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A Troubled Troika: The CoMission, the Russian Ministry of Education, and the Russian Orthodox Church

Perry Glanzer

The JESUS Film Project

"Never mind Big Macs. The former Soviet republics are now opening their public school doors to teaching about Christianity," proclaimed *USA Today*.¹ What provoked this headline? On 5 November 1992 three officials from the Russian Ministry of Education asked Christian educators to join the CoMission—a group of over 80 Christian organizations formed to instruct Russian public school teachers how to teach Christian ethics. This unusual invitation originated from the JESUS Film Project's efforts to show the JESUS film in Russia.² Six months after the first JESUS film premiere in the Soviet Union in 1989, education officials from 15 Communist countries and republics had asked for the film to be shown in their public schools. Many of these officials eventually accepted a JESUS Film Project proposal to help train teachers to teach Christian ethics. As a result, the JESUS Film Project created a new department that became known as the International School Project (ISP). Beginning in 1991, ISP started organizing four-day convocations in 10 different countries³ with the permission and assistance of former Communist officials. During the convocations educators viewed the JESUS film, learned to teach a Christian morals and ethics curriculum, and heard lectures about such topics as Jesus Christ's resurrection, the reliability of the Bible, and other facets of the Christian worldview.

The Need for Followup

The CoMission grew out of the need to follow up the evangelistic and educational efforts of ISP's four-day convocations. ISP possessed neither the finances nor the human resources to meet the need. Thus, Campus Crusade for Christ joined with over 80 other Christian groups to build on the Christian witness of ISP convocations. The Russian Ministry of Education and the CoMission signed a Protocol of Intention providing for a five-year partnership to develop morals and ethics programs and curricula for Russian public schools, to distribute education

materials, and to conduct educational conferences and consultations. This unique partnership between the CoMission and Russian educators noted by *USA Today* appeared to be a test for Russia's attempts to find noncommunist foundations for moral education, its efforts to embrace religious liberty, and its willingness to accept ideological pluralism in education.

To determine the consequences of this project, I undertook a qualitative analysis of both the International School Project (ISP) and the CoMission. I spent seven months in Russia and Ukraine visiting CoMission activities and interviewing 116 educators from the region and 119 Westerners involved with both groups. In addition, I conducted a quantitative survey of 212 persons from the former Soviet Union involved with the CoMission.

The Need for New Moral Foundations

Overall, I found that ISP and the CoMission clearly filled a need. Over half of the teachers I surveyed ranked moral and/or religious decline as the most serious problem facing their country today. Only a little over one quarter ranked the economy as the most serious problem. Even for these teachers raised on Marxism, their countries' major problem was first and foremost the need for new moral foundations. As one teacher lamented, "It is very hard to live without believing in anything." Still another shared, "It is hard to find something to believe in. All the Communist principles failed. Now people need something to believe in."

The problem was that while post-Communist education officials, ISP and CoMission leaders, and Orthodox Church clergy all wanted to replace Communist moral education, each had different ideas about how it should be done. All three groups sought to use the public education system to accomplish their particular goals, and as a result the relationships between these different groups were plagued by social conflicts, ethical dilemmas, and church-state

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A paragraph inadvertently was omitted from the Editor's Note of "Eastern Orthodox Teachings in Comparison with the Doctrinal Position of Biola University" by Robert L. Saucy, John Coe, and Alan W. Gomes, in volume 8 (Summer 2000): 6. That paragraph follows:

The focus of the East-West Church & Ministry Report is not North America. At the same time, Biola's careful reflection on Orthodox theology from an evangelical perspective serves as a model for the sort of theological exercise that should be the task of all Western missionaries serving in historically Orthodox territories. The following excerpt from Biola's 76-page report, along with accompanying responses by theologians Don Fairbairn and Gerald Bray, seek to serve that purpose.

difficulties that eventually resulted in the cancellation of the CoMission's protocol with the Russian Ministry of Education.

Moral Education or Evangelism?

On the Western side, ISP and the CoMission experienced two particular tensions. First, they faced the difficult task of balancing the dual goals of moral education and evangelism. The tension between offering Christian moral education and leading teachers and students toward a conversion to Christianity was clearly noticeable in the curriculum. Kenneth Woodward wrote in *Newsweek* magazine:

In theory, the visiting Americans are supposed to train Russian teachers in teaching Christian ethics, not doctrine. To the Russians, this means demonstrating how the values Jesus taught, such as forgiveness, can benefit secular society. But in fact, the CoMission's teaching manuals say very little about the ethics Jesus taught: the Sermon on the Mount, for example, is ignored. Instead the manual's entire thrust is to lead students step by step toward making a "voluntary" commitment to Jesus as "Savior and Lord." In short, to act like Jesus, students must first have faith in him.⁴

Woodward overstates his point. Nonetheless, he recognizes the fundamental tension between evangelism and education found in ISP's curricula.

Second, the attempt to teach not only Christian ethics, but also to present an evangelistic message through government-sponsored channels, raised thorny church-state issues. Marketing the CoMission to American churches, parachurch organizations, and fundraisers required being explicit about the project's evangelistic intentions. Thus, the leadership formulated the following purpose statement:

The CoMission exists for the purpose of calling together the Body of Christ to cooperatively share resources in order to maximize the accomplishment of the Great CoMission in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) through forming strategic alliances and planting indigenous Bible studies for children, youth and adults in each of the 120,000 local public school districts throughout the former Soviet Union as well as Bulgaria, Albania, and Romania no later than December 31, 1997.⁵

An earlier version of the mission statement had explicitly indicated that the CoMission would aim to start churches. However, due to opposition from the

Ministry of Education, the statement was changed. The fact that the CoMission sought to use the state-run education system to begin church planting bothered some missions-minded evangelicals. As a result, some groups decided against joining.

From the moment the CoMission started, ISP officials had urged that the message being given to the larger American public and the message being given to post-Soviet education officials be consistent, systematic, and formalized. Despite this advice, different messages about the CoMission continued to be communicated on the two continents. One Western missionary warned the Executive Committee of the CoMission in April 1993 that these mixed messages would create problems with the Orthodox Church:

As we understand it, the Ministry of Education and the CoMission have an agreement, stating that the CoMission will provide a Christian based morality and ethics curriculum and training for teachers, by teachers, within Russian school districts. On the U.S. side of the ocean, however, we all hear that it is being advertised as the largest evangelism outreach ever, that it will change the course of history, and that anyone can be a part, regardless of qualifications. The gap between these two definitions of CoMission's role in Russia is huge. It is not unlikely that the Orthodox will use the CoMission's own advertising to support their accusations of "hidden agendas" within Protestantism. They may subsequently apply pressure to have CoMission and very possibly Protestant ministries expelled from Russia. The point we are trying to make is this: CoMission cannot afford, for its own sake and for the sake of all Protestant ministries working in this country, to be anything other than "squeaky clean" in its representation and fulfillment of its intentions in Russia.⁶

These prophetic words would soon be fulfilled. In the summer of 1993 Father Ioann Ekonomtsev, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department of Christian Education and Catechization, joined Patriarch Aleksii II on a trip to the United States. During the visit American Orthodox priests raised with Ekonomtsev their concern that the CoMission was composed of Protestant church-planting groups that were not making full disclosure of their activities. In August 1993, after returning to Russia, Father Ekonomtsev met with ISP leaders Alexei Brudnov, Alexander Asmolov, and another deputy minister of education to discuss their relationship and his concerns. Ekonomtsev's greatest complaint was that the CoMission did not fully disclose its goals of starting new churches through its Bible studies.

The tension between offering Christian moral education and leading teachers and students toward a conversion to Christianity was clearly noticeable in the curriculum.

Orthodox Opposition

Ultimately, Russian Orthodox opposition broke the fragile political partnership between the Russian Ministry of Education and the CoMission. In early 1995 an Orthodox priest in the city of Nizhny Novgorod learned that a CoMission member was teaching the curriculum on "Christian Ethics and Morality" at the request of a Russian teacher during regular school hours. Since the agreement with the Ministry of Education stated that CoMission team members would only work with teachers and not with students to teach the course in the voluntary after-school classes, the act was a breach of the Protocol of Intention. What further confirmed Orthodox suspicions were CoMission documents found by the same priest that outlined the goals of the CoMission as communicated to American audiences. The documents related the CoMission's intention to send 12,000 missionaries to Russia over a five-year period to start Bible studies that would eventually form churches. On 3 February 1995 the Ministry of Education suspended the Protocol of Intention with the CoMission.

