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“We are all brothers and sisters— I know and understand no other Christianity”:

An Interview with Fr. Georgi Edelstein

Fr. Georgi Edelstein was born in Kiev [now Kyiv], Soviet Ukraine, in 1932. When the Nazis invaded in 1941 he was forced to flee eastwards to Soviet Russia with his Jewish father and Polish mother. After receiving Orthodox baptism as a young adult, he spent more than two decades searching for an Orthodox bishop prepared to ordain him to the priesthood, his advanced level of education and part-Jewish background being regarded as impediments under Soviet rule.

Although finally ordained in 1979, Fr. Georgi was suspended from priestly duties in early 1987 after organizing an unauthorized church summer camp. He then rose to international prominence as one of two Orthodox priests invited to meet President Ronald Reagan at a reception held at the US Embassy in Moscow in May 1988. The other was Fr. Gleb Yakunin (1934-2014), who had been sentenced to five years in a KGB prison in 1980 for “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda” and then amnestied part-way through an additional five-year term of internal exile in Siberia. Within days of the embassy event, Fr. Georgi’s suspension was lifted. “My thanks to Ronald Reagan,” he joked recently, “he really did give me back a church!”

Now aged 91, Fr. Georgi has not receded into quiet retirement. A Duty to Not Stay Silent [Russian: Obiazannost’—ne molchat’], a documentary film about his life, was released in 2019 [available with English subtitles at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LB7U6TLG0Q>]. In April 2022 the film’s director and narrator, Russian opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza, was arrested for criticizing the war



**Fr. Georgi Edelstein performing a baptism in Karabanovo village church, 2009
(A. DE CARBONNEL)**

against Ukraine and is now serving a 25-year jail term. In a letter to Fr. Georgi from prison published last September, Kara-Murza wrote: “I often recall your words that are the title of the film—A Duty to Not Stay Silent. I try to follow this principle in life to the best of my ability; sometimes one has to pay such a price as now.”

On 19 July 2023 both Vladimir Kara-Murza and Fr. Georgi Edelstein received awards in absentia from the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington, DC; Fr. Georgi “for his lifelong commitment to truth and religious freedom for the peoples of Russia and Ukraine.”

Fr. Georgi was involved in perhaps the earliest public criticism of last year’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine to be expressed by an Orthodox priest in Russia. This was a statement published by Fr. Ioann Burdin, Fr. Georgi’s successor as priest at the Church of the Resurrection in the village of Karabanovo, Kostroma region. It appeared on the parish’s website on 25 February 2022:

Brothers and sisters,
Early on the morning of 24 February Russian troops attacked Ukraine. Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, [Ukrainian: Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv], Mariupol and other Ukrainian cities are being shelled.

Russian soldiers are killing their brothers and sisters in Christ.

We Christians cannot stand on the sidelines while brother kills brother, Christian kills Christian. We will not repeat the crimes of those who greeted Hitler’s actions on 1 September 1939.

We cannot bashfully close our eyes and call black white; evil good; say that Abel was probably wrong to provoke his elder brother. The blood of the inhabitants of Ukraine will remain not only on the hands of the leaders of the Russian Federation and the soldiers who carry out this order. Their blood is on the hands of each of us who approved of this war or who simply remained silent.

Fr. Ioann Burdin

Fr. Georgi Edelstein

For this and other anti-war statements, Fr. Ioann was fined 35,000 rubles—equivalent to approximately \$275 or a month’s local wages—on 10 March 2022. The case has received broad international media attention, including a video opinion piece in The New York Times by satirical US author Gary Shteyngart that has been viewed some 50,000 times [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A04sRuWwWQw>].

Fr. Georgi Edelstein currently resides with family in the suburbs of Tel Aviv, Israel. In mid-September 2023 the editor of the East-West Church Report interviewed him via Skype. The original conversation took place in Russian.

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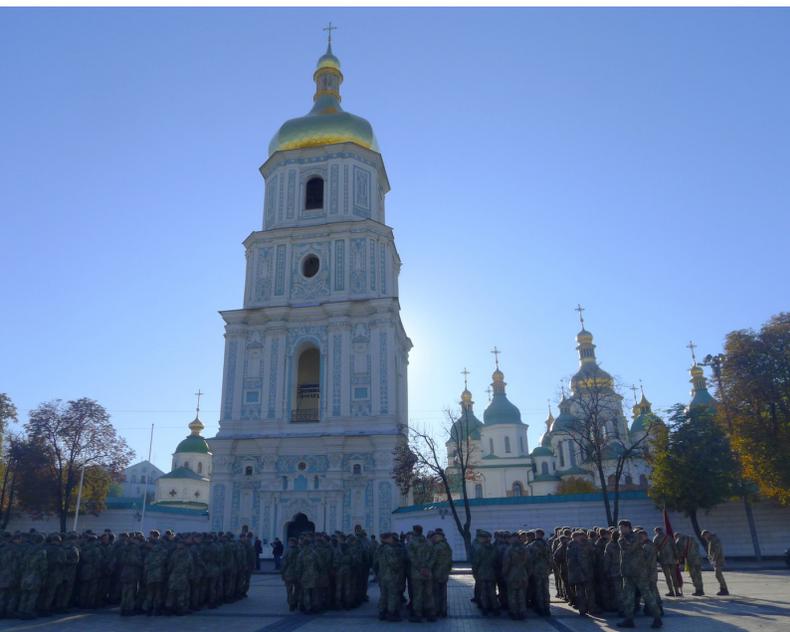
Fr. Edelstein Interview *(continued from page 1)*

What moved you to compile a public statement against last year's invasion of Ukraine together with Fr. Ioann Burdin, your successor as parish priest at the Church of the Resurrection in Karabanovo? Partly due to that statement, Fr. Ioann was fined for so-called "discreditation of the armed forces of the Russian Federation." Why do you think the police did not indict you also?

What happened was this: on 24 February 2022, the first day [of the full-scale invasion], Fr. Ioann Burdin wrote a short letter to our parishioners and sent it to me. It seemed to me that it was too long, so I cut it down to a third and sent him my version. I did not assume that we would both sign this letter. The next day Fr. Ioann published it with our two signatures. However, when he read it aloud in church [Sunday, 6 March] in the village of Karabanovo—where I used to serve—he was denounced to the police. It was reported that Fr. Ioann had read out this anti-war letter with our two signatures following his sermon. For some reason, there was no complaint made against me, and he—but not I—was summoned to court and fined. However, when the [Orthodox] Metropolitan of Kostroma, Ferapont, subsequently made a statement on local television, he mentioned two names: Fr. Ioann's and mine. He said that Fr. Ioann supposedly just repeated what I had taught him, and that I, of course, was the main culprit.

Did you support what was said in that letter about the war?

I did not entirely support it. I cannot understand the United States, Germany, or other states, because the war did not start on 24 February 2022. It started in 2014. The Soviet Union occupied Crimea. The Soviet Union occupied Donetsk region and Luhansk region, and the world calmly looked on—or, if it objected, then only in a whisper.



Ukrainian troops parade outside St. Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv, 2018 (G. FAGAN)

Here, we categorically must not say that Russian people are fighting against Ukrainians. I fear that by doing so we sow seeds of evil that will germinate into very poisonous shoots. Ukrainian people will hate Russians for 30, 50, or maybe 100 years. It is not the truth—every time we need to explain to people that it is not Russians or Russia that is fighting, but Bolsheviks; Communists. For today we have the very same Soviet power as 50 or 80 years ago.

Second, I very rarely agree with what Fr. Ioann Burdin says and writes. He is a pacifist in the spirit of Leo Tolstoy or Gandhi, the Indian thinker and political activist. Sometimes he is called Mahatma Gandhi, but to me he is no *Mahatma* [from Sanskrit, "venerable"] because he is not a teacher. I categorically disagree with both Leo Tolstoy and Gandhi. You and your readers may recall that Gandhi corresponded with Hitler. If Hitler wishes to occupy Britain, Gandhi said, then he should not be resisted: let him occupy. [Editor's note: In July 1940 Gandhi made an appeal "to every Briton, wherever he may be now, to accept the method of non-violence instead of that of war... to fight Nazism without arms... You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions."]

