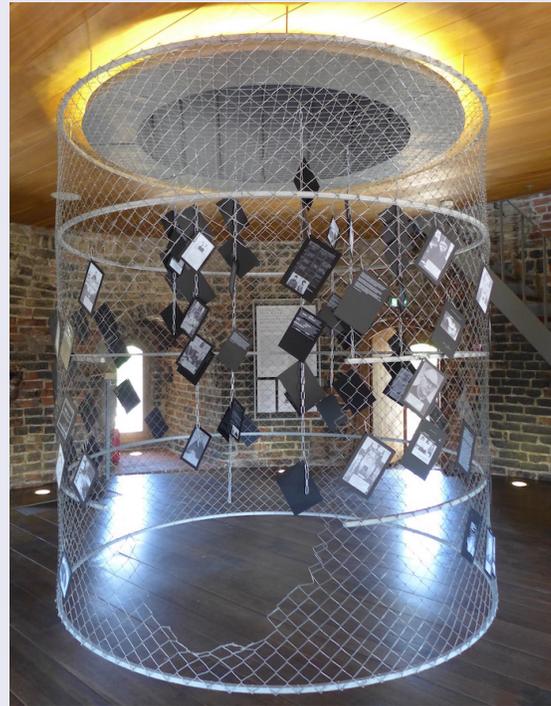
Issues of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* from the 1980s featuring Fr. Juozas Zdebskis (left) and then Fr. —now Cardinal—Sigitas Tamkevičius (right).

The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania

Lithuania's *Seimas* [parliament] declared 2022 the year of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*: a journal produced clandestinely despite Soviet persecution from March 1972 to March 1989. To commemorate the publication's 50th anniversary, a special exhibition—*Perskaitę duok kitam* [Lithuanian: Pass on to others after reading]—lined an external façade of Vilnius' Catholic cathedral and filled a gallery within its bell tower during 2022. The cathedral site holds particular resonance for Lithuanians as starting point for the two-million-strong human chain protesting against Soviet rule that spanned all three Baltic states on 23 August 1989. Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to declare independence from the USSR on 11 March 1990.

The *Chronicle* documented thousands of religious-freedom and other human-rights abuses in Soviet Lithuania. According to current Archbishop of Vilnius Gintaras Grušas, the publication developed from an appeal by a group of young Lithuanian Catholic priests to the authorities for an increase in the annual intake of students to the last remaining Catholic seminary in Lithuania, in the city of Kaunas. By keeping the number lower than the annual mortality rate among older priests, the Soviet government had sought the Church's gradual demise. [See "Faith and Freedom: A Lithuanian Perspective," Nanovic Institute, Notre Dame, 4 May 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guSS2Qikono>, from approximately 12.00.]

Exhibition to mark the 50th anniversary of the first issue of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, Vilnius Cathedral Bell Tower, August 2022 (G. FAGAN)



Pages from *Kronika: Slaptos Knygos Istorija* [Lithuanian: *Chronicle: The History of a Secret Book*], an illustrated history of the *Chronicle* for young Lithuanians published in 2022. As explained to the *Report* by Lojoteka librarian Lilijana Marcinkevičiūtė, told here is the story of how a priest received some candies with the request to give them to a particular person the following day, but without knowing that copies of the *Chronicle* were hidden inside them. He gave away several of the candies to a visiting couple, who took them home. When they went to eat the candies, the couple found the *Chronicle* inside the wrappers. They quickly returned them to the priest, telling him simply that the candies did not belong to them. "Luckily, those people were patriots!" Marcinkevičiūtė remarked.

Led by Fr. Sigitas Tamkevičius [now Cardinal, b. 1938], the work of the *Chronicle* was supported by dozens of priests, nuns, and laypeople using interpersonal channels; co-workers were often unaware of others' identities in order not to compromise the publication. Issues of the *Chronicle* were also smuggled abroad, where Lithuanian émigré and foreign-language media disseminated their content. As the 2022 exhibition in Vilnius recalled, the publishers "took maximum effort to remain undetected—they worked (or changed their working place) in the dark, changed the font of their writings, never wrote by hand, hid in the houses of people whom they could trust where they would end up staying for weeks until the new publication would be finished." The Soviet KGB bugged and searched the homes of participants, and some involved were arrested, tortured, and/or imprisoned.

The 2022 exhibition also noted that 23 of those producing and circulating the *Chronicle* were jailed, while 63 received "preventative punishments." In 1983 Fr. Tamkevičius received a 10-year sentence for "anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation." Following five years in labor camps in Soviet Russia, he was exiled to Siberia in 1988, before being released later that year due to *perestroika* liberalization measures. During Fr. Tamkevičius' imprisonment, the *Chronicle* was edited by Fr. [later Bishop] Jonas Boruta, who died on 19 December 2022. ♦

Fr. Sadauskas Interview *(continued from page 2)*

normal novitiate [period of training prior to taking vows] as we have now. A novice would simply work at a parish church and visit our provincial [spiritual adviser]—outwardly a parish priest—every few months for counsel. Such calls could not be made during daylight hours, as somebody might notice and inform the KGB. We also had reason to suspect that some of the seminarians were collaborating with the KGB, so we had to be careful.

Your own novitiate came later on.

Yes, by the end of my seminary years the Soviet Union was collapsing and everything was in chaos. I was ordained in 1991, and I joined the Jesuit order, to which my friends belonged. Initially, the underground arrangements for the novitiate continued: After ordination I worked in parishes for two years while sometimes meeting with our provincial, Fr. [later Bishop] Jonas Boruta. He had been one of the publishers of the *Chronicle* and was also famous for his great intellect—he held a doctorate in atomic physics. Fr. Jonas then decided to send all of us who had recently joined the Society of Jesus to different European countries to complete a regular novitiate—that is, normal studies. First I spent a year in Birmingham, England. Then I went to the USA for a couple of years to do my licentiate in theology—at Weston School of Theology, which is now part of Boston College.

By that time it was again possible to live in religious community in Lithuania.

Yes, we could organize ourselves. In the early 1990s a lot of activities were going on—we could barely embrace all the possibilities! The churches were crowded, there were many baptisms and weddings, and all schools were open to religious education. Pope John Paul II visited Lithuania



Vilnius Jesuit High School (G. FAGAN)

in 1993, just before I left for England. People were full of inspiration! This church—St. Casimir’s—was given back to us. We started to do reconstruction work and re-founded our Vilnius Jesuit High School in 1995.

