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The Protestant Missionary Presence in the Former Soviet Union*

MARK ELLIOTT & SHARYL CORRADO

The bathtub looked ordinary enough, even if the apartment rated five stars by Moscow standards. I wondered why my friend was so intent upon my seeing it – until he confided that it was the site of his secret baptism in the early 1980s. Aleksandr Zaichenko is hardly a typical Evangelical Protestant, with his doctorate in economics, his government service as a pro-market economist under Gorbachev, and his apartment well above the average Russian standard. He had come to faith through private Scripture reading well after receiving his education. Until the late 1980s, because of his position, Dr Zaichenko was quiet about his faith, fearing repercussions should he be discovered ‘flirting’ with religion. As a result, he first dared attend worship hundreds of miles from his home while on government business in Tallinn. Now, by contrast, he leads weekly Bible studies for members of the Russian Duma, he publishes articles in the secular press advocating Christian ethical foundations for a market economy, he provides oversight for Christian business clubs he has established in Moscow and other cities, and he serves as vice-chair of the board of Moscow’s new Russian–American Christian University. In short, times have changed. Today the determined diversity of Dr Zaichenko’s unfettered witness underscores the end of wholesale state persecution of believers and the introduction of a degree of religious liberty unparalleled in Russian history.

I have myself witnessed the rapid transformation of official attitudes, from derisive condemnation of religion as opium to the current perception of religion as a moral and national bulwark. Gorbachev’s Tashkent speech of November 1986 predictably railed against the harmful influences of religion; 19 months later came his televised celebration of the Russian Christian millennium with Patriarch Pimen. By this point, April 1988, Gorbachev could extol the Russian Orthodox Church for its patriotic and moral virtues through a thousand years of Russian history.

I also experienced the changes firsthand. As late as July 1989 I had Bibles and other Christian literature confiscated by Soviet customs officials while escorting a Western tour group. (Russian religion specialist Jane Ellis believes I may hold the dubious distinction of leading the last foreign group to receive such treatment.) In contrast, just one year later, in August 1990, as part of an exchange programme with Moscow State University, my students cleared customs with quantities of Christian

* This paper was first presented at the second Keston Institute conference on Proselytism and Religious Liberty, Oxford, 12–16 May 1997.

literature, no questions asked. But for me the October 1991 issue of the Soviet humorous magazine *Krokodil*, which I bought on a Moscow street, highlighted most dramatically how times had changed. On the cover a cartoon depicted a young couple gazing across open water at a sun, half hidden on the horizon. The half of the sphere that was visible was emblazoned with the initials of Soviet Communist Party, and the caption read 'Oh, what a beautiful sunset!' Mere possession of such antisoviet propaganda could have led to imprisonment a few short years earlier, yet by 1991 such sentiments could find their way onto the cover of a magazine produced and underwritten by the Soviet state. It was in this period of the frenetic dismantling of communism that Václav Havel, the Czech dissident playwright, who himself in fifteen months exchanged a prison cell for a presidential palace, acknowledged 'We have no time to be astonished.'

Dr Zaichenko, for one, wonders not only at the unprecedented transformation, but at the prospects for continued freedom of religion. He works well with Russian Orthodox on the board of the Russian Bible Society. But he also worries about increasing official deference to the hierarchs of this former state church, and growing restrictions on non-Orthodox faiths. While today foreign Protestant missionaries and representatives of various cults are the villains of choice in a Russia that is increasingly nationalistic and xenophobic, Zaichenko fears the possibility of more comprehensive assaults on all so-called 'non-traditional' religions. Discrimination against indigenous Slavic Protestants, even with their history in Russia of well over a century, increasingly takes the form of blocked building permits; Orthodox, nationalist and communist pressure on local officials not to rent public facilities to Evangelicals; and baseless charges of worship practices that are injurious to health. In Russia today the growing probability of national legislation restricting religious liberty, and increasing provincial legislation and administrative practice which is already curbing 'non-traditional' faiths, contribute an air of urgency to both foreign and indigenous Evangelical efforts.

The political upheaval which spelled an end to communist rule in East Central Europe, and which led to the dismantling of the Soviet Union itself, has also transformed the region's churches and East European ministry. As far as Protestant missionary activity in post-Soviet lands is concerned, the seismic changes of this past decade have contributed to a considerable number of major developments including: (1) mission restructuring; (2) mission expansion; (3) and (4) unprecedented cooperative efforts alongside an unprecedented proliferation of mission mavericks; (5) mission specialisation; and (6) the need to rethink the relationship between East European ministry and indigenous Christians – both Protestant and Orthodox.¹ I propose to deal with each of these topics in turn.

Restructuring

Gorbachev's stress in the late 1980s upon *glasnost*' (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) triggered a major restructuring in East European ministry as well. Proceeding as usual made less and less sense for Evangelical agencies as the Soviet Union relaxed religious discrimination and restrictions on foreign contacts. In several ministries there was intense debate on which operations and personnel ought to remain abroad and how much ought to relocate to the country concerned. Meanwhile, with the demise of communist governments, missions that stressed anti-communism had difficulty adjusting to the new politics and suffered financial reverses.²

Expansion

The unanticipated removal of political barriers in East Central Europe and the Soviet Union in the latter half of the 1980s led to a sharp increase in the number of ministries from abroad working in the region: from 150 in 1982, to 311 in 1989, to 691 in 1993, to nearly 1000 today. Of the current total some 561 groups are active in the former Soviet Union.³ Quickest to take advantage of new opportunities were parachurch ministries (more flexible than church bureaucracies), ministries headed by Slavic immigrants from the region (whose leaders understood the region's languages and cultures firsthand), and missionaries with worldwide programmes (which could rapidly redeploy substantial resources and personnel to former Soviet-bloc states).

While no precise statistics exist for the current size of the foreign missionary force in post-Soviet territories, informed estimates are available. In 1993 British author Patrick Johnstone published an admittedly conservative estimate of 1113 foreign missionaries in the former Soviet Union and 864 in East Central Europe, a total of 1977.⁴ In 1995 survey work conducted by the *East–West Church and Ministry Report* determined that the 25 largest sending agencies by themselves had 3197 non-indigenous missionaries in the former Soviet Union⁵ (see Table 1). Among the hundreds of smaller ministries, several hundred which are engaged in such support services as publishing, broadcasting and relief work have either no missionaries or no career missionaries stationed in the region. At the same time, hundreds of other smaller agencies would appear to be sponsoring an average of four missionaries each at present. Given these considerations, a total Western missionary community in the former Soviet Union of approximately 4400 would appear plausible for 1995.⁶ In late 1996 an *East–West Church and Ministry Report* survey indicated a 31 per cent one-year increase in the number of Western denominational missionaries in the former Soviet Union, as opposed to parachurch groups (see Table 2). Since it appears that denominational momentum is just now reaching a crescendo, in comparison with that of parachurch groups which mobilised more quickly and may have peaked earlier, a more likely overall estimate for a 1995–96 increase in the Western missionary force in the former Soviet Union might be 15 per cent, which would yield a total of 5060.⁷ Adding 557 South Korean missionaries gives a total foreign missionary force of 5617 in the former Soviet Union.⁸ Finally, if the career-to-short-term ratio of 35/65, which was the case for the 25 largest sending agencies, can be applied to all groups, then approximately 1966 career missionaries from abroad currently serve in the former Soviet Union. On the one hand, this represents a striking increase over the handful of undeclared missionaries in the Soviet Union in 1986. On the other hand, given its population of approximately 287 million people, the former Soviet Union does not command a disproportionate share of the worldwide Protestant missionary effort.⁹