The one who is right in this dispute was Winston Churchill, who tried to defend his homeland with all his might. On no account would he allow a single German soldier or officer onto the island of Britain. He was victorious, and I am very glad that the Allies won.

In video commentary about the 25 February letter broadcast in early April 2022, Metropolitan Ferapont described Fr. Ioann Burdin as your "pupil." He also stated that commentary about Russian national or international politics is "the prerogative of the Patriarch and the institutions of the Patriarchate that are designed for this; it is not the prerogative of a village priest" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gj5yv7_P_B8]. There has been no censure of priests who make political statements in favor of the war, however.

Do you agree that there should be a clear line separating the ecclesiastical sphere from the political, beyond which ordinary priests have no place?

I must say that I have always greatly respected Metropolitan Ferapont. I respect him as a person, and I consider him an intelligent person. However, he is an entirely Soviet person, in that he says and thinks what he is told by the



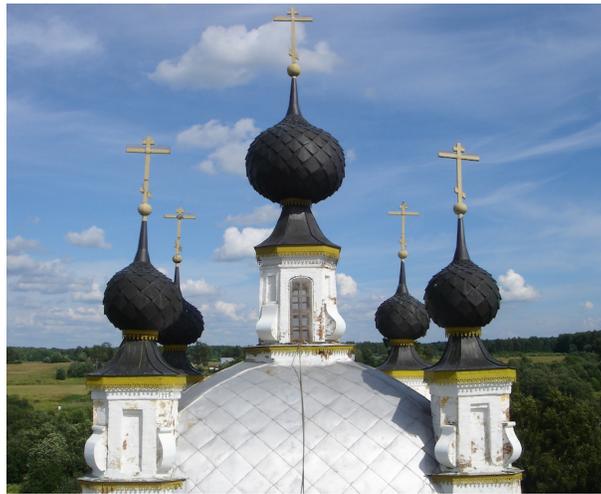
Fr. Ioann Burdin (M. MURATOVA)

Moscow Patriarch and the KGB. When he speaks, I do not believe they are his own words—he is told to say something, and he says it. I do not think that he thinks the same thing.

As for me, I have always been something of a formalist, so when I think about such issues I turn to the documents of the Church. In 1917-18 the All-Russian Orthodox Church Council took place. One of the decisions of that Council was that every cleric may hold his own opinion on any political issue. On the basis of that decision, a metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church who had been defrocked back in the 18th century was restored to holy orders. His name was Metropolitan Arseni Matseyevich of Rostov [on Lake Nero], which is not so far from Kostroma. During the reign of Catherine II [the Great] he was defrocked and exiled to the city of Revel' [modern Tallinn, Estonia], where he died in prison. Then, in 1918, he was reinstated by this Council.

I think that any priest—be they American, French, or Soviet—is both a priest and a citizen. He must always have some sort of attitude towards the country in which he lives and to the government of his country. For 80 years of my life, if not all 90, my attitude towards the government and the political system of the state in which I have lived and of which I am a citizen has been extremely negative. It is not a democratic state but an authoritarian dictatorship. In my view, all rulers of this state without exception—the Party leaders Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev... I won't name them all, currently Putin—are Communist leaders from whom tyranny is always to be expected; all kinds of deception, agitation, and propaganda, rather than truth. It is always to be expected that they will wage war against neighboring states.

An April 2022 documentary about Fr. Ioann Burdin filmed in Kostroma featured interviews with two local Orthodox, both evidently with a Soviet upbringing [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfgzpXyVYA&t=2s>]. **One said that he had refused to betray Fr. Ioann**



Church of the Resurrection in the village of Karabanovo, Kostroma region, 2009 (G. FAGAN)

particular life factors influencing some people to perceive the war against Ukraine as contrary to the Gospel, while others sincerely believe the opposite and support it?

You know, Communist as well as Nazi propaganda had—and still has—a very strong effect on people. I cannot understand it, but people look at white and say that it's black. They look at black and say that it's white, just because the radio or the TV or someone else said that that is what to think.

One small example: when Stalin died [5 March 1953, when Fr. Georgi was a 20-year-old student] my mother woke me up early in the morning. She shook me and said, "Get up, get up quickly! Stalin has died!" I answered, "If he's dead, then he's dead—why should I get up? If he's dead then that



Fr. Georgi Edelstein with laborers renovating a church, Kostroma region, 2003 (G. FAGAN)

to the police: "They thought that we would bark and denounce our priest as in Stalin's time. No way!" Commenting on the war in Ukraine, the second said, "I will never say anything bad about the authorities... military people better understand the situation. The intelligence services, the KGB, are there."

You say that the authorities in Russia are still Soviet. As well as being residents of this Sovdepiia [Russian: Soviet-dom], as you call it, these two are examples of people who are close to you as a priest. Do you observe any

means there won't be any classes at the institute." She shook me again: "Get up! Get up! Stalin has died!" I said, "Well, it's a pity they didn't hang the scoundrel. He simply died a natural death." My mother never beat me—never in my life. However, on that occasion she swung at me intending to hit me in the face. Fortunately, I rolled over and she hit my head; otherwise, she would probably have broken my nose and there would have been blood everywhere. She then spoke some words to me that greatly surprised me, and I remember them to this day: "Stalin has died! America will probably attack us tomorrow, and we will be hit with atomic bombs. We will all die! Without Stalin, we will die! Get up, you scamp!"

So I got up and went to the institute. Everyone was walking

(continued on page 4)



Funeral procession of Joseph Stalin in March 1953, caught on camera by US assistant army attaché Major Martin Manhoff from the embassy balcony (Source: MANHOFF ARCHIVE)

around wearing red ribbons on their sleeves. I was given one and so I put it on—I wasn't such an idiot as to be the only person without one. I went to join my group. All the girls there were crying—genuinely crying. Their mascara was running and their lipstick was smudged. They were crying sincerely—they genuinely regretted what had happened. The assistant professor of psychology who was due to deliver a lecture to us stood on the podium and said a few words. But then he burst into tears and sat down. He sat there for five minutes, then went back to the podium and started to speak. Once again he burst into tears and sat down, saying, “No, I am unable to give a lecture!” He was Professor Frenkel, an elderly Jew. At that time there was a very strong anti-Semitic campaign in the Soviet Union, and I fear that a not-very-good future awaited this Professor Frenkel. Yet he, an adult, was crying sincere tears, as were the girls in my group, whom I had also considered smart.

Why did some people and not others fall under Soviet influence, do you think? Is today's version as powerful?

After Hitler was defeated, he committed suicide by taking poison. The parts of the SS that were most loyal to Hitler and Himmler had already surrendered. Yet older German schoolchildren—the *Hitler Jugend*—continued to resist, shooting from windows and the rooftops. Why were those lads so devoted to their *Führer*? Why did they go to their deaths resisting, in a completely hopeless situation in which Germany had already surrendered? When Field Marshall Keitel had already signed an act of unconditional surrender? I cannot explain it. For some reason propaganda and agitation—whether Nazi or Communist—influences people.

A person who was assisting me on the altar [at the time of the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine] is a retired military colonel. He reproached me at length for my anti-Soviet—in his words, anti-war—position. He lectured me for half an hour on the altar. I sat and listened and didn't say a single word of objection. Then he went out into the main part of the church and gave the same half-hour lecture to the parishioners. Then he went home and telephoned me for another half hour to tell me that I am wrong. Later, his son was killed in Ukraine—he fought as a soldier there—and so



he went to Khimki, on the outskirts of Moscow, to bury his son. For some reason, he was told about his son's death only a month after it happened; perhaps they were unable to identify him.

Today, following his son's burial, this altar server remains the same patriot as he was 18 months ago when he gave me those lectures. I cannot explain this. I am still on good terms with him. I always send him my greetings if I am speaking to someone he knows, and he sends me his greetings. He is Ukrainian, incidentally—he is from Ukraine, and his brother still lives there. But he says “the Ukrainian nationalists must all be killed.” I cannot understand this.