There was a long history of Jesuit education in Lithuania prior to the suppression of the order in 1773, I understand.

Yes, we trace the beginning of our school to the Jesuit Collegium in Vilnius. The Collegium was established in 1570 and later became Vilnius University, which is the oldest university in the Baltic States. The high school functioned again between the two world wars, when it was run by Polish Jesuits—Vilnius being controlled by Poland for most of that period. Then, under Soviet occupation, it became a state school.

Has the expansion of the current school coincided with a revival of the Catholic Church in Lithuania?

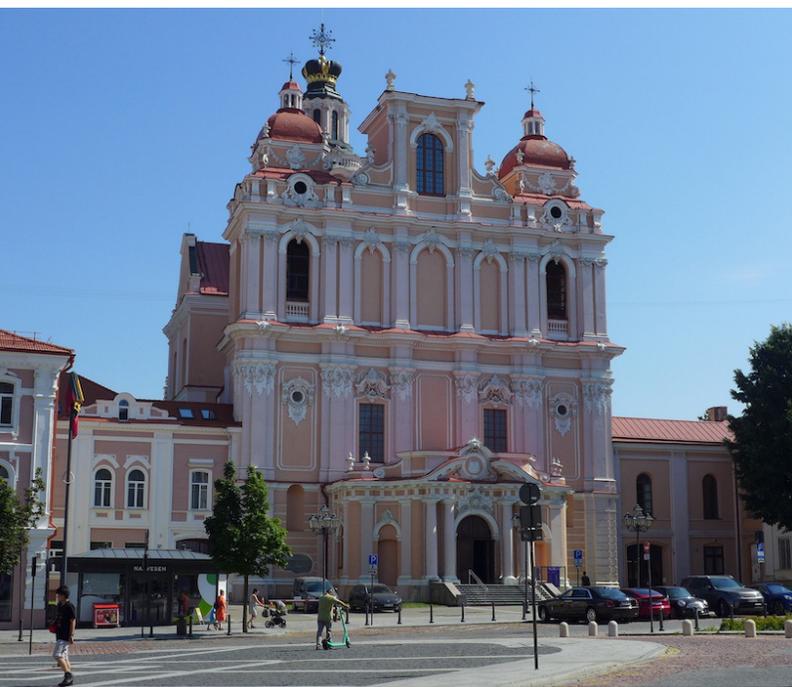
The peak was when the Soviet system collapsed—at that time everyone was interested in the Church. But little by little people discovered that it was not the ideal institution they had imagined. We have not had the same scandals as in the Western Church, so the situation now is not so challenging, but there is not as much interest as a couple of decades ago. However, we do have many people wanting to enter our school—around 350 applicants a year for only 100 places.

How many pupils attend overall, and how varied are their backgrounds?

We have 800 pupils in total, from various backgrounds. Almost all are Catholic—the intake reflects our society—but we are open to non-Catholics. For example, we currently have several Ukrainians studying here who are refugees from Kyiv and Kherson. They are Orthodox.

Does the Catholic Church fund the school?

No, but it does receive state funding. This covers salaries and some money for the pupils. In addition, parents pay fees depending upon their level of income. If they are unable



St. Casimir's Church, Vilnius (G. FAGAN)

to pay we will usually make an exception. We also support large families—we have some very big families here, and we try to provide some credit for this. In my brother’s family, for example, there are six children, and the five who are of school age are all pupils at the school.

Is theology taught as a separate subject in the traditional manner, or within other subjects and the wider life of the school?

It actually depends upon the teacher. I and one other Jesuit are the only clergy working at the school—most of the teachers are lay people.

Besides formal classes we have a place 26 kilometers [16 miles] outside Vilnius where pupils go for camp and retreat programs—a beautiful big house by a lake. Every group of pupils goes there once a year with a team of teachers and older students. They spend several days there, attend Mass, and are engaged in religious and many other activities. Social work is also part of our pupils’ formation—they co-ordinate this with Caritas [Catholic charitable services] and the local Sisters of Mother Teresa.

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Lojoteka Library and Media Center



Lojoteka interior (G. FAGAN)

Connected to Vilnius Jesuit High School by a subterranean corridor and opened in 2020, Lojoteka is a light-filled library and cultural center housing exhibition and lecture space, recording and film studios. There, librarian Lilijana Marcinkevičiūtė showed the editor of the *East-West Church Report* some of the 50,000 books she and a colleague are currently cataloguing. Many are devoted to theology or church history and were donated to the local Jesuit community by Lithuanian émigrés in the United States—particularly the Chicago area—in the wake of the re-establishment of Lithuanian independence in 1991: “A quite large and exceptional collection of Lithuanian books printed abroad by people who fled the Soviet regime and continued to write and publish.” Without suitable premises, Marcinkevičiūtė further explained, these volumes were previously housed at the Jesuits’ nearby monastery and remained inaccessible.



Lilijana Marcinkevičiūtė, librarian at Lojoteka (G. FAGAN)

Lojoteka’s now consolidated collection contains some rare items that will remain on site, including theological and devotional texts from the 18th century onwards and writings from the 1918-40 period of Lithuanian independence, according to Marcinkevičiūtė: “The Soviets were after those books and tried to burn them whenever they found them, so people hid them.” The library also preserves items of *samizdat* [Russian: self-published] literature clandestinely produced during the Soviet period, such as copies of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.

Lojoteka offers study resources to high school pupils. Alongside desks and lounging corners are Lithuanian- and foreign-language volumes on literature, mathematics, history, geography, and art. A small selection of Ukrainian-

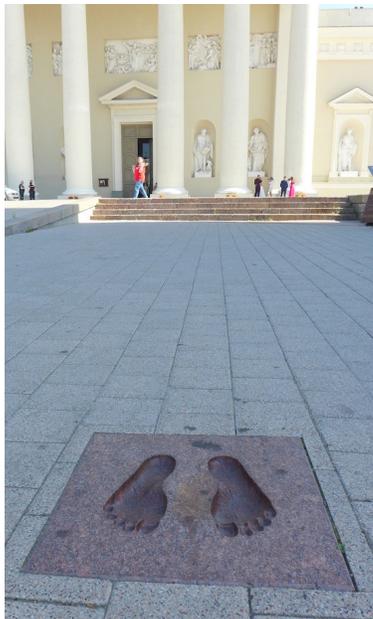
language children’s books greets recent refugees from Ukraine. As its holdings were only recently gathered on site, Lojoteka is not yet a lending library. “We are very much at the beginning—I am still in the process of finding out what we have,” Marcinkevičiūtė told the *East-West Church Report*. “It’s like a detective story!” In due course, however, “the idea is to open up this big fund of books to the public.” Lojoteka is currently open to visitors outside school hours. ♦



Lojoteka exterior (G. FAGAN)

Fr. Sadauskas Interview

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Outside Vilnius Cathedral, starting point of the two-million-strong human chain against Soviet rule that spanned all three Baltic states on 23 August 1989. (G. FAGAN)

What is your own approach to teaching theology?

