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1. Are works of repentance the sign of a previous attitude of repentance or the essence of the repentance necessary for salvation?
2. What redistribution of money is God calling *me* to?

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The U.S.S.R.—The Church After Sixty Years of Persecution

by MICHAEL BOURDEAUX

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ABOUT SIXTY years after the Communist revolution in Russia—and that is sixty years too late—the Christian world seems to be just starting to take seriously the subjects of Communism on the one hand and of the Soviet Union and what it represents in the international power structure on the other. It may be that recognition of the importance of the subject is coming now, partly, as a panic reaction. You hear people say, "Well, Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola, Portugal, probably Italy will be the next and what then is the next country to become communist?" And the tendency is to react in fear and possibly even in hatred and put up the shutters. But there are other Christians who say: "God is failing us, our social system has had its day, and perhaps the new social justice is to be found in Communism or Marxism. Let's learn from them while there is yet time." Both attitudes I find to some extent inadequate.

Over the past twenty years I have had some experience of how one Communist society—the Soviet Union—works, and that has been very largely at first hand since I went to Moscow in 1959 as a member of the first-ever group of exchange students sent by the British Government. I stayed a whole year there and I have been back many times since. This experience is personal and limited, but at least it was of the heartland of Communism.

The years that have passed since I first went to Russia have deepened my absolute certainty that we have a basic and a dynamic lesson to learn from the Soviet Union. It is not a lesson from the Communist system as such; it is a lesson about Christianity in the world today. It is a lesson about the reality of Christ p. 263 crucified in 1978, not a lesson of the triumph of Communism, but of the defeat of the Cross.

I believe that the Russian Christian is probably closer to the New Testament in spirit and in fact than you or I, because of the way in which he, the average Russian Christian, is suffering for his faith at this moment. Christians in the Soviet Union are already achieving a certain knowledge of the truth of the resurrection because they have themselves experienced the suffering, the crucifixion, many of them in the immediate past, some still in the present.

FOUR PERIODS OF PERSECUTION

There have been, over the last sixty years, four major and many minor periods of persecution or confrontation of the church with the State. Let me summarise them and then go over them in detail:

1. Immediately after 1917 Lenin, the founder of the Soviet system, against Patriarch Tikhon—1917 to 1925. 2. Then Stalin, the man who solidified the system and turned it more or less into what it is today, against the then leader of the church, Metropolitan Sergius. That is the period 1927 to 1941. 3. Then a gap during which the church managed to find its feet again—followed by a new period of persecution urged on by Khrushchev and with the next patriarch, Alexei, in charge of the church. That was a short period, 1960 to 1964. 4. Then since 1970, yet another period of hardening persecution with Brezhnev in power in the Soviet Union and yet another patriarch, Pimen, as head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Humanly speaking the church lost each of these battles—was defeated comprehensively—and yet the vanquished one is today winning the hearts of men more readily and more rapidly than at any time in the last hundred years.

The weakness of man can be the strength of the Gospel. I would like to begin by quoting a modern example of this before going back and considering the period more in historical perspective. Father Dimitri Dudko, one of the great and still-active priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, a member of a registered Orthodox Church—(let us at once do away with the myth that p. 264 only the underground church is strong and winning souls for Christ in the Soviet Union today)—has been openly preaching the Christian Gospel in a church in Moscow and then, later, when he was banished to the countryside continued there, proclaiming Christ every day from his church, and also bringing a new depth into preaching in the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian Church has not been outstanding in its history for its preaching; its liturgy has always taken first place.

This priest, Father Dudko, inaugurated a new type of sermon in the Russian Orthodox Church. Pieces of paper are passed down to the front and the priest sorts them and answers questions that have been put to him in writing. He had determined that he would talk about the subjects which were close to the hearts of those who wanted to listen to him.

So he began to draw to his church more and more young people. In Soviet terms that meant an ever-increasing conflict, for the very simple reason that the Soviet authorities are still extremely anxious that the church should not be able to have any influence with young people. I now quote the words of an eye-witness: “It was these questions and answers which made his sermons so attractive. I can remember very few details of his answers. In fact only two sequences remain in my mind. In the first Father Dimitri was talking about a small boy whom he knew, who had asked his mother why Christ had come into the world and died. His mother answered ‘to save mankind’. ‘What! Everybody, even bad people’? the child asked. ‘Yes’. ‘Then Jesus Christ must have been a very good person indeed’. This impressed the young boy who a few days later passed one of Moscow’s many closed churches. He asked his mother why there was no cross on this church. She explained that the church had been closed. Then the child went up to the church and, to the consternation of passersby, he drew a large cross on the wall. And the next day, when his school teacher was explaining to the pupils that God did not exist and that this had now definitely been proved by the fact that when the cosmonauts went into orbit they had not seen God, the young child piped up in all his naivete: ‘they were flying too low’!”