In a religiously pluralistic society such as Russia, allowing various forms of ethics (Protestant Christianity being one) to be taught in voluntary, supplemental education classes appears quite just. In theory, each ideological or religious group could hold a supplemental education class on its particular brand of ethics. The voluntary nature of the class would preclude students from being indoctrinated into one particular ideological or religious view in a way that would violate their consciences. The Russian Ministry of Education actually envisioned this type of equal playing field among religious groups. The CoMission was asked to teach those Christian beliefs that were common to all Christian groups, and they claimed that their curriculum adhered to this request. The reality was that the curriculum represented a distinctly Protestant approach to Christian ethics and Scripture. As a result, the Orthodox Church believed that the Ministry of Education was favoring an evangelical Protestant form of Christian education in the public schools. If religious liberty for all religious groups was to exist, the Orthodox wanted it to be granted fairly. Yet Orthodox leaders wanted more than honesty and fairness. Father Vladimir Yashchenko, assistant to Father Ekonomtsev, claimed,

"We can't do as Americans do, because we can't have such sects equal to our traditional Orthodox Church. We need legal laws to prevent them from their activity."⁷

Orthodox leaders believed the state should prohibit the access of Western missionaries to Russia in order to help the Orthodox Church recover its special place of privilege in Russian society. This attitude proved fatal not only for the CoMission's government partnerships at the national level, but also for religious freedom in Russia. In the fall of 1997 Orthodox efforts to inhibit the work of foreign missionaries succeeded. Under the strong influence of the Orthodox Church, Yeltsin signed a new law restricting both religious liberty and foreign missionary activity. In the end, the Orthodox Church preferred to struggle against the CoMission and other Western missionaries not by the power of its ideas but by the use of government power to restrict their activity. ♦

Notes

1. Dennis Kelly, "New Russia Welcomes U.S. Religious Educators," *USA Today*, 10 November 1992, D1.
2. Paul Eshleman, *The Touch of Jesus* (Orlando, FL: New Life Publishers, 1995), 181-93.
3. Russia, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Byelorussia, Moldavia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania.
4. K. L. Woodward with C. O'Brian, "Iisus Kristus Loves You: U.S. Evangelicals Put God Back in Russian Schools," *Newsweek* 121 (4 January 1993): 45.
5. CoMission Promotional Materials, 1993.
6. E-mail correspondence with ISP, 4 April 1993.
7. Father Vladimir Aleksandrovich Yashchenko, interview with the author, 30 June 1995.

Edited excerpt used with permission from Perry Glanzer, "Teaching Christian Ethics in Russian Public Schools: The Testing of Russia's Church-State Boundaries," Journal of Church and State 41 (Spring 1999), 285-305; and Perry Glanzer, "A Critical Analysis of the CoMission: A Study in the Loss, Replacement, and Establishment of an Ideology of Moral Order," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1998.

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The Trouble with Glanzer's Troika

Alan Kent Scholes

Perry Glanzer's article poses a question critical to all mission efforts within the former Soviet Union: What factors led to the 1997 law restricting religious freedom in Russia? Dr. Glanzer answers this question

by recounting portions of the history of the work of the International School Project and the CoMission in cooperation with the Russian Ministry of Education during the decade of the 1990s. His

Russian nationalists, diehard Communists, and some factions in the Orthodox Church all had different reasons to oppose Western evangelical missions.

concluding paragraph makes clear he believes: 1) the Russian Orthodox Church was the primary influence behind the 1997 law, and 2) the Orthodox Church promoted the law primarily to stop the CoMission and other similar Western evangelical missionaries.

It is beyond my ability to assess the extent of Orthodox influence on the Russian Duma in passing the law, or on President Yeltsin in signing it. However, the notion that the Orthodox Church was motivated substantially, or perhaps even primarily, by a desire to stop the CoMission has not been demonstrated by Professor Glanzer in this article and, in fact, I believe it to be false. As evidence, Glanzer asserts that Russian Orthodox opposition ultimately broke "the fragile political partnership between the Russian Ministry of Education and the CoMission." First, let me mention a minor quibble. There never was anything that could be remotely construed as a "political" partnership between these two bodies. I am certain that CoMission leaders never had any ambitions to influence the politics of Russia. The partnership, from both sides, was an educational one. But my larger concern with the statement is the assertion that Orthodox opposition broke the partnership. A little historical context may help shed light on what really happened.

Teacher-Training Convocations

The International School Project (ISP) began early in 1991 when Paul Eshleman, director of the JESUS Film Project, asked future ISP director Dr. Blair Cook to assemble an international team of scholars and educators to write a brief curriculum to be distributed to Russian teachers with copies of the JESUS Film. Ministry of Education officials had requested that convocations be held on a trial basis in three Russian cities to orient selected teachers to the curriculum and film. In May 1991 I joined a group of Western Christian scholars, educators, and Christian leaders, accompanied by a group of officials from the Ministry of Education, in conducting weeklong convocations in Moscow, Vologda, and Leningrad. The response of the teachers and officials was extremely positive and ISP was invited to provide similar teacher-training convocations in many cities throughout Russia and eventually nine other countries of the former Soviet Union. In the end, more than 100 such convocations were held.

The Window of Opportunity

From the very earliest days of the project in 1991 many of us believed that the window of opportunity would be short. Campus Crusade speaker Josh McDowell spoke frequently of a "five year window." I also publicly predicted, on a number of occasions,

that our opportunity would last only a short time, perhaps only a few years.

There were at least three reasons that many felt the period of openness would likely be short. First, in 1991 religion in general, and Christianity in particular, was a novelty. Seventy-five years of Communism had left an intense spiritual vacuum. Also, Christian literature and media such as the Bible and the JESUS Film had the added allure of "forbidden fruit." On a number of occasions in 1991 I saw Russian teachers, even some who professed to be atheists, with tears of joy running down their cheeks as I gave them their own copies of the Bible in Russian. It was evident to me that this sort of spiritual fervor could not long endure.

Second, when the doors flew open, everything flooded in. By 1991 CNN and MTV were ubiquitous. Western groups such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses quickly sent thousands of missionaries. Eastern-based groups such as the Unification Church also quickly gathered converts. New Age ideas such as belief in astrology, UFOs, and reincarnation spread like wildfire.

Finally, it was clear that there would be opposition and reaction to the gospel. Russian nationalists, diehard Communists, and some factions in the Orthodox Church all had different reasons to oppose Western evangelical missions. I was aware from the beginning that one or a combination of these groups might soon succeed in hindering or even outlawing Western missionary efforts.

The Nature of the CoMission-Government Relationship

For all these reasons, CoMission leaders viewed their work as a short-term effort. The CoMission was a joint project of dozens of mission agencies to send teams to as many of the convocation cities as possible to provide follow-up for the teachers and assist them in their Christian growth. It was planned from the beginning that it would be a five-year project from 1992 to 1997. Glanzer states that the Russian Education Ministry "suspended the protocol of intention with the CoMission" in February of 1995. However, that meeting was only one of several renegotiations and readjustments that took place during the five years of the CoMission operation. Glanzer gives the impression that CoMission work was halted early in 1995. In fact, the CoMission actually continued to send teams to new cities with the cooperation of both national and local educational officials through the end of 1997. When CoMission efforts did begin to taper off, it was because 1997 was the end of the planned five-year project, not due to some falling out with the educational ministry, or even because of the 1997 Duma action.

Did the CoMission Trigger Restrictions on Religious Liberty?

With this background, I want to answer more directly what I see as the most disquieting implication of Glanzer's article. Were the actions of the CoMission or ISP a contributing—or even major—cause of the 1997 law restricting religious freedom? I find this conclusion extremely unlikely, if not impossible.