I usually have older students in my religion classes—11th and 12th graders. With the 11th graders I cover the Church and Western civilization—we go through relevant general history and spiritual traditions. With the 12th graders I examine faith and culture. I take contemporary figures, such as J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, and we look at how their faith or religious values are reflected in their activities. We cover 30 topics in all. I also contact experts in particular topic areas and ask them to present their thoughts, which we then discuss. Or, for example, we might watch a *YouTube* video of someone like Alister McGrath, the expert on faith and science at Oxford University. We listen to the ideas he expresses, and then the pupils discuss whether or not they agree with him. That is how I present the thinking of the Church on some of these hot topics—I take one person who is an authority in that area, and I ask the pupils to read or listen to them. Whether they agree or not does not matter.

Do the older pupils in these classes tend to have positive or negative opinions of the Church?

It varies, actually—it depends upon their background. Some have had bad experiences in their family or parish, or received negative information from mainstream or social media, where positions on many topics—especially moral questions—are opposed to the Church.

Did you formulate this approach during your many years of teaching?

Yes, I discovered that this method is the best way. My philosophy towards these hot topics is that, if you want to make sure your beliefs are true, you need to encounter a different opinion. Then you can check whether your conviction is a true one or whether you have to change something because the other arguments are stronger than yours. You have to listen to other ideas in order to make sure that your own belief is correct—there is no other way. ♦

“We are trying to create a space for free thinking and critical analysis”:

An Interview with Valdis Tēraudkalns

Valdis Tēraudkalns grew up during the late Soviet period in a Latvian-speaking family in Riga, now capital of independent Latvia. He continues to live and work in the city as a professor of church history and history of religion at the University of Latvia’s faculty of theology. He is additionally associate minister at St. Savior’s Anglican Church on Anglikāņu iela [Latvian: Anglican Street] in Riga’s Old Town and general secretary of the Latvian Bible Society.

In early February the editor of the East-West Church Report joined Valdis (and his two British Blue cats) via Zoom for a conversation about his church activity and the role in Latvian public life played by the revived theology faculty. The interview was conducted in English.



Valdis Tēraudkalns outside St. Savior’s Anglican Church, Riga (Source: <https://anglicanriga.lv>)

Did your upbringing in Soviet-era Riga have a Christian element?

My parents were not active Christians. I was baptized, however, and I do remember being taken secretly from school to a Christmas service. Christmas was not a holiday during the Soviet period, and children were definitely not encouraged to attend services. Being in a crowded church was quite an experience for a young person—it had a kind of dissident atmosphere. That is one of the reasons why I started to become interested in Christianity—to my mind, and the minds of many young people back then, this was something not quite legal; it was against the system. I also remember telling my mother once during Soviet times that I even wanted to study church history. She was horrified! It was

probably the worst scenario, ruinous for one's career! But once the Soviet system collapsed, that is what I did.

Was the church you were taken to at Christmas as a child a Lutheran church?

It was, but I later became involved with the Baptist Church because the Baptists were working with young people much more actively. They also started to use contemporary forms of music and had many links with foreigners. These were not just official links—all churches had international relations controlled by the Soviet system—but grassroots-level contacts. I remember tourists visiting from Finland and Sweden, as well as émigré Latvians. It was a space relatively free from state control.

Your school education was in the 1970s and 80s. How strongly did you feel atheist propaganda in school? Did it fluctuate during those years?

There was definitely an aggressively repressive system working—even in details that were probably not regulated, which shows how people were intimidated. For example, we had to write essays in our high school classes in Latvian literature. In one essay I mentioned Christmas, for which I used a capital letter. The teacher told me off for this, saying that we do not use a capital letter for such festivals. This was not in fact a question of grammar, the message was: “No religion, please! If you must mention it, you should show that it has nothing to do with proper [i.e. Communist] festivals.”

This was in the early 1980s. But even at the very end of the decade, when *perestroika* was in full swing, I remember someone calling me with a request to meet. This person turned out to be from the KGB, and he hinted that the international contacts I had might prove problematic. He was well informed about my involvement in the church, using phrases known only in church circles. This incident shows that the system was still working right at the very end. Later on, of course, we learned how many church activists were involved in informing the KGB.

Have the churches that were functioning in Soviet-era Latvia addressed this issue?

The KGB archives were opened some years ago—anyone can access them. Many names, including top leaders in the Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, and Seventh-



St. Savior's Anglican Church, Riga (G. FAGAN)

day Adventist Churches, were found there. Some of the people who were identified as agents in these files talked openly about how they were recruited. Others said publicly that they did not know why their names featured there as informants, as they simply had international contacts. Of course, there is no proof in either direction to say whether this is true, but at least they talked about it openly. Others have never said anything in public, including Metropolitan Aleksandr (Kudryashov) of the Latvian Orthodox Church, who appears in the KGB files under the agent code name *Chitatel'* [Russian: “Reader.” See Oksana Antonenko, “Latviia atkrila arkhivy KGB,” *BBC Russian Service*, 21 December 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-46653022>.]

So this is still a live issue. I would say that we cannot deal with the past with silence—by simply saying nothing.

Presumably there was no Anglican community in Riga when you were growing up. What drew you to the Anglican tradition in particular?

Yes, the historical Anglican church here was closed in the early 1960s during the USSR's anti-religious campaign at that time—from the 1940s onward it had been used by the Lutherans. The building then became the students' club of Riga Technical University—one of the very first discos started there in the 1970s. Now it once again belongs to the local Anglican community, which is very multicultural, including Latvians, Russians, Swedes, Dutch, and so on. Very few in

the community are from the UK, however, so it defies the stereotype that Anglicanism is something peculiarly English.