Are there any practical steps that might be taken to leave Soviet-dom? In an opinion piece for *The Washington Post* this week your friend Vladimir Kara-Murza suggested that various remedies—such as fully opening up state archives to public scrutiny and barring former Communist Party and KGB personnel from public office—were missed in the 1990s [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/09/11/russia-post-putin-democracy-window-nuremberg-lustration/]. Kara-Murza accepted the Dissident Human Rights Award from the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in July with another statement written from prison, in which he regretted that such proposals had been rejected at the time as a “witchhunt.” Here, he quoted the dissident Vladimir Bukovsky [1942-2019]—“In that case, the witches will return and start hunting us” — before concluding: “As we know, they have. When evil is not publicly reckoned with or condemned, it always returns.” Do you agree?



Vladimir Kara-Murza making the sign of the cross at the site near the Kremlin where opposition politician Boris Nemtsov was assassinated on 27 February 2015 (MICHAŁ SIERGIEJEVICZ)

First of all, I think that, during the Second World War, Churchill was right never to conduct—or even to think of conducting—negotiations with Hitler. I very much approve of the fact that the government of the state of Israel does not conduct negotiations with terrorists. I think that no negotiations are possible with Nazis or Communists, because neither Nazis nor Communists ever abided by any agreements, and they will never abide by them in future. This is simply because Communist agitation and propaganda are constant lies. President Roosevelt was very surprised, as far as I recall, that Stalin did not abide by the Yalta agreements. At Yalta they agreed one thing [Editor’s note: such as free elections in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria] but Stalin said and did something different as soon as they had all gone home. Like Hitlerites, Communists understand only one language—the language of force. Armed force.

Second, Vladimir Kara-Murza and I have discussed this topic [possible remedies against continued Soviet influence that were not attempted in the 1990s] several times. He has a more optimistic evaluation than I do of our leaders, Gorbachev and Yeltsin. While they were liberal, they were still Communists in my understanding, in the same way as Khrushchev, Andropov, and Stalin—or Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin today. I do not make any distinction between different Communist leaders. It is just that one might be kinder, while another has a more cruel and ferocious personality.

Around the time that Putin came to power in the spring of 2000, I wrote an article in the literary journal *Znamya* called, “There can be no reconciliation between ‘yes’ and ‘no’” [<https://znamlit.ru/publication.php?id=1103>]. There, I repeated some words of the émigré Russian philosopher Ivan Il’in [1883-1954]. He wrote that Bolshevism would definitely be defeated, and that afterwards there should be a national plebiscite in which many people must be deprived of active and even passive voting rights. They may not be elected, and they should not have the right to vote. Who would that be? Communist Party secretaries, members of the Politburo, the Central Committee of the Communist Party, thieves, criminals, brothel owners, and so on. At that time many people—including Vladimir Kara-Murza—did not agree with me;



Moscow, 2005: Mayor Yuri Luzhkov (left) alongside Georgi Poltavchenko, then head of Russia’s Central Federal District, at the Orthodox reburial of philosopher Ivan Il’in and monarchist military commander Anton Denikin (G. FAGAN)

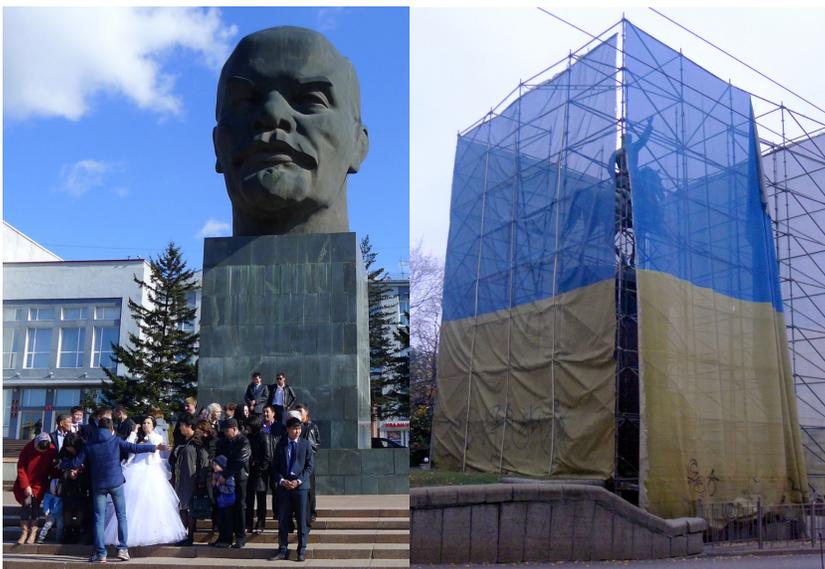
many democrats, such as Larisa Bogoraz [one of eight people who protested on Red Square when Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, d. 2004] and Sergei Kovalev [dissident who from 1974 served a seven-year jail term followed by three years’ internal exile for “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda,” d. 2021.] We argued about this. They said I was proposing a witchhunt, and that all citizens must be equal and have the same rights. I said, “No, Yeltsin does not have the right to be President of the Russian Federation, nor does Gorbachev, simply because they are Communist leaders.” I am very glad that Vladimir Kara-Murza has now repeated these words!

If you think about who were in the circles surrounding Gorbachev and Yeltsin, three out of four were Communists—people like Yuri Luzhkov [mayor of Moscow 1992-2010] or Yevgeny Primakov [Foreign Minister 1996-98]. These are people to whom I would never offer my hand, nor would I shake theirs. I named two, but I could name more: people who, I’m deeply convinced, are the same little Lenins, little Stalins, and little Gorbachevs of today who support and wage war.

Does the fact that the war against Ukraine is taking place mean that Ukraine has managed to escape this legacy of Soviet-dom?

Of course. I was born on Lenin Street in Kiev [now Kyiv]. Now it is not Lenin Street. Today in Ukraine there is no Lenin Street, no Lenin Square, no statue of Lenin—and so on—anywhere.

(continued on page 6)



A wedding party posing before a bust of Lenin in Ulan-Ude, Siberia, 2013; a disputed statue of Ukrainian Communist Mykola Shchors shrouded by the Ukrainian flag, Kyiv, 2018 (G. FAGAN)

Fr. Edelstein Interview *(continued from page 5)*

But in Soviet-dom [i.e. the Russian Federation], there are not only still thousands, but tens—perhaps hundreds—of thousands of them.

While they both rose to prominence under the Soviet authorities, the last two Patriarchs of Moscow made differing statements when Putin ordered invasions of neighboring states. Patriarch Aleksy II called for dialogue with Georgia in August 2008, with an appeal “to those who have gone blind with hatred: Stop! Do not let more blood be shed!” In September 2022, shortly after Putin announced military mobilization, Patriarch Kirill spoke about the war in Ukraine. He said in a sermon that anyone moved by a sense of duty to serve in the military and who died as a consequence was making a sacrifice, and that therefore, “we believe that this sacrifice washes away all sins which that person has committed.” Why were these responses so different, do you think?

There’s no need for quotations. You could give any quotation of the past 80 years; since September 1943. In September 1943 Stalin “revived” the Russian Orthodox Church, as they say. For 80 years our patriarchs and bishops have said what they were told to say by the Kremlin or the Lubyanka [headquarters of the KGB, now of the FSB, a successor agency]. They are not independent people. However, I entreat your readers not to confuse us priests with the Church. We are crooks and deceivers. For many years we “struggled for peace,” while saying that America was the aggressor. I am very ashamed that many American, German, French, and other clerics came to visit Moscow and “struggled for peace,” as they called it, alongside our bishops. I recall there was one Very Reverend Bruce Rigdon from Chicago. I read a report of his visit to the Soviet Union in which he described how we had freedom of conscience, religious freedom!

I recall also that at the very beginning of the so-called revolution in 1917 there was John Reed, an American Communist, who wrote the book *The Ten Days That Shook The World*. This was Communist agitation and propaganda. Paul Robeson, the famous American singer, and [American writer] Theodore Dreiser also praised the Soviet Union constantly. The writer Lion Feuchtwanger



Bust of Felix Dzerzhinsky, head of two Soviet secret police organizations prior to the KGB, in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk, 2013 (G. FAGAN)

came to the Soviet Union [from Germany], chatted with Stalin in the Kremlin, and wrote a book called *Moskau 1937*. It exists in German, English, and Russian; it is a false, propagandistic book. So there were both clever and stupid people in America too. This cannot be helped.

