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EDUCATORS FOR MISSION AND THE WESTERN MISSIONARIES

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There have been four major movements of mission expansion in Christian history. During the first several centuries Christianity spread almost unobtrusively around the Mediterranean, and there are indicators of Christian witness into Arabia and Persia. By 311, the start of Christendom following Emperor Constantine's conversion, sociologist Rodney Stark has claimed that there were around 4 million Christians. Thereafter one plausible explanation for the 10 fold increase during the next century was the phenomenon of geometric progression.¹ As a member of the classic free church tradition that has emphasized the Constantinian fall of the Church thesis, I want to establish at the outset the problem of historical perspective that the free church traditions as a whole now struggle with. That is, how do we think and teach responsibly about mission history for the sake of the Kingdom, when those four major movements in Christian history have been so easily dismissed as occurring during the Constantinian era?

In broad paradigmatic terms, the major missionary movements were the following: 1) Mediterranean world plus by 500 the Christianization of Arabia, Armenia, Georgia, India and parts of Persia, largely from mission centers in Antioch and Edessa; 2) a two pronged expansion into northeast Europe and northwest Europe resulting in the Slavicization and Germanization of Christianity, and a string of Christian communities along the silk road to China guided out of mission centers in Constantinople, Rome and several Persian synods; 3) mission to the new world (the Americas) and along the coastlands of Africa and southern Asia, mostly a Roman Catholic movement from the Vatican and new missionary orders; 4) a non-territorially focused but global expansion through the modern missionary movement from 1740-1975. Since the latter phase involved Western Protestants & Catholics and Eastern Christians, to the degree that there was a mission center, we have learned to think of a series of World congresses and synods for giving broad direction to the movement.

¹Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Major Stages of Contextualization of Christianity²

World in View	Time Period	Where	Context	Mission Center
Mediterranean Plus	Ancient Christianity till 500	E. Roman Empire trade routes, Beyond empire - Georgia, Armenia, Persia, Arabia, India	popular Greek and Semitic languages, vernacular	Antioch & Edessa
Europe & Asia	7-10th century	NorthWest Europe NorthEast Europe SilkRoad to China	Germanization Slavicization Persia, Kyrgyzstan, China	Rome Constantinople Synods in Persia
New World & African & E. Asian coastlands	Roman Catholic 1400-1750	Americas India-China E. Europe & Middle East	Patronato Jesuit adaptation Proselytism	Spain/Portugal Jesuit Order Vatican
Non-territorial Global	Modern Mission Movement 1740-1975	Global	Enculturation	World Congresses & Synods

Most missiology has tended to concentrate on the modern missionary movement, hence most of us are quite able to divide its developments into chronological phases, into spheres of influence including the territory agreements even free church Protestant missions entered into. So now we are attempting to think about global mission through new templates, such as mapping predominantly Muslim regions of the world - that is, the 10-40 Window - as unreached territories, and viewing the former Communist world as unreached for mission.

This is hardly the audience that needs an argument showing the limitations of fixating

²Walter Sawatsky, "From Mono-linear Paradigm Shifts to Multi-linear Transformations", *Mission Focus: Annual Review*, Vol. 11 (2003) Supplement, 212-224. Author's chart and text discussing and going "beyond" Bosch.

on the modern western mission movement, but we must recognize as we proceed, how much the literature within which we are finding our way, is still framed by an Evangelical Protestant way of ignoring much of Christian history as Spirit-less. Yet in the region of Eastern Europe and the CIS, one cannot speak of context, without reference to Islam, Eastern Christianity, and Marxism, plus many of the presuppositions of postmodernity I encounter constantly in North American mission discourse simply do not apply.

Nor is this the moment to spell out in more detail those global ways of perceiving mission and mission education, but my brief references are intended to indicate where I am coming from. Elsewhere I have attempted over the years to identify what is different if the missiologist has incorporated a “second world” perspective into the usual 1st versus 3rd world contrast.³ Instead I need to limit myself to assessing what has happened within the CIS and Eastern Europe generally since 1989. Not only will I tend to focus mostly on developments in Russia and Ukraine, with references to other countries buried in footnotes, but even such a limited assessment is daunting. I thought I was watching developments closely, but there is so much I do not know or did not notice. So my approach will be to refer to three periods of stock taking (with some publications to cite) as a way to make sense of the current moment. They are 1) the planning and setting up of theological education in the early 1990s, 2) the flurry of articles reporting on the theological schools (1993-94), and 3) a new round of articles 1999-2000 where deeper analysis, attention to ways of shaping a nation’s schools from primary to university for the sake of Christianization, had expanded our capacity to compare. I offer as an appendix a chronological listing of articles that appeared in the journal I edit, *Religion in Eastern Europe*,⁴ to illustrate such patterns and how similar they were for the various confessions, key articles from other journals will be referred to in what follows.

1. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR MISSION - A SHAKY HISTORY

When we consider the predominant image we have of Jesus as teacher mentoring a small group of followers over a three-year period, it becomes particularly striking that theological education has consistently been the weakest link in Christian history. Initial references to church schools give us little more than a sense of scholars reading scripture, including the writings that became the New Testament, and soon also the commentaries, major sermons or writings of those we now call the Church Fathers. The process of mission training that we associate with the school in Edessa that directed outreach into Asia,⁵ was similar to the advice which Pope Alexander of Rome and Patriarch Fotii of Constantinople

³For example, Walter Sawatsky, “Thoughts on God’s Mission Within CIS in the Future”, *Transformation*, June 2004.

⁴Posted at www.ree.georgefox.edu.

⁵See the more globally balanced Dale Irvin & Scott Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement. Vol. 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.2001, vol. 2 forthcoming.

sent to their missionaries. These included basic decisions about approaches, such as a prescribed Roman liturgy and doctrine taught in Latin, or a Byzantine emphasis on translating the central Scriptures into the vernacular and the training of indigenous leaders. Both the standardized worship and doctrine approach, and the flexible adaptation to culture approach had, and have, retained strengths and weaknesses.

The most striking weakness for either approach became obvious as Christianity was extended across vast territories, making continuous communication difficult. Striking to a modern Protestant was the emergence of a chain of monastic communities dedicated to the preservation and study of Scripture, to worship, to service teaching and witness in the community. On one hand, Eastern and Oriental Christian monasticism with its peripatetic monks facilitated the spreading of the Gospel. On the other hand, a stricter organization of Western monasticism was integrated into the emergent Roman centralized church structure, was by the seventh century more able to assure common practice across vast distances. Had these monasteries of both types not recorded their work, our knowledge of Christianity and mission history would be greatly impoverished. We might note how much our understanding of the spread of Christianity in the first 500 years within the Russian lands was enhanced through Johannes Reimer's book on the missionary monks.⁶

Two watershed moments relevant to us here are the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 and the West European Reformation beginning in 1517. These marked a structural breakdown for Eastern Christianity following which its theological leadership disappeared, until theological schools in Russia finally emerged in the 19th century. The Western reformation was due to a series of inadequacies in Christian practice, especially north of the Alps. When the Catholic Church took action at the Council of Trent, a key theme thereafter was a stronger emphasis on clergy education, on teaching of laity [particularly in France and Italy] and also the organization of new monastic orders that became known for their missionary and teaching emphases. The Protestants found themselves struggling much longer to survive as separate confessional entities. All initially placed a strong emphasis on the sermon and teaching the word, and where possible clergy studied in the theology departments of universities. Generally speaking however, it was with the rise of Pietism and Revivalism that Protestant church bodies began establishing specialized schools for clergy. Specialized mission departments in such schools are of much more recent vintage. In America for example, it was only in the 1970s that the now prominent schools on mission with special degree programs were started. Even today, integrating mission education with seminary education remains a point of tension.

Even though the 19th century marked the emergence of a serious organization of seminaries and higher theological academies within Russian orthodoxy – to which other Orthodox churches looked for assistance – nevertheless expectations out ran the capacity of

⁶Иоханнес Раймер, *Миссионерская деятельность древнерусского монашества*. Lage: Logos Verlag, 1996.

the church to train the clergy. Hence the evangelical movement emerged from the new access to the Bible in the vernacular, caused thinking believers to notice the inadequacy of local priests or the absence of a missionary vision.⁷ During the half-century before the Russian Revolution new evangelical congregations began organizing into unions in order to increase their capacity for systematic evangelism and missionary work and to train workers for the task. As it turned out, the evangelicals, largely of indigenous origin, obtained assistance for theological study and the reading of literature from West European missionaries.

II. AN INTERLOCKING DIMENSION – POST SOVIET URGENCY AND SOVIET SUPPRESSION OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

In contrast to most countries in Eastern Europe, theological education in the Soviet Union was nearly eclipsed between 1929 and 1989. For Russian orthodoxy this meant not only the end of a thriving system of seminaries and theological academies from which over 80% of the clergy serving around 1900 had graduated, it also meant that the debate over the approaches and purposes of theological education remained unresolved. In 1912 for example, of 29 faculty members at Moscow Theological Academy, 20 were laymen and in St. Petersburg 27 of the 33 were lay theologians.⁸ That is, these were lay theologians functioning officially within a Russian Orthodox Church structure, unlike such well-known spokespersons for Orthodox theology, Soloviev and Khomiakov. Chris Repp's article on N.N. Glubokovsky, who taught at the Moscow Academy from 1891 to 1918, served to illustrate an argument in favor of teaching priests classic dogmatic theology in their seminaries, but fostering theological study in universities that would be free and independent. If theological studies could be free from church bureaucratic control, such studies were more likely to foster the development of a modern theological tradition which Russian Orthodoxy still lacked, in Glubokovsky's opinion. In essence, lay theologians recognized by the church but not controlled by hierarchy were the promise for a Christian faith witness that was wrestling seriously with the issues of the day.