If the primary, or even a significant, intent of the 1997 law was to restrict the distribution of ISP materials or hinder CoMission-related teacher training, it would be reasonable to assume that most or all ISP activity in Russia would have ceased after 1997. At the very least, such activity could not have been carried on with the cooperation, much less the official sanction, of Russian educational officials. But cooperative efforts did not cease; instead, they accelerated.

In 1999 Alexei Brudnov, the department head for Supplemental Education of the Russian Federation Ministry of Education, asked ISP to write a 30-lesson curriculum to accompany the audio-cassette "Story of Jesus" produced by the JESUS Film Project of Campus Crusade. Once again, I served as a writer and content editor for this curriculum. In June 1999 an official educational review board in Moscow examined the curriculum, recommended a number of changes, and then gave the edited curriculum its full endorsement. In July 1999 a deputy minister of education signed a formal agreement for the audiotapes and curriculum to be distributed to all 67,000 schools in Russia. (The same week, Alexei Brudnov tragically died of a heart attack.) During the 1999–2000 school year these materials were made available to nearly every school in the country. This high level of approval and official cooperation exceeds even the cordial relationship ISP enjoyed with the education ministry in previous years. Could this have taken place if ISP or the CoMission had been a major target of restrictive national legislation only two years prior?

"Cultic Missionaries"

If it was not the CoMission, then what were the targets of the Orthodox Church and the Duma in the 1997 law? I believe there is a simple and much more likely explanation than the one suggested by Glanzer. During the 1990s there was a virtual flood of cultic missionaries into Russia from both East and West. These were both much more visible and more troubling influences than the rather sedate and professional educational activities of ISP and the CoMission. Many observers believe that the Orthodox Church and the Duma were primarily concerned to stem the tide of this aggressive cultic onslaught. Such is the conclusion of Paul Carden, executive director of The Centers for Apologetic Research:

It is clear that one of the primary motives of the 1997 religion law was to curb the expansion of aggressive foreign cults such as Aum Shinrikyo, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Unification Church. I am not personally aware that the work of the CoMission was even a concern, much less a major motivation behind the Duma action.

My own experience with the International School Project and the Russian Ministry of Education since 1991 does not lead me to believe that ISP has played any, even inadvertent, role in restricting religious freedom or the progress of missionary efforts. On the contrary, it is my personal belief that ISP has done much over the years to enhance the relationship between Russian Ministry of Education officials and Western evangelicals. ♦

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A CoMissioner's Firsthand Report

Jena Gaston

While in Ukraine with the CoMission, I tried not to create my own agenda, but to allow the Holy Spirit to work while heeding the primary goals of the organization. These included follow-up visits with school teachers and administrators who had attended past convocations where a Christian ethics and morals curriculum was introduced along with the JESUS film, the Bible, and other teaching aids. Another goal was to start Bible Discussion Groups (BDGs) to introduce the teachers and others to the Bible—a book that has been a mystery to 99 percent of the population for over 70 years. The BDGs were

to serve a second purpose as well—to train nationals to eventually lead BDGs of their own.

As we began contacting teachers and others in Zaporozhye, we found some were quite open to further communication. They invited us into their schools to speak to students and to have Bible studies in their classrooms, their homes, and—more often—in our flats. Others were not so open, and we said goodbye on a friendly note. What struck me, as I spoke personally with the teachers through interpreters, was their diligence not only to read the Bible, but also to begin from the beginning and read

through to the end. Most also showed amazement that the Bible is filled with so much "practical information." Others commented on the Bible's relevance in classroom teaching.

I was most impressed, however, with the large number of high school and university students that God brought our way. The majority initially came to meet Americans and practice English. However, they were more than open to the truths being introduced in the Bible studies. Slowly they gained confidence and eventually led discussion groups on their own. Eventually, Ukrainians also took the initiative with other ministries including dorm evangelism, Christian summer camps, and witnessing to their families and friends. They also became key workers in

teacher curriculum workshops and JESUS film showings. Boris, for example, called himself Saul because he had persecuted the church during the Communist years. Now he is a soldier for Christ. He was a key networker in one Christian ethics and morals curriculum workshop for Sunday school teachers and church administrators. Due to his efforts, we were able to address over 80 people from eight denominations all over the Zaporozhye Region. When we left Zaporozhye, Ukrainians were leading three Bible discussion groups, students continued to minister at orphanages, Christians had been identified at five university campuses and had been taught how to share their faith, and a Ukraine for Christ evangelistic team had been formed. ♦

Jena Gaston is assistant editor of the East-West Church & Ministry Report.

Eastern Orthodox Teachings in Comparison with the Doctrinal Position of Biola University

Robert L. Saucy, John Coe, and Alan W. Gomes

Editor's Note: The 1990s witnessed the presence of a number of Eastern Orthodox Christians on U.S. evangelical university and seminary faculties. In 1997 Biola University, LaMirada, CA, with three Orthodox faculty and staff, commissioned three of its theology faculty to examine Eastern Orthodox teachings in the light of Biola's doctrinal position. This 80-page April 1998 report, available online along with an eight-page summary (www.biola.edu/faculty/alang), did not lead to the dismissal of any employees. However, Columbia International University, Columbia, SC, did require the resignation of Professor Edward Rommen in December 1997, following his decision to leave the Evangelical Free Church for Eastern Orthodoxy. Finally, Dr. Bradley Nassif of the Antiochian Archdiocese of the Orthodox Church, who defines his theology as evangelical, taught full-time at Fuller Seminary's Fullerton, CA, extension in 1998-99 and currently teaches part-time at Fuller. See Bradley Nassif, "Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism: The Status of an Emerging Global Dialogue," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 18 (Spring 2000): 20-55.

Orthodox theology includes what evangelical Protestantism understands as regeneration and sanctification in the meaning of justification.

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone

Biola's doctrinal statement affirms that "Men are justified on the simple and single ground of the shed blood of Christ and upon the simple and single condition of faith in Him who shed the blood, and are born again by the quickening, renewing, cleansing work of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the Word of God." Biola's statement of faith is based on the traditional Protestant understanding of the relationship between faith and good works, which entails the following:

1. Justification means "to declare righteous." It does not mean to "make someone righteous (inherently)," but rather it is the verdict of a judge "to pronounce righteous" as opposed "to condemn."

2. Human beings are justified by God on the basis of the righteousness of Christ which is reckoned to them. It is not based on any inherent righteousness or good works of the believer produced by the grace of God.

3. The righteousness of Christ is reckoned to people on the sole ground of faith in Christ and his saving work.

The concept of justification in Orthodox theology differs from that of evangelical Protestantism. Instead of justification being simply a judicial declaration of the right status of the person on the basis of Christ's imputed righteousness, Orthodox theology holds that justification includes also the actual making of the person righteous. It involves the partaking of a "real righteousness" whereby the individual is in fact being made righteous by being "in Christ," that is, by becoming a partaker of the Divine nature and, thus, entering the path of theosis or deification. Orthodox theology thus includes what evangelical Protestantism understands as regeneration and sanctification in the meaning of justification. Orthodox teaching explicitly denies justification by faith alone and includes good works as necessary in justification. [It also] defines justification as including the concept of being transformed into the likeness of God. Justification is included in the process of "salvation" or "deification"

(being transformed into the likeness of God through union with Christ). Thus the place of works in relation to "salvation" or "deification" in the citations below is also the place of works in relation to justification.

1. "Justification is not merely a once-for-all event, but a dynamic, ongoing process. Two conditions are given here: God accepts whoever (1) fears Him and (2) works righteousness. This in no way denies justification by faith; but it is not by faith alone. And God supplies the grace necessary for us to fear Him and work righteousness."¹

2. Orthodox teaching implicitly denies justification by faith alone by asserting the necessity of the sacramental rites for justification, regeneration, or salvation. Evangelical Protestantism denies that baptism or any other sacramental rite is essential for justification or regeneration.

The Doctrine of the New Birth through the Instrumentality of the Word of God

Biola's doctrinal statement affirms that "Men . . . are born again by the quickening, renewing, cleansing work of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the Word of God." The writers of Biola's statement can be assumed to believe that no other instrumental means are necessary for the effecting of new birth. The Orthodox teaching that the new birth or regeneration occurs through the instrumentality of the sacrament of baptism denies that the new birth is effected solely by faith through the instrumentality of the Word of God.