But you do not see any reason *not* to be part of the institution you say Stalin formed—you were ordained in the Moscow Patriarchate. Sometimes, even in the Soviet Union, priests decided to transfer to alternative bodies, such as the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad [the émigré Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia or ROCOR].

If you speak to priests of the Russian Church in Washington they will tell you that it was proposed to me several times that I transfer to the Church Abroad and not be in the Moscow Patriarchate. Each time I answered that, to me, this is a child’s game. You cannot transfer, for there is nowhere to transfer to—the Church is one.

Even if I am not in agreement, I am a very disciplined person. When Archbishop Mikhail of Vologda banned me from serving as a priest 35 years ago, I did not serve for a year and a half. I kept saying that this was an incorrect, mistaken suspension...

It happened because you organized a church camp without authorization?

Yes, but it wasn’t anti-church activity. I said openly to Archbishop Mikhail: “You are not an independent person. You go on trips to meetings abroad—to Germany, Austria. Therefore, when the KGB orders you to ban me, you carry out the orders of the KGB.” For the 18 months during which I was banned from serving as a priest, I kept repeating the same thing to him, both orally and in writing: “I am not angry with you, I understand that this is not your fault. You



Russian soldiers pose at Moscow’s Stalin-era Exhibition of National Economic Achievements [Russian acronym: *VDNKh*], whose Soviet title was restored in 2014 (G. FAGAN)

were ordered to do this. I am obeying this unjust, wrong punishment because you are a bishop, and I am a priest. I serve only as you delegate. You took away my rights, and so I obey.”

[Editor’s note: Fr. Georgi commented at greater length on the Soviet legacy within the Moscow Patriarchate in the *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, vol. 10 (2002), no. 4 (2002), 9, 11-15.]

Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the almost immediate reaction of Metropolitan Onufry, the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church then subordinate to the Moscow Patriarch, was to appeal to Putin with a request to stop the war. Does this speak to the health of the Ukrainian Church?

Let's recall the Gospel. There Jesus said, "I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" [Matthew 16:18]. He didn't say, "I will build my churches." He built one Church, and I do not believe that there is a Ukrainian Church, a Bulgarian Church, an American Church, on this globe. There is one Church—we have one Jesus Christ. There is one Gospel, and as for all these human divisions into Ukrainian, Belarusian, and so on... I cannot take them seriously. I do not follow closely relations between Ukrainian bishops and our bishops in Soviet-dom, but I think they should be brothers. They pray to the same Lord God; they read the same Gospel. The only correct position, I believe, is that we are all brothers and sisters—I know and understand no other Christianity.

It is rather stubborn of me, but from my first day as a priest 43—soon to be 44—years ago, I have kept saying the same old thing: the Church is one, but we priests are various. To me, American priests and bishops are my brothers. I once met the Pope of Rome, John Paul II—Karol Wojtyła—and to me he is senior bishop and first hierarch of the Church; I am unable to relate to Catholics in any other way. In the USA I have a friend called George Roller who is a brother in Christ to me, and I think he feels the same towards me, although he is some sort of Protestant. I don't even ask—for me it's enough that he is a Christian. ♦



George Roller accepting the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom on Fr. Georgi Edelstein's behalf at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington, DC on 19 July 2023 (G. FAGAN)

Transition and Transformation: Christian Business Ethics in Hungary

KRISZTINA OLÁH

The following is an abridged extract from the author's doctoral dissertation, which she defended successfully in June 2022 at Bakke Graduate University, Texas: "Transition and Transformation in Hungary: What Influences Ethical Decisions of Christian Leaders in the Marketplace?"



Bridge across the River Danube, Budapest, Hungary (G. FAGAN)

“The revolution is moral or not at all,” says the French poet Charles Péguy.¹ If no genuine moral or ethical foundations underpin the interactions—including business interactions—between individuals and communities within a society, then lasting and equitable prosperity are impossible to achieve.

The democratic revolution that arrived in my native Hungary some three decades ago initiated a political, economic, and cultural transition in Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, elements of the previous, non-democratic Communist culture survived, and these affect business activities along with other aspects of everyday life. The transformation of value systems remains an ongoing process in post-Communist countries, where individuals and organizations still face such shadows from the past as

(continued on page 8)

autocratic leadership, black market economics, and profitable individual connections in which selfishness often overrides the needs of communities.

Pervasive corruption

In Hungary, corruption—*korruptió*—is a huge issue. Everybody is aware of it, but most people prefer not to talk about it. According to Transparency International’s 2022 *Corruption Perceptions Index*, Hungary ranks as the most corrupt country within the European Union.² According to research conducted by Ipsos in 2020, corruption ranked third among topics of concern to Hungarians, and it had risen to second place by the fall of 2021.³ The problem of corruption is expanding, therefore, and Hungarians recognize that a solution is urgent.

I believe morality and ethics come from God, and that Christians should represent this morality in their mission. The Gospel describes true Christians as the salt and light of the world, essential and irreplaceable [Matthew 5:13-15]. Without salt, food is tasteless; without faith, life is meaningless. Just as a lamp brings light to others, so Jesus’ command for us as Christians is to “let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” [Matthew 5:16].

Another Gospel teaching states, “No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and money” [Matthew 6:24]. This teaching describes two ethical models, one defined by God in Scripture, and the other defined by worldly greed. We cannot follow both in our work; we must choose whether to follow Jesus’ example or the rules of the post-modern secular world. This duality in standards applies to the workplace and to leadership. Indeed, it applies to leaders even more: “If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked” [Proverbs 29:12].

In my view an ethical business should be based upon this Christian morality, where a genuine business leader is a “ruler” who does not “listen to falsehood.” According to Jeffrey McCollum, director of organizational development at a large pharmaceutical company, “Leadership balances what’s inside of us (our desire for meaning and purpose, our values and our aspirations) with what shows up on the outside—our actions.”⁴ As one businesswoman simply puts it, “I should show that I could serve something sacred and that I could do this inside a business.”⁵

Given the context of pervasive corruption, my research set out to answer the question: How do personal Christian values affect work, leadership, and business activities of individuals and their organizations in Hungary? Transformation and transformational leadership thus became key themes of my work. As “transformational leadership” is unfamiliar in Hungary, it is not easy to define this term in Hungarian nor to translate it to the local context. In Hungarian “transformation” is *átformálás*, and the best fit for “transformational leadership” would be *transzformáló vezetés* or *átformáló vezetés*.

According to Stone, Russell, and Patterson, the transformational leader makes the organization, its needs, and goals the top priority.⁶ In my understanding, transformational

leadership starts with calling. Calling by God means the basic calling of Jesus: “Follow me!” This call is so simple and reliable that there is only one answer: obedience. Calling is personal, but as Christians we are members of a bigger community: the Church of God. This is the collective calling. It exceeds our personal calling and is against the individualism of modern times.

Paul the Apostle describes transformation as a personal experience: “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds” [Ephesians 4:22-23]. “Transformational leadership” has been identified as a process whereby leaders and followers mutually uplift themselves to a higher level of motivation and morality.⁷ Here leaders connect the future aspirations of their followers with organizational visions, thus playing an inspirational role.



Fruit and vegetable market, Budapest (G. FAGAN)

Christian business leaders

The main target audiences of my research are Christian business leaders active in companies of all sizes, church leaders, and scholars. My hope is that they will be able to implement my findings in their organizations and work in the marketplace, churches, and education, so that my work supports bridge-building between these spheres.

I gathered my research in two phases. First, I conducted individual in-person interviews with eight top-level Christian business leaders in the Hungarian marketplace. Second, I administered an online survey including qualitative and quantitative questions that was completed by 76 respondents. For the first part, I chose two criteria for my interviewees—they had to be Christian believers and active business leaders in Hungary. I drew on a common network

sampling method in order to select them: I have been closely monitoring Hungarian conferences, seminars, news articles, and public speeches where the topic was Christian faith, ethics, and business. These events are organized by Christian communities, governmental institutions, or the media. I followed the *Keresztény Vállalkozói Konferencia* [Christian Entrepreneurs' Conference] and the Global Leadership Summit speaker line, where speakers and participants were Christian business people. Other events I monitored included those organized by the Jesuit Catholic order (such as their "Management by Jesus" trainings) and the *72 Tanítvány Mozgalom* [72 Stewards Movement], a Catholic movement that gathers professionals in discussion groups.