After spending extended periods teaching in Russian Orthodox schools over a half-dozen years, Dimitry Pospelovsky, recognized Canadian historian of Russian Orthodoxy, began his "impressions" of theological education in that church with the following sober

⁷One recent scholar beginning to contribute is Catherine Wanner, "Missionaries of Faith and Culture: Evangelical Encounters in Ukraine," *Slavic Review*, 63, 3 (Winter 2004) 732-755. Cf. Catherine Wanner, "Advocating new Moralities: Conversion to Evangelicalism in Ukraine," *Religion, State & Society*, 31, 3 (September 2003) 273-288; see also recent scholarship by Heather Coleman and a new book on evangelical beginnings, relying largely on south Ukrainian sources: Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation. Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004..

⁸Arther C. Repp, "N. N. Glubokovsky: Lay Theologian and Educator," *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 27, 1 (1999), p.83.

sentence: “The Russian Orthodox Church has failed to find in itself the leading force to lead Russian society morally or spiritually, as was hoped by both believers and nonbelievers when the collapse of the Soviet state had become obvious.”⁹ There was no longer the Babylonian captivity of the Holy Synod under the thumb of the tsarist Procurator-general, instead “there prevails an arbitrary episcopal despotism in the contemporary Russian Orthodox Church.”¹⁰ As Pospelovsky saw it, the Russian Orthodox Church had called for the establishment of ecclesiastical courts at its 1917 Sobor, and had adopted that same statute at its 1990 Sobor, without putting such an administrative tool for adjudicating disputes into effect. As a result, even though by 1993 there were approximately 2400 seminarians, 250 academy students, 800 students in two-year programs plus several thousand correspondent students,¹¹ the intake of students in the schools under direct church control started to decline thereafter. There were other schools that sprang up after 1988 whose orientation was reformist and whose ideas fit the notion of influencing Russian society theologically who drew a total of approximately 1550 students, plus Fr. Kochetkov’s Higher Orthodox Christian School for laity with hundreds of students. None of the latter however, so Pospelovsky, “had permanent quarters... and none has an impressive library.”¹² Modernizing the seminaries and academies, from curriculum to teacher-student relationships, seemed unenforceable, and the Patriarch delayed ordaining graduates of the newer schools for fear of forcing a split between two polarities in the church.

The point to make here is that Russian Orthodoxy had once come to value an educated clergy and theological academies whose professors, lay and clergy, participated in theological discourse beyond their borders. The war on religion ended the church’s capacity for broad, informed leadership, and it steadily slipped to a level of clergy poorly educated but deeply pious, some survivors of the Gulag, and a small number of graduates from the three seminaries and two academies that were able to function in the postwar years. The persistent warning during the 1980s was the steady attrition of available clergy, insufficient intake permitted even for correspondence training, so that parishes closed for lack of staffing. The sudden expansion of training could not turn matters around quickly, unless there was a concerted focus on theological education. Further, a devaluing of theological study in favor of monastic asceticism had set in.¹³ Orthodox leaders of 1990 were of quite different minds about what

⁹Dimitry Pospelovsky, “Impressions of the Contemporary Russian Orthodox Church: Its Problems and Its Theological Education,” *Religion, State & Society*, 23, 3 (1995) p. 249.

¹⁰Ibid. p. 252.

¹¹Walter Sawatsky, “Visions in Conflict: Starting Anew Through the Prism of Leadership Training,” in Niels C. Nielsen, jr. ed. *Christianity After Communism. Social, Political, and Cultural Struggle in Russia*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, p. 125.

¹²Pospelovsky, p. 253.

¹³For trenchant commentary on this anti-intellectual spirit, see Bishop Hilarion (Alfasyev), “The Problems Facing Orthodox Theological Education in Russia”, *Religion in Eastern Europe*, (February 1999), 23-24.

theological course to pursue.

The contrast for evangelical Protestants is striking, but they too found themselves caught in opposing readings of the Soviet experience. During the relative freedom of 1917-1929, Soviet evangelicals had managed to found a number of Bible schools, whose impact on evangelism and mission was direct. But none lasted more than four years. Then came near total collapse of church life in the decade before the Great War, a slow recovery thereafter under controlled conditions, and finally a limited resumption of theological education by extension in the 1970s. When Khrushchevian policies of renewed restrictions on church life began, there was a split within the Evangelical Christians-Baptist (ECB) community (with parallels in Pentecostal and Adventist circles). That ECB split revolved around the issue of educating for mission versus nurture of believers for survival. What the split away Reform Baptist movement, eventually known as Council of Church of ECB, emphasized and became known for, was an emphasis on Christian education for children and youth, on publishing literature of a missionary spirit, and reaching out to a broad spectrum of Christians from abroad for moral support and assistance.