1. "By means of holy baptism, the 'bath of regeneration' and renewing of the Holy Spirit, believers shed the sinful garments of the old man and are clothed in Christ, entering through him as through a door, into the church, the kingdom of grace. We are thus regenerated, renewed, and recreated, our nature being made over into the divine image . . . According to Chrysostom, 'It is through baptism that we received remission of sins, sanctification, communion of the Spirit, adoption, and life eternal.'"²

2. "Baptism," writes Nicholas Cabasilas, "is nothing else but to be born according to Christ and to receive our very being and nature."³

Orthodoxy's strong position on Apostolic succession and the place of the bishop as the "fountain of all the sacraments" entails that the ecclesiastical hierarchy is a necessary instrument in effecting regeneration (as in baptism) and all the other sacramental means of grace for the participation in theosis and salvation. "The dignity of the bishop is so necessary in the Church," wrote Dositheus, "that without him neither the Church nor the name Christian could exist or be spoken of at all . . . He is a living image of God upon earth . . . and a fountain of all the sacraments of the Catholic [universal] Church, through which we obtain salvation. If any are not with the bishop," said Cyprian, "they are not in the Church."⁴ Thus, faith's response to the Scriptures is not a sufficient means of regeneration, as indicated in Biola's doctrinal statement.

Scripture and Tradition

Eastern Orthodox place significant weight on "tradition"—much more so than in Protestantism. Traditions include especially the Scriptures, the church councils (particularly the seven ecumenical councils), the teachings of the church fathers, the liturgy, and the veneration of icons. The problem from a Protestant perspective is not the existence of tradition per se, but whether any tradition, however widely or anciently held, is to be regarded as on a par with Scripture in terms of inspiration, infallibility, and authority. Another point of conflict is whether the church is the infallible interpreter of Scripture.

Eastern Orthodox expressly deny the principle of *sola Scriptura*. For Orthodox it is the Spirit-led church that provides the norms for true belief; in Protestantism, Spirit-inspired Scripture is the sole norm.

1. " . . . [the Church] provides the norms of true belief, of the profession of the true faith."⁵

2. " . . . for them [the Orthodox] the Christian faith and experience can in no way be compatible with the notion of *Scriptura sola*."⁶

While conservative Protestants do agree with the conclusions of at least certain of the [seven] ecumenical councils, they do not regard these as infallible or inspired, any more than they believe their own confessions of faith (e.g., Biola's doctrinal statement) to be inspired. Protestants accept these decisions only in so far as they reflect Scripture, which alone is infallible and inspired. Indeed, Protestants outright reject as erroneous much of the seventh ecumenical council (Nicea, 787), which enjoined the veneration of icons.

Orthodox [also] affirm that the Spirit-led church is the infallible interpreter of Scripture. Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches both agree that one's interpretation of Scripture must be subordinated to and controlled by the Tradition. Protestants believe that the Orthodox (and, for that matter, Roman Catholic) position effectively (and wrongly) places the church over the Bible rather than the other way around.

1. " . . . [The Bible] must not be regarded as something set up over the Church, but as something that lives and is understood within the Church . . . It is from the Church that the Bible ultimately derives its authority, for it was the Church which originally decided which books form a part of Holy Scripture; and it is the Church alone which can interpret Holy Scripture with authority . . . and individual readers, however sincere, are in danger of error if they trust their own personal interpretation."⁷

2. " . . . to understand the inspired Scripture a special inspiration, inherent only in the Church, is necessary."⁸

For Orthodox it is the Spirit-led church that provides the norms for true belief; in Protestantism, Spirit-inspired Scripture is the sole norm.

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Orthodox believe the full enjoyment of the grace of salvation is found only in the Orthodox Church.

Other Orthodox Beliefs and Practices Which Are in Tension with the Evangelical Protestant Tradition

1. *The Church and its hierarchy.* Orthodoxy teaches that the Church is the continuation of the incarnation of Christ in the world. This leads among other things to the conclusion that the Church, through the hierarchy, conveys the saving grace of God through the sacraments.

2. *The exclusivity of the Orthodox Church.* The Orthodox Church is the true visible Church. Thus although most Orthodox believe in the possibility of salvation outside of the Orthodox Church, the full enjoyment of the grace of salvation is found only in the Orthodox Church.

3. *The canonization of saints.* Like Protestants, Orthodoxy holds that all believers are "saints." In addition, however, some members of the Church are officially recognized through canonization as having attained a level of sanctification which is described as "glorification." Though dead, these recognized saints play a significant role in the faith and practice of the Orthodox believers. This includes praying to them and asking them to intercede for us as well as venerating them and their relics.

4. *Prayers for the dead.* Orthodoxy teaches that the ultimate fate of the individual is not determined until the last day of Judgment. The person still has opportunity prior to final judgement to turn more toward God or away from God. Thus there is the need to pray for the departed dead in their journey toward final judgment.

5. *Various beliefs about Mary.* Orthodoxy teaches a number of doctrines concerning Mary that evangelical Protestantism holds as non-biblical. These include Mary's perpetual virginity; her freedom from actual sin; the Bodily Assumption of Mary; [that] Mary is to be venerated as the most holy saint; [and

that] believers are to pray to Mary asking her to intercede for us in heaven.

6. *The veneration of icons.* The practice of venerating icons was mandated by the seventh ecumenical council (787) and, thus, has become very important to the life of the Orthodox Church. Orthodox are to honor [and] worship God and [are to] pray before icons which are pictures or representations of Jesus Christ, Mary, and the Saints, typically painted on wooden panels or other plain surfaces.

7. *The denial of guilt in original sin.* The evangelical Protestant heritage has historically held that all people have inherited from Adam not only the corruption and mortality of sin, but also the guilt of sin. Orthodox theology holds only to the inheritance of corruption and mortality. ♦

1. *Orthodox Study Bible* on Acts 10:35
2. John Karmiris, "Concerning the Sacraments," in *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Daniel Clendenin (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 24.
3. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 193.
4. Timothy Ware (Kallistos), *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin, 1993), 248-49.
5. Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 10.
6. John Meyendorff, "Doing Theology in an Eastern Orthodox Perspective," in Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox*, 83.
7. Ware, *Orthodox*, 199.
8. Bulgakov, *Orthodox*, 19.

Don Fairbairn Responds to the Biola Statement on Eastern Orthodoxy

I should begin by warmly commending the members of Biola University's Task Force on Eastern Orthodoxy, Dr. Saucy, Dr. Coe, and Dr. Gomes, for the thoroughness of their work.

There are a number of specific issues on which I believe the members of the task force deserve praise. First, I applaud their attempt to be evenhanded. Second, I commend them for their recognition of where the major differences between Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism lie. Issues such as the veneration of

saints and the use of icons are very far from the heart of the differences between us, even though they are the first differences to impinge on our senses. The members of the task force were right to relegate these issues to a somewhat secondary position, rather than allow them to dominate the report. Third, I applaud them for recognizing that the lack of a juridical emphasis in Orthodox soteriology is a key area of difference with Evangelicalism. Fourth, I think the members of the task force were right in

arguing that Orthodox ecclesiology makes it very difficult, at best, for Orthodox people to serve in good faith on the faculties of evangelical seminaries. I believe that for the most part the report is as accurate a presentation of Orthodox theology as one can produce when one's purpose is to discuss only those areas that are different from Evangelicalism.

Two Orthodox-Evangelical Distinctions

The Biola Task Force was quite correct in pointing out that there is an underemphasis, and usually an actual absence, of juridical concepts in Orthodox thought. However, another closely related difference between Eastern and Western Christendom is that Western theology is much more concerned with making distinctions than is Eastern theology. Of course, Western theology, at least from the Reformation in the sixteenth century, has placed its focus on the individual. Obviously, modern Evangelicalism is the primary heir of this individualistic focus. In contrast, Orthodox are much more corporate in their understanding of reality. They see people, things, and God in terms of their connectedness, their interrelatedness, not in terms of the distinctions among them. This corporate view of reality is at least as important in the Orthodox mindset as is the lack of juridical categories.