The account of this was written by an atheist, a young British student who went to Moscow—I suppose fifteen years after myself, but on the same exchange scheme and so

he was writing absolutely p. 265 what he experienced at the time without any prejudgement in a pro-Christian sense at all. His was purely an intellectual interest in reporting the scene. What did this all mean? he asked. Well to him as an atheist just this: "The immorality which I could see everywhere in Soviet society, its inhumanity and corruption, its lack of a moral code or credible ideals—meant that Christ's teaching came through to those whom it was reaching, and they saw it as a shining contrast to that immorality. Christianity stressed the value of the individual, of humanity, of forgiveness, of gentleness, of love. It was this that appealed to the child in the example that Father Dimitri gave in his sermon. But for me, the British atheist, come to listen, Father Dimitri Dudko demonstrated that evening that the moral code of Christianity wasn't just something that could be cast aside or superseded. It has survived for 2000 years precisely because it did stress certain qualities in personal relations between men which one does not find in Communism. The loss of these qualities is one of the most disturbing facts in modern Soviet life."

This student's account of the experience ends with the scene of the end of one of the Sundays when the secret police came to the church to arrest Father Dudko. They marched him off and interrogated him. But thank God, the priest was not completely prevented from exercising the priesthood and imprisoned; he was moved to another church, and continues to this day to carry on his special ministry.

There is a cutting edge, a diamond like quality in the Christian faith in Russia which has been arrived at in the same way as the diamond, which as you in South Africa know better than I, becomes what it is in a complicated chemical process with the physical pressures put on its constituent materials which after a long time form the gem out of very simple elements. The diamond of the Christian faith in Russia has been formed out of similarly simple elements from pressure over a period of time.

I. THE CHURCH IN THE ERA OF LENIN

This pressure goes right back to the beginning, to 1917. Let me repeat the popular myth which Communists are anxious to spread about the Christian church in 1917. It is that the church was P. 266 entirely backward, entirely corrupt, that it was due for sweeping away and deserved any suffering that came to it as it had done nothing for Russian society over the past hundred years or more.

I would be the first to admit that there was a great deal that was wrong with the official church in Russia before the revolution. Nevertheless it was not merely an upholder of the old system. It was very much more. There was a real spiritual calibre in the Russian church before the revolution, preserved essentially, not by the hierarchy and those who fawned around the court of the Tsars, but by those sages or elders, the *startsy* as they were called, who went out into the countryside and set themselves up in tiny remote hermitages or monasteries. They preserved the spiritual quality of the Orthodox Church in very difficult times, and people recognised this and came to visit them. You can read about that in the novels of Dostoyevsky or Tolstoi.

Secondly, the church was progressive in education, and it is not without significance that at the time of the Communist victory every single church school was taken away from the church. It was not given a chance even to run its own best institutions, and from that day to this the church and the whole process of education have been in two completely different worlds. The church has had no right whatsoever to establish formal classes in the Christian faith for young people at any level, except for just one concession made after the second world war when the Soviet regime once again allowed a very small number—at the time eight—theological seminaries to be re-introduced for training for the

priesthood. From the years 1917 to 1945 there were not even any theological seminaries let alone any Christian education in schools.

Thirdly, the Russian Orthodox Church had in fact been trying to reform itself since about 1905 and it was very well prepared to do this, but it could not carry through the process of reform because the revolution simply stepped in and disbanded the series of meetings which was going on at the very time. The revolution happened when the church was basically discussing its own affairs from top to bottom. The leadership of the church, which had wanted to carry out many reforms was instead carried off and imprisoned.

There was an immediate and a total clash between the Communists p. 267 (or the Bolsheviks, as they were called) and the church leaders. The Communists immediately began to demand the total loyalty of everybody, and of course in this process of sweeping clean with a new broom, the church seemed to the Communists to stand as one of the main pillars of the old system, and therefore needed to be removed.