I began to become interested in Anglicanism in the 1990s, when I was a visiting student in the UK. I attended Anglican churches in Manchester and Oxford. What I really liked about it was that it was comprehensive—not confessional in the Lutheran manner. On the same street you could find an Anglican church that was almost Catholic, as well as one that would be strongly Charismatic or Evangelical, with a worship band playing and no vestments. Very importantly to me, it also had a strong liberal wing—theologians at grassroots level standing for inclusivity: the rights of women, of LGBT people, and so on. This way of keeping things together and allowing space for different ideas and worship styles really

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St. John's Lutheran Church, Riga (G. FAGAN)



Tēraudkalns Interview *(continued from page 7)*

attracted me. Looking back now, I can see that things were more complex—like any other church, Anglicans struggle with many issues.

Latvia is situated where three major Christian traditions meet: Lutheranism to the north, Orthodoxy to the east, and Catholicism to the south. The Pew Research Center’s 2017 study “Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe” found Latvia to be “religiously mixed” almost evenly along these lines [<http://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe/>.] Is there a sense locally that any particular faith is quintessentially Latvian?

We do not have precise statistics. Historically, Lutheranism has been the majority church, but many Latvians are also Roman Catholics. The Orthodox Church would be the main one among ethnic Russians. The Lutheran Church has been perceived by many as a kind of Latvian national church, but not so strongly as in other countries, such as in parts of Germany or even neighboring Estonia. Ludvigs Adamovičs, a famous Latvian church historian, wrote that the idea of the Lutheran Church as a church for the nation is more wishful thinking than reality. He was writing that in the 1920s—a century ago! Our country has become ever more secular since then, and we cannot say that there is one large religious group with which people would associate.

Back in the 1840s tens of thousands of Latvians chose to convert from Lutheranism to Orthodoxy. Is there a strong sense in Latvia today that cultural background need not determine faith identity?

Yes, and this mass conversion to the Orthodox faith was not just due to Russification or financial incentive. It also happened because many people felt alienated from the Lutheran Church, which in the 19th century was a German church with strong links to the nobility. Many people today might think of the Orthodox Church as a kind of ethnic Russian faith, but that is not the case—there are also Orthodox Latvians. Just recently the Orthodox Church in Latvia produced a Latvian translation of the Psalms from Church Slavonic, as well as new Latvian translations of liturgical texts, and there are some Orthodox churches where worship services are in Latvian.

With the fragmentation of religious life, of course, many younger denominations have also been introduced—Baptists in the 19th century, Seventh-day Adventists at the beginning of the 20th century. These groups have remained

small but they are much more integrated now—they try to maintain ecumenical links with the other churches. There is also a strong Charismatic movement—not just independent Charismatic churches that often have links to the United States, but also Charismatic movements within larger denominational bodies.

How have the changes in Latvia over the past 30 years influenced the attitude of young people towards the Church?

There was enthusiasm at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. Now it is less. You can see this simply by attending churches of various denominations—there are not so many young people there. The main reason is the same as in other secularized Western countries—churches have become less relevant, and many young people now

would not accept a church not ordaining women, or not being LGBT inclusive, or having a very negative attitude towards other religions, for example. Of course, there will always be congregations that are attractive to young people—that are open to more experimental kinds of worship, for example. But the general trend is not encouraging.

Turning to your work with students at the University of Latvia: How recently was the faculty of theology re-established there?

The faculty was opened in 1920, after Latvia won independence from

Russia. It functioned for 20 years—until the Soviet annexation of Latvia in 1940—but was then closed, except for a short period under Nazi occupation. The faculty was re-established in 1990, when Latvia once again proclaimed independence.

Does this mean there was no theological education in Soviet-era Latvia?

The Lutherans still offered courses in theology. They had a seminary where they tried to follow the pre-war program of the faculty of theology and to maintain academic standards. The Catholics also had a seminary. The Baptists repeatedly petitioned the local government department for religious affairs for permission to start theological courses. By the very end of the Soviet period they had semi-official courses here and also people studying in Moscow, where the Baptists ran an extensive theological program. There was thus some theological education, but it was not part of a broader international scene—that was not possible. Some of the literature used was smuggled in—brought in as single copies by church leaders on international trips. Many books were old, from the pre-war years.

When the faculty of theology was re-established in 1990, it was as an extension of the Lutheran seminary. The students were typically men preparing for ministry in the



University of Latvia, Riga
(G. FAGAN)

Lutheran Church—and not only men, as women’s ordination was still possible at that time. [Editor’s note: It ceased with the election of Jānis Vanags—a conservative on the issue—as archbishop in 1993.] That has since changed: among the present faculty staff we have Orthodox, Anglicans, and Adventists, as well as Lutherans. The student body is even more diverse—we have had Muslim students and a Neopagan student, for example.

So today there are fewer studying to become clergy?

Much fewer, and people can choose to major in either theology or religious studies. This means that some opt to study Buddhism or another religion, for example. We currently have over 100 students: around 90 studying on the three-year bachelor’s degree program, 11 on the master’s degree program, and two or three doctoral students.

The larger churches now have their own seminary arrangements—the Lutherans have an academy, and the Orthodox, Catholics, and Baptists also have seminaries. Yet many pastors are graduates of our faculty, or would still choose to study with us for an advanced degree.

We try to cooperate with the church-connected educational institutions, but it is not easy. Our goals are obviously different as we are part of a secular university. We are also perceived as “liberal,” although I would say that this is an oversimplification, as not all staff and students would regard themselves that way. There is also more than one definition of what theological “liberalism” means. Here we are trying to create a space for free thinking and critical analysis. I believe the church should be a place where people are not told what they have to believe, but where they find out for themselves—they develop their own understanding rather than being told in a strict manner what the dogmas are. Every denomination has its own identity, but it should be broad enough to include various viewpoints.

In what particular fields of research are faculty staff members engaged?

Research on the Soviet period is one—together with some colleagues, I am personally involved in that area. It helps that we are acquainted with the relevant local languages, Latvian and Russian. We also have studies looking at contemporary religious life. For example, there is now a project financed by the Latvian Council of Science on the role of women in the Lutheran Church, including the issue of ordination. Some staff members have also been involved in Bible translation.

Is that work linked with the Latvian Bible Society?

Yes, the Latvian Bible Society published the newest Latvian-language translation of the Bible in 2012. I would describe this as the first ecumenical Bible translation into Latvian, as people from various churches took part. Previously, all translations were essentially Lutheran projects. The Catholics have produced a New Testament, but not a complete Bible.