The Issue of Justification by Faith

This, of course, is the primary focus of the task force report, since it is the key tenet of Reformation faith. The report makes a sharp distinction between justification and sanctification, and it points out that Orthodoxy views justification in a way more like the way Protestantism views regeneration and sanctification. The report then goes to great lengths to show that in Orthodoxy's view, works are necessary for justification. This is quite true, but I do not believe it is a particularly helpful way of exposing the differences between Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism. One needs to remember that the New Testament word *dikaïosune* simply means "righteousness." There is no linguistic distinction between a word that must always refer to what we mean by justification and another word that always refers to what we mean by sanctification or actual righteousness. James, for example, uses the word *dikaïosune* in a way different from what we mean by justification, and Paul himself uses the word in different ways in different places. Therefore, if a group uses the word *dikaïosune* to refer to the acquisition of actual righteousness, we can hardly be critical of that group for saying that our action plays an important part in the process of acquiring that righteousness. In fact, we believe that as well, and the task force report stated as much, but we call that process sanctification.

The task force report does not simply distinguish between justification and sanctification; it also distinguishes between justification and regeneration, and the report insists that justification is a juridical category pertaining only to the change in one's status

before God, whereas regeneration has to do more with the change in one's being, brought about by the indwelling of Christ through the Holy Spirit. On this basis, the report criticizes Orthodoxy for seeing justification as an inward change, an actual righteousness rather than an imputed righteousness. Again, this criticism is valid if one accepts the Reformation understanding of justification and if one limits justification to the juridical idea of imputed righteousness. However, distinguishing justification and regeneration is somewhat artificial, since both of them take place at the beginning of faith. I do not find it particularly helpful for us to criticize the Orthodox for failing to distinguish between two things that both happen at the same time. In effect, this is simply criticizing them for not using our terminology.

However, there is a major difference between Orthodox and Evangelical soteriology on this point, and I believe the members of the task force have sensed that difference correctly, even though I do not think they have expressed that difference in ways that are fair to the Orthodox. I believe a better way to phrase the issue would be to leave aside the word "justification" (since that word is used in other ways in the New Testament in addition to the way Protestants use it, and since we therefore have little grounds for criticizing the Orthodox for using it in one of its other biblical senses) and to concentrate on the truth that we are trying to express by the phrase "justification by faith." We believe that a person becomes acceptable in God's sight from the very moment that genuine faith begins. We express this truth primarily through the use of legal language, but we can also express it in a way that is much more comprehensible to the Orthodox by using relational language. We are not just declared righteous at the beginning of faith; we are also accepted into God's family as his adopted children at the beginning of faith. To use Protestant terminology, justification and adoption both come at the beginning of faith.

In light of this, I believe the key question is that of when God accepts a believer. This raises a follow-up question, that of whether Christian life flows from a prior acceptance or leads to God's acceptance. This, I believe, is the heart of the difference between Evangelicalism and most of Orthodox theology. The truth we are trying to guard by the phrase "justification by faith" is the truth that God's acceptance comes at the beginning of faith and that Christian life is a life of gratitude for that acceptance, not a means to gain God's acceptance. Orthodox theology at least underemphasizes, and often actually denies, this truth. We normally try to guard this truth by talking about faith versus works, but the language of acceptance makes the same point in a way that is more comprehensible to Orthodox and that does not require detailed explanations of differences between Orthodox and Evangelical terminology. Thus, this is the sort of language I use when talking to Orthodox people.

(continued on page 10)

I believe the key question is that of when God accepts a believer. This is the heart of the difference between Evangelicalism and most of Orthodox theology.

The question of whether one can hold to Orthodox soteriology and still affirm Biola's doctrinal statement concerning justification by faith alone is a very tricky one. There are Orthodox leaders who understand what Evangelicals mean by justification by faith alone and agree, even though they do not themselves use the word "justification" in that way. These men also agree that this truth is crucial and

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Gerald Bray Responds to the Biola Statement and Don Fairbairn

Like Don Fairbairn, I was very impressed by the high level of argument and the generally fair and irenic tone that the Biola paper revealed. I also agree that the approach is perhaps not the best, since Orthodox do not think in forensic categories. However, as Don Fairbairn shows, even with a change of framework, Orthodox doctrinal structure still is unacceptable to Evangelicals.

Evangelical and Orthodox doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit differs. Evangelicals believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, which means that He is equally representative of both. It is an obscure subject to many people, but the question of the centrality of the atoning work of Christ in our experience of salvation hangs on it. Evangelicals and Orthodox also have a different understanding—and this is most important—of the doctrine of assurance. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer is a sealing of the finished work of

needs to be proclaimed more fervently within Orthodoxy. However, such voices, more prominent in North American and English Orthodoxy than in Greece or Russia, are somewhat of a minority in Orthodoxy. Perhaps I should simply conclude that even if Orthodoxy does not explicitly deny the truth we are trying to guard, the Orthodox focus on aspiring to union with God obscures the truth that all of Christian life flows from the fact that God has already accepted the believer at conversion. ♦

Christ, which in turn is the ground of our assurance of salvation. To the Orthodox, as to Roman Catholics, the Evangelical doctrine of assurance is presumptuous—how can you know for sure that you are going to heaven?

On the work of the Spirit, Don Fairbairn contrasts Protestant "individualism" and Orthodox "collectivism." I would prefer to say that this distinction rests on a different understanding of the way in which the Spirit works in the world. For both Catholics and Orthodox, His work is primarily external—in and through the church, the sacraments, etc. Believers receive the Spirit through external mediation—from the priest in the sacraments, and so on. Protestants, on the other hand, believe that the primary focus of the Spirit's work is internal—in the heart of the believer. This is why Evangelicals stress the right reception of the sacraments, rather than valid administration. ♦

Gerald Bray is Anglican Professor of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, AL.

Resource Note

"Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church" is the title of a 124-page paper to be published early in 2001 by the British Evangelical Alliance. Part I treats definitions and summarizes the common ground and differences between Evangelical and Orthodox Christians. Part II treats in more detail Evangelical and Orthodox distinctive understandings of Christology, soteriology, the Holy Spirit, the Church, Scripture and Tradition, worship, prayer and spirituality, and mission and evangelism.

A working group of the Evangelical Alliance, the Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth Among Evangelicals (ACUTE), met on six occasions in 1999–2000, formulating and revising the draft which is shortly to be published. *The East-West Church and Ministry Report* will provide cost and order information in a future issue.

Hunches and Pointers in Understanding Russia

Peter Lowman

Editor's note: See the East-West Church & Ministry Report 8 (Spring 2000), 1-3, for the first half of this article.

Logic, But More Than Logic

What did Communism do to truth in Russia? On the one hand, Russians must be one of the most consciously "cultured" races in the world. It is deeply important to many Russians whether something is of a "high" or "low level" culturally. On the other hand, Russia's roots lie in a tradition that has not especially valued verbalized truth and, related to this fact, its culture has a high level of emotionality. (This is a nation that has become passionately devoted to Latin American soap operas such as "The Rich Also Cry.") So stir into this combination the profound post-Communist distrust of anything resembling propaganda, and the result is a cultural situation bearing some resemblance to the postmodern Western disinterest in verbal truth. Russia, in some ways a society that has bypassed "modernity," is coming out at a similar point to the West, though by a different route.

What are the resulting implications for ministry? It is good for outsiders to watch how the Russian intellectual argues a case. Often arguments may seem to lack the "systematic clarity" of Western presentations. For Russians, it seems to me, belief or disbelief often flow from the guts, from the passions. Note the plus and the minus here, as is usually the case when cultures differ. Western clarity can lead to efficiency and accessibility, no doubt owing something to Protestant belief in the comprehensibility of Scripture. But we must be cautious about importing Western rationalism in our methodology and materials. Sometimes I have watched Western presentations carried out in wonderfully tidy and sequential sections and subsections, and thought how alien, untransferrable, and passionless it all seemed. Such presentations may appear impressive and win applause, like a skilled juggling act; but one suspects that, ultimately, they may only go deep with the more Westernized hearers.