By 1989 however, it had become generally known that the maligned registered union of ECBs was resilient enough to reform itself, and to keep pushing the state-imposed limits on theological education and the publication of literature. In places there was de facto mission through new conversions, or through support of Reform Baptist, later more the Independent Baptist initiatives. In the first spurt of starting theological schools, one could generalize to say that the Independents started a variety of free-standing Bible institutes, colleges and universities, whereas the Euro-Asiatic Union of ECB Unions launched such schools under denominational controls. A bit odd was the fact that the remnant still supporting the CCECB has been cautious about starting schools, preferring to continue patterns of teaching learned under the Soviets, and now more distrustful, not only of the less radical “Baptists”, but of most of the foreign missions wanting to help.

So there were competing visions for what form of theological education was needed.¹⁴ The variety of ideas included special mission training institutes, reminiscent of American mission institutes and Bible schools of a century earlier, differing views about whether to foster denominationally controlled training of pastors, or to create liberal arts colleges or universities where Christian faith was welcomed and practiced. It was precisely here that the outside influence factor of missionaries and denominational partners added to the complexity. Before sketching out the main lines of development we need to recall that the known models of theological education for Soviet and for East European evangelicals were adopted from abroad. The earliest Bible school curricula were influenced by the American Bible school movement, and by the differences in forms of schools possible for free church Protestants in Britain and Germany. With the rise of seminaries in Hamburg and Britain, and the much

¹⁴Developed more extensively in Sawatsky, “Visions in Conflict...”.

stronger Baptist seminaries in America, that model of training became the highest goal. When in the late sixties there was a global shift, especially in mission settings, to Theological Education by Extension (TEE), soon it was applied to East Europe and the Soviet Union. A number of the best known schools today - Donetsk, SPB Christian University, Odessa Baptist Seminary - could begin their story with TEE classes, initiated through Logos Mission or the BEE program.

3. SO MANY MODELS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Let me highlight the main models by comparing the categories of schools identified by Peter Penner in 1997 with those described by Gerd Stricker, writing soon after about Lutheran models of theological education in the CIS.¹⁵ Stricker began by describing a type of TEE program, already functioning by 1989, where the leading bishop would meet with church leaders (there were few ordained pastors according to classic Lutheran expectations) for intensive teaching of basic doctrine and church practice over the course of a week, meeting perhaps four times a year. Then in 1994 the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia (ELCROS) obtained a property in the village of Novosaratovka outside St. Petersburg, and set about creating a seminary. This seminary had space for 30 students, offered a three year course plus a further year of supervised experience (Vicariat) before ordination as pastor. The Finno-Ugaritic Lutherans, on the other hand, launched a “training center” not far away in Kellto, intended to train preachers, deacons, musicians, catechists (or Christian education) and social service workers. To add to the mix, Stricker drew attention to the way much of the teaching was done by visiting professors from Germany, Finland and USA. So some of the students began following an MDiv program with eventual accreditation from Missouri Synod schools in America, with a conservative theological orientation, that the German Lutheran Church (EKD) was opposed to. Finally, Stricker ended his survey by quoting an active layperson from Kazakhstan, who saw no hope of formal theological education happening in his society that was becoming actively Muslim, but who wished that the teachers would come visit and fellow parishioners could sit at their feet and be taught, the way Jesus used to teach.

Surveying Evangelical schools in the CIS, Peter Penner highlighted the way Overseas Council International (OCI) began addressing theological education in Eastern Europe and the CIS in its strategic plan of 1992.¹⁶ Its 1993 survey, done through the Peter Deyneka mission, identified over 100 theological educational institutions, the majority of which were correspondence or TEE schools, or short seminars as noted above for the Lutherans, with only a few residential Bible schools. Penner went on to stylize the schools functioning by 1997 in

¹⁵Gerd Stricker, “The Problems of Theological Education: The Experience of Lutheran Institutions in the CIS”, *Religion in Eastern Europe*, XXI, 3 (June 2001), 1-19.

¹⁶Peter Penner, “The Enlarging Family: The Challenge of Theological Education in CIS”, *Mission Focus: Annual Review*, Vol. 5, 1997, 67-78.

two ways, in terms of how they emerged, and the variety of nomenclature they adopted. His six categories were 1) indigenous schools (mainly Baptist and Pentecostal) belonging to a union, but supported with teachers and finances from abroad; 2) Western schools, such as St. James Bible School in Kiev, trying to contextualize with emphasis on training for ministry, non-denominational, and “not taking into account the 1000 years of Orthodox history and beliefs...”;¹⁷ 3) Korean mission schools, at least ten in Russia alone by 1997, worthy of a separate category because of the strict control from Korea; 4) schools (usually 1 year curriculum) started by larger congregations for their own members and smaller churches nearby; 5) Correspondence courses in the TEE tradition; 6) liberal arts schools, colleges and universities. It was essentially this last category where the problem of nomenclature was becoming acute. Four terms were in use - institute, Bible School or Bible College, seminary, and academy - but evoked different understandings, especially between CIS citizens who thought of Soviet meanings, and western, especially American missionaries for whom those names evoked a specific character from the American context. That ambiguity of meaning was necessary, for the sake of fitting in to Russian and Ukrainian educational structures, and for the sake of gaining recognition and support from abroad.