Two of my eight interviewees are members of the Roman Catholic Church. One is an elder of the Reformed Church in Hungary. One is from the Lutheran Church, one is Baptist, and the remaining three are Pentecostal or free Evangelical believers. Three of the interviewees serve as pastors in their congregations in addition to their business activities. Two interviewees are women and six are men, thus representing the gender composition of Hungarian business leaders. The average age of the interviewees was 53, and the interviewees have been in a leadership role for an average of 20 years. Four are entrepreneurs who established and lead their own companies. Two are employed as top-level leaders—a Chief Executive Officer and a Chief Financial Officer, while two had previously been employed in different leadership positions before becoming self-employed.

Basis for business ethics

Among the key themes of the individual interviews were ethics and business ethics. One interviewee summarized the importance of ethics in the following way: "What you fill up with good gives no room for evil." The same person described himself as "an enemy of the system"—where "the system" means the culture of corruption—who could not succeed in a non-ethical business environment. Another interviewee mentioned "high ethical and moral norms" as the basis for business ethics. For this person, these norms require transparency towards clients, business partners, and colleagues. One interviewee shared a parable: "There are two wolves in you—two animals—and they are fighting; the good wolf and the bad wolf. Which one is going to win? The one you feed."

Another interviewee mentioned probity [*becsületesség*] and the importance of one's given word as the basis of business ethics. "I don't think that a big effort is needed. You just need to be non-compromising." The same interviewee shared the price of being ethical in business: "I voted for honesty. This did cost me huge pain and sacrifice, both financially and as a human being. Indeed, I decided so—and I just told myself that it is okay this way."

A related key theme was ethical leadership and transformational leadership, this being the focus of my research. Here, the interviewees positively defined these forms of leadership and shared their thoughts about the challenges faced by leaders representing these approaches.

Concerning ethical leadership, one interviewee suggested that it "creates value or represents value," but is not a merit (*érdem*) in some professional fields, where generally non-ethical acts are accepted and supported by leaders. Another interviewee maintained that, "Your decisions form the company; in fact, you are the company." However, this person also thought that, "There is no option to stay clean as an economic authority. If you are an authority by love, where your authority is based on your personal impact and not on your money, then it [staying clean] can work."

"Change upwards"

Concerning transformational leadership, some interviewees offered only positive definitions:

"If you need to change, change upwards: be brave aggressively. Put everything on one card and rely on God. I didn't see people fall; I saw people rise and get stronger."

"I will not ignore humanity in a context where people are rude and aggressive. Indeed, each day I will add what I can and form the world."

"Build community and mediate value. Present and live by a vision that will make the eyes of others shine and say that it makes sense to follow those leaders. There is no excuse: pharoses [beacons], lighthouses are needed."

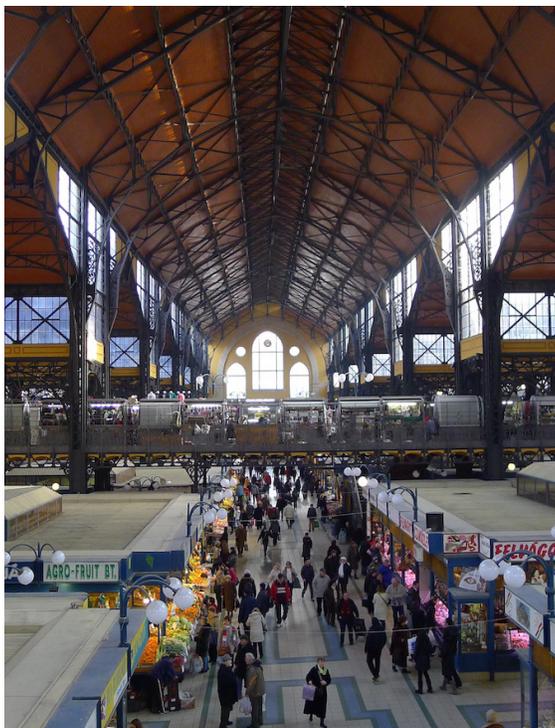
However, others identified challenges to transformational leadership:

"If you want to act with integrity, it's a luxury nowadays, and you have to be good enough professionally."

"There is no Christian mindset that has an impact on society."

My interviewees thus highlighted that achieving ethical and transformational leadership in a profession will not automatically result in a high ethical standard. On the

(continued on page 10)



Central Market Hall, Budapest
(G. FAGAN)

Business Ethics in Hungary *(continued from page 9)*

contrary, it will bring about new challenges for the ethical leader. One interviewee was particularly critical of Christian leaders and their impact in Hungary, admitting frustration that those who are viewed as transformed had no impact on society, while they should have taken the responsibility to transform it.

A further related key theme was corruption, of which my interviewees had a range of experience. Three shared that they had never been bribed, offering the following comments:

“Nobody really wanted to pay me a bribe. I was prepared for it so that I could have said no. But nobody came. And I think it’s also a wonderful thing. First, it is the protection of the Lord, probably. The second, if you act with integrity in your life, that creates an aura around you, I may say.”

“Probably, I do have an attitude that prevents people from trying to bribe me.”

“I strongly assume that a Christian leader lives the right way if he or she never comes to the situation where he or she needs to refuse a bribe. Instead of that, the best case is if he or she will never be asked for that.”

However, these interviewees did not criticize general corruption in Hungary; remarking: “I don’t think we are worse than any other nation,” “I don’t recognize corruption in my everyday life,” and “When it comes to corruption, I don’t know what the truth is.”



Outside Hungary’s parliament building in Budapest, a statue of Francis II Rákóczi, who fought for Hungarian independence in the early 1700s (G.FAGAN)

Generational change needed

At the other end of the scale were interviewees who admitted that corruption does exist everywhere. One interviewee shared, “Each of us will be tempted sooner or later” and suggested that a generational change at least is needed in order to overcome the post-Communist legacy of corruption. The issue also did not seem clear-cut, with interviewees reporting that it is sometimes difficult to describe. It may be called “lobbying” or “business development” or “payment for something that does not produce value.” Such understandings of corruption lead people into grayish areas. One interviewee described corruption as “Giving up inner values in order to reach a goal, where the person assumes that staying in power has the highest priority overall.” This interviewee also shared details about people in power: For them nothing is enough; time does not exist; they do not feel fear, and they are arrogant, shameless, and greedy.

Three interviewees highlighted corruption issues in public administration. According to one, “When someone

has a dependent or vendor relationship with the state, that situation is very tough because there has always been—and probably always will be—some forms of corruption.” This interviewee spoke of the need to diminish this type of corruption. “If nothing else, the public sphere should be cleaned... This is a tragedy, the way it is now. Simply, it is a tragedy.” Another interviewee connected corruption in public administration with the character of the people in power:

Power spoils people’s and high-level leaders’ decisions so easily, whereby their personality splits. I saw so many politicians before, during, and after being in a powerful position, and they were unrecognizable during their time in power; they were like different people.

Two of these three interviewees directly mentioned the current government and Christian democrats. “Unfortunately, ‘Christian democracy’ as a slogan became the tool of tasteless political marketing, and for that I feel ashamed, because these people represent our Christian democracy in Hungary.”

What are the barriers hindering Christian leaders from overcoming corruption in the Hungarian marketplace? This was another topic of discussion for my interviewees. The first type of barrier identified was that in general, one is not allowed to speak about Christian values at work, because it is not part of the business context or work environment. Even though the eight interviewees represented different professions, they were limited in words when it came to their Christian background. Six of the eight interviewees mentioned this issue.

To me, this finding appeared controversial. At the beginning of the interviews the interviewees maintained that they live an integrated life, in which their work and business activities are not separate from their Christian values. And yet, here at the end of the interviews, they admitted that a division does exist between being a Christian and a business professional in Hungary. However, this may also mean that an external division caused by society or the business context exists: while the interviewees themselves are able to integrate their faith and work, society is not able to accept that kind of integration. One reason for this may be separation of church and state, the sacred from the secular.