One of the most intelligent groups of non-Christian students I encountered in Russia was in an astronomical society meeting in St. Petersburg. In my first presentation to this group I employed the full battery of apologetics arguments one would use in the West: if this, then that. Afterward some students said to me, "You English think much more logically than we do." Then they added that such a rational approach was "totalitarian logic. We have had it for too long." It really set me thinking. How does one communicate in a context suspicious of logical arguments? By sharing more about our experience of

the supernatural or about the symbolic in Scripture? On my next visit I preached the symbolic aspects of the story of Jesus turning the water into wine in John 2; it seemed to open windows my earlier presentation could not. This was not ideal; without the rational we cannot tell the true from the fake in the mystical realm, and Russia has enough counterfeit occultism and off-color holy men. But I needed to broaden my approach if I wanted to communicate.

Grand Reflections and Building Friendships

Likewise, newcomers need to listen to what Russians are actually interested in, rather than what we feel they ought to be interested in. It is true that times are changing and we now see the rise of a coolly realist Russian variant of Generation X, oriented primarily to Western-style ambitions of success and careers. But the average Russian still revels in discussions on the grand scale, explorations of profound themes. Westerners are usually too afraid or too cynical to tackle. What is love? What is beauty? What is friendship? What is the Russian soul? (We can sense the difference between Russia and the West by reflecting why we would never discuss the nature of the British or American soul.) So many of these issues are germane to the gospel, and we are seeing discussion clubs becoming useful bridges toward the gospel in different parts of Russia.

There are other such lessons we can learn. We may perhaps say that Russians often are drawn to the apocalyptic (the French mystic Nostradamus, UFOs), so the book of Revelation is of real interest; and the tragic, so Ecclesiastes clearly strikes a chord. Such parts of the Bible often seem to convey a sense of depth that themes more germane to Westerners will not. Perhaps Westerners need to cast aside the delicate hermeneutical caution they were taught in seminary and learn to revel in expounding the passionate, lurid colors of Revelation. It may be what their hearers are waiting for. The rational, sequential, and doctrinal are all indispensable; but we may well communicate better initially with story-telling and testimonies, with the symbolic, the intuitive, and the supernatural. Even more important, what is said needs to be clothed in relationships, clothed in time spent together, hence the value of anything that can resemble an evangelistic weekend away. And most of all, of course, we transcend our limited Western backgrounds by presenting the one whose revelation touches every human level, Jesus.

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The Gospel's Relevance in a Post-Communist World

Finally, in what respects might the gospel be especially relevant to the post-Communist world? Let me focus on four: identity and self-worth; purpose and hope; ethics; and love and friendship. (I happen to believe these are four key areas in which the West too is discovering life to be unworkable without God; but the symptoms are different there.)

It seems to me that self-worth and identity are major issues in the post-Communist situation. Orthodoxy has not been strong on the place of the individual, and Communism served to negate it. In addition, it may well seem that Communism has done incredible damage to the Russian psyche, in good measure because of the havoc it wreaked upon the Russian family. One of my colleagues remarked that what was needed in her region was 20,000 psychiatrists working for 50 years! Almost any student she knew, she added, lived in a single-parent family, a family with a violent father, a family with an alcoholic father, one with very serious financial problems, or some combination of these. The prevalence of alcoholism exacerbates these trends. In consequence, many Russians carry deep emotional hurts; they have had to grow up with pain to a degree few outsiders may understand. I noticed in the early 1990s that presentations on issues of identity, self-worth, and self-image seemed to strike a powerful chord. The meaning of being a unique creation of an unreservedly loving Father, the unbelievable value that the cross shows the Son setting upon us, and the Spirit's unique giftings to us, are enormously life-giving truths in a context so scarred.

Another major issue, it seems to me, is that of meaning and purpose in life, of destiny and hope. As was suggested above, the Russian vision of the greatness of God is enormously positive; but where it loses the sense of the Father coming near to us, the result can be fatalism. Communism for a while supplied a purpose for life, for history, and for sacrifice that justified living meaningfully, living consistently on a "war footing." But now that whole Marxist drama has been shown to be a monstrous fake. What is left is a sense of hopelessness, deepened further by Russia's low rates of life expectancy, desperately low by global standards. Indeed, we may even feel an expectation of tragedy—it sometimes seems to me that the catastrophic has a fatal attractiveness for the Russian mind.

In such a universe meaning is sought most often in the private sphere, from art and beauty (music, cinema), or from romance, or from the esoteric—just as in the post-God West, one might add. All these offer opportunities for discussion of what is most significant to our friends. There are other possibilities, too. Fatalism, with the notion of a distant, almost incomprehensible God, gives no basis for thinking

about personal growth; nor for coming to grips with fear, suffering, aging, or death. But all of these are issues to which the gospel specifically speaks.

Ethics is another major issue for Russia. The failure of Communism was followed by the equally evident failure of Western capitalism. To start with it looked so good; but the hopes were dashed by the unworkable remedies of the International Monetary Fund, and by the vast sums of "aid" that went straight into the pockets of consultants who spent far too little time learning to understand Russia. Now, with Communist morality dead and capitalist morality in Russia non-existent, what basis for ethics is left? Without credible foundations for ethics, either personally or in the legal, business, or police systems ("legal doesn't work here," a friend told me recently), it is not surprising that Russia shows little sign of "catching up" with the West. Indeed, the real question may be the opposite: how long will it be, as the postmodern West's own ethical basis continues to dissolve, before the West "catches up" with Russia's present ethical jungle? Christian faith can explain both the nature of the ethical crisis, in terms of the collapse of the false gods, and also its cure—the reality of the law of God's kingdom based on revelation, the radical example of Jesus, the power of the Spirit for righteousness.

Finally, it seems to me that love and friendship remain topics of compelling interest in Russia today. The meaning of friendship has far more intensity for Russians than for Westerners. I have watched Westerners get into deep trouble through failing to grasp the serious expectations contained here in "being a friend." Russians frequently perceive Westerners as practicing a shallow notion of friendship. Yet many Russians also live with a deep sense of inadequacy and failure at being unable to find or be "friends." The same is true of the whole meaning of "love" in relationships. To these vital issues the gospel has, again, so much to say.

Russia: Unpredictable, Untamed, Unforgettable

So many challenges; such genuine answers available in the gospel. I have come to love Russia; and when, soon, I have said goodbye to this vast land, I know I shall miss it enormously. Russia is huge, as are its needs and its glories; it is wild, it is unpredictable, it is passionate, and it is wonderful. For every newcomer, the stories to remember for grandchildren seem to occur on a weekly basis; the West can seem tame and pygmy-scale by comparison. As with any adopted country, something enters the soul in Russia that can never be found in one's homeland. The West seldom quite matches the greatness or grandeur of Russia; nor, one must sometimes add, the horror. It is a challenge to serve in Russia; it is also an enormous privilege. I pray the above remarks will help a few readers relate more easily and fruitfully to this majestic land. ♦

Russia is huge, as are its needs and its glories; it is wild, it is unpredictable, it is passionate, and it is wonderful.

Peter Lowman holds a Ph.D. in English literature from University College, Cardiff, Wales. He has worked and lectured in Russia extensively since 1990.

Responses to Report Coverage of Christian Book Distribution

Despite the economic crisis of 1998, the situation gave us new opportunities. Of course, publishers had reduced incomes, but the number of titles even increased. We have many new distributors in various Russian cities since 1998. Also, we now sell more books in secular bookstores. Our system of book delivery by mail works very well. On a regular basis we send information about our books to most of the churches we know. Where there are many believers, new bookstores arise.

Free distribution has not only a negative, but a positive side. Many people want, but have no opportunity to buy, even Bibles, especially in prisons. On the other hand, free distribution is not useful at this time when Western missions give too many free Bibles and other Christian books to one church, and that church—instead of giving the books away—sells them below cost. These in turn are sold on the market below cost. Thus, the purchaser has the wrong idea about the real cost of the book.