In addition to a pronounced increase in foreign missionary activity, *glasnost*' also gave new opportunities to indigenous Protestants in the former Soviet Union. One response has been a proliferation of denominations. In part, new church structures were a reaction against Soviet-imposed unity that had seen Mennonites and even Pentecostals constrained under an Evangelical Christian–Baptist (ECB) umbrella. New freedom also allowed Western and Korean denominations to enter, or reenter, the region unimpeded. Whereas in 1986 the Kremlin permitted only one all-union Protestant denomination (Evangelical Christians–Baptists), and a handful of others in particular locales (Lutherans in the Baltic States, Methodists in Estonia, Hungarian Reformed in Western Ukraine), by 1997 the former Soviet Union counted 35

Table 1. Western missionaries in the former Soviet Union from the 25 largest sending agencies (1995)*

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Missionaries</i>
Assemblies of God ¹	28
Biblical Education by Extension ²	12
Campus Crusade for Christ ²	234
Child Evangelism Fellowship ¹	25
Christian and Missionary Alliance ¹	39
Church of Christ ^{†1}	104
Church of the Nazarene ¹	16
Church Resource Ministries	17
Evangelical Free Church Mission ²	12
Frontiers ²	118
Greater Europe Mission ²	18
International Teams	20
Institute in Basic Life Principles ⁴	320
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship ³	32
Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod	32
Navigators	193
OMS International	87
Operation Mobilization	40
Salvation Army ¹	50
Seventh-day Adventists	49
Southern Baptist Convention ²	80
United Methodist Church	15
United World Mission ¹	18
Wesleyan World Mission	38
Youth With a Mission	1600
Total for 25 Agencies	3197

¹ All career; ² Majority career; ³ All short term (3 to 24 months); ⁴ 20 career, 300 short term.

* To avoid double counting of many of the 862 one-year CoMission missionaries, this cooperative effort involving 12 sending agencies is not listed separately.

† Church of Christ totals do not include 200–300 mission-trip participants (1–6 weeks) because this short term of service falls below the 3- to 24-month designation for short-term missionaries.

Source: *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 2, Spring 1995, p. 10; no. 4, Fall 1995, p. 3. Compiled by Pamela Meadows and Matt Miller.

Protestant denominations.¹⁰

The past decade has also witnessed an explosion of independent grassroots mission enterprises, distinct from existing church structures. Many hundreds of such indigenous initiatives now engage in evangelism: Christian publishing and distribution; compassion ministries in hospitals, orphanages, prisons and soup kitchens; and professional associations for Christian lawyers, doctors, artists and entrepreneurs.¹¹ Three such groups founded in 1988–89, *Svet Yevangeliya* (Light of the Gospel) in Rovno, Latvian Christian Mission in Riga, and *Vozmozhnost'* (Possibility) Mission in Donetsk, alone support 540 full-time and part-time workers.¹²

Indigenous ministries and Western agencies such as Campus Crusade, Navigators, InterVarsity and CoMission are spawning Bible studies and new autonomous congregations that frequently have no affiliation with the formerly all-encompassing Union

Table 2. Western missionaries in the former Soviet Union from the 12 largest denominational sending agencies

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>
Assemblies of God ¹	28	51
Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa ¹	8	45
Christian and Missionary Alliance	39 ¹	57 ²
Church of Christ ¹	104	ca 104
Church of the Nazarene	16	16
Evangelical Free Church	12	87 ³
Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod	32	35
Salvation Army	50	52
Seventh-day Adventists	49	69 ⁴
Southern Baptist Convention	80	108 ¹
United Methodist Church	ca 15	15 ¹
Wesleyan Church	38	41 ⁵
Total	471	680

¹ All career; ² 40 career, 17 short term; ³ 25 career, 62 short term; ⁴ 29 career, 40 short term; ⁵ 10 career, 31 short term.

Compiled by Sharyl Corrado, Mark Elliott and Pamela Meadows.

of Evangelical Christians–Baptists. These newly-forming churches appeal especially to new converts who, on the one hand, distrust many Orthodox hierarchs and priests who collaborated with the old regime, but who, on the other hand, find it difficult to conform to Baptist and Pentecostal legalism and cultural isolation. Ultimately, distinct new Protestant denominations are likely to emerge from these parachurch efforts, as has happened in the past with such ministry-sponsored churches as Nigeria’s Evangelical Church of West Africa (related to Sudan Interior Mission) and the Korean Holiness Church (related to the Oriental Missionary Society).¹³

Greater Support for Cooperation and Greater Independent Activity

Paradoxically, in former Soviet bloc states unprecedented mission cooperation coexists with an unprecedented number of solo, go-it-alone mission mavericks. On the positive side, 1987 to 1989 alone saw Bible delivery partnerships involving some 28 denominations, missions and Bible Societies.¹⁴ Other continuing collaborative efforts include eight new evangelical alliances and 23 new Bible societies in former East-bloc states; the CoMission involving 85 agencies in a programme of Christian ethics and outreach in post-Soviet state schools; the 65-member Albanian Encouragement Project; and the multi-ministry Alliance for Saturation Church Planting.¹⁵ Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, founded in 1991 specifically to serve as a consultant and catalyst for Slavic ministry partnerships, has advised and assisted over 270 church and parachurch missions now working in the former Soviet Union.¹⁶

Unfortunately, hundreds of other, more independently-minded new players claim to know what has worked in Christian outreach in the West, and boldly step forward with a bewildering array of ‘proven programmes’ they are confident will provide answers in the East. Too often a ‘Wild West’, ‘Lone Ranger’ approach to ministry ends in what might be called hit-and-run evangelism, with its neglect of disciplining

for new believers and its inattention to respectful partnerships with existing churches. Gross cultural insensitivity on the part of too many missionaries stems in part from an arrogant attitude that assumes 'the West knows best'. Even when Western and Korean ministries are unconscious of their overweening, unbiblical sense of self-importance, Christians in the East readily detect it. The latter have to deal with far too many newcomers more intent on promoting pre-packaged strategies than on listening to Slavic believers sharing their needs and dreams.