A second type of barrier mentioned by three interviewees is a generational problem. Churches and Christian organizations are missing a generation—people in their thirties and forties—who could serve as future leaders. One interviewee also admitted that there is no focus at all on the youth in their church.

When I asked whether the interviewees listen to sermons about work, money, or business, most agreed that there are no such teachings in their churches. Even though three of the interviewees are also pastors, they do not teach about business-related topics. Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Evangelical, and Reformed interviewees alike reported that business-related teachings are absent. Describing this missing teaching as a “black hole,” one interviewee admitted that there is a so-called “silence where everyone knows what is right and what is not, but they do not talk about it.” The reason behind this may be that, “Nobody would admit that he or she agreed to a grayish situation.”

Questionnaire responses

For the second survey phase of my research I created a questionnaire that was answered by 76 people who work in business and are also Christian believers. Forty-seven percent are members of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 32 percent identified themselves as Roman Catholic, Baptists were six percent, Lutherans and Methodists were two percent each, and 11 percent of respondents named “Other Evangelical” as their religious affiliation. As I belong to the Reformed Church in Hungary, its members were likely overrepresented compared with national statistics.

Twenty-three percent of the respondents work in information technology or virtual services, 15 percent in the finance and banking sector, 15 percent in commerce, and nine percent in the production industry.

Four percent are employed in each of three fields: human resources services and organizational development; education and training; and health care and social services. Twenty-six percent of respondents chose the option—“Other.”

The responses shed further light on the challenges of corruption in Hungary. One question asked, “Does your workplace or the business context where you are active sometimes expect you to act unethically?” While 58 percent of respondents answered “No,” 42 percent answered “Yes.” The latter group was then asked to describe a situation when they did not behave or decide according to their Christian values, because that was what their workplace or business environment expected them to do. Pertinent responses included:

“I needed to share a false fact with the client.”

“The supervisors expected the employees to reach unrealistic goals, even though the leaders knew about the difficult circumstances.”

“When we sold a property owned by the company, I let myself be convinced that, instead of an external expert,

the market value of that property was defined by an internal expert.”

“I needed to put a vendor under pressure. I would not have done it myself.”

“Tax avoidance. Whether I ask for an invoice or not.”

A further question asked, “Do you face any type of corruption in your work or business activities?” Fifty-five percent of my respondents answered “No,” while 45 percent answered “Yes.” The latter group was then asked, “What form of corruption do you face?”

Most of those who submitted answers referred to different forms of financial corruption, including “financial income for an advantageous decision,” “a success fee,” “bribes,” and “gray salaries; profit transit to another European affiliate where company tax is lower.” Networking-related advantages were another form of corruption, including “catering and entertainment for representatives of important partners,” “advantaging some business partners,” and “smaller and bigger gifts for partners.” One respondent used

the term “Christian corruption” with reference to advantages based upon connections within the Christian community. A further example of management-related corruption outlined how managers report incorrect data in order to impress owners or the market.

Another question asked, “Could you imagine that a Christian believer may use tools of corruption in work or business?” Seventy-four percent of responders answered “No,” while 26 percent answered

“Yes.” Those who answered “Yes” were then asked, “Why do you think that a Christian believer may be impacted by corruption?” I structured the nine responses I received (12 percent) into four thematic groups:

1) **Most said that Christian business people are impacted by corruption because of the nature of the outside world: “We live in this world. Anybody could fall.”**

2) **Some listed industries in which corruption is structured into general practice, such as construction and health care: “Contractors are chosen in a certain way. The business owner is responsible for the families of the employees. So he or she needed to accept contracts the way it was common in that industry;” “There are some fields—health care for instance—where bribes or side payments (gratitude money) are given to doctors or nurses. It is good that these payments are forbidden now.”**

3) **Respondents also emphasized human nature: “Christians are human too,” and they may fall “in order to keep a position or to be efficient in business.”**

4) **One respondent mentioned cases in**

(continued on page 12)



St Stephen's Catholic Basilica, Budapest. Above the door, a Latin inscription reads: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” [John 14:6]. (G. FAGAN)

Business Ethics in Hungary *(continued from page 11)*

which Christians do something for the Church that is corrupt, while reasoning that it is benefiting the Church: “Christians ideologize what they do, saying it is good for the Church. I don’t understand why, but it is very common that the end justifies the means.”

When survey participants were asked what would help them to follow their Christian values in ethical dilemmas at work, prayer and Bible reading were mentioned most frequently. Next came Christian colleagues and partners, followed by mentors and coaches. The lowest-rated tools were English-language books and articles, conferences in Hungary, and higher education programs and courses.

At the start of this research project, my naive question was essentially: “Why do the Christian values held by individuals *not* lead to transformation of the whole of society?” I now hope that this idealistic original sense has been transformed and sounds as follows: How *could* Christian values of individuals lead to transformation of whole societies?

I believe that the Christian faith is the hope of the world and can provide some answers to corruption, but there

are barriers to fully fledged Christian influence upon people and structures in the Hungarian marketplace. My project originally sought the reasons for these barriers and aimed to suggest tools and trainings in order to overcome them. After reviewing the results of each interview and survey questionnaire, I would change that original goal to searching for tools that help to *face* or *challenge* corruption and other ethical issues relevant to the Hungarian context.

The results of both my primary research (interviews and questionnaire) and those of my secondary research (review of relevant literature) underlined that there is no “magic bullet” solution against corruption, and it cannot be fully eliminated. The world is a fallen and sinful one where people can only try to face and challenge corruption. Biblical teaching, the guidance of God, and the global or local church provide an ethical compass but they do not guarantee success. As members of the Kingdom of God, Christians must follow that moral compass; their task is to aim for the good, the right, and the ethical. My original problem-solving mindset has thus changed towards an observation-gathering way of thinking: looking for insights that initiate or strengthen processes of moral transformation. ♦

(Notes on page 13)

In March 2022 Krisztina Oláh spent two weeks helping to receive the thousands of war refugees then arriving at the railway station in Záhony, a small town on the short border between her native Hungary and Ukraine. There, she set up a corner for mothers and children:

I tried to provide them a clean and quiet place where they could change diapers, receive hygiene products, nurse their babies, get some baby food, let their kids play, draw, or nap in the middle of the chaos. As a result, both the adults and the children could forget about where they are and why they came here. When people ask me why I created that babies’ corner, I don’t have the right answer. Calling? Instinct? I don’t know. But I was sure that this is what I needed to do when I first smelled baby powder and diaper cream in that corner.

Her hometown and parents being nearby, Krisztina has since visited Záhony regularly. Among her fellow volunteers are Edina, a Ukrainian whose bilingual Hungarian allowed her to act as an interpreter to other refugees, and Anmol, a student from India who was close to graduation in medical surgery at a Ukrainian university when Russia invaded on 24 February 2022.

Today, reports Krisztina,

Both of them are still serving the refugees on the border. More than one and a half years have passed since the beginning of the war in February 2022, but there is no border restricting the love of the helpers who stand on this front line. Both Edina and Anmol serve



Krisztina Oláh (Source: K. OLÁH)

whomever is in need: people they can talk to in their mother tongue; people who need information about train schedules, refugee status, accommodation, or employment. They both do this with more humility and kindness than I can describe. Anmol always has a smile on his face. Every word Edina says touches the heart. The war is still their story, their reality.

If this horror had not started, Anmol would have lived in the city of Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine. He would have finished the very last semester of his medical studies, had a joyful graduation ceremony with friends and relatives and then started his professional career as a resident surgeon in either Ukraine or his homeland, India.

If the war had not started last February, Edina would have stayed in her family home in western Ukraine. She would have worked as a hairdresser,

while her daughter would have continued second grade and then started third grade at the elementary school where she studied previously. Edina’s son would have continued studying at the high school where he had planned to apply. The family would not have been separated from grandparents, they would not have left behind their home, garden, pets, good neighbors, and the kids’ future plans.

If I search for one word that describes the current situation, I would choose *separated*. These people and their families have been separated for so long. They are separated from the places where they belong, from the people they love, from their dreams, plans, work, studies... They are totally separated from their regular, “before-the-war” life, from safety, their freedom to choose, their past, and their future. ♦



Anmol and Edina (Source: K. OLÁH)

Notes: (continued from page 12)

¹ Cited by Michael Novak in his foreword to Mark R. Elliott and Scott Lingenfelter (eds), *Ethics in the Russian Marketplace: An Anthology*, Wheaton College: Institute for East-West Christian Studies, 1992.