The first translation into Latvian was completed by Johann Ernst Glück [a German pastor and stepfather to Peter the Great’s second wife, Catherine I] in the 17th century. This underwent many revisions. Then a new translation was started between the two world wars. The translation of the New

Testament was published in the 1930s, while the Old Testament was completed in diaspora. There were some Baptists involved, but Lutherans still mainly led that project. This second major translation into Latvian was published in 1965, but it was still in the tradition of Pastor Glück.

The 2012 translation was a completely fresh start with a new team—mostly people with no previous involvement in Bible translation, such as the famous Latvian poets Uldis Bērziņš [1944–2021] and Knuts Skujenieks [1936–2022], who produced a translation of the *Song of Songs* [*Song of Solomon*] during his years in a Soviet prison camp. The person who chaired the translation committee is an exception: Juris Cālītis, a Lutheran and Anglican minister who for some time was also dean of the theology faculty. He became involved in the translation work in diaspora during the Soviet period and was later coordinator of the Bible Translation

Committee of the Latvian Bible Society.

Is the 2012 Bible translation now used by all churches in Latvia?

Some congregations might also use the old translation. The Catholics also use their own New Testament and lectionary texts for liturgical purposes. But yes, the 2012 translation is distributed throughout all churches in Latvia. The new translation makes the Deuterocanonical books available in modern Latvian for the first time. The 1965 translation did not contain them—in those early days of ecumenism, The British and Foreign Bible Society still had a policy of not funding the publication of those texts, even if they were in use by Lutherans, Anglicans, and some other Protestants.

We are currently in the process of revising the new translation—the revised text will hopefully be launched in 2024. We have also entered the digital age, as the new Latvian Bible is available on international platforms such as YouVersion and Olive Tree. ♦



In Riga’s Old Town, a Latvian mural of Christ’s words in John 10:9: “I am the door— whoever enters through me will be saved.” (G. FAGAN)



“Now it feels like we can breathe!”: An Interview with Irina Paert

Enveloped by Scots pines in Nõmme, a suburb of the Estonian capital Tallinn, is the sleek new building of Püha Johannese Kool—St. John's School—which opened just in time for the start of the 2022-23 school year. The school has an Orthodox ethos—teachers and pupils' families must share Orthodox Christian values—and its lofty central atrium orients towards an Orthodox chapel where the priest of the nearby St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church holds a weekly prayer service. The chapel's stark interior walls will be frescoed in due course by the parish's deacon, Nikita Andrejev, who is also an iconographer.

In early September 2022 studies secretary Pille-Katrin Levin greeted the editor of the East-West Church Report at the new school entrance, where all outdoor shoes must be removed (each pupil has a named shoe compartment.) Levin recalled how the school has increased tenfold since its initial intake in 2012-13, a new first grade being added each successive year. After renting two small rooms in Tallinn's medieval Old Town “and a tiny corridor beside them where the secretary sat,” St. John's then moved to a rented former kindergarten in the city's Mustamäe District. There are now 457 pupils.

The school's extensive new facilities include a sports' hall, library, and cafeteria, which offers pupils three meals a day and also serves as a meeting place for older pupils and parents “to chat, generate new ideas, work on projects,” Levin continued. Fees to attend St. John's are currently 1,300 Euros [\$1,400] per annum.

The school community includes members of both the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church—under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople—and the Estonian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), even as their hierarchies are formally estranged. While St. John's' sponsor parish is under the Moscow Patriarchate, the school has publicly condemned “the distortion of Christ's teachings for destructive purposes. We cannot agree with Patriarch Kirill's statements regarding the war in Ukraine, and we consider the bloodshed of the Russian authorities in Ukraine to be a catastrophic mistake. The life-giving message of the Gospel must not be a cover for the work of destruction.” The school has also affirmed that it is not supported financially by “the Moscow Patriarchate, any foreign country, or political group.” [For more on the impact of the war in Ukraine upon Estonian Orthodox under the Moscow Patriarchate, see the East-West Church Report, vol. 30 (2022), no. 4, 7-10.]

As pupils delighted in the unfamiliar expanse of their new facility, Irina Paert—head of its educational center—told the editor of the East-West Church Report more about the school's distinctive identity. The interview took place in English.

St. John's recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. How did the idea for an Orthodox school in Tallinn develop?

The idea evolved once we had a quite vibrant community of Estonian converts who had been in the Orthodox Church for a few years. We were engaged in various common projects in the field of education with our friends from the Catholic Church. In Tallinn there is an institution called Old Town Educational College (Collegium Educationis Revaliae) that was established here by the early 1990s, so quite quickly after Estonian independence. It is a municipal rather than a private school, but its most active members have ties to the Catholic Church, and it is quite strong in the area of spirituality. We got to know one another at a conference they organized.

It was also in the nature of our parish and parish priest, Fr. Toomas Hirvoja, to want to extend the spirit of our community into other fields. We have a number of people who work in the spheres of culture and education. Liivika Simmul—our headmistress—had previously founded a private school and so knew how to run one. She believed that we needed to found our own school. In fact, the Catholics also encouraged us—they thought there should be more faith-based schools in Tallinn. It was also a time when a Lutheran school and a second Catholic school were being set up. There was thus momentum among various active Christians to create something within their own confessions, but not strictly for their own people.

Helpfully, the law in Estonia is very favorable towards non-profit schools. They are eligible to receive support per

pupil from the Ministry of Education, and in some cases also the municipal authorities. However, this does mean that such schools have to be licensed, and that tuition fees may not be above a certain level.

Why is the school named after St. John the Evangelist?

It was Fr. Toomas' idea. He suggested that St. John the Evangelist would be a most suitable school patron as—being the beloved disciple of Christ and an apostle of love—he is the epitome of both discipleship and love.

How have you been able to complete this extraordinary new school building despite the recent pandemic?

I think it is really thanks to the grace of God. When we started we had no money, or even any idea of how we were going to do it. Then, in 2019, one of our parents found a plot of land among the pine trees of Kivimäe [part of the Tallinn suburb of Nõmme, approximately two miles from St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church] on a property auction website. With the help of a loan from another parent, the school managed to purchase it. In 2020 we held an architectural competition and managed to secure a bank loan to start building. A really competent team of people was involved—many parents have experience in construction. One school employee, Anti Kodas, turned out to be a genius in this field; he managed the entire project.

How did you manage to raise enough money to build?

