

He describes his many visits to Russia, in particular his work at the American Exhibition in Moscow in 1959. On this and other visits he met many Russian Christians, worshipped and worked with them, and also testified to many unbelievers. His involvement with Russia led him to what must to many seem a strange step: the attempt to gain Soviet citizenship. The move was frustrated and the young missionary left Moscow to spend months of confusion and despair in Paris. Later he returned to America to continue the work he had left behind. These dark months are described without glamour and add much to the sharp reality of this book. David Benson speaks of Russia and the Russian people with love and with vivid observation. His remarks on the Russian Orthodox tradition, although foreign to him and to those Russian Christians with whom he shared most, are balanced and sensitive. †

Very different but equally gripping is the documentary book *Vanya*. The story of the young Baptist soldier Moiseyev, murdered while serving in the Crimea in the summer of 1972, is widely known. Myrna Grant, a free-lance writer, re-tells the story with remarkable imagination and sensitivity. She has based her book not only on the ample documentation available from Russia (both Christian and atheist sources) but also on personal discussion of the story with Soviet believers. The book is divided into sections each introduced by a Russian proverb; the whole is attractively presented and very readable. The documentation is appended for those who wish to follow the story again from direct sources. The book has a foreword by Michael Bourdeaux.

KATHLEEN MATCHETT

**Church, State and Opposition in the USSR** by Gerhard Simon, C. Hurst & Co., London, 1974. 248 pp., £4.20.

"In the West," writes Gerhard Simon in the preface to his new book, "there is a widespread lack of detailed knowledge concerning the situation of the Church in the Soviet Union" and, more specifically, about "the three main events in the internal life of the Russian Churches over the last decade": "the wave of persecution under Khrushchev from 1959 to 1964," "the internal Church oppositional movements" among the Russian Orthodox and the Evangelical Christian-Baptists "since the beginning of the 1960s," and "the present brutal persecution of a relatively large Baptist group". That little is known of religious life in the USSR is certainly true, although it can be argued that in the area of Dr. Simon's

chief concern, Church-State relations, more information has come forth than anywhere else. How well this has been appropriated by specialists and filtered through to the general reader is of course a different matter. Dr. Simon's book should admirably serve to further the process. And it can do so in better fashion than its English language title implies, since part of the book deals with Church-State issues in the Russian Empire and thus lends a useful historical perspective to the more contemporary picture in the USSR.

Based on research done at the end of the 1960s, the German original, *Die Kirchen in Russland: Berichte, Dokumente*, first appeared in 1970. It consisted of six individual essays (four previously published) together with a number of *samizdat* documents in German translation. The recently published English version updates the essays to mid-1972 and in the documentary section substitutes (save in two cases) new and more pertinent materials. The chief weakness of Simon's book stems precisely from this collective character. It is not so much the contradictions encountered in moving from one essay to another, for these are few and minor. Nor is it the occasional repetition of information, since each restatement is in a different context which usually serves to enhance comprehension. Where the problem lies is that too much has been imposed on the reader to integrate key sections of the material. Still, the values of Simon's book far outweigh this shortcoming. The separate essays cohere remarkably well into a composite. Their no-nonsense style of composition is to be welcomed in a field riddled with ideological dispute. Intelligibility is achieved without the sacrifice of complexity, and though the book is not profound it has the stamp of technical competence. Finally, what Dr. Simon has chosen to emphasize is sound: the Church-State dimension is but part of "the situation of the Church in the Soviet Union," but it is fundamental, even as it is best observed through the experience of the Russian Orthodox and Evangelical Christian-Baptist Churches. Other than these generally useful features, the individual essays or chapters that comprise the book each have a contribution to make which a review of the whole can but partly depict.