The reaction of the church leaders to the bloodshed which the church had to undergo was strong and outspoken—and their words were publicised. This perhaps did exacerbate the situation, but nevertheless these words were spoken in an extreme situation. The patriarch of Moscow, Patriarch Tikhon, who had just been elected in the great council that was taking place at the time of the revolution—he was very new in his job—did in fact first of all call upon Communists to stop the looting of churches, the imprisonment of church leaders and indeed to stop the bloodshed which happened when there was opposition by church people to the takeover of the Communist authorities. What he did when the bloodshed did not stop was to ex-communicate Communists and to forbid them to present themselves at the altar—I don't suppose they wanted to anyway—but what he said was: "by the authority given to us by God we forbid you Bolsheviks to present yourself for the sacraments of Christ and we pronounce an anathema on you".

That became the official attitude of the church in this first big clash between Lenin and Tikhon. But Tikhon himself was imprisoned and was probably tortured. After a year or two he was released when he agreed to sign some rather milder statements. But he was so badly treated in prison that he died almost immediately afterwards, leaving the church without a leader in 1925. For many years no patriarch was permitted to be elected in his place.

II. STALIN'S EFFORTS AT LIQUIDATING THE CHURCH

By this time the church had been so badly persecuted that its whole leadership was gone and it was beaten almost to its knees. Stalin came to power in about 1927 to find that the church was no longer the force that it had been ten years earlier. He immediately began to gather to himself all the reins of power; every lead from P. 268 every organisation ended in his fists. He really established what became the present system, because it was he who inaugurated the rule of the country by the secret police. He was absolutely insistent that the reins of power rested in his own hands in every single way. It might be surprising that a new leader who had so much to do economically, with all the collectivisation of agriculture, and in industry, building it from very primitive sources, had time to bother with more ideological matters like the church. That he did this in itself is an indication of how important Christianity has seemed to Communism as a potential opponent ever since 1917. Indeed Stalin thought so much about the church that he inaugurated a whole new series of legislation. Lenin had started by taking the schools away from the church and had also expropriated all church buildings, and nationalised its property.

Stalin went much further and insisted that every single manifestation of Christianity had to be confined within an approved framework. He introduced in the legislation of 1929, what is called registration of the Christian church. Every religious body that wanted to exist legally from then on, could do so only by presenting a petition to the State and getting the State to licence it in an act of so-called registration. In the same period, according to the constitution that was promulgated, the church and the State were separated! That has been one of the great points in the Soviet constitution—separation of church and State—but when you look at the laws which are supposed to be subservient to the constitution, you will find that in fact they contradict it and this legislation that Stalin inaugurated really rendered the constitution nonsensical and unworkable.

The Church for its part showed a willingness, having been decapitated, and with all the best leaders in prison camps, to go even further in compromise. The next leader of the Russian Church, Metropolitan Sergius, stated during this time that the Russian Orthodox Christian must be "loyal to the Soviet state, whose joys and successes were its joys and successes, and whose tribulations were its tribulations".

Even such a declaration of loyalty was not enough for Stalin—he not only went ahead with his legislation but, having introduced these laws, he then treated even the laws as though they did not exist. He refused to licence even a minimum Christian activity. p. 269 The church was then at the gates of the period called the great purge. This meant that even what had survived of Christianity as an open institution was liquidated and the church, if it were to survive at all, had to become an underground church. This is the period during which it is quite legitimate to talk about the underground church in Russia, because in the 1930s the official church almost ceased to exist, as it is stated by one of the great more recent thinkers of the Russian Orthodox Church, a certain Boris Talantov. He was a mathematics teacher who had failed in his bid to become a priest. When he was young there were no theological seminaries, but he devoted himself to Christian writing which he circulated secretly in the wonderful process of what is called *Samizdat*—self-publishing. By the same process Solzhenitsyn, while he was still in the Soviet Union, circulated his novels from hand to hand in manuscript copies. The written word thus achieved something of the value that it had in the medieval monasteries when only a few people had access to it.