By now, as someone once remarked, school leaders no longer need to claim theirs is the highest quality of school around in all aspects, but rather they seek to clarify the specific mission of their institution and seek to apply a continual review process to how they are pursuing the mission. Several schools soon found that their mission of leadership training, meaning primarily pastors and church planters, could not function independently of an existing denominational body. Thus the structure and mission of the school was re-configured for the sake of a specific church polity. That affected how students were selected and financed, where the practicums were organized, who were the primary faculty, and what form of accountability the board needed to oversee. The Donetsk school went through several shifts as it was working out the degree to which they had been established for the sake of church planting and mission. Soon there were a community of congregations in far away regions, that had become the equivalent of a distinct evangelical denomination - the Light of the Gospel Mission churches, if you will. The agenda of one year mission training expanded to include pastoral education, then to liberal arts until that vision was in conflict with the Ukraine’s stress on secular university education, limiting church schools to religious studies only.

Similarly other institutions settled into a focus as training center for special ministries, or to provide ongoing spiritual nurture and formation, to offer a series of conferences and dialogues to foster theological reflection. In each there was a creative variety of approach.

Were I to present these models of theological education in North or South America, in Africa or Asia, each one would be a known category. That is one aspect of the outside influence factor, the globalization of methodologies of theological education.

¹⁷Ibid, p. 70.

4. THE EXPERIMENTAL ERA IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

A number of the published papers assessing theological education, that appeared between 1999 and 2001, were part of broad consultations.¹⁸ It was becoming clear that it was time to move past the initial experimental era in order to stabilize programs. Moving past the experimenting was in essence an attempt to take the best from recent Euro-Asian experience, from the rethinking about theological education happening globally, and to settle on an appropriately contextualized program. Penner among others began speaking about an East European education model. I remarked in an editorial when introducing a major review by OCI staff member Jason Ferenczi, that “almost all major issues for churches seeking direction in society become factors in the debates about the future of theological schools.”¹⁹

In his wide-ranging and fact filled survey Jason Ferenczi spoke about a time of consolidation after the “proliferation of semi-viable training programs” of the first half of the decade.²⁰ Secondly denominational training networks were growing - his readers were familiar enough with the first half of the nineties as the time of fragmentation, impoverishment and near collapse of denominational structures. Third there were “emergent cooperative efforts” about which more will be said later.

On the other hand, the key difficulties for moving toward stability were “continued dependence on Western funding”, “need for curricular reform” and continuing needs in faculty, library and use of information technology. These Ferenczi then proceed to detail. One over arching need for which most programs could offer less than adequate resources, was “the need to develop leaders who can articulate a Christian worldview in the context of extremely pluralistic societies in a way that answers the deep spiritual questions of a highly educated population.”²¹ To some extent this was an indication that after a dozen years of evangelization and of free access by believers to higher education, they too were no longer locked into the lower working class milieu. At the same time the vision for such leaders reminds one of what Soviet society and East European communist societies had been turning to religion and the churches for in 1989, and to recall Pospelovsky’s sad commentary about the Russian

¹⁸Mark Elliott, “Recent Research on Evangelical theological Education in Post-Soviet Societies” *Religion in Eastern Europe*, XXI, 1 (1999) 30-52. This thorough article begins by examining two doctoral theses: Miriam L. Charter, “Theological Education for New Protestant Churches of Russia: Indigenous Judgments on the Appropriateness of Educational Methods and Styles”, PhD diss. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Evanston, IL, 1997; and David P. Bohn, “The Perspectives on theological Education Evident Among Evangelical Church Leaders in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Russia”, PhD diss. Trinity International University, Evanston IL, 1997. then goes on to discuss the many consultations, including a chart listing range of issues.

¹⁹Walter Sawatsky, “Editorial”, *Religion in Eastern Europe*, (February 1999) p.ii.

²⁰Jason E. Ferenczi, “Theological Education in the former Soviet Union: Some Recent Developments”, *Religion in Eastern Europe*, XXI, 6, (December 2001) 1-15, with corrections in Feb. 2002, p. 3-7.

²¹Ibid. p.1.

Orthodox Church having failed to lead.

Pospelovsky declared that “the church is vitally in need of a well-educated, balanced clergy.”²² Indeed, in his view, the more progressive schools headed by Kokchetkov and the Alexander Men Open University “are unique in training their graduates as teachers and missionaries.”²³ My impressions from an interview with the Rektor of the Higher Orthodox School in April 2003 was that to be missionary was central. She had come to see that authentic missionaries were those who had learned to share their faith naturally in their work places, able to integrate Christian faith with daily issues of life. This element was highlighted in a short factual survey by Wil van den Bercken, of Nijmegen University in the Netherlands that developed exchange programs. Van den Bercken claimed that “During the last decade an entirely new theological educational system has emerged in Russia, Belarus’ and Ukraine: theological education for laypeople.”²⁴ His survey of eleven schools was limited to Orthodox and Catholic or Greko-Catholic institutions, offering a highly factual amount of data for comparison. Evangelical Protestant links to some of the religious studies programs exist, but the approaches are illustrative of ways of expanding the theological role of lay persons, meaning those not ordained.