Pavel Damyan, President
The Bible for Everyone
St. Petersburg, Russia

Greetings from Slovakia. Here are a few thoughts on Christian book distribution in Russia, which remains problematic for several reasons. Christians try to keep prices as low as possible for good reasons: (1) to get better distribution to poor people; (2) because in some quarters a deep suspicion of money lingers from Communist indoctrination. This means that the

book price cannot sustain all the people in the distribution chain. Also, socialism did not foster the idea of a win-win [situation]. So people believe that if one person wins, another must be losing. As a result, distribution is very difficult to set up.

Other problems include the lack of capital to set up shops, lack of skill in operations, and an understandable unwillingness to learn from people from the West who, for good reason, do not know the context and whose suggestions appear to be naïve, even when they might work. More significantly, Christians are often unwilling to use non-Christian distribution channels that could sell many titles. These non-Christian channels are improving in some places, but the separation of Christians from society and a wrong understanding of “the world” put unnecessary barriers in the way. In Central Europe the situation is different. In Slovakia about half of 300 bookshops are willing to take Christian titles. The same is true in Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Unappealing cover designs, combined with a lack of understanding of the target market, do not help, but these also are improving in many places. We need more national writers who are in tune with the questions and issues facing their churches and society. This requires time for reflection, good editing, and thinking, but activists often find it difficult to take the time. Our zeal often hinders our success.

Marsh Moyle, Director
SEN
Bratislava, Slovakia

Russian Christian Book Fair Points to Need for More Local Authors

Representatives of nearly 50 Russian Christian publishing companies attended the first-ever International Exhibition of Christian Literature held in October 1999 in St. Petersburg, Russia. Doug Wicks, resident publishing advisor for the Evangelical Christian Missionary Union, Krasnodar, Russia, reports the book fair was organized by three veteran publishing companies: The Bible for Everyone (St. Petersburg), Mirt Publishers (St. Petersburg), and the Russian Bible Society (Moscow). “The purpose was to bring together in one place the growing number of Christian publishers for fellowship, interchange of ideas, presentation of new products, and building of

unity among those involved in the emerging Christian book industry in the former Soviet Union,” he said.

The four-day event included a full schedule of discussions and seminars and an exhibit hall where 38 publishers displayed their products. At the closing ceremony, prizes were given for the best books in five different categories. Contest judges stated that indigenous Russian Christian authors are noticeably sparse at the present time. Many of the current Christian books are translations of works written by non-Russian writers. ♦

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INTERNET RESOURCES

Sharyl Corrado, compiler

American Historical Association Directory of Dissertations in Progress

<http://www.theaha.org/pubs/dissertations/> (in English)
Currently contains 4610 dissertations in progress at 165 North American academic institutions, with a keyword search engine. A significant number of dissertations on East Central Europe, Russia, and the former Soviet Union deal with religious issues. Sample works currently in progress include: Paul Hanebrink, "Towards a Christian Hungary: Catholicism and Christian Nationalism in Hungary, 1913-30" (University of Chicago); Amanda Aucoin, "Religious Sectarianism and the Imperial State: Baptists in Holy Russia" (Arkansas); Argyrios Pisiotis, "The Russian Orthodox Church and Clerical Political Dissent in Late Imperial Russia, 1905-14" (Georgetown); Magdalena Teter, "The Jews in the Legislation and Teachings of the Catholic Church in Poland, 1648-1772" (Columbia); and Jennifer Wynot, "Keeping the Faith: Russian Orthodox Monasteries and Convents in the Soviet Union, 1917-39" (Emory). Also provides university contact information.



Blagovest Religious Information Agency

<http://www.blagovest-media.com> (in Russian)
This independent religious news agency focuses primarily on the Russian and other Orthodox churches, also providing information on the Catholic church as well as other religious groups and denominations, ecumenical events, and other cultural events related to Christianity. Daily news is available to subscribers, and the Web site contains the week's top stories and headlines, updated daily. An English-language Web site is under construction. To subscribe to Blagovest-info, contact the editors at tel: 7-095-264-97-72; tel/fax: 7-095-976-85-45; or E-mail: stpaul@glasnet.ru.



Central Europe Online

<http://www.centraleurope.com/> (in English)
This online commercial English-language newspaper published by the European Internet Network (EIN) includes up-to-date business and other news on the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Yugoslavia. The volume of information provided free of charge, as well as links to numerous additional sources of information, easily compensate for the flashy advertising that can become distracting. Easily searchable and updated daily.



Oanda Classic 164 Currency Converter

<http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic> (in English)
This extremely simple and helpful currency converter allows conversion to and from 164 world currencies at bank, cash, and typical credit-card rates of any date (excluding bank holidays) since 1 January 1990.

Professional Articles from Mark Harris

<http://www.westernseminary.edu/mrg/dmiss/harris/> (in English)
Contains 11 academic papers by Mark Harris, a doctoral student at Western Seminary, Portland, OR, who has lived in Russia since 1993. Topics include Russian religious attitudes and conversion experiences, as well as evangelism, worship, preaching, and counseling within the Russian Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church.



Radio TEOS

<http://www.teos.org.ru> (in Russian and English)
Since 20 January 1993, the interdenominational Christian radio station TEOS has been broadcasting 16 hours a day in St. Petersburg. Programming includes Scripture readings, sermons of famous preachers, Bible exposition, Christian music, children's programs, and more. The Russian version of its Web site includes a daily schedule of programming and a large online library of Christian articles and reference materials. Live broadcasting is available online using Realplayer.



Religious Life in Russia. Press Digest

http://www.wps.ru/index_d/religio.html (in Russian)
This weekly digest dedicated to the spiritual, educational, and societal activities of the Russian Orthodox Church as well as to other confessions in Russia contains complete articles from both the secular and religious press. Special attention is given to work in social institutions such as the army, prisons, schools, and universities, as well as work with youth. Topics covered include "Religion and the Authorities," "Freedom of Conscience," "The Russian Orthodox Church," "Islam," "The Catholic Church," "Activities of Foreign Religious Organizations in Russia," and "Religious Minorities." Available in print or electronically. Each electronic digest is 65-80 kb and contains the full text of 20-30 articles. Subscriptions can be purchased online for \$35/month. View a sample issue at <http://www.wps.ru:8103/digest/religio.html>.



Slovo i delo [Word and Act]

<http://word-act.narod.ru/> (in Russian)
This helpful Web site supported by the Bratsk (Siberia) Christian Fellowship includes a 27-page Russian-language compendium of Christian history, with short entries on denominations, movements, and individuals active in church history. According to the webmaster this compendium, while "in places far from objective," nevertheless, is a valuable reference tool. The site also contains 25 issues of the online newspaper *Slovo i delo [Word and Act]*, an extensive catalog of both Russian- and English-language Christian links, a Christian art gallery, and a short article on the history of Pentecostalism in Russia.

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RESOURCES

John Witte Jr. and Michael Bourdeaux, eds., *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia: The New War for Souls*. New York: Maryknoll, 1999. \$25, paperback, 353 pp. Reviewed by Kent R. Hill.

Perhaps no issue so crystallizes the differences between the Russian Orthodox Church and other Christians as does disagreement over "proselytism and evangelism." Evangelicals insist that they are mainly engaged in evangelism, that is, sharing the Good News with those who are not believers or are not active members of any church. They contend that the great majority of foreign missionaries are not "proselytizing" among the active and seriously Orthodox. However, Russian Orthodox do not accept this "evangelical" distinction between proselytism and evangelism. The Moscow Patriarchate insists that virtually everything "well-financed" Evangelical Protestants and Catholics do among native Russians is "proselytism," since Orthodoxy is the historic faith of the Russian people and most have at least been baptized as infants. The Russian Orthodox Church believes that in light of the more than seven decades of Communist oppression and the resulting weakened state of the Russian Orthodox Church, the truly civil and Christian thing for non-Orthodox foreign Christians to do would be to support the Orthodox materially, or at least stand aside and let the Orthodox Church regain its strength. Many Evangelicals respond that the needs of those without Jesus Christ are simply too great to ignore, despite the demands of the Orthodox to leave Russia.

What is often absent in consideration of these issues is a full and balanced presentation of the historical background and contemporary scene regarding the religious landscape of Russia. Into this void comes the excellent compendium of essays and articles edited by John Witte, Jr., and Michael Bourdeaux—*Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia: The New War for Souls*.