Very frequently mission mistakes result from a lack of appreciation for, and even ignorance of, the culture in question. It may be that the greatest flaw today in missionary orientation for post-Soviet lands is not its brevity, although that is frequently a serious shortcoming. The greatest flaw may be inadequate to nonexistent country-specific and culture-specific preparation; that is, woefully insufficient study of pertinent languages, literature and history. Ministry training too often focuses on what might be called generic preparation; that is, the cultivation of skills and outlooks applicable to any cross-cultural experience, be it in Botswana or Belarus', to the neglect of an adequate preparation for the specific country of destination. What are we to make of a mission board currently preparing missionaries for service in diverse parts of the world which is sending them together to southern California for a 10-week internship with Hispanic cross-cultural ministry? If a pre-field cross-cultural immersion experience is prescribed, why not, rather, send the candidates bound for Russia to Sacramento, to one of its many Slavic immigrant churches, to experience more of Russian culture first hand? And why not send those bound for Nigeria to a ministry internship among African immigrants in Chicago, New York, or London? Greater attention to culture-specific orientation and training would require more staff work and greater decentralisation, but it would reap ample dividends in terms of less traumatic culture shock and greater longevity for personnel in the field. Missionaries to Russia, for example, who arrive ignorant of icons and Orthodoxy, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, Stanislavsky and Chekhov, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, will not be taken seriously and will give deep offence.

I often have been asked by mission boards and mission candidates for recommended reading on Eastern Orthodoxy. And when I have suggested Don Fairbairn's thoughtful Evangelical critique *Partakers of the Divine Nature* I have been told, more than once, that at a hundred pages it is too much.¹⁷ My response is that if even 500 pages of reading on Orthodoxy is too much for missionaries bound for Russia, then the distance – in comprehension as well as miles – is too great. They had better stay at home. Fortunately, those too busy to prepare properly do not represent the whole picture. I have also had the joy of leading a semester-long independent readings course on Eastern Orthodoxy that involved two missionaries on leave and one missionary candidate who regularly drove the over two hours round-trip to my office so that all four of us could gain a better understanding of Slavic Christianity. They minister today in Romania, southern Russia and Siberia.

Specialisation

Recognising postcommunist mission mistakes, and recalling the region's long-standing tradition of state churches identified with particular nationalities, one can more readily explain the genesis of various legislative measures to curb Western missionary activity. The fact of ill-advised and ill-informed Christian witness is however only part of the explanation for the hostile reception. Communists, nationalists and the hierarchs of former state churches also oppose Evangelical missionaries

because they are just as often warm, winsome and loving as they are brash, brazen and culturally clueless. Opposition, then, is as much a function of what Evangelicals are doing right as it is of what they are doing wrong. It may be argued that so many ministries are having such a beneficial effect, in so many places, in so many ways, that their detractors cannot tolerate it, and as a result seek to restrict freedom of conscience by erecting political barriers which discriminate against arbitrarily defined 'non-traditional' faiths.

In the meantime, large numbers of Western ministries are making perhaps their greatest impact for good in former Soviet-bloc states through all manner of specialised assistance, including facilitating in-country radio broadcasting, publishing, and film and video production, entering into partnership with indigenous churches to help provide training at all levels from Sunday school to seminary, sharing expertise in counselling on marriage, family, youth, prison, alcohol and drugs and introducing sports, camping, and drama ministries.

The Need to Rethink the Relationship between East European Missions and Indigenous Protestants and Orthodox

East European ministries have much to learn from both the successes and failures of two centuries of Western Protestant missions in Africa, Asia and Latin America.¹⁸ At the same time, even long-established ministries, highly respected for their effectiveness elsewhere, need to approach service in post-Soviet lands with a healthy dose of humility, and many more questions than answers. The disastrous consequences of 72 years of communism in the Soviet Union, for example, not only on the political process and the economy, but also on the psyche of long-suffering citizens, cannot be overestimated. Missions from abroad must remember that ministry among people long conditioned by authoritarian Marxist rule, and now emerging from its pitiless grasp, presents circumstances unique in the history of world missions.¹⁹

It is appropriate for mission agencies to note, of course, that as regards hardship and deprivation, Botswana and Belarus' have suffered alike. At the same time, a discerning Evangelical outreach in post-Soviet Belarus' must take into account the peculiarities of its twentieth-century ordeal: terror, death, and devastation inflicted by Stalin, Hitler, and Chernobyl'. Missions from abroad to Belarus' also need to be aware that, in contrast to Botswana, this troubled land had a Christian tradition long before modern missionaries arrived. Orthodox and Catholics have been on hand for a millennium, and even indigenous Protestants have had a presence here for more than a century. More than once Fr Leonid Kishkovsky, ecumenical officer of the Orthodox Church in America, has publicly deplored a 1991 ministry advertisement in *Christianity Today* that, under a reproduction of an icon, appealed for help in its campaign to take the real Christ to Russia.²⁰ The implication that without this initiative the real Christ would remain absent from Russia is clearly offensive to Orthodox Christians; and Slavic Evangelicals, who managed to survive over 100 years of tsarist and Soviet attacks on their existence, might justifiably take offence as well. Guidelines for ministry in the East published by the British Evangelical Missionary Alliance second Fr Kishkovsky:

Mission teams which say 'We are taking Jesus to Russia', show they don't understand the situation at all. Nobody is taking Jesus to Russia. He has been there all the time! His Holy Spirit was moving behind the Iron Curtain before Christians from the West could go there. Remember that

many Christians you meet have lived under persecution, whilst you have lived with religious freedom.²¹

East European missions should first recognise the existence of indigenous Evangelical and Orthodox Christians, and should pay them due respect for having outlasted communism.

Rethinking the Relationship between East European Missions and Indigenous Protestants

In the relationship between ministries from abroad and indigenous Protestants two contrasting perspectives prevail. The first emphasises the fact that Evangelicals have survived a lengthy and vicious atheist assault on their existence, that they have been directly tested by the refiner's fire, that they are to be commended for their faithfulness, and that as a result it is only right that they should receive the lion's share of support from their fellow-believers abroad. The second ministry perspective stresses the legalism of many former Soviet-bloc Evangelicals, their cultural isolation from the mainstream of society, their authoritarian leadership style, their lack of financial accountability by Western standards, and their frequent inability to absorb new converts who sometimes find the traditional Evangelical subculture cold, constraining and judgmental. Accordingly, it is argued, the major focus should be on new wineskins, that is, on new churches where those coming to Christ in the wake of communism will find ready acceptance and love. The main assumptions in both perspectives can in fact readily be documented. That being the case, both partnership with existing denominations and the establishment of new churches would appear to be legitimate strategies for Evangelical ministries. At the same time, it would be more edifying if proponents of the two approaches did not verbally cast those with whom they differ into outer darkness. As a matter of practical policy ministries from abroad, even those committed to new wineskins, should not begin work in any region or city without extending the common courtesy of informing local churches of their plans, asking for advice, and where possible, I would recommend, offering material assistance.