Boris Talantov wrote these words in the 1960s: "What did Metropolitan Sergius save by his compromise with the Soviet State? By the beginning of the second world war there were no more than five or perhaps ten churches remaining open per diocese out of many hundreds. The majority of priests and almost all the bishops, except for just the very few who co-operated with the authorities, were being tortured in the concentration camps. Thus the compromise made by the Metropolitan saved nothing except his own skin. He even lost authority in the eyes of the faithful, but he did acquire the goodwill of Stalin. The reopening of the churches which happened later, was caused by the faith of the people, and not by the compromise which the church leaders had undergone". For writing these words, and much else about recent church history. Boris Talantov was imprisoned in the final wave of persecution in the late 1960's, and actually died as a martyr in 1971.

The terrible period of the 1930s virtually saw the liquidation of the Russian Church.

THE THAW DURING WORLD WAR II

Something wonderful now happened. Whenever tragedy strikes P. 270 the human race there is nearly always something which shows the resilience of the spirit, to make up for what has happened, and the tragedy which hit the Soviet Union in the early 1940s was the invasion of that country by the Germans.

The Nazis invaded in 1941, thus bringing the Soviet Union forcibly into the war from which they had stood aside for two years—1939 to 1941—and indeed had annexed territory to the west as a *cordon sanitaire*. They reckoned they were going to keep out of the war, and they needed to because they were still very unprepared, and were very far from having built up their industry and their collectivised agriculture.

The country had suffered to the extent of literally millions upon millions of people being imprisoned and liquidated during the 1930s. It is still not recognised just how much suffering there had been in the 1930s. A fact which has etched itself upon the consciousness of the whole world is that perhaps six million people or so died in the Nazi concentration camps, but it has not become a universally known fact that at least double that number of people, died in the Soviet concentration camps in the period immediately preceding the Nazi epoch.

It has been one of the greatest achievements of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, with his utter integrity and determination, to demonstrate to the whole world what happened during that period of history. He has gone some way towards writing it up. But, of course, the one point which Solzhenitsyn has proved in his writings, for which the Soviets will never forgive him, is that it was not Stalin who started this off—it was Lenin.

Solzhenitsyn has traced all the institutionalising of terror back before Stalin into the Lenin period and this has been perhaps his most important single contribution to the writing of Soviet history. Of course it was very much less in Lenin's period than it was in Stalin's. Nevertheless Solzhenitsyn has clearly established this through the documnents that he has published.

After this terrible period an even worse event overtook the Soviet Union—the German invasion. It was this period which. as well as shaking the country from top to bottom, led to acts of untold herosim in the eventual repulsion of the German troops from Soviet territory. At the same time there was one good aspect of the invasion. The Soviet regime allowed a concession to the p. 271 Russian Church. Stalin seems to have felt that if he was going to have any chance of winning the war, he had to gather to himself all the potential forces, spiritual as well as physical, which could help him. As a realist he was aware that the Christian church, despite all the persecutions, still carried a very great deal of weight.

So quite a number of church leaders who had been imprisoned and survived were released. They were allowed to reopen the churches which still existed but had been closed down in the towns and villages, and the Christian church became one of the bastions of support in the war effort. It was a militant kind of Christianity, but it was effective and it did revitalise the spirit of Russia. I say of Russia, rather than of the Soviet Union, because it was a very Russian-centred patriotism. It was not a Ukranian-centred patriotism or a Georgian or a Lithuanian-centred patriotism, it was a Russian patriotism. Let us not forget the element of Russian nationalism in all of this.

The Russian nationalist war effort was backed by the church and at the same time the church was itself given the possibility of reconstituting some of its institutional life including, incidentally, the re-establishment of a publication—the journal of the Moscow Patriarchate which was allowed to appear in small quantities. (The eight theological seminaries were re-opened during these years.)

This was the period of the first rebirth of the Russian Church and again, in my view, it is quite wrong to designate the leaders of Russian churches which came into the open at this time as people who had made a compromise with the Soviet State in order to survive. Criticism of the Russian Church at this time is unfair and unjustified. There were, of course, a certain number of leaders in the churches on whom the regime would lean and those leaders when leant upon would present the kind of statement that the Soviet authorities would like to quote in defence of their own policy. But at all other levels of the

church, the Christian gospel was once again heard, the liturgy was celebrated and the calibre of wonderful spirituality concentrated in the Russian Orthodox liturgy revitalised the church at this time and began to bring many people again to Jesus Christ.