² <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022>.

³ https://nepszava.hu/3077382_ipsos-a-magyarok-aggodnak-a-legjobban-az-egeszsegugy-allapota-miatt; https://nepszava.hu/3136245_ipsos-mar-jobban-felunk-a-szegenysegtol-es-a-korrupciotol-mint-a-koronavirustol.

⁴ Larry C. Spears (ed.), *Insights on Leadership: Service, Stewardship, Spirit, and Servant-Leadership*, Wiley, 1998, Kindle edition: Chapter 29, Paragraph 10.

⁵ Cited in Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, *Spiritual Intelligence: The Ultimate Intelligence*, London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2000, 116.

⁶ A. Gregory Stone, Robert F. Russell, and Kathleen Patterson, “Transformational versus servant leadership: A difference in leader focus,” *The Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, vol. 25, no. 4, 347-61.

⁷ James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, New York: Harper and Row, 1978.

Krisztina Oláh was awarded master's degrees in economics and business communication before earning her Doctor of Transformational Leadership degree in 2022. She works for Bakke Graduate University (www.bgu.edu) as well as the Osijek Doctoral Colloquium (<https://ceeams.org/doctoral-colloquium/>). Her more recent professional work focuses on digital communication. She lives in Budapest, Hungary.

BOOK REVIEW

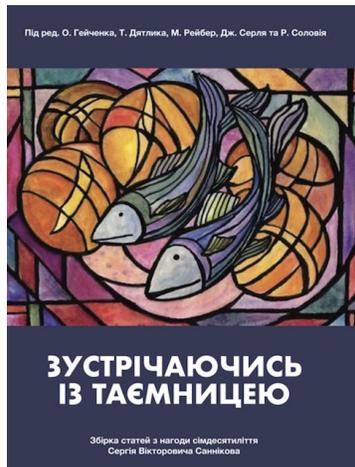
Encountering the Mystery: Essays in Honor of Sergii V. Sannikov on his 70th Birthday
edited by Taras Dyatlik, Oleksandr Geychenko, Mary Raber, Joshua Searle, and Roman Soloviy
Rivne, Ukraine: Format-A, 2020

284 pp., \$25.00 (via eeit.books@gmail.com), ISBN 978-617-515-343-7

CHARLEY WARNER

Beginning with the thousandth anniversary of the Baptism of Rus' in 1988 and drawing further impetus from the implosion of Communist rule in 1991, Evangelical churches in the Soviet Union set about considering how better to train their members for church service through theological education. One of the key leaders in developing Evangelical theological education has been Sergii Viktorovich Sannikov, who was born in Odessa, Soviet Ukraine, on 5 October 1950. As a convert to Christianity in his mid-twenties and one of the few local Evangelicals at that time with academic training, Sannikov pioneered the effort to start a theological seminary for Baptists. *Encountering the Mystery: Essays in Honor of Sergii V. Sannikov on his 70th Birthday* is a fitting Festschrift for someone with such broad involvement in education, ministry, and training for Evangelical churches in the former Soviet Union.

Lev Golodetsky of the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association begins *Encountering the Mystery* with a warm-hearted biographical overview of Sannikov's life and ministry. Trained as a specialist in social psychology, Sannikov began his academic career at Odessa I. I. Mechnikov State University. It was during this time that he studied many philosophical systems, but found no inner satisfaction. Only after a friend



Ukrainian cover of
Encountering the Mystery
(Source: <https://sannikov.info>)

gave him a New Testament, which he read and studied intensely, did he realize that this satisfaction could be found in Christ alone. Baptized in 1979, he lost his university position immediately and was forced to work in various menial jobs.

After attending a nearby Baptist church, Sannikov grew more involved in its Christian community as a new “home,” both in terms of pastoral ministry and academic life. He became increasingly immersed in theological education, culminating in the founding of the Odessa Bible School (1989) and Theological Seminary (1991), as well as the eventual establishment of the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (EAAA) of Evangelical schools, which currently has more than 50 member institutions across the former Soviet Union.

Sannikov's writing ministry also reached its apex at this time, with the publication of his two-volume Russian-language work *Twenty Centuries of Christianity [Dvadsat' vekov khristianstva]*. This magnum opus was published in Ukrainian in 2011 and will soon be available in English. Sannikov has also spearheaded the establishment of several theological journals and played a significant role in various edited volumes, including the Russian-language *Slavic Bible Commentary*. In 2018 he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation in

(continued on page 14)

theology and was awarded the Doctor of Science degree from Drahomanov National Pedagogical University in Kyiv.

Aside from Golodetsky's introductory chapter, *Encountering the Mystery* is divided into four main parts, followed by a list of Sannikov's publications, presentations, and a chronology of his life. Part One, dealing with theological education, includes chapters by Taras Dyatlik, Walter Sawatsky, and Joshua Searle.

Dyatlik, a long-time worker with the EAAA, starts by discussing [in Russian] the interrelationship between different generations of theological educators: a younger generation (aged 25-35), a middle generation (aged 25-42), and an older generation (aged 49-70). Through asking many open questions, he examines the shared values and goals of each. For Dyatlik, Sannikov is a good example of bridge-building between generations of pastors and leaders of theological schools. He is a person who values guidance and mentorship, who "sows into someone" in leadership development.

Sawatsky of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in the USA—a long-time observer of the Church in the former Soviet Union—writes on "The Amazing Story of the EAAA." He recounts some of the early attempts at founding theological training, such as the Moscow correspondence courses started in the 1960s, as well as at publishing study aids, such as a Russian translation of William Barclay's New Testament commentaries. He notes that "the EAAA has been a leader in shaping and building Slavic Evangelical ministry for the sake of the churches, to foster a consciously Slavic theology, and also contextual sensitivity in Central Asia" (68-69). The impact of EAAA projects—including the setting of

standards for accreditation, archival, and oral history research, as well as the Bible Pulpit Series of textbooks—gives Sawatsky hope for the future.

[Editor's note: In the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the EAAA separated into two major groups of theological schools. One serves Ukraine, Moldova, and the Baltic states, while the other serves Russia, Belarus, and Central Asia. Those in Armenia have not joined either group.]

Searle of Spurgeon's College in the UK discusses [in Russian] the prospects for renewal and reformation of theological education in the post-Soviet space. He notes that, under Sannikov's leadership, the EAAA provided an impetus for theological schools to learn from one another by promoting collaboration and pooling resources. For Searle, the main challenges faced by the Evangelical community are interaction with wider society concerning scientific issues, overcoming the Soviet past, vision for mission, and equipping theological

students with not only practical skills for ministry, but also the potential to become effective agents of change in society. His hope is that the EAAA will continue to have a unifying role for discussion of these issues by various denominations and Christian ministries.

In Part Two, chapters by Anthony Cross, Tony Peck, Mary Raber, Ian Randall, and Alexei Sinichkin [in Russian], address topics related to Church history and Baptist theology. Cross—of International Baptist Theological Study Centre in the Netherlands—discusses sacramental baptism as being essential to the Christian spiritual life, giving historical examples to support his view. He notes that the EAAA journal *Theological Reflections* [*Bogoslovskie razmyshleniia*]—co-founded by Sannikov—began a conversation on this topic by publishing two articles in 2008. This discussion has been furthered by several articles and conferences since and continues to this day.