Rethinking the Relationship between East European Missions and the Eastern Orthodox

Turning to the relationship of ministries from abroad with the Eastern Orthodox, some preliminary theological reflections are in order. Orthodox and Evangelical Christians alike hold Scripture in high regard. They share a belief in the Trinity, in Christ as wholly human and wholly divine, and in Christ's death and resurrection as the means of mankind's salvation from sin and death. These and many other historic Christian teachings held in common are enumerated in the Nicene Creed, which both traditions affirm. Given these major, mutually cherished convictions, it would appear that Evangelicals and Orthodox have much more in common theologically than either has in common with modern mainline Protestantism.²²

At the same time I would agree with Don Fairbairn, a Cambridge University doctoral student who formerly taught at Donetsk Christian University, that 'the theological differences separating Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism are more than cultural'. The fundamental distinction for Fairbairn involves contrasting Evangelical and Orthodox understandings of salvation: Evangelical justification by faith *at the*

outset of a Christian life, versus Orthodox *theosis* (deification), the ‘process of becoming acceptable to God — as I practise love, mercy, and justice’, *ending* in God’s ultimate confirmation of eternal communion with Him.²³

In his unpublished *Partakers of the Divine Nature* Fairbairn contends that a fundamental distinction between Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism may stem from an Orthodox telescoping or combining of biblical passages concerning salvation and sanctification. It is interesting that a key verse for an Orthodox reading of salvation (2 Peter 1:4: ‘His divine power has granted to us ... [to] become partakers of the divine nature’) has historically been a key verse for both Wesleyan and Calvinist readings of sanctification. While better relations between the confessions should earnestly be sought, Evangelicals still need to keep in mind that their faith also appears to part company with Orthodoxy over the related question of mediation between God and man. For Evangelicals, Christ alone stands as mediator between human sinfulness and God’s holiness. However, it would appear, from a Reformation perspective, that Orthodoxy includes additional mediators between the two: the church, the priest, the divine liturgy, icons, and prayers of supplication to saints. As East European theologian Peter Kuzmić has argued, from an Evangelical perspective Orthodoxy appears to detract from Christ ‘by addition’.²⁴

In Eastern Europe popularly perceived differences between Orthodox and Evangelical Christians, as opposed to carefully drawn theological distinctions, shed little light, but certainly inflame passions. ‘When we say “the Church” we always mean the Orthodox Church and no other’, reported one respondent in a mid-1980s poll conducted in the Soviet Union. ‘It has been established by Christ, and has had no deviations, neither left nor right. All the rest are false churches or sects that went astray.’ In the same survey Russian Evangelicals typically voiced opinions just as intolerant, dismissing Orthodoxy as ‘a dead Church’ with ‘drunkards’ for priests. ‘They know how to cross themselves, and nothing else ... Worshipping those icons, lighting the candles, praying for the dead, it’s all idolatry.’²⁵ In the Russian Empire and in the Soviet era most grassroots Protestants and Orthodox rarely moved beyond such negative stereotypical images of each other; and today the situation is arguably worse as more and more Protestant ministries work in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. These days the mutual tolerance and respect among Western Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox, built up painfully over centuries, frequently evaporates in a flash in the cauldron of ethnic and confessional strife now raging from the Balkans to Siberia.

The common ground mentioned earlier counts for very little as Evangelicals make their way into territory Orthodox consider to be their exclusive domain. Here the key question is: east of the old Iron Curtain, are Evangelicals interlopers? Many Orthodox Christians, for example, believe that Protestants have no place in Russia. In particular, they see recent Evangelical activity from abroad as an unwelcome and offensive intrusion into a spiritual landscape nourished by a thousand years of Byzantine Christianity. Western missionaries working in countries with long-standing Orthodox traditions definitely need to apply themselves to a study of history and culture in order to understand this heritage. However, even as Evangelicals come to appreciate Orthodoxy, the exceptional achievements of Russian culture and the remarkable perseverance of a long-suffering people, they should not feel they need to apologise for sharing the good news in a Russia minus Marx.

One major reason is demographic. Evangelical ministries are motivated by a desire to support a movement of some three million indigenous Protestants,²⁶ but both Evangelicals from abroad and indigenous Evangelicals are also motivated by

Russia's huge non-believing population. Data from a survey conducted in June 1996 suggest that as many as 67 per cent of Russian men and 38 per cent of Russian women do not identify themselves as religious believers.²⁷ While a recent poll indicates a substantial increase in the percentage of Russians claiming affiliation with the Orthodox Church (from 30 per cent in 1991 to 50 per cent in 1996), the percentage of these respondents who have taken Orthodoxy to heart and who practise their faith is another matter.²⁸ The June 1996 survey indicated that believers (50 per cent of respondents) were far more often non-observant (37.3 per cent) than observant (12.7 per cent); and even among self-described observant believers corporate worship proved to be strikingly erratic. When asked how often they had attended church in the past twelve months, only ten per cent of believers who considered themselves to be observant answered once a week, and 13 per cent answered once a month, while 55 per cent answered on religious holidays and on family occasions.²⁹ Just as revealing as the low levels of participation in Orthodox worship is the conclusion of one poll analyst, based on an All-Russia Public Opinion Research Center survey, which suggested 'no correlation between religiousness and the expression of a personal moral code'.³⁰

Evangelicals believe they have an obligation to witness to nominal believers as well as to non-believers. Leaving nominalism aside, however, the current poll figures for Russian non-believers are such that indigenous Evangelicals and Evangelical ministries from abroad have ample opportunity to minister to many millions who are spiritually adrift in the former Soviet Union, without ever engaging in proselytising – that is, specifically targeting adherents of one church in an attempt to lure them into another.

The Russian Orthodox leadership is aware of the daunting challenge it faces in inculcating spiritual and moral values into its flock and into society at large. In the face of Russia's present economic and political travail and Marxism's harvest of moral and spiritual devastation it would appear that reestablishing Christian moorings and life-changing faith across the land would more than challenge all the resources and efforts of Orthodox, Protestants and Catholics combined. Not only is proselytism under these circumstances uncharitable, divisive and counterproductive, but by diverting energies into futile interconfessional strife it diminishes prospects of reaching the many tens of millions of Russian non-believers.

In Russia the difficulty Orthodox and Evangelicals have in agreeing on a single definition for 'proselytism' stems in good measure from conflicting understandings of what constitutes a believer. Evangelicals assume a personal, conscious commitment to Christ alone as Saviour, lived out in worship and life. In contrast, if a Russian has been baptised as an infant, even if faith is dormant or non-existent, Orthodox consider an Evangelical witness to that person to be proselytising. Many Orthodox in fact believe they have an even more extensive prerogative in the East. Since Russia – and Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia – have historically and traditionally been predominantly Orthodox, church leaders in these countries would like to assume a territorial spiritual protectorate over at least their Slavic populations. Some Orthodox will thus interpret Evangelical witness even to self-described Russian non-believers as proselytism. Oddly enough, such an understanding seems to be underscored by survey findings which indicate that some respondents who identify themselves as Orthodox, meaning 'I am Russian', have little or no acquaintance with Christian teachings, and rarely if ever attend worship. One poll revealed that 'fewer Russian Orthodox than the general population believe that Jesus is the Son of God'.³¹