Not even the compromise made by the State towards the church, however, had led to an emptying of all the prison camps. Far p. 272 from it. They carried on functioning and only some Christians were released. Many others remained in prison right up to the time of Stalin's death in 1953. But during the mid-1950s, the prison camps did begin to close down and many more Christians were released. They came back to their native towns and villages, bringing with them the experience of a martyred church. These people, who had survived quite remarkably under inhuman conditions over a period of ten to fifteen years, had experienced the salvation, the saving grace, of the church in physically appalling conditions.

When they came back and rejoined their families and their people they were greeted as souls who had almost been resurrected from the dead, because in many cases there had been no contact over these 10 or 15 years, and people did not even know that their relatives had remained alive and yet here they were! Very rapidly they again began to fill positions of importance in local church life. They only had to be themselves in order to demonstrate the ongoing power of the Gospel. The church received immense strength during these years of the 1950s. When I first visited the Soviet Union (1959) the church was beginning to show the benefits of this revitalisation, and in the countryside or in the towns wherever one went, one found full congregations. One found active Christian bodies. It did seem to me at the time that there was an overwhelming preponderance of old people in the Russian churches. That was the situation twenty years ago—it is changed very much now.

III. THE RUSSIAN CHURCH IN THE TIME OF KHRUSHCHEV

So great was the return to the Christian church during the 1950s that the new master of the Soviet Union, Nikita Sergeivitch Khrushchev, began to take fright at what he saw and to plan a new anti-religious campaign.

It was at this point that my personal history crossed the history of the Soviet Union, because I was in Moscow when the new purge hit the church. In fact, I was probably the first person to begin gathering the evidence about the renewed persecution, and, during p. 273 the next 3 or 4 years (1960–1964) when it raged especially bitterly, I began to gather a great deal of evidence. But to try to publish it was another matter. There was a conspiracy of silence in the Western world at that time and it was not possible to publish information about the growing persecution of Christianity in the Soviet Union during that period. Many times I attempted to do so and failed: nevertheless I was gathering the information in growing frustration, knowing that the persecution was getting worse.

What did Khrushchev do to the church during this third period of confrontation? There was another patriarch on the throne of the Russian Orthodox Church at this time, Patriarch Alexei, who was, when elected, a very old and a very tired man. He had somehow survived persecution—we don't know exactly how or what happened to him, but he never seemed to be a particularly decisive figure. The church was actually being run in the late 1950s by a Metropolitan—Metropolitan Nikolai, who seemed to have reached some sort of concordat with the State—a live and let live position—but when Khrushchev began his new purge of the Christian church, Metropolitan Nikolai was removed from his office and replaced by a much younger man, somebody who was entirely Soviet educated and immediately seemed to be much more pliant towards the Communist authorities. His name was Nikodim and it was he who presented the new face of the Russian Church to

the world, although in the last year or two he was very seriously ill.[1] It was he who first negotiated the entrance of the Russian Orthodox Church into the World Council of Churches.

Metropolitan Nikodim believed that only a bland face presented to the world could save the church. He stated that there was no persecution and that the Russian church was allowed to organise its own affairs without interference from the Soviet State because "We have separation of church and state in the letter of our constitution".

While this was going on the persecution of the church was growing daily worse. Theological seminaries were closing down, five of those eight seminaries which had been re-opened only a few years earlier, were directly closed down at the insistence of the State, leaving only three up to this day. From that day to this, theological p. 274 training has been quite inadequate simply because of the lack of places in theological seminaries.

Monasteries had begun to flourish again after the Second World War and monasticism, as before the revolution, became again a very important feature in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church—not a refuge against persecution—not hiding from the world—far from it—but the concentration of spirituality which was the essence from which the rebirth of Christian life could and would take place. The monasteries began to be closed down again and their inmates were dispersed around the countryside and forced to take up manual jobs. Those who opposed this, especially the closure of the churches, were imprisoned.

There were reckoned to be about 20,000 Russian Orthodox churches open by this time. That shows how massive had been the re-opening of the churches during the period at the end of the war. But of those 20,000 Russian Orthodox churches something like two thirds were closed again during the Khrushchev period (1960–1964).

There was a massive opposition to this closure—people demonstrated outside them and physically formed rings around the churches, trying to stop the K.G.B. and the hooligans breaking through, in order to desecrate the buildings. But those who resisted were rounded up, thrown into lorries and into buses; they were taken off for interrogation and their ringleaders were imprisoned.