John Witte is a noted legal and human rights scholar who directs the Law and Religion Program at Emory University. Michael Bourdeaux is regarded as the foremost authority in the world on religion in the Soviet Union and Russia. He is the founder and former director of Keston Institute, Oxford, England. Much of the research contained in this detailed volume was produced as a result of a three-year project on proselytism worldwide sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Following a very competent introduction by John Witte surveying the topic, the rest of the book is divided into three main parts, with contributions from highly respected authorities representing a variety of perspectives. Part One deals with "Religious Perspectives" and provides excellent historical sections dealing with the Orthodox Church and foreign Christians (Philip Walters) and the positive role of the Orthodox Church in recent historical events in the former Soviet Union (James Billington). The perspective of the Orthodox hierarchy on foreign missionaries is shared (Metropolitan Kirill), as is an Evangelical Protestant perspective (Mark Elliott and Anita Deyneka). There are important articles on interreligious relations (Aleksandr Shchipkov), Catholicism and Russia (Sergei Filatov and Lyudmila Vorontsova), Muslims and proselytism (Donna Arzt), relations between Judaism and Russian Orthodox (Yuriy Tabak), Seventh-day Adventists (Mikhail Kulakov), and recent charitable activities in Russia (Michael Bourdeaux).

Part Two focuses on "Legal Perspectives" by giving an historical survey of church and state in Russian history (Firuz Kazemzadeh), a thorough analysis of the new 1997 law on "Freedom of Conscience"

(T. Jeremy Gunn), a Western legal scholar's defense of special privileges for the Russian Orthodox Church (Harold Berman), and a survey of federal and provincial legislation dealing with religious freedom in Russia (Lauren Homer and Lawrence Uzzell).

Part Three, "Signposts for a New Way," presents recommendations to American missionaries from an American convert to Orthodoxy (Lawrence Uzzell), as well as proposed guidelines from an American Evangelical missionary (Anita Deyneka). This fascinating and informative book contains a wealth of material on an important topic for all who care about the future of Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church, Christian missions, and genuine Christian ecumenism. The problems and difficulties presented cannot be easily untangled, but it is certain that the book itself makes a major contribution towards a more informed understanding of these important issues.

Kent R. Hill, a specialist in Russian church history and author of *The Soviet Union on the Brink*, has taught and lectured in Russia. He has been president of Eastern Nazarene College, Quincy, MA, since 1992.

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Volobaev, Aleksei. *Kak vyzhit pravoslavnomu predprinimateliu v sovremennom rossiiskom biznese: tsel i metod [How an Orthodox Businessman Can Survive in Contemporary Russian Business: Goal and Method]*. Moscow: Izdatelstvo Pravoslavnogo Bratstva Sviatitelia Filareta Mitropolita Moskovskogo, 1997. 112 pages. Reviewed by Olga Loukmanova.

Does business always involve theft, deceit, and greed? What about business in contemporary Russia, where all the power seems to belong to the mafia and selfish bureaucrats? Can a Christian ever become a businessman? Can one honestly strive for profit and success, and at the same time remain a person of faith and integrity? Aleksei Volobaev, a faithful Orthodox believer and a successful Russian businessman, tries to answer these and other questions in his witty and practical book. He honestly addresses the chaos and sinfulness of the contemporary Russian economy and possible difficulties that a believer may encounter as an entrepreneur. However, he is absolutely certain that it is possible for a Christian to be a businessman—and a good businessman at that, the kind so desperately needed in a country torn by greed and egotism. Volobaev's work, which takes a practical, common-sense approach, is clearly the result of extensive experience and careful thought. The author demonstrates excellent knowledge of the field and the specificity of the Russian environment and business mentality. His book is full of vivid images, simple examples, and reasonable advice. Volobaev treats everyday business practices and strategies as well as the moral issues involved. Certain rough edges (such as an idealization of the traditional Russian character and rash judgments about American spirituality) are more than compensated by the respectful and friendly tone of the book, references to Scripture, and the inclusion of commentaries written by the spiritual mentor of the author, an Orthodox priest. The volume is not a theology of work, but rather a helpful guide for Christians working in business or considering a business vocation.

I Will Not Leave You as Orphans. I Will Come to You.” *Mark Elliott*

Today, many Western ministries and many Russian and Ukrainian Christians are working with orphans and street children, but often without knowing who else is trying to help.

Last year 15-year-old Natasha’s mother died a violent death. Sadly, her father refused to accept the responsibility of raising his daughter and his six-year-old son. Natasha has had a difficult adjustment to life in an orphanage, running away several times before resigning herself to her lot. In May she learned that authorities who had promised that her brother Dima could join her in her orphanage when he turned seven, instead had permitted him to be adopted in the West without her knowledge, a violation of Russian law. Despite the loss of everyone she holds dear, Natasha somehow manages a ready and winning smile. What can be done to at least put Natasha in touch with her brother and assist her in her dream of becoming a nurse?

Seryozha is 14, going on 30. On his own at age 12, he lived on the streets of Moscow for two years before being picked up by the militia and being sent to an orphanage. A bright youngster, he has better command of Bible stories learned from short-term missionaries than most children born in Christian homes. Seryozha, remarkably, has a winsome, gentle side to his personality, despite rough-hewn street smarts, a heavy smoker’s cough, and a penchant for alcohol. Could foster care, or a family-style transition center for older orphans, or effective job training, or Christian summer camps with meaningful follow-up help spare Seryozha a life of crime and imprisonment, the fate of most male orphanage graduates?

Natasha and Seryozha help me personalize numbing statistics: an estimated 600,000 Russian orphans and 1.2 million street kids, not to mention children in crisis in Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. Dr. Susan Hillis of the U.S. Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta recently projected that as many as half a million additional Russian children could be orphaned in the next decade as a result of

parents dying of AIDS.

Natasha and Seryozha deserve God’s best and the Lord’s saving grace—as do all orphans and street children in the former Soviet Union. But how can God’s best and His grace become a reality for these unfortunates? Today, many Western ministries and many Russian and Ukrainian Christians are working with orphans and street children like Natasha and Seryozha—in the spirit of John 14:18 quoted above—but often without knowing who else is trying to help, or who has useful advice about running summer camp programs, or post-orphanage transition centers, or orphanage discipleship programs, etc.

On 14 July 1999 over 40 people gathered in Moscow to form “To Russian Children With Love,” an umbrella organization that seeks to encourage greater cooperation and a sharing of information among Christians ministering to children at risk. Natalia Loginova of Moscow’s Word of Christ Church agreed to serve as director of this new effort. Among its goals, “To Russian Children With Love” hopes to encourage more Western church and parachurch ministries to partner with various indigenous Russian initiatives on behalf of orphans and street children.

Mrs. Loginova, herself a longtime volunteer in orphanage ministry, will participate in the upcoming National Summit for Children At Risk, scheduled for 9–11 November 2000, in Atlanta, GA. The driving force behind this gathering is the desire to see a much greater Christian effort in response to Russian children at risk and a more efficient use of resources through greater networking and collaborative ventures. Other speakers will include Baroness Caroline Cox (British House of Lords), Commissioner Kay Rader (Salvation Army), Phillis Kilbourn (Rainbows of Hope), George Steiner (Children’s HopeChest), Susan Hillis (Communicable Disease Center), and Barbara Johnson (International Aid). I would implore each reader to consider attending the Atlanta Summit or encouraging someone in your circle of workers or friends to attend. ♦

Editor’s Note:

For further information, contact the CoMission for Children at Risk, 1827 Powers Ferry Rd., Building 15, Suite 300, Atlanta, GA 30339; tel: 770-916-9029; fax: 770-916-9742; E-mail: comissioncr@cs.com; Web site: www.comissionforchildren.com. For in-depth analysis of conditions for children at risk see Kathleen Hunt, *Abandoned to the State: Cruelty and Neglect in Russian Orphanages* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1998), which may be downloaded from <http://www.hrw.org/reports98/russia2/>. For photos and testimonies from a Children’s HopeChest summer camp for Russian orphans in June-July 2000 led by East-West Church & Ministry Report editors Mark Elliott and Sharyl Cornado, consult: <http://www.samford.edu/groups/global/orphans.html>.

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