Of course, differentiating proselytism and legitimate proclamation of the Gospel

can be contentious in the West as well as in the East. Consider a volume of essays edited by Martin Marty and Frederick Greenspahn entitled *Pushing the Faith: Proselytism and Civility in a Pluralistic World*. In his closing remarks, after a succession of chapters awash with broad condemnations not only of proselytism but of practically every conception of evangelism, Marty concludes that if the arguments of his contributors were taken to their logical conclusion it would be a rare occasion when it was ever proper to share any personal spiritual reflection outside church walls. The politically correct Western Christian today seems determined to make an idol of tolerance, defined in such a way as to make almost every profession of conviction an affront and an offence. If everybody really left everybody else alone, says Marty, 'it would be a more comfortable but probably comatose world'.³²

Despite the Soviet Union's concerted antireligious assault this century Orthodoxy is, and will probably remain, the preeminent cultural and religious reality in Russia. Nevertheless, though some will not accept the fact, dissenting Protestants have much to offer Russia – even Orthodoxy itself. To begin with, Evangelicalism appears at the moment to be the only route to faith for some Russians who will never trust an Orthodox hierarchy they see as compromised by its past ties to the Soviet state. Some better-educated Russians appear to be attracted to Evangelical rather than Orthodox Christianity because Reformation churches tend to be more ready to accept knowledge and intellectual inquiry as complementary to faith. Finally, Evangelicals can render Orthodoxy a service in the same way that the Reformation stimulated genuine reform within Roman Catholicism. Evangelical activity in a given region can and often does serve as a catalyst, reenergising Orthodox out of a complacency born of tradition and nominal predominance.³³ As Martin Marty has noted, challengers of the *status quo* can provide 'great stimulus for communities to define themselves' and 'to revitalize stagnant cultures'.³⁴ Today the question must be posed: does the majority faith in Russia – Orthodoxy – have sufficient confidence in itself to tolerate religious dissent? Or will it repeat history and retreat to dependence upon the state to provide it with a legislative advantage, if not a monopoly? On the basis of Europe's sad experience with state churches, it would appear that nothing could be more deadening to Orthodox spiritual vitality than artificial secular supports propping up a privileged church.

Evangelical Assistance to the Orthodox

Evangelical ministries working in the East should require their missionaries to study language, culture and history, and those bound for Russia should prayerfully determine to their own satisfaction what are the common theological understandings between Eastern Orthodox and Evangelical Christianity, and what are the non-negotiable differences. These matters settled, the question of practical day-to-day relationships still looms large. Conclusions will differ. As a basis for discussion let me note that Eastern Nazarene College president Kent Hill and I have argued previously that we believe Western ministries should

assist in strengthening the voice and witness of Orthodoxy in any way possible – even as Evangelicals maintain the position that no single Christian confession alone can reach all of Russia for Christ. ... Because Russian culture owes an enormous debt to Orthodoxy ... many Russians likely will remain spiritually lost if a reinvigorated Orthodox Church does not reach them.³⁵

Before *glasnost*' YMCA work among Russian post-1917 emigres stood out as perhaps the most strategic and successful instance ever of concerted Protestant assistance to Orthodoxy. Under the able and discerning direction of the Episcopalian Paul Anderson the Russian YMCA Press in Paris played a pivotal role in preserving and undergirding Russian Orthodox cultural life at a time when the Soviet antireligious onslaught and Western indifference might otherwise have extinguished it.³⁶ This exceptional case history deserves widespread study today as a model for effective but non-invasive and non-patronising interconfessional assistance.

Better understanding among Christian traditions is a primary concern of a number of current initiatives. One is the Society for the Study of Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism, headed by Dr Bradley Nassif, an Orthodox scholar with a well-informed understanding of both confessions.³⁷ Annual meetings have been held at the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, since 1991. The Anglican Jane Ellis, who has written extensively on contemporary Russian Orthodoxy, has organised three dialogues to date (1994–96) in Moscow directly addressing Orthodox–Evangelical tensions. A third body that will we hope succeed as an agent of improved interconfessional relations is the Christian Inter-confessional Consultative Committee, which emerged from a meeting of 132 representatives of 21 church bodies held in Minsk, Belarus', from 1 to 3 October 1996. Participants from various republics of the former Soviet Union both affirmed 'full respect for the spiritual choice of a person' and condemned conversions from one church to another 'through ways and means contradicting the spirit of Christian love and violating the freedom of a human person'.³⁸

Since *glasnost*' direct Protestant assistance to the Russian Orthodox Church has not been overwhelming, but it has been more extensive than is commonly realised. Work teams from the US National Council of Churches and programmes run by mainline Protestant sister churches have provided some assistance. The Danish Lutherans, the Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Committee on Relief have funnelled substantial humanitarian aid through the Moscow Patriarchate. On the whole, however, ecumenical and mainline Protestant links with Russian Orthodoxy have become more precarious in recent years due to growing grassroots Orthodox distrust of the West in general and wariness of mainline Protestant theology in particular.³⁹

Russian Orthodox are of two minds regarding Keston Institute, well-known as a champion of Soviet-bloc religious rights for nearly three decades. The hierarchy does not appreciate the work of this interdenominational advocacy group headed by Anglican priest Michael Bourdeaux, because in the past Keston consistently supported Orthodox dissidents out of favour with state and church authorities, and at present Keston News Service reporter Lawrence Uzzell tenaciously documents and decries the Patriarchate's manoeuvrings for preferential state treatment. In contrast, Orthodox believers who were persecuted for their faith by the communists hold Keston in highest regard for being their voice through decades of oppression.⁴⁰

Western Evangelicals might be thought to have less substantive relationships with Russian Orthodox than mainline Protestants, since the latter have had longstanding and visible links with the Moscow Patriarchate through the ecumenical movement since 1961. That has become somewhat less the case since *glasnost*'. In 1988–89 Open Doors with Brother Andrew provided the Russian Orthodox Church with one million New Testaments; Taizé, with strong French Calvinist support, provided the Patriarchate with another million New Testaments; and the Swedish Institute for Bible Translation donated 75,000 Russian Orthodox study Bibles.⁴¹

The American Bible Society (ABS) and the United Bible Societies (UBS), with Evangelical as well as mainline Protestant contributors, have provided major funding and technical support for the revived Russian Bible Society. Effective Orthodox, Baptist and Pentecostal working relationships in this organisation over a number of years now have made this indigenous Orthodox–Evangelical collaboration perhaps the most significant interconfessional initiative in the former Soviet Union to date. The ABS, the UBS and the Russian Bible Society have been responsible for the publication of 6,459,835 Bibles and New Testaments in the Soviet Union and its successor states from 1987 to 1996.⁴²

Gospel Light, a California-based Evangelical publisher, is collaborating with the Russian Orthodox Ministry of Education in a potentially unprecedented venture. Gospel Light and the Moscow Patriarchate are jointly producing large quantities of graded Sunday school literature for use in Orthodox parishes. The intention is to produce materials acceptable to both Orthodox and Evangelicals.⁴³