Thousands, possibly tens of thousands—we do not know precise statistics—of Christians were imprisoned during this period for their opposition to this wave of religious prsecution.

Let me quote somebody who came to the defence of the church at that time. It is not widely realised that Alexander Solzhenitsyn, when he first became known as a great fighter for liberty—a leader of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union—spoke from a Christian standpoint. Ten years ago when he began doing this his Christian allegiance was widely questioned and many people did not even accept it. But many of us were aware that what Solzhenitsyn did, he did first and foremost as a Christian—as a believing and baptised member of the Orthodox Church but one who at the same time had a tremendous sympathy with members of other Christian traditions. p. 275

This is something that Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote in the mid 1960s, while directly trying to defend the Christian Church against the wave of persecution I have described:

"When you travel the by-roads of Central Russia you begin to understand the secret of the peaceful Russian countryside. It is in the churches—they trip up the slopes, ascend the high hills, come down to the broad rivers like princesses in white and red, they lift their belltowers, graceful, shapely, all different. High over the mundane timber and thatch of the villages they nod to each other from afar—they beckon to each other and soar to

[1] He died on 5 September, 1978.

the same heaven. Wherever you wander in the fields or the meadows you are not alone. From over the hayricks or a wall of trees—remember Central Russia is very flat—even above the curve of the earth's surface the head of some belltower will beckon you from the villages … But when you get to the village you find that not the living but the dead were greeting you from afar. The crosses have been knocked off the roof long ago or twisted out of place. The dome has been stripped, there are gaping holes between the rusty ribs. Weeds grow on the roofs and in the cracks in the walls. The graveyard has been all churned up by agricultural machinery.

"Inside, the murals over the walls have been desecrated by the rain and obscene inscriptions scrawled all over them. In the porch there are barrels of lubricating oil and a tractor is turning in towards them. Or a lorry has backed into the church doorway to pick up some sacks—you see, the church was usually the only stone building in the village and so was taken over as a store for agricultural machinery. In another church there is the shudder of lathes, yet another is locked and silent, and in yet another there is a youth club meeting with its slogans on the walls, 'Let us aim at high milk yields!' or a 'poem about peace', or 'a heroic deed'.

"People", Solzhenitsyn says, "were always selfish and often unkind, but then the evening chimes used to ring out over the villages, fields and the woods, reminding men that they must abandon the trivial concerns of this world and give some time and thought to eternity.

"These chimes would raise people up, prevent them from sinking down on all fours. Our ancestors put all that was finest in themselves into these stones, into these belltowers". Then Solzhenitysn p. 276 walks up to the church and prises open the door of the church in which a youth club is meeting. "Ram it in—give it a bash—don't be afraid—film show at six—and dancing at eight".

The sense of outrage and shock which was felt by the Soviet people during this great wave of anti-religious persecution, expressed so well in that conclusion by Solzhenitsyn, was experienced not only by the old people who had been the bulwark of the Russian Church for generations—even Lenin had commented that the churches were filled only by old people: "give them a year or two and we shall not even need to persecute the church as they are all dying out anyway". The old people had known suffering and then the rebirth of the church, they were all the more horrified when they were overwhelmed by the new campaign. But the moral indignation felt was also experienced by young people—for example, that child whom I quoted earlier in Father Dimitri Dudko's sermon.

Solzhenitsyn himself became the moral spokesman for a whole generation of young people. He himself was slightly older but was putting into words what other people felt but could not so adequately express.

If I were to summarise what happened during this period, I would have to say two things: 1. that young people who had been very far away from the church, even alien to it, came gradually, all over the Soviet Union, in growing numbers, to express an interest in the Christian faith. Why was it being singled out by Khrushchev for persecution? What is it about the Christian faith which made Communists persecute it? As an intellectual question they asked this, but they would come to find out about Christianity as a result of this curiosity. Sometimes they would come merely to jump on the bandwagon, they would come to mock, but very often, in many documented instances, they would stay to pray.

The Christian conversion of a growing number of young people over the last ten years or so has been, I think, one of the most remarkable events in the Christian history of the 20th century. It is an event which has not yet been fully reported and told—I think only in the literature from Keston College, in our journal *Religion in Communist Lands*, will you find a documented account of this rebirth of the church, which extends to all

denominations. Some young people, perhaps belonging to no denomination at all, will go to the Orthodox Church because they find that it embodies p. 277 something of the richness, the beauty of tradition and history of Russia. They will go to it for perhaps aesthetic reasons initially. Others will come across the direct and open preaching of the Russian Baptists and they feel that here is a messsage that cuts right across the concepts which are being promulgated in the newspapers and on television, here is something quite different but expressed in such a forceful way, we will go and find out what this preaching is all about.

