

## AN ORTHODOX VIEW ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS MISSION

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What constitutes an Orthodox view? Is it the view of an Orthodox person, or is it an official statement of the Orthodox Church today, or a voice from the treasury of the 2000 year tradition and heritage of the Church? Must an Orthodox view represent a confessional specificity?

What would be an Orthodox reaction to presentations on theological education by Dr. Andrew Kirk, David Schenk, and other presentations shaping my response, or to the book by David Bosch entitled *Transforming Mission*? They are very orthodox in the early Church sense of the word. Is it typical for Orthodox? Not really. But there are some Orthodox theologians who are agree with them, such as Archbishop Anastasios (of Albania).

We must think of Orthodoxy as a pluralistic tradition. There is a very broad spectrum of colours of spirituality including even fundamentalism. That is also true when we ask 'what is the Orthodox understanding of mission, its concept of mission, or to ask what is Orthodox missiology? Although I shall discuss Russian Orthodox understandings and positions of the past century in what follows, my views are those of a member of that church, working under its blessing but not speaking officially here.

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<sup>1</sup>The section "Theological Education in Russian Orthodoxy 1917-1943" was written by Alexander Bovkalo, vice-director of the library of the Theological Academy in St. Petersburg; as part of an earlier co-written historical section. We include the material here because of the archival data and citations, generally not known in English, and to grasp the long struggle for alternative forms of theological education when the academies and seminaries were forcibly closed.

### **Toward a New Understanding of Mission and Ecumenical Education**

To take the meanings of the word “mission”<sup>2</sup> from everyday usage, as a synonym for “vocation”, “calling” or “task”, may turn out to be the most proper way to describe the missionary perspective of education. The mission of the Church in Eastern & Central Europe is the vocation and the task of the Church in a contemporary post-communist society that for the time being has not yet reached stability. It is not for life, and not for school, not for the sake of professional and confessional interests, but for the sake of assisting both pastors and laymen in their self-realization as Church members to whom the Saviour commanded via the apostles to “make disciples of all the nations” (Mt 28, 18).

Contemporary missiology reminds us that mission is not for the Church, but the Church is for mission. We were sent to this world to witness to the Truth, and education is today one of the main forms of our witness. To find truly Christian (not only clerical) forms, approaches, programs and methods of education is in the first place a task of religious and theological education, but not only that. This search, this process of renewing education should also include as an integral part the ecumenical dimension.

It is unthinkable that under almost universally existing conditions of globalization, growing migration, confessional and religious heterogeneity of society one would neglect inter-confessional cooperation in the field of education. It is critical that the topics of tolerance and religious plurality should be introduced into educational programs. A pressing question is that of religion and conflict. The need for giving a Christian meaning to everything related to the issues of “healing” is felt more and more poignantly, the problems of HIV/AIDS being a priority. Introduction of all these subjects and elaboration of all these new ideas in Christian education is the mission of the Church. The very task of serving the cause of unity is the mission of the Church. And one of the most important objectives of ecumenical movement, viz. attainment of visible unity, should not be interpreted superficially as common praying and the like, but as inner Christian unification and integrity, as resourcefulness and eagerness to give common answers to the challenges of the present time. So ecumenical cooperation in education, in promotion of theological studies, in active Christian enlightening should by all means rank among the most important goals of the ecumenical movement, and education itself should be the real priority of the mission of the Church. We need to see education as a mission of the Church and what we need for education is not only missionary resources but also a missionary perspective in the strategy of renewing religious and theological education.

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. *American Heritage Dictionary*, 1. (n.) What one intends to do or achieve: purpose, aim, design, goal, intent, intention, meaning, plan, ambition, aspiration, objective, object, target, resolution, motive, scheme, project, proposal; 2. (n.) Something pursued for personal, satisfaction, vocation, calling, life's work, passion, pursuit; 3. (n.) A goal or purpose: objective, aim, aspiration, dream, intent, intention, design, end, target, destination, object.

In the church documents and speeches of the leading hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) over the past seven years, the Church's position in relation to mission work is fairly clear. In order to identify the main directions of the following discussion, it is first necessary to adopt the definitions provided by the Bishop's Councils of 1994 and 2000, "The Concept of Reviving the Russian Orthodox Church's Missionary Work" and the speeches of Most Holy Patriarch Alexii II and other hierarchs of our Church.