Campus Crusade for Christ has made extensive, if not always successful, efforts to engage the Orthodox in the former Soviet Union. In 1992 Mission Volga, an evangelistic outreach projected as a joint Campus Crusade–Orthodox effort, highlighted the possibilities and the pitfalls of working together. The Moscow Patriarchate seriously considered endorsing the venture, but declined to do so at the last minute. Some Orthodox priests participated in the boat ministry anyway, while some other Orthodox protested against the outreach at several ports of call.⁴⁴

Navigators, InterVarsity and the latter's affiliate, International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, have made concerted efforts to study Orthodoxy, to develop meaningful relationships with Orthodox believers and to sponsor interconfessional theological dialogues. Dansk Europamission, Norwegian Mission to the East and Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries have sponsored rebroadcasts of radio sermons by Father Aleksandr Men', the Russian Orthodox priest martyred in 1990. Russian Ministries also helped underwrite an Orthodox/Protestant conference in 1994 on cults in Russia and funded a publication on the cults written by Orthodox writer Andrei Kurayev.⁴⁵

Today in Russia cordial Orthodox-Evangelical relationships do not come easily, and are the exception rather than the rule. But the exceptions can encourage us to hope and work for more fruitful cooperation. One Western ministry new to Russia has in just a few years established a remarkably productive relationship with one Russian Orthodox diocese: perhaps more so than the Moscow Patriarchate would find to its liking; hence the anonymity of the ministry in question. In this instance the respectful concern for Orthodox sensitivities and the resulting cordial interaction recently shared with this writer deserve to be commended and widely copied:

The Lord has helped us to develop good relations with Russian Orthodox Church authorities. We have had repeated consultations with members of the bishop's cabinet, meetings held with the bishop's blessing. These have resulted in good mutual understanding and offers of cooperation at some levels. For example, we provide flannelgraph materials and training of Orthodox priests to engage in child evangelism. The bishop has provided Orthodox priests as trainers to help orient our career and short-term missionaries in understanding what the Russian Orthodox Church stands for and is doing in Russia. Orthodox have also participated in a limited way in our youth programs, and have offered us some of their air time on the government radio station.

How has our small Evangelical ministry developed a good relationship with the Orthodox Church and the government? In a number of ways. Perhaps most importantly, we have always taken the initiative to meet with the Orthodox to show respect and appreciation for the good things they are doing and to express our interest in learning from them and being cooperative. Some, perhaps many, leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church are sceptical and hostile toward foreign, Protestant groups because of their fear of what we may be doing. That fear is sometimes validated by the insensitive activities of some groups, and the presence of cults which leads people away from biblical truth. Our philosophy has been that what we are actually doing would be reassuring to the Orthodox, compared to what they fear we might do if they had no direct knowledge of our activities. Therefore, we meet with them and communicate with them in person and in writing about our history, our doctrines, our current activities, and our proposed activities. We show them respect as our elder brothers in Russia by asking them for advice about Bible translations, cultural issues, and how to avoid activities which would be needlessly offensive. And we avoid proselytizing Russian Orthodox Christians, directing our ministries instead toward the vast majority of practical atheists. We do our best to stress our common ground, without compromising biblical imperatives. Secondly, every Christian ministry should make full legal registration a matter of high priority, both at the federal level with the Ministry of Justice in Moscow, and at the local levels as needed. This full legal compliance can open many doors, such as property ownership, visas, and partnerships with government agencies such as youth and education departments.⁴⁶

Conclusion

A Russian Orthodox theologian has written that

Russian society, exhausted by previous exertions and failures, finds itself in some sort of torpid state, apathy, spiritual stupor, despondency. The Russian state has yet to demonstrate signs of rejuvenation and strengthening which are so vital for it ... Russian citizenry, blinded by multiple mortal punishments and the extraordinary rise in crime and the general decline in manners, has steadily regressed. Russian literature has been overwhelmed by a powerful wave of pornography and sensation-mongering.⁴⁷

So wrote the theologian Sergei Bulgakov in 1909. That his words ring as true at the end of the twentieth century as at its beginning underscores not only the long-suffering nature of the Russian population but also the urgent need for a fresh approach to the country's multiple crises – political, economic, but, above all, moral and spiritual. In Russia all Christians of good will, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, native and foreign, need to focus not on each other, but on the true foe – the evil of corrosive, destructive egoism that divides not along any East–West faultline, but, as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has said, through every human heart.⁴⁸ In 1909, in his famous essay in *Vekhi (Signposts)*, Sergei Bulgakov wrote that ‘the root of evil lies in the egotism of every individual’. Consequently ‘only those renewed from within can implement the required political, economic, cultural, and religious renewals in Russia’.⁴⁹

Just as in 1909, so today, Russia's gravest troubles are fundamentally moral and spiritual. No society can endure indefinitely without a rule of law; but today in Russia few feel any moral compunction to obey the law, which is in any case contradictory and in flux. Nor can a society endure indefinitely amidst pervasive economic crime and a mafia stranglehold on the material lifeblood of the nation. General Nikolai Stoloyarov, former Gorbachev confidant, who tried but failed to reform the KGB, declared in 1992 that Russia had rejected the Ten Commandments and, as a result, the entire nation was reaping the dreadful consequences.⁵⁰ Writer Yuri Barabash advanced the same argument in 1989 in defending the long-suppressed religious ideas of Nikolai Gogol':

It seems that, finally, bit by bit, and with a near fatal time-lag, we are beginning to grasp the point: culture and religion, morality and Christianity, creation and faith are so indissolubly interconnected that the desecration of sacred things, the violation of the Ten Commandments, and the cynical ridicule thereof, once impressed upon us as normal, in fact bear witness to a terrible, yawning emptiness.⁵¹

Russia's Orthodox and Evangelicals can certainly agree that the solution to the nation's political and economic crises is moral, and, in turn, that the solution to the moral crisis is spiritual. At the same time, what a tragedy it will be if Orthodox and Evangelicals do not make common cause by making amends, as both confessions need to, for vilifying each other. Instead, both need to concentrate on the present moral collapse and its spiritual cure. Orthodox, for their part, need to recognise that religious pluralism is unavoidable in a free society, and that a renewal of state-enforced Orthodox privilege would only sap its spiritual vitality.⁵² Evangelical ministries, for their part, need to pay a great deal more attention to legitimate Russian sensitivities, through substantially improved missionary orientation and through a sober appreciation of their own cultural limitations. So much constructive work needs to be done in Russia by all charitably inclined Christians that there should be no time for debilitating 'mutual demonization', as Paul Mojzes puts it.⁵³ The solution is Christian charity, deference and humility. As Anita Deyneka has suggested, a Golden Rule needs to prevail among confessions, denominations and ministries.⁵⁴ Otherwise, while theological and ecclesiastical battles rage on the sidelines, a nation may be lost to some combination of chauvinism, racism, intolerance, xenophobia, militarism, greed, alcoholism, corruption and licence.