Some parents have backgrounds in finance. They demonstrated that the school was sustainable and so helped obtain the bank loan, which needs to be paid back, of course. We also received donations, but not large ones. The important thing is that the parents have standing donations. There are around 200 supporters who give some part of their monthly income to pay off the loan. We are able to pay because we have this extra sum for the building coming in every month. The supporters are primarily parents, but they are not rich—just ordinary people, including many parishioners, who simply love the school and want to support it.

So the burden is spread across many people.

That's the idea. Even giving five Euros a month still counts; over the years it will make a difference. Our fundraising is not on an American scale—in Estonian culture this kind of philanthropy is not done in the same way; when people give to charity they try to keep it quiet. So far we have managed to fundraise quite delicately, and I hope it will continue in this way.



Pille-Katrin Levin (G. FAGAN)

How long did construction take?

One year—the cornerstone was laid in August 2021. No one can believe it! The builders were working around the clock, especially recently—they were put under a lot of pressure. We were determined to finish because we didn't have anywhere else to go. We had just given up our old building, which we rented. It had become like a Harry Potter school, where every space was extendable, transformed according to need. Now it feels like we can breathe!

Is theology taught as a separate subject in the traditional manner, or within other subjects and the wider life of the school?

For pupils under 16 it is not a separate subject. We have a class called humanities' studies, similar to anthropology, with its own program. It includes the Bible, saints' lives, and other texts. It is the vision of one teacher, Liina Olmaru, who is also a professional actress. She starts with Greek mythology and epics like *The Odyssey* before moving on to the Old Testament, the Gospels, the saints. She uses narrative-based learning—storytelling, essentially—followed by conversation. This is the favorite subject of many children!

Of course, it is difficult for smaller children to focus, and if they start playing there would be chaos. So they each have an album and they copy artwork, such as icons, into this album. While they follow the lines of the drawing, the teacher tells them stories about what they are drawing, so it is all connected. Their hands are busy drawing, and so they are able to sit and listen.



Irina Paert (G. FAGAN)

In the 16-19 age group, pupils have classes in religious education—this is an introduction to religion rather than confessional teaching.

How else do educational approaches here differ from regular state schools in Estonia?

Our art program is particularly rich: It includes printmaking and ceramics. We are lucky to have very inventive and energetic art teachers. We also sometimes integrate subjects in this area. For example, an art teacher and a natural science teacher might take classes into the forest so that the children are able both to learn something scientific and also to draw what they see. In general, teachers like to go outside with the children, and there is time during the school day when being outside is compulsory—not all local schools do this. Even when we were based in the city center and did not have this amazing forest all around us, the teachers would take pupils into Old Town or to nearby parks.

(continued on page 12)

Paert Interview (continued from page 11)

Another feature of our school is that we have adopted a total immersion method of English-language teaching with materials created by Sister Mary Vénard [b. 1923], a Catholic nun from America who spent many years teaching in Estonia. The Catholic school in Old Town shared her materials with us. The children start in first grade, when they can't really read their own language yet. They receive the same natural environment as native English speakers, where they recite nursery rhymes and other traditional childhood texts. It is intensive in the sense that the children get very involved in the lesson and the material becomes lodged in their heads. By fifth grade, they are fluent.

The reading material selected by Sister Mary also embodies the Christian ethos of good neighborliness to others.

This is only for English. We tried to do something similar for Russian—in Estonia the teaching of Russian as a foreign language, despite our Soviet background, is a real challenge. This doesn't mean that children don't want to learn it—parents especially, at least before the war, wanted their children to learn Russian because there are many Russian speakers in Estonia, and Russia remains a neighbor. But Sister Mary's method did not adapt well to Russian, so we use different materials. We offer Russian as either a foreign language or a "second home language," which is for those children who have Russian-speaking or bilingual parents and whose proficiency level is above beginner's, but below pupils at Russian-language schools in Estonia. This is also something other schools do not have.



Pupils in the atrium of St. John's School, Tallinn at the end of the school day
(G. FAGAN)

Is the school's Orthodox ethos also present in the study of music?

The children learn Orthodox hymnody and also some beautiful traditional Estonian Christian hymns. At the end of classes every day they sing a hymn composed for the school by [internationally renowned Estonian composer] Arvo Pärt, "Memme Musi" [Estonian: "Mama's Kiss"]. Our headmistress wrote the lyrics:

My mother saw me off this morning/She kissed my forehead tenderly/To protect me/And keep me safe from harm.

The school day is almost over now/ Was I good today?/School's wisdom, like a mother/Feeds and clothes me.

Help me, O Mother of Peace/Carry my prayer to your Son/That I might also greet tomorrow/Filled with love and light.

In general, our school's musical program is very rich, with elements of music theory and history, as well as instrument learning outside the curriculum—children can learn violin, guitar, and piano here. Thanks to our music teacher, we have five grand pianos! [Laughs.] Singing is also very popular in Estonia: adult and youth singing festivals are held alternately every two years, and every school has several choirs. Ours has five, spanning the various pupil age groups, as well as teachers and parents.

Is Arvo Pärt connected to the school in any other way?

One could say the connection is through the Church. For many people in Estonia—not just our school—Arvo is a spiritual authority, someone above the various



A new classroom at St. John's School, Tallinn (G. FAGAN)

political and ideological struggles that divide society. He may also be the reason for our love for St. Silouan [the Athonite, 1866-1938] and his disciple St. Sofrony [(Sakharov), 1896-1993], founder of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Monastery in Essex, England. [Our parish priest] Fr. Toomas began visiting this monastery in Essex...

...Was Fr. Toomas raised in the Orthodox Church?

No, he is a convert. We had some very spiritual priests here during Soviet times, and when it became possible, some younger people started coming to the Orthodox Church and became part of their community. They were very much interested in the Orthodox tradition of spiritual guidance contained in the *Philokalia*, and I think they were already reading the writings of St. Silouan in the Soviet period. So it was natural to feel an ascetic connection with St. Sophrony and the monastery in Essex. Arvo Pärt and his wife Nora visited the Essex monastery regularly from the 1980s, and Fr. Toomas from the early 2000s. Fr. Sophrony was no longer alive by that point, but there were other priests there who had been his disciples.

This connection with the monastery has since grown—it is not easy to explain why, but it seems



Chapel (left) and atrium at St. John’s School, Tallinn (G. FAGAN)

particularly attractive to Estonian Orthodox. There is a group of people who regularly visit Essex—or did prior to the pandemic, at least. Our school began to organize such trips for teachers twice a year. Even non-Orthodox teachers were able to stay for a week, to attend services, and to consult with Sister Magdalen, a nun at the monastery who has long worked with children and teenagers.