In "The Concept of Reviving the Russian Orthodox Church's Missionary Work"<sup>3</sup> it is stated that

Mission, or witness, is inherent in the nature of the Church and consists in proclaiming the Good News to the whole of creation (Mark 16.15)... Mission as apostleship has always been the primary duty of church members... mission consists in drawing closer to the world, enlightening and renewing it, injecting new content into an old way of life, accepting local cultures and those means of their expression which do not conflict with Christian faith and turning them into pathways to salvation.

The Concept formulates the principles and forms of Orthodox mission.

The Archiepiscopal Council of 1994 does not provide a strict definition of mission but clearly formulates its tasks and nature:

Missionary service is inseparably linked with the task of restoring the fullness of church life to the eparchies and parishes, the need to extend efforts in religious education, catechisation and evangelisation. The whole of parish life, especially the works of spiritual enlightenment of the pastors and the laity, and daily service, must be dedicated to missionary objectives. For this very reason, strong missionary effect is produced by the Church's social service, her care for poor and oppressed people, refugees, immigrants, the unemployed and the homeless. Orthodox mission must take account of the complexity of modern society, the need for special approaches to various professional and cultural communities, especially armed forces' personnel, workers, farmers, members of professional movements, various groups within the educated population, dispossessed victims of urbanisation and modern technological civilisation, members of at-risk groups, persons under investigation and prisoners. Particular effort must be directed at working with young people and at organising worship and religious discussions for children and teenagers.<sup>4</sup>

This document, which the ROC regards as authoritative and binding, provides a clear idea of what the Russian Orthodox Church's mission means. The problem is that in missiology today there are two conflicting approaches to mission work. Those who uphold the classical definition say that mission is "the spreading of Christian faith among non-believers and those who confess different faiths, and the sending of teachers and preachers (missionaries) to the corresponding regions for this purpose"; they

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<sup>3</sup> Ratified at a meeting of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) on 6 October 1995 (No. 4043).

<sup>4</sup> See *Orthodox Mission Today*, p. 8. Author's translation from Vladimir Fedorov, comp. *Pravoslavnaia missia sevodnia. [Orthodox Mission Today]* St. Petersburg: Izd. Apostol'skii gorod, 1999. Intended as textbook in missiology for Orthodox schools, many of the references to Meyendorff, Florinskii and official ROC statements are drawn from this book, hereafter referred to as *Orthodox Mission Today*.

are at variance with the broad understanding of mission.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes, they claim, these new definitions are so broad that they include practically any of the Church's activities, or any healthy manifestation of Christian life. Critics object that, under the broad approach, the definition of mission means nothing and is simply unnecessary. The broad understanding of mission has numerous opponents, who appeal for a return to the traditional concept.

A hundred years ago, mission was understood exclusively as evangelisation by all available means, as the preaching of the Gospel to all the peoples who had never heard it. However, already in the nineteenth century a concept of internal mission (now known as *diakonia* - service) was born in Germany. After World War II, such definitions of mission arose in the theology of mission (Johannes Hoekendijk) as "proclaiming, brotherly communion and service (*kerygma, koinonia, diakonia*)." This missiology dated back to the early chapters of Acts, which tell us that the apostles proclaimed the Gospel, founded communities and engaged in service. Under this definition of mission these three aspects are not means to an end but the end itself.

Later came the theology of liberation, which was based on Holy Scripture and which proceeded from tragic reality. Mission came to be understood as service for the achievement of greater social, economic and political justice. Later still, any benevolent initiative began to be called mission. Richard Niebuhr defined mission as "Everything done outside our four walls" and "Everything the church does for non-members". The Bishop of Winchester, J. Taylor, described the task of evangelisation as "seeking and finding in every activity an opportunity to help people through the grace of Christ." The adherents of the classical way in missiology find this interpretation of mission too broad.