Notes and References

- ¹ The present study is an expansion and revision of Mark Elliott, 'East European missions, *perestroika*, and Orthodox–Evangelical tensions', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, no. 33, Winter 1996, pp. 9–20, including updated statistics and demographic data, expanded discussion of cooperative and independent-minded ministries, and extensive rethinking of the relationship between missions from abroad and indigenous Protestants and Orthodox.
- ² *ibid.*, p. 10.
- ³ Mark Elliott, 'Eastern Europe: responding to crisis in the household of faith', *Eternity*, no. 37, July/August 1986, p. 25. Mark Elliott (ed.), *The East European Missions Directory* (Institute for the Study of Christianity and Marxism, Wheaton, IL, 1989), includes 267 groups, 402 if branches are included, and excludes 44 low-profile organisations. Sharon Linzey *et al.*, *The East–West Christian Organizations Directory* (Berry Publishing, Evanston, IL, 1993), includes 691 groups. Paul Hansen, European Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, estimated 80 groups in 1979: see *Religious News Service*, 27

February 1979. Since 1993 the Institute for East–West Christian Studies has identified some 296 Western agencies not included among the 691 groups listed in the Linzey *Directory*, thus giving a total of 987 for 1997. The figure of 561 ministries from abroad working in the former Soviet Union is based on the following: 377 of the 691 groups in the 1993 *Directory* work there, plus 148 (approximately half of the 296 groups identified since 1993), plus 36 South Korean groups (9 church and 27 parachurch).

- ⁴ *Operation World* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1993). For a statistical table by country based on *Operation World*, see ‘Non-indigenous Protestant missionaries in former communist states of Eurasia’, *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 2, Winter 1994, p. 5.
- ⁵ *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 2, Spring 1995, p. 10; no. 4, Fall 1995, p. 3.
- ⁶ The total of 4400 Western missionaries in the former Soviet Union in 1995 is based on 3197 (from the 25 largest agencies) plus 1200 (from 300 agencies with an average of 4 each). The author wishes to thank Peter and Anita Deyneka of Russian Ministries for their help in arriving at this estimate.
- ⁷ The total of 5060 is based on 4400 in 1995 plus a one-year increase of 15 per cent (660).
- ⁸ The author wishes to thank graduate assistant Sharyl Corrado for her extensive survey work in autumn 1996 on Protestant missionaries in the former Soviet Union. The source for the number of Korean missionaries is an e-mail from David Lee, GM Torch Center, to Sharyl Corrado, 3 December 1996.
- ⁹ If the fifteen republics of the former Soviet Union constituted one nation today, the 5617 Protestant missionaries working there at present would constitute the largest Protestant mission contingent in a single nation worldwide. (No up-to-date breakdown by republics is available.) On the other hand, given a population of approximately 287 million, the Protestant missionary presence in the former Soviet Union, per capita, is less than that in the five countries with the largest Protestant missionary contingents: Brazil (3397 in a population of 146,200,000); Japan (3015 in a population of 124,760,000); Philippines (2958 in a population of 65,650,000); Kenya (2322 in a population of 29,300,000); and Papua New Guinea (2278 in a population of 3,850,000). See Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (ACMC, Wheaton, IL, 1993), pp. 644–49; Brian Hunter (ed.), *Statesman’s Yearbook* (132nd ed.) (Macmillan, New York, 1996). (Both the *East–West Church and Ministry Report* survey and Johnstone’s statistics used in the above comparison include short-term missionaries. However, the figures are not completely comparable because the total for the former Soviet Union includes short-termers serving 3–24 months, whereas Johnstone includes short-termers serving 12 months or more.)
- ¹⁰ Mark Elliott and Robert Richardson, ‘Growing Protestant diversity in the former Soviet Union’, in Uri Ra’anan, Keith Armes and Kate Martin (eds), *Russian Pluralism: Now Irreversible?* (St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1992), p. 204; they cite 21 denominations, but additional churches now work there. See Table 3.
- ¹¹ ‘Indigenous Christian missions in the former Soviet Union’, *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 2, Winter 1994, p. 6.
- ¹² Elliott and Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 198.
- ¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 198–200.
- ¹⁴ Mark Elliott, ‘New openness in USSR prompts massive Bible shipments to Soviet Christians in 1987–88: a statistical overview’, *News Network International*, 20 March 1989, pp. 24–31.
- ¹⁵ Elliott, ‘East European missions’, p. 11; letter from Paul Stawasz, American Bible Society, to Amy Staufer, Institute for East–West Christian Studies, 24 February 1997. On 28 February 1997 Dwight Gibson, World Evangelical Fellowship, reported eight evangelical alliances in the region: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.
- ¹⁶ ‘Categories of networking relationships’, 1996, Russian Ministries files.
- ¹⁷ Don Fairbairn’s unpublished paper *Partakers of the Divine Nature* is available for \$10 from the Institute for East–West Christian Studies, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL 60187; tel: 630-752-5917; fax: 630-752-5916; e-mail: Louise.L.Meyers@wheaton.edu.

Table 3. Protestant denominations in the former Soviet Union

Churches Present Since 1917 (Regardless of Official Status)

Anglican
Evangelical Christian–Baptist
Lutheran
Mennonite
Pentecostal
Seventh-day Adventist

Churches in Lands Annexed in the Second World War

Hungarian Reformed (Transcarpathia)
Methodist (now active outside Estonia)

Reemerging Churches

Armenian Evangelical and Baptist
Brethren
Church of Christ
Evangelical Christian
Molokane
Salvation Army
United Pentecostal

New Churches

Calvary Chapel
Christian and Missionary Alliance
Christian Life Centers
Christian Reformed
Church of God, Anderson
Church of God, Cleveland
Church of the Nazarene
Estonian Christian Church
Evangelical Covenant
Evangelical Free
Evangelical Presbyterian
Friends
Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod
New Apostolic
Pentecostal Holiness
Presbyterian Church of America
University Bible Fellowship (Korean)
Vineyard Christian Fellowship
Wesleyan
Word of Life

Independent, Nondenominational Churches (founded by Western and Indigenous Parachurch Missions)

Compiled by Mark Elliott, Robert Richardson and Sharyl Corrado

¹⁸ Mark Elliott, 'New opportunities, new demands in the old Red Empire', *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, no. 28, January 1992, pp. 36–7.

¹⁹ Juraj Kusneirik, 'Post-modern culture in post-communist countries', *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 2, Winter 1994, pp. 1–2; Annette J. Ford, *Mission Trends in Eastern Europe*, unpublished report, Christian and Missionary Alliance, February 1996.