Does the school also engage with the wider public?

We have been organizing international public conferences almost annually since 2013, the last few in collaboration with the Arvo Pärt Center in Laulasmaa [25 miles west of Tallinn]. Conference themes have included pedagogy as love and hope, creativity, and *metanoia* [repentance]. This year it is “To Be Human”—what it means to be human in a time of crisis, dehumanization, and how current events affect our image of God. ♦



Tahan alati, et muusika puudutaks kuulajat. Nii nagu kiriku uks peab olema igatihe jaoks lahti, peab ka muusikat esitama nii, et kõik uksed oleksid lahti.
ANDRES MUSTONEN
I always want music to touch the listener. Just as a church door must be open to everyone, so must music be performed in a way that all doors are open.

An exhibit at the Arvo Pärt Center, Laulasmaa, featuring Arvo Pärt (left) and Estonian musician friend Andres Mustonen. Mustonen’s quotation reads: “I always want music to touch the listener, just as a church door must be open to everyone, so must music be performed in a way that all doors are open.”

(Source: ARVO PÄRT CENTER)

The Arvo Pärt Center

The rich yet sparse sound of Estonian classical composer Arvo Pärt [b. 1935] is unmistakable to millions around the world. Less familiar is the close relationship between Pärt’s music and Orthodox Christianity.

Opened in 2018, the Arvo Pärt Center in Laulasmaa [25 miles west of Tallinn] illuminates the role of Pärt’s Orthodox faith in his work. Back in 1976 in then Soviet Estonia, following a lengthy period of creative block coupled with disillusionment with contemporary musical conventions, Pärt experienced a sudden breakthrough when he composed a piece, *Für Alina*, using a new signature style, *tintinnabuli* [from Latin *tintinnabulum*, bell]. He had also spent the preceding years immersed in Gregorian chant, Scripture, and prayer, and in 1974 was advised by iconographer Viktor Krivorotov to experiment with unfamiliar types of art: “You just have to have the courage to do poorly, fail, and even have a certain impudence.”

(continued on page 14)

Pärt Center (continued from page 13)

Tintinnabuli interweaves two monodic lines of music in what for Pärt is unambiguously spiritual dialogue:

The melodic line I create is like my own imperfection, and the tintinnabuli sound is like the smoothing out of the imperfection, like a guardian angel who guards my steps... One is like my sins, the other is the forgiveness of my sins.

St. Sophrony, born in 1896, moved to Paris after the Communist takeover of his native Russia. Unable to find spiritual solace in art, Eastern religion, or formal study of Orthodox theology, he joined the monastic community on Mount Athos where St. Silouan was residing in 1925 and subsequently became his spiritual son. Two decades later he returned to Paris, and in 1959 founded the St. John the Baptist Monastery in Essex, England.



Many of Pärt's works—such as *Te Deum* and *Magnificat*—also draw upon sacred texts from both Eastern and Western Christian tradition. Here too, spiritual content directly informs musical structure, as this typically follows the emphasis, number of syllables, and even punctuation found in the texts. “The words,” Pärt has said, “write my music.” In some cases—such as *Silouan's Song*—this is while the works themselves remain instrumental.

As with *Silouan's Song*, the inspiration for Pärt's *Adam's Lament* is a poem by St. Silouan [(Antonov), 1866-1938], a Russian who moved to Greece as a young man and spent the rest of his life as an Orthodox monk on Mount Athos. Pärt and his wife Nora first encountered St. Silouan's writings in Tallinn in the 1970s. The impact of his teachings—highlighted by the sayings “my brother is my life” and “keep thy mind in hell and despair not”—deepened when the couple later met his spiritual disciple, St. Sophrony (Sakharov), in England. (In 1980 the Pärts were granted permission to leave the Soviet Union, where the regime disliked his spiritually-influenced compositions.)



Approach to the Arvo Pärt Center (top left), interior with library (top right), and chapel dedicated to St. Silouan the Athonite and St. Sofrony (Sakharov). (G. FAGAN)

The Arvo Pärt Center in Laulasmaa states that one of the most important tasks of its library is to display the early Christian texts that so inspired Pärt during the development of his *tintinnabuli* style. Pärt believes that:

Sacred texts exist independent of us and await us. There will come an hour when every person finds his way to them. This meeting will come about when the texts are no longer regarded as literature or as a work of art, but as a model, or as a point of reference.

Alongside Pärt's personal musical archive, the Center's library offers some 2,000 of his books to researchers, most of which are on Orthodox theology.

One of the Center's pentagonal courtyards holds a small chapel dedicated to St. Silouan and St. Sophrony. Inside, facing the entrance, a fresco of Christ is flanked by the two Athonite saints. Christ holds the proclamation “I Am”: (“Our own being is merely lent to us, and is dependent upon the source of all being,” the visitors' guide explains.) Opposite is a fresco of Adam representing humankind, accompanied by the closing words to *Adam's Lament*: “Be merciful unto me, O Lord! Bestow on me the Spirit of humility and love.” ♦

BOOK REVIEW

The Arduous Path of Post-Soviet Protestant Theological Education

by Mark R. Elliott

Wilmore, KY, First Fruits Press, 2020

185 pp., open access PDF, ISBN 978-1648170041

GREGORY L. NICHOLS

Editor's note: Dr. Mark R. Elliott is Editor Emeritus of the East-West Church Report. His anthology may be downloaded at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/academicbooks/35/>.

In his 2020 foreword to *The Arduous Path of Post-Soviet Protestant Theological Education*, Walter Sawatsky notes that the story and statistics told in this anthology “nearly stagger the mind.” “Arduous” proves to be the perfect word to encompass the sweeping 30-year path of Protestant theological education in post-Soviet society, the development of which Elliott documents here first-hand and in real time.

Elliott has enjoyed a rare perspective. His academic work on tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, along with his tenacious research highlighting the stories of dissidents during Soviet times, earned him a place among the handful of academics who first assisted post-Soviet Protestants in their efforts to develop theological education with the mission ministry Overseas Council. Elliott’s connections were not limited to one or two denominations or their Western champions, but encompassed every person he could find with an interest in Protestant theological education. He has thus been front and center in the production of objective research on the topic throughout its glorious and frustrating story.

The book under review is an anthology of Elliott’s selected articles published between 1993 and 2020. It is divided into four sections: “Opening Doors” (1993-94), “Establishing a Solid Foundation” (1995-99), “Emerging Concerns” (1999-2004), and “Future Promise and Warnings” (2010-20).