Simon's initial chapters deal with the captive state of the Orthodox Church in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century and "the drive for reform" to burst these fetters. The first does so by analysis of socio-institutional developments and the second through a biographical sketch of Metropolitan Antoni (Vadkovsky) of St. Petersburg. The value of this part of the book is less in showing what of the past has made the present, than in reminding that not all of the contemporary Church-State situation in the USSR is new. With the third chapter the heart of the book

is reached. Entitled "The Soviet State and the Church," this essay considers the experience of the Russian Orthodox Church during the Soviet era. After brief depiction of key stages from 1917 to 1959, best in what is said of the war and the immediate post-war years and worst in the failure to mention "the 100 days" of anti-religious pressure in 1954, the bulk of the chapter is given over to Khrushchev's repressive campaign in the early 1960s – a perfectly sound procedure since it is this period which introduced the fundamental conditions governing Church-State relations in the Soviet Union today. Simon is here deeply dependent on Struve (*Christians in the USSR*, 1967), but in addition to an admirable condensation he offers new data and a perspective clarified by lengthening hindsight. Particularly astute is his observation that at the same time that under State pressure most of the institutions of the Orthodox Church were suffering drastic reductions and the overall number of its clergy was being halved, the Russian Church's most visible aspects to foreign eyes – relations abroad and the episcopate – were enjoying dramatic expansion. Where Simon's discussion of the Khrushchev years is less satisfactory is in its failure to incorporate the legal changes of 1961-1962 and the brief space given to the atheist indoctrination campaign which, almost inexorably, gave rise to public coercion of many lay believers. A more serious flaw comes at the end of the chapter when Simon introduces the word "détente" – qualified by "a certain" – to describe Church-State relations in the post-Khrushchev years. This wrongly weaves 1965 into a common cloth with subsequent years, as well as underplays the marked differences in treatment presently accorded to compliant and uncompliant believers. It is true the essays to come (IV and V) present considerable corrective information, but it remains for the reader to eschew the détente image.

The fourth chapter of the book, "The Churches in the Soviet Union Today," offers thumbnail sketches of the Old Believers, the Georgian Orthodox, the Armenian-Gregorians, the Roman Catholics, and the Evangelical-Lutherans, somewhat greater detail on the Evangelical Christian-Baptists, and the fullest data of all on the Russian Orthodox. This hardly constitutes a "keeping of the different denominations in balance," as advertised by the dust-jacket, and for a work concerned with contemporary Soviet Church-State relations the sparse treatment of the Lithuanian Catholic Church is woeful. Still the information Simon does include serves to update in certain important respects what has been made available to English readers in Kolarz, Struve, and Marshall. This is also a value in Simon's fifth chapter, "State Pressure and Church Resistance," which though building on Bourdeaux (*Religious Ferment in Russia*, 1968)

adds considerable new data to the story of the Baptist reform movement. In addition, with the benefit of a longer time-perspective Simon is able to correct the original picture by arguing that the reform Baptists constitute but a small minority and the regular Baptists are characterized by a "flexible attitude" while at the same time he confirms the early impression "that the All-Union Council is largely indebted to the reckless courage of the free Baptists for the removal of restrictions" even as the struggle "for basic human rights" of these same *initsiativniki* has "contributed greatly to critical awareness within Soviet society in recent years". Simon's final essay, "The Underground Church," though the briefest, is in some ways the most original and important item in the book. It is, as has been well said, "a cool and overdue appraisal of a major controversy" – i.e., the mission of Pastor Richard Wurmbrand among the Western churches. Better read in full there than in summary here.

Simon's book concludes with a documentary section which makes no pretence of formal integration with the essays which precede it or of any attempt to illuminate the full substance of the volume – e.g., no document is included of relevance to the introductory historical essays. Nevertheless, as an expression of recent (1967-1972) religious *samizdat* material relevant to contemporary Church-State relations in the USSR the selection is judicious: Levitin's letter to Pope Paul VI, Solzhenitsyn's letter to Patriarch Pimen and Zheludkhov's reply, the letter of 1,453 Baptist mothers to Brezhnev, the jubilee issue of the *Fraternal Leaflet* of the Baptist reformers, the letter of the Uzlovaya Baptist congregation (where the reform movement began) to U Thant, two documents on unrest in the Catholic Church of Lithuania, a report on pressures exerted on the Old Believers. In this section more than any other place there is truth in the assertion that this is "a book of equal value to general readers and specialists in Soviet affairs". What the essence of this value is can be simply stated. Gerhard Simon's book is the best work in single binding now available in English by an individual author on contemporary Church-State relations in the Soviet Union. That it is available in a crisp yet flowing style is due to the translation skill of Kathleen Matchett, to whom credit also belongs for assisting the able Dr. Simon in his work of updating the essays and introducing new and more pertinent material into the documentary section.

ANDREW BLANE