- ²⁰ *Christianity Today*, no. 35, 16 September 1991, p. 61; Leonid Kishkovsky, 'The mission of the Russian Orthodox Church after communism', *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 1, Summer 1993, p. 2; Miroslav Volf, 'Fishing in the neighbor's pond: mission and proselytism in Eastern Europe', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, no. 20, January 1996, p. 28.
- ²¹ Evangelical Missionary Alliance, *Working in Central and Eastern Europe, Guidelines for Christians* (EMA, London, 1994), p. 3.
- ²² Mark Elliott, 'For Christian understanding, ignorance is not bliss', *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 1, Summer 1993, p. 5. For a discussion of Slavic Evangelical and Orthodox common ground see Mark Elliott, 'Eastern Orthodox and Slavic Evangelicals: what sets them both apart from Western Evangelicals', *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 3, Fall 1995, p. 16.
- ²³ Don Fairbairn, 'Eastern Orthodoxy: five Protestant perspectives', *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 3, Spring 1995, pp. 6–7.
- ²⁴ Mark Elliott, 'Response' to Bradley Nassif, 'Evangelical missions in Eastern Orthodox lands', *Trinity Forum*, Winter 1996, p. 5; Fairbairn, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
- ²⁵ Eugene Grosman, *A Contribution to Protestant–Orthodox Dialogue in Russia*, unpublished paper, Wheaton College Graduate School, Fall 1986, pp. 7 and 9.
- ²⁶ Elliott and Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 205.
- ²⁷ Susan Goodrich Lehmann, *Religious Revival in Russia: Significant or Superficial*, paper presented at the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, Washington DC, 21 October 1996, Fig 6. An earlier 1992 survey found a comparable 69 per cent of Russian men and 46 per cent of Russian women who did not identify themselves as believers. Mark Rhodes, 'Religious believers in Russia', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report*, no. 1, 3 April 1992, p. 61. In contrast, in the post-Second World War era perhaps as few as 10 to 15 per cent of the population was religious. William Fletcher, *Soviet Believers* (Regents Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 1981), p. 67.
- ²⁸ 'Dramatic increase in Russians claiming religion', *Religion Watch*, 3 January 1997, based on a poll by the All-Russia Public Opinion Research Centre.
- ²⁹ Lehmann, *op. cit.*, Fig. 1 and Table 4. Among the 50 per cent of respondents who identified themselves as believers, 83 per cent considered themselves to be Orthodox. *ibid.*, Fig. 4.
- ³⁰ Mark Rhodes, 'Russians' spiritual values', *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 1, Fall 1993, p. 13.
- ³¹ 'Disparity between faith and practice in Russia', *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 4, Spring 1996, p. 14. See also Paul Mojzes, 'Ecumenism, evangelism, and religious liberty', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, no. 33, Winter 1996, p. 6. On territorialism and the equation of national and religious identity, see Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., 'Mission and the issue of proselytism', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, no. 20, January 1996, pp. 3–4; Volf, *op. cit.*, p. 26; and Harold J. Berman, 'Religious rights in Russia at a time of tumultuous transition: a historical theory', in Johan D. van der Vyver and John Witte, Jr. (eds), *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective: Legal Perspectives* (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1996), pp. 301–2.
- ³² Martin Marty and Frederick Greenspahn (eds), *Pushing the Faith: Proselytism and Civility in a Pluralistic World* (Crossroad, New York, 1988), p. 158.
- ³³ Kent Hill and Mark Elliott, 'Are Evangelicals interlopers?', *East–West Church and Ministry Report*, no. 1, Summer 1993, p. 4; W. Cole Durham, Jr., 'Perspectives on religious liberty: a comparative framework', in van der Vyver and Witte (eds), *op. cit.*, p.16.
- ³⁴ Marty and Greenspahn, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
- ³⁵ Hill and Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- ³⁶ Matthew L. Miller, *The Russian Ministry of the YMCA: 1899–1939*, unpublished M.A. thesis, Wheaton College Graduate School, 1994.
- ³⁷ Bradley Nassif, 'Evangelical missions in Eastern Orthodox lands', *Trinity Forum*, Winter

- 1996, pp. 2–4.
- ³⁸ ‘Churches talk in Minsk’, *Christian Century*, no. 113, 23 October 1996, pp. 1002–3.
- ³⁹ Based on comments at a meeting of Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe, 17–18 November 1994, Chicago, IL, and on Mojzes, *op. cit.*, pp. 4–5. For a survey of Orthodox-mainline Protestant contacts see Mark Elliott, ‘How the churches have seen their roles in the USSR’, *Pulse*, no. 22, 9 January 1987, pp. 2–5, based on a longer unpublished paper, *East–West Christian Contacts*, 1986.
- ⁴⁰ Jenny Robertson, *Be Our Voice: the Story of Michael Bourdeaux and Keston College* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1984). Aid to Russian Christians, a Christian humanitarian agency founded by former Keston staff member Jane Ellis, has focused on assistance to the Russian Orthodox since 1973.
- ⁴¹ Elliott, ‘New openness in USSR ...’, pp. 28–31.
- ⁴² Statistics provided by Anita Deyneka based on an interview with Doris Fisher, American Bible Society, 26 November 1996, Russian Ministries file.
- ⁴³ William T. Greig, Jr., chairman of Glint International, to Mark Elliott, 17 February 1997, and supporting documents.
- ⁴⁴ R. Vito Nicaastro, Jr., ‘Mission Volga: a case study in the tensions between evangelizing and proselytizing’, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, no. 31, Summer–Fall 1994, pp. 223–43; ‘Witnessing on the Volga’, *Christianity Today*, no. 23, 16 October 1992, p. 77.
- ⁴⁵ Information based on conversations with James Stamoolis, Wheaton College Graduate School, and Anita Deyneka, Russian Ministries, 25–26 February 1997. The book on cults is *Soblazn’ neoyazychestva* (MNPP ‘Bukva’, Moscow, 1994).
- ⁴⁶ Letter to Mark Elliott, 7 January 1997.
- ⁴⁷ Peter Sawczak, ‘Reconstruction, deconstruction and the restoration of literature in Russia’, in Amin Saikal and William Maley (eds), *Russia in Search of Its Future* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995), p. 185.
- ⁴⁸ Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, vol. 1 (Harper & Row, New York, 1973), p. 168.
- ⁴⁹ Paraphrase of Bulgakov in William van den Bercken, *Christian Thinking and the End of Communism in Russia* (Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, Utrecht–Leiden, 1993), pp. 24–25.
- ⁵⁰ Presentation at Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL, 2 October 1992. See also Philip Yancey, *Praying with the KGB* (Multnomah, Portland, OR, 1992), p. 33.
- ⁵¹ ‘Nash russky Paskal’, *Nauka i religiya*, no. 3, 1989, pp. 12–14, quoted in van den Bercken, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
- ⁵² Elliott and Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–214. Growing religious diversity in Russia would appear to be a function of the collapse of rigid Soviet ideological controls, of the resulting dramatic increase in Christian and cult activity from abroad, and of a resurgence of indigenous pagan, pseudoreligious and occult influences. In Russia today one finds an inextricable mixture of native and foreign influences in the surge of interest in ‘the supernatural, the fantastic, the mystical and the esoteric’. Valentina G. Brougher, ‘The occult in Russian literature of the 1990s’, *Russian Review*, no. 56, January 1997, p. 124.
- ⁵³ Mojzes, ‘Ecumenism ...’, p. 8. See also Berman, *op. cit.*, p. 304.
- ⁵⁴ See guidelines section of Anita Deyneka, ‘Evangelical foreign missionaries in Russia’, forthcoming in *Religion in Eastern Europe*.