And yet others travelling, way out in the fringe lands of the Soviet Union, for example to Lithuania, find there an active Roman Catholic Church. I know of a number of young Moscow itellectuals, atheists, who went to Lithuania for their holidays and came back already having taken the first steps towards joining the Roman Catholic Church. It's right across the board, this revival of the Christian faith in Russia today, but it is affecting mainly the young people.

IV. THE RUSSIAN CHURCH TODAY

The other wonderful and remarkable phenomenon in Russian Christianity today is that what used to be called in the 1930s "The Church of Silence", has found its voice.

There is a growing number of people of all ages involved in this. People who are prepared not only to speak out in defence of their faith but to write about it as well. In this new Christian literature, we have discovered a very rich understanding of what the faith in Russia or in the Soviet Union today is all about.

This voice of the church (I can't even say the church in Russia because it affects the Republic of Georgia, Armenia, Lithuania and the Ukraine, all these non-independent republics of the Soviet Union), is being heard and Christians in those areas are expressing themselves with growing forcefulness. This again has been something which we at Keston College have been increasingly able to document.

After the fall of Khrushchev in 1964 persecution again slackened, 1964 to 1968 or 1969—these were years again when things were not really so bad for the church. They did not manage to reopen the seminaries or the churches or the monasteries but at least the terror was removed. p. 278

But when the new period of persecution broke on the church in about 1969, it was much more selective. It was not nationwide, although it did affect all parts of the country. It did not affect all congregations. What it did was to single out individual leaders who were seeking to express their voice as Christians, those people who were active in the national areas of, say, Lithuania or Georgia. An example would be the leaders of the Lithuanian movement for a free and independent Lithuanian Catholic Church (independent of Soviet power, not independent of the Vatican: they were very loyal to the Vatican—the most loyal of all Catholic people).

Those who spoke out and wrote about their own situation fully and at great length and sent their documents out of the Soviet Union, were the people who had to bear the brunt of the next period of persecution. And what were they asking for primarily? They were asking that the Soviet constitution should be implemented. They were saying that the Soviet laws which demand the registration of Christian groups and which implement Soviet control over Christian activities are not good enough and must be revised. They Want to see the Christian having an independent right to govern his own church and to look after his own church affairs.

This continued; it was a voice that was more and more clearly heard in the churches of the Soviet Union and gradually, by sending the documents out, in the church in the

world at large. It is remarkable that it is not a political voice as such. They want to help build a new society—but within that society they want Christianity to be a vital element, possibly *the* vital element.

That is what the new voice is saying and it is a very exciting and challenging voice indeed. Christians want to see the Soviet constitution of separation of church and state implemented, so that they can learn to fulfil the role in Soviet society which they believe God is calling them to fulfil.

There is tremendous ground for optimism that the churches as a whole in Russia, the persecuted church and the official registered church, are really saying one and the same thing. I do not see a divide between them, I do not see a dichotomy of one betraying the Gospel and the other fulfilling it. This is all part of a myth in my view. I see different sectors of the Christian church making their own contribution towards this rebirth of the Christian church in the Soviet Union today; 60 years after the Soviet revolution, Communism p. 279 in a country where it has been tried over a period of 60 years seems to the younger intellectuals to be a god that failed—whereas the Christian church is providing evidence about a God who is active and is not failing the people in a country where the church has been so bitterly persecuted.

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Theology and Healing

by JOHN GOLDINGAY

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THERE HAS long been a Christian involvement in healing, but in recent years healing has become a subject of much wider interest in the church at all levels.[1] My aim in this paper is to point to some aspects of the theological context in which a Christian concern for healing has to be set; specifically, in a definition of health, in an understanding of miracle, and in a theology of suffering.

I. A THEOLOGY OF HEALTH

First, we can surely only understand both sickness and healing in the context of some defined concept of health. Now it happens that my wife is a doctor, so I asked her if she could give me a description of health such as the medical profession uses. Her first

[1] I am grateful especially to my colleague Graham Dow for discussions which have clarified my thinking on this subject.