As a seminary professor in America, and regular reader of the ATS journal *Theological Education*, assessing the outside influence factor on the experiments requires recognizing how uncertain were the times in North America, but also recognizing that only some of the missionary educators to CIS and EE were familiar with the debates. These were the years of intense discussion within ATS, equally involving Catholic, mainline and free church Protestant schools in North America, on moving away from a clergy to a congregational paradigm, and influenced by a series of studies on ways of fostering global perspectives, including articles in which specialists proposed ways of reframing syllabi from a global perspective. There was much goodwill, but a globalized perspective in teaching still faced such obstacles as literature in English, faculty experience and competence, and a student body beginning to reflect the isolationist mindset of America after 2001.

More so in America than elsewhere, there remained the evangelical versus denominational/ecumenical problematic. A new initiative called Churches Coming Together promised new relationships between member churches of NCCC and churches rejecting such membership, but it still lacks enough forms of “coming together” to talk, for those churches beyond their chief executives to have much of an interest outside their denominational world. That denominational world included the recognition that fellowships or “community churches” or even mega-churches with satellites functioned like denominations. All of them

²²Pospelovsky, p. 252.

²³Ibid. p. 256.

²⁴Wil van den Bercken, “Theological Education for Laypeople in Russia, Belarus’ and Ukraine: a Survey of Orthodox and Catholic Institutions.” *Religion, State & Society*, 32, 3 (September 2004) 299-311.

were turning inward to meet internal issues and sustain their own program financially, not able to invest in foreign involvements, especially if such involvement would not become known under their flag. This last week, another initiative attempting to bring Evangelicals and Ecumenicals in North America together for a second Conference on Faith and Order was dissolved, due to lack of readiness by the church bodies from all sides to commit the needed time and money. So the decline in inter-church talk in America is hardly an example for the much more difficult inter-church agenda in CIS and in Eastern Europe.

5. CONTEXTUALIZING SCHOOLS WHEN CONTEXT WAS SO TRANSITORY

It is one thing to joke about missionaries who had imagined they were bringing Christ to a communist world where He was not known, who now needed to set about taking the Christian context and the nature of the mission context seriously. Much more difficult for the contextualizing task was the reality of an uncertain and changing terrain.

There were major political, socio-economic, nationalist and eventually religious implications of the post-Soviet transitions that we must at least mention. American journalism has stayed with the simplistic line about post-Communist transitions to democracy, without even noticing that all the communist governments, and most of the original opposition parties, advocated some form of social democracy, or of populism. Measuring democracies by whether there were elections said very little about the governed participating in their governance, something increasingly true in USA in spite of rhetoric from the top. If in 1990 it looked like multiple parties would discuss and reach compromises on national issues in their parliaments, such idealism about parties, about leaders to be trusted not to be corrupt evaporated in so many countries of EE and CIS. The middle class in Russia was destroyed through the unequal privatization process and stock market swindles. Most followed the Russian economic collapse, economic rebuilding thereafter has been most uneven. Baltic countries appeared to attain economic stability, linked in trade with the EU, Ukraine and Belarus are still battling over the wisdom of renewed economic ties to Russia, versus the EU, and the Central Asian countries after a time of tribal politics, generally ended up with dictatorships with financial contracts to America as allies in the latter's war on terrorism.

We cannot here detail the many ways in which religion was involved. Majority and minority groups within new state formations were understood in cultural terms, usually meaning that to be Orthodox, Uniate, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim was as much a political designation. New boundary limitations made Euro-Asiatic cooperation steadily more problematic. One might say that by 2005 the "Euro-Asiatic" sense of commonality that sustained the definition even of the EAAA may be slipping.

There were missionaries who came with great hopes but with misunderstandings. These then developed questions about what they thought they were trying to achieve, what they wanted to teach, and what mission methods would fit the context. In his essay length review of Glanzer's book on Co-mission, Donald Fairbairn presented a solid argument for

major aspects of contextual mission that most missionaries did not understand.²⁵ There was first of all the failure to take seriously and to respect Russian orthodoxy. Fairbairn pointed out that there was a traditional, nationalistic and fundamentalistic strand of Russian Orthodoxy versus a renaissance strand, the latter strand also dominant outside Russia. The Co-Missioners drew their conclusions too much from manifestations of the nationalist strand, and failed to understand and make common cause with the renaissance strand. Had they done so, they might have been better equipped to understand that their own understanding of Christian conversion was very dependent on what he called a “backward-looking” spirituality, where the authority of the individual personal experience of being born again was what mattered; the Orthodox in contrast had a “forward looking” spirituality, the new converts thought in terms of an ongoing journey toward God, much more attentive to the authority of God and the Church than that of personal experience. In my own experience, it was more frequent that an evangelical Christian, indigenous to the Orthodox world, knowing only too well the dark side of Orthodox practice, showed respect and understanding for a more corporate understanding of faith, than did many missionaries. The latter needed to think against the grain of their primary theological training and socialization.