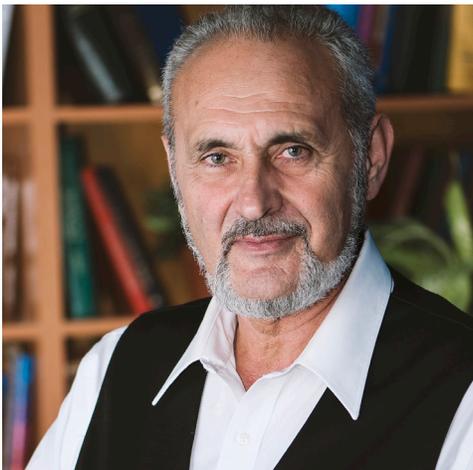
Peck, a British member of the European Baptist Federation, gives a personal reflection on the relationship between European Baptists "East" and "West." He also finds Sannikov to have been a "bridge-builder" through his relationships with Baptists throughout Europe, his expertise as an historian, his

pioneering work in theological education, and—most importantly—his gracious and generous spirit. Peck then recounts his own experiences of bridge-building, from his first visit with Latvian Baptists in 1990 to more recent discussions on how Baptists in the West can recover from European secularism through Christian discipleship, and how Baptists in the East can re-engage society after being isolated under the Soviet regime. Baptists in East and West have different perceptions of theological issues—such as the role of women in the Church—and Western Baptists have noticed sometimes a certain attitude of spiritual superiority from those in the East. However, it is Peck's hope that

the common beliefs of the European Baptist Federation can still be a unifying force for all Baptists in Europe.

Raber of Odessa Theological Seminary tells of the cooperation between foreign and Soviet Baptists for relief efforts during the famine of 1921-3, which occurred a decade prior to the infamous *Holodomor* famine in Ukraine. Following the First World War, severe drought across Ukraine and southern Russia threatened millions, including about 50,000 Baptists. Through the initiative of Ivan Neprash, a Russian Baptist immigrant to the United States, connections were made with the Baptist Union in Moscow, thus facilitating a program of famine aid that included clothing, food, and money. British Baptists also joined the effort. Raber sees this historical example of cooperation between Baptists as a much-needed example for today.

Randall—of International Baptist Theological Study Centre in the Netherlands—explores the ministry of John Melville in Sannikov's hometown of Odessa during the mid-



Sergii V. Sannikov
(Source: <https://sannikov.info>)

19th century. Although never a member of the official British and Foreign Bible Society, Melville was involved in evangelism as well as the distribution of Scripture portions and Christian literature. Of particular note here is Hans Brandenburg's cited belief that "the way in which Stundist and Baptist movements in Russia had remained close to the Bible 'has much to do with Melville'" (122).

The archivist of the Russian Baptist Union in Moscow, Sinichkin began investigating the historical Congresses of the Russian Baptist Union—documented in its archives—at Sannikov's suggestion. His Russian-language essay here recounts his discovery of the Baptists' "Unknown Congress" held between 30 November and 30 December 1914, including the key leaders attending and issues discussed. This was a difficult time for Russian Baptists as the First World War had just begun, and historical ties with German Baptists were seen as "aiding the enemy."

Part Three of the Festschrift covers philosophical theology and methodology with excellent chapters by Yuriy Chornomorets, Inna Golubovych, Sergiy Holovashchenko,

and Roman Soloviy. Examining Sannikov's theological methodology, Chornomorets of Kyiv's Drahomanov National Pedagogical University concludes [in Ukrainian] that it is especially helpful for discussion across denominational and church traditions. Sannikov is described as having a "holistic

hermeneutical" approach which charges the theologian to speak on behalf of the Church community as well as for him- or herself, as a teacher and prophet imitating Christ's example. In other words, the ministries of teacher and prophet are not in opposition.

Also writing in Ukrainian, Golubovych of today's Odesa National University examines Sannikov's audio series of "portraits" of great theologians and historians of the Church, reviewing his biographical method in the light of philosophical, historical, and theological guidelines.

Holovashchenko—of National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy—recalls the historical research project that he and Sannikov "dreamed up" in 1993 to discover and process documents related to the history of the Evangelical Baptist movement in Ukraine. This project proved to be not only a matter of publishing what was discovered, but also of how to interact with and teach their findings. The study of a denomination's history, Holovashchenko insists, represents both archival verification of facts and a motivation for personal spiritual devotion.

Roman Soloviy of Ukraine's Eastern European Institute of Theology explores [in Ukrainian] the role of the prophetic in the philosophy of religion. He focuses on the conceptions of the American Christian philosopher Merold Westphal, who is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Fordham University in New York. Soloviy suggests how Westphal's thought intersects and accentuates Sannikov's ideas of the Church's prophetic ministry and practice of the presence of Christ in areas of justice, peace, and compassion. While the prophetic can challenge complacent church belief and traditions, it can also challenge us to be truer to the Word of God.

Part Four, "Church and Witness," contains chapters authored by Mykhailo Cherenkov, Yuriy Chornomorets, Ludmyla Fylypovych, Oleksandr Geychenko, and Katharina and Peter Penner. Cherenkov—of Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv as well as Mission Eurasia at his time of writing—discusses [in Russian] Sannikov's writings in the context of four pillars of the mission of the Church in the modern world. These are: education as mission, the

cornerstone of freedom, Christian culture as a mission field, and radicalism as a form of witness. Cherenkov then describes Sannikov's pioneering and prophetic understanding of each of these four pillars. He concludes by noting the importance of Sannikov's writings as a foundation for post-Soviet Christian missiology, as well as a body of work that will continue to challenge future generations.

Chornomorets' second contribution to this volume [in Ukrainian] focuses on how Christianity can give hope to a hopeless secular society. Although post-industrial society has an anti-Christian bent, it is possible for the Church to overcome this bias through every Christian's gracious living. This is accomplished through Christians' relational living in the world as God's priests, prophets, and teachers, combined with the testimony of living holy lives.

Fylypovych of the Hryhoriy Skovoroda Philosophy Institute of the National Academy of Sciences offers personal recollections [in Ukrainian] on the life and ministry of Sannikov in his many guises of scholar, pastor, writer, and Odessan. For her, Sannikov's life purpose is to show the world the true essence of Christianity: Jesus Christ revealed in his life and works. This is his calling. Sannikov is not a boring, traditional Christian but rather a living man of faith, a man of the Scriptures. He destroyed the Soviet paradigm that

(continued on page 16)



Members of Odessa Bible School, opened in 1989
(Source: <https://sannikov.info>)

perceived Protestants—as well as Christians in general—as marginal relics of the past.

Also writing in Ukrainian, Geychenko of Odessa Theological Seminary is in dialog with Sannikov on the topic of the sacramental dimension of the Church. He introduces Sannikov's three-part series *Znaki prisutnosti* [*Signs of Presence*], of which the first volume—published in Ukrainian and Russian in 2019—examines baptism in the context of Baptist sacramentology. The second volume—published in Russian in 2023, with a Ukrainian version to follow—examines the Eucharist, while a future third volume will consider ordination. Geychenko then interacts with Sannikov's conceptions of the sacraments in Baptist theology. He discusses the sense in which the Church—and thus the Christian community itself—is sacramental, before arguing that, should certain aspects of sacramentalism be combined with the traditional Baptist sense of being the visible Church, then true unity might become possible.

Katharina and Peter Penner of Campus Danubia in Austria reflect upon the significance of the publication of the *Slavic Bible Commentary* and Sannikov's major role in seeing it come to fruition. After discussing the importance of the pioneering *Africa Bible Commentary*, the Penners examine the characteristics of what makes a contextualized commentary contextual. They also consider the importance of having contextualized commentaries for various parts of the Eurasian region, including a *Central Asia Bible Commentary* as well as a *Central and Eastern European Bible Commentary*. Finally, they discuss the missional use of such commentaries by the church community as well as individuals, the development of national authors, and the stimulus to write other theological works.

The editors of this volume are to be congratulated for having such a wide variety of topics by authors from different generations writing in multiple languages. This certainly is an honoring reflection of the life and ministry of Sergii V.



Znaki prisutnosti/Znaki prisutstvaia: Ukrainian and Russian editions of Signs of Presence volumes on baptism and the Eucharist
(Source: <https://sannikov.info>)

Sannikov. Full translation of each essay into English, Russian, and Ukrainian would allow a greater audience to benefit from and appreciate more deeply the serious and important theological reflections it contains. ♦

Charley Warner is a missionary serving with Barnabas International. He and his wife Cheryl are currently based in Irpin, Ukraine.

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P.O.Box 76741
Washington, DC 20013
U.S.A.

Geraldine Fagan, Editor
eastwestchurchreport@gmail.com
Mark R. Elliott, Editor Emeritus
emark936@gmail.com
Matthew Lee Miller, Book Review Editor

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