“Opening Doors” is comprised of three chapters: One and Two are snapshots of the immediate post-Soviet situation, when steep challenges were already becoming apparent. Following a February 1993 meeting in Moscow, for example, Elliott reflects:

Much can be said in a positive manner about the vision and energy of new theological educators in the East, and for the willingness of an array of western evangelical agencies to assist. At the same time, however, sober reflection would suggest that too many institutions have been founded without sufficient consideration for the advisability of collaborative efforts in expensive and labor-intensive areas such as faculty, texts, and library development (7).

Chapter Three contains an overview of the history of theological education during the Soviet era. From there, it moves to a profile of the situation in 1994, with suggested guidelines and projections for its future development. The chapter also features a helpful chart of the very earliest post-Soviet theological institutions.

The following section, “Establishing a Solid Foundation,” contains a further three chapters, opening with a paper delivered

in Oradea, Romania, in 1994. This also appears motivated by troubling trends Elliott and others were noticing:

Theological educators in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union should be encouraged to develop culture-specific criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of leadership training programs. They should be creative and judicious in adapting, rather than submitting to the wholesale adoption of, Western accrediting standards. They should weigh carefully the costs of accepting secular governments as the accrediting agents for theological schools (40).

From 1997, Chapter Five is a concise review of Wayne Kenney’s research on non-traditional methods of theological training among unregistered Baptists. Here, Elliott hopes that Kenney’s methodologies could be used “to help determine strengths and weaknesses of the various current efforts to provide theological education to pastors in post-Soviet societies, including correspondence, extension, and formal residential programs” (49).

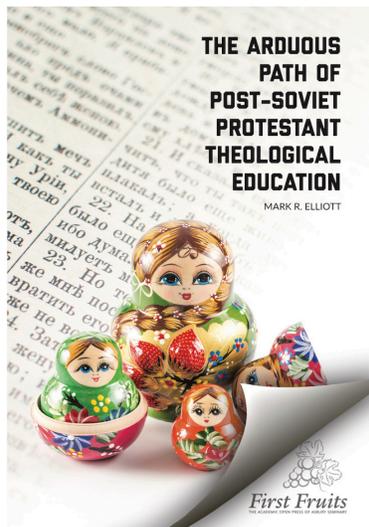
Originally presented as a paper in Osijek, Croatia, in 1999, Chapter Six introduces the findings of two contemporary dissertations dealing with issues of theological education in post-Soviet society. Again, unexpected problems emerge:

For many it would seem axiomatic that a major goal of seminary education would be to train church leadership; [yet a senior Protestant leader] identifies a seminary-church gap, some might even say chasm, that thwarts this aim. In addition to youthful inexperience and lack of calling already noted, the gap is widened in some instances by graduates who are full of theoretical knowledge and intellectual pride who balk at service in remote districts (58).

The third section, “Emerging Concerns,” contains two chapters. Published in 1999, Chapter Seven is a summary of a theological educators’ conference held in Kyiv in 1996. It reminds us of the already dizzying pace of development:

Among indigenous conference participants, the average number of years of involvement in theological education was three—a startling illustration of the infancy of the movement. Nevertheless, Western observers who had attended the first such gathering in February 1993 in Moscow and the second in October 1994 in Oradea, Romania, commented on the rapid maturation and growing sophistication of the indigenous leadership (83).

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Published in 2004, Chapter Eight examines the issues surrounding the Association of Theological Schools' 1990 initiative to implement a global standard for theological education and illustrates its negative consequences.

The final section, "Future Promises and Warnings," contains three chapters. Written in 2010, Chapter Nine may elicit strong memories and emotions from those involved in Protestant theological education at the time, as it enumerates the increasing challenges experienced by post-Soviet theological educators and administrators over the previous decade:

Since the fall of Communism, Protestant schools have too often overbuilt, have depended too heavily upon Western money and models, and have admitted too many marginal students. In addition, they too often have failed to maintain sufficiently close ties with the church, have adopted a more classical than practical curricula, and as a result, have produced graduates who frequently are ill-equipped for pastoral duties or are not welcome in the churches they have been trained to serve (130).

From 2020, Chapter Ten highlights the circumstances that led to the demise of the Russian American Christian University (RACU) in Moscow, arguably the flagship of Christian liberal arts education in post-Soviet society. Elliott summarizes:

RACU was born during the fleeting ascendancy of pro-Western, reform-minded, Yeltsin-era higher-education administrators. They were soon eclipsed by officials unsympathetic to private institutions, Protestants, and liberal-arts education. As a result, RACU's higher education model—which stressed faith-based character formation and the creative stimulus of the liberal arts—has little purchase in Russia today (145).

Likewise written in 2020, the final chapter carefully documents the increasing legal restrictions being placed upon Protestants in Russia, as well as the impact those changes are having upon their theological schools:

The concerted efforts of the administration of President Vladimir Putin to exert ever greater control

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over all sectors of Russian life is much in keeping with the country's longstanding tradition of authoritarian rule. Russia's Protestant seminaries labor under the additional burden of the common, Russian media-stoked perception of Protestantism as a Western import... in a climate of chauvinistic nationalism and xenophobia (172).

I would recommend this collection to any scholar researching religion in post-Soviet society. The essays clearly delineate the key junction points along the developmental pathway taken by Protestant theological education following the break-up of the Soviet Union, as well as its impact upon local Protestant experience. The only shortcoming of the collection is that its focus during the most recent decade is limited to the Russian Federation. Dr. Elliott's writings should also prove thought-provoking to anyone interested in theological education in a wider global context, as they record the challenges and decisions (plus their consequences) related to the development of theological education within a dynamically changing society.

Every chapter is thoroughly researched, with extensive bibliographic references and endnotes that often contain useful personal insights. I found the notes to Chapter Nine alone a reason to acquire the book. As someone involved in theological education in the post-Soviet world, I encounter blind spots and niggles that are hard to track down when I try to recount what was happening during the period studied here. In the notes to Chapter Nine, those difficult-to-document moments are transformed into quotable statements.

While not an exhaustive explanation of every expression of Protestant theological education in post-Soviet society, this anthology nevertheless plots a clear narrative of its "arduous" development to the present day. Re-reading that trajectory in these essays in the wake of February 2022, I realized I had no excuse to have been caught off-guard by the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Putin's Russia. ♦

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