Much more telling was Fairbairn’s observations about the depth of disrespect toward indigenous Protestants in Russia, by the Co-Missioners that Glanzer interviewed. Glanzer failed to develop this element, apparently lacking the capacity to grasp the significance of American evangelicals imagining they could create a counter evangelical culture not as “traditional, rigid and legalistic” as the Russian and Ukrainian Protestants, and expecting it to take root. No doubt the most fascinating section of Glanzer’s book was his analysis of the “legitimizing narratives” whereby at each stage the Co-Mission project moved in denial past their mistakes. This was rooted in that personalist mindset, whereby dramatic stories widely repeated made the claim of special divine intervention. Those who agreed that the ‘signs’ were indeed from the Holy Spirit rode a wave of enthusiasm, those who wondered were silenced by the suggestions that they lacked the eyes of faith. When we reflect on how much outside financial support for the theological schools relied and still relies on dramatic narratives, possibly such “legitimizing narratives”, it seems worth asking whether a foundation was being built on sand. Certainly in the American world of the new century, the “spin factor” has so pervaded all of life, that even Christian ministry must now be presented in Hollywood and Madison Avenue terms.

There are two more disquieting factors that must influence our consulting together about a truly contextualized eastern European theological education. By 1994 a pervasive depression about the direction of Russian and Ukrainian society had set in. A recent political

²⁵Donald Fairbairn, “Book Review: *The Quest for Russia’s Soul: Evangelicals and Moral Education in Post-Communist Russia*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2002.” *Religion in Eastern Europe*, XXIII, 5 (October 2003) 51-58.

comment by the editor of *The Nation* drew attention to pensioners, the Babushkas,²⁶ moving from passivity to angry protests against Putin's Russia undercutting still further their low pensions and benefits. This societal depression about the future, widespread across CIS, has been exasperated by depression about the church itself. What do you do when they no longer respect the church?

Secondly is another of those outside influence factors. Especially after 9/11, 2001 it became evident that even our supporters abroad are letting us down. Funding by sponsors for evangelical schools became more difficult. This must really be seen in the context of the widespread crisis in mission funding, especially in North America. The January 2005 issue of *International Bulletin of Mission Research* included an analysis of the statistical decline in long term workers, and the massive expansion of short term workers, well beyond the capacity of long term missionaries and host churches to utilize well. Patterns of giving were already shifting in the late 1980s to supporting local mission and service initiatives. So how do we teach mission, how do we teach mission in hope, how do we teach mission as an international church partnership, given that level of fragility?

6. FACING THE MISSIONAL CHURCH PROBLEMATIC

By 2000, partly stimulated by a renewed attention to *Missio Dei* missiology, the language and key concepts of the Gospel and Culture Network - mostly an Anglo-American way of articulating and framing the post-Christendom context - had made "missional church" trendy.²⁷ Many were speaking of the church as a form of alternative society. Such thinking was a critique of doing mission through programs, especially through single issue parachurch approaches.

The renewed emphasis on the Gospel for all of life called for the permeation of the missionary spirit, but it also tried to foster keeping distinctions in mind. If everything is mission, then nothing is mission was one rejoinder. When applied to mission education, the challenge was to identify the tools whereby one could regularly assess the ways in which missional theology permeated the curriculum and the ethos of the school, what is known as the implicit teaching of mission. And how to connect courses and degrees explicitly focusing on mission, in order still to assess whether they were addressing a changing world very well.²⁸

The articles by Orthodox rectors Kochetkov and Bodrov that both argued for lay accountability and missionary parishes within Russian Orthodoxy, were part of several conferences on the role of the laity early in the new century, that were held to foster such awareness in Catholic and Orthodox circles. Given the present structure of the official Russian

²⁶Katrina vanden Heuvel, "Babushkas vs. Putin", *The Nation*, February 7, 2005, 4-5.

²⁷A series of books, starting with Darrell Guder, *Missional Church*, (Eerdmans, 1999).

²⁸For a short detailed application of the explicit-implicit teaching of mission to a curriculum, see Bernhard Ott, *Transformation* (2002).

Orthodox church - in many ways also true in Ukraine - its capacity to realize the wonderful ideas of the social doctrine articulated by the Bishops' Sobor in 2000 depends much more on a committed laity than on clergy. The laity are normally regarded as the enviable strength of the free churches - the widespread expectation when seeking to realize the priesthood of all believers, that each member is a minister.

Nevertheless, two themes that have emerged from the consultations I have been surveying here, remain particularly problematic for free church evangelicals. They have to do with a) Mutual Accountability in Mission, and b) Leadership in Church and Society. It has been so easy for free churches not to take seriously the mission of the entire church, because their protest origins had taught them to focus on the flaws of the big churches and claim a more purist praxis for their little flock. After several centuries of free church denominational existence, it is now quite abnormal to feel accountable for one's actions beyond the limits of one's own denomination. From there is has been no major step to settle for some variation on the legitimating narratives to which Fairbairn referred. That is, as long as there were events to be claimed as signs of Holy Spirit blessing, then the separatist missions were justified, and accountability was no longer so much mutual as merely personal. Tracing out the way in which that outside factor I have referred to regularly, namely the western missionary, implicitly taught mission fragmentation, rather than mutual accountability remains to be done. But for practicing and teaching mission in CIS and East Europe, what matters more is concerted effort, specifically also through such conferences as this one, to encourage indigenous leadership to strive for mutual accountability, even with the good missionary tradition in Orthodoxy and Catholicism, because that is the form of witness society in general will notice.

A finding of the American Theological Society (ATS) in 2002 drew attention to how little theological schools seemed to be preparing pastors for a leadership role in society. That study included checking with prominent citizens in communities to see if they had any idea what the seminary located in their town did, and whether it was beneficial to the community. This stimulated modest debate within seminaries, on how well faculty and administrators modeled good citizenship, how well local community to national issues were addressed in school community life. But the discussion was also problematic because of the way a deep polarization in America over "moral issues" and the churches' role in shaping society were to be pursued.

Societies in Eastern Europe are usually described as manifesting a stronger corporatism. One dynamic of the outside influence was the fact that evangelicals within Eastern Europe were indeed more sensitive to belonging to a nation - even if their emphasis was on international fraternity - but the increasing pre-dominance of a free church mentality in America, where individuation of faith, where the legitimating narrative of being "truly Christian" placed a premium on personal conversion experience, kept the western missionary in contradiction to thinking about *missio dei* in peoplehood terms.

7. CURRENT REALITIES FOR MISSION CONTRIBUTION IN LIGHT OF GLOBAL MISSION

Participants of this conference are most particularly aware of the positive results from forming a Euro-Asiatic Accrediting Association (EAAA). It has been a vehicle not only for developing standards for theological education, but through its journal, the Bibleiskaia Kafedra and theological conferences common concerns for finding the contextually appropriate Euro-Asiatic approach have been addressed. EAAA is also linked more globally via the Lausanne network, and the international group of evangelical accrediting bodies (ICETE). It is also worth acknowledging the return of denominational consulting, at least in modest ways, compared to the free for all search for sponsors to survive of a decade ago. A troubling new reality is the steady growth in difficulties for evangelical Christians, especially in the Asiatic part of Eurasia. That is making denominational life difficult, and threatening the viability of schools.

Another reality beginning to sink in more consciously, the the degree to which Christianity has moved south. The reality of church life in southern Christianity - Latin American, Asian and African - may well be closer to Eurasia, given that the latter is too easily ignored as appendage to old Europe (West). Exchanges between mission leaders from the south and the Eurasian world are apparently so little, that I have not yet encountered any articles on them. How is the south included in the curricula of Eurasian theological schools?

Returning to the mission agenda of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, what I have found little on so far are the following: addressing issues of post-Marxist secularism, the missional dimension in the search for civil society (and its relevance for Christianization visions), of the secondary role of evangelicals in Orthodox regions yet shaping the world beyond their sphere, of Christian unity as prerequisite for authentic mission, whose parameters of meaning and likelihood of progress are so small, and of the new life of Muslims and the rise of persecution once again.

Some missions are in a hurry, anticipating the second coming momentarily, so what matters in soul salvation as the essence of mission. Some missions are stressing whole gospel integration anticipate a testing of constancy, as do many indigenous leaders.

The sustained work of missions was dependent on longterm workers, on a calibre of worker capable of living deeply within two worlds - sending and receiving - and committed to mission reciprocity. There is a promising beginning of such western missionaries and of the trained "indigenous" colleagues for the partnerships in theological education necessary in a global setting. But the long term decline in career missionaries is the most specific point of worry when seeing the consequence of the crisis in belief in mission so evident in North America.

In the content of so much mission course work, case histories from the south with interpretive frames from North America predominate. Mission education in context will need something different than some such equivalent with East European case studies and North

American theory. The “something different” needs to include comparing 3rd and 2nd worlds, comparing oriental and eastern Christian mission historic experience and new shared experiences. When my school hosted a consultation of east Asian theologians attempting to utilize David Bosch’s *Transforming Mission* I was struck by the way in which that stimulated creativity. Bosch said so little about Asia, his historical paradigms are quite biased toward the Protestant west, and understandably so, but how were they to counter the claim that Christianity was a mere western religion, for those Asians who wanted to go west. But the Koreans had found Bosch helpful in getting them to move out of a quite simplistic fixation on going out to do evangelism with little reflection on goals and methods. Bosch had started them noticing the longer paradigms of history, so finding better paradigms beyond Bosch enabled them to notice the uniquely Asian. What must we change, so asked one Japanese theologian, if this time Christianity will last longer than the one or two generations of previous mission eras? Imagine Euroasians doing missiology beyond Bosch.

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