So, according to the broad interpretation, the whole life of the Church is mission. "The Church is mission"<sup>6</sup> - this is what Catholic theologians also maintain.<sup>7</sup> When we speak of the Church's mission in Russia, or the mission of Christianity in the world, we are thinking primarily of the Church's task as a whole. We realise that salvation involves actively working with God, witnessing faith by deeds, ascetic struggle (which includes individual participation in social struggle); we are thinking of the transforming and creative role of Christianity in world history - in the history of every country, and we

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur F. Glasser and Donald A. McGavran, *Contemporary Theologies of Mission* (Baker Book House, 1983), cite the definition which they themselves follow, and describe the WCC's preferred definition as fundamentally false: "Carrying the Gospel across cultural boundaries to those who owe no allegiance to Jesus Christ, and encouraging them to accept Him as Lord and Savior and to become responsible members of His church, working, as the Holy Spirit leads, at both evangelism and justice, and at making God's will done on earth as it is done in heaven." p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Vsevolod Spiller, "Missionary Aims and the Russian Orthodox Church", *International Review of Mission*, April 1963, pp. 195-205.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to draw a parallel. The Catholic theologian Karl Rahner called missiology "the science of missionary self-realisation of the Church". *Grundprinzipien zur heutigen Mission der Kirche* (Foundations of the Church's mission today), pp. 49.

believe that it is our task, in the new millennium, to open a new chapter in that history. The negative aspects of globalisation demand not just a theoretical response but also a radical Christian one.

The chief claim of the adherents of the narrow definition of mission is, in effect, that the International Missionary Council became part of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961 and the nature of missionary work changed substantially thereafter. In order to demonstrate that not only evangelical missiologists criticised the WCC's stance in relation to mission work, I shall quote an Orthodox theologian:

“The ‘stormy sixties’ fundamentally altered the prevailing concepts of mission and the ecumenical movement. The idea of the existence of a ‘Christian world’ which sends out missionaries to convert the pagans was cast aside in favour of a new, generalised theology of mission which rightly assumed that, in today’s secularised world, the Church’s mission could not be restricted to any geographical or territorial confines. Christian mission was now identified with involvement in those historical processes that were considered ‘progressive’, i.e. which assisted the improvement of human life. Christians were being called to renounce their traditional focus on the Holy Scriptures and worship and to ‘tune into the world’. The ‘secular’ was defined as the source of continuous revelation, and the Church’s mission was to assist those efforts and ideologies that were struggling for ‘peace’ and ‘justice’. The main problem with this new, dominant interpretation of mission was that it practically excluded any notion of ‘peace’ and ‘justice’ except ‘secular’ ones; it followed all the preoccupations and Utopias of modern sociology and betrayed the very core of Christian Good News: eternal life, resurrection and the Kingdom of God, i.e. those realities that are not amenable to sociological or political definition. The culmination of the development of these concepts of mission was the 1966 Geneva conference, “Church and Society”, and the WCC’s Fourth Assembly, held in 1968 in Uppsala. Following this, militant secularism appeared to go into decline, and the ‘secular world’ itself (whatever that might mean) seemed to be more receptive to irrational Pentecostalism and emotional religious revivalism than to the dry Utopias of political activists.<sup>8</sup>

These criticisms by an Orthodox theologian do not mean that Orthodox believers are against the Church’s social service as such. Meyendorff continues:

Mission means more than just preaching the Gospel: it means service, i.e. witness by deed as well as word. This means that if the Church ceases to be missionary, if it limits itself to an introverted self-sustaining existence or, even worse, places ethnic, racial, political, social or geographic limitations upon the Good News of Christ, she ceases to be authentically ‘the Church of Christ’. Also, since Christ was “anointed to preach the good news to the poor” and “sent to proclaim release to the captives” and “to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4.18), it is clear that his Church must do the same.<sup>9</sup>

Criticism of the WCC’s position on missionary work by the traditionalists is nothing more than a condemnation of its strategy and of its wrong distribution of resources, which, the critics say, are spent

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<sup>8</sup> Meyendorff, see “Orthodox Mission Today”, pp.79-80.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, p.80.

on measures for social and economic improvement, and not on mission. They have even formulated the principles of the new missiology, which they criticise by labeling it “conciliar”:

1. *Mission is everything God is seeking to do in the world.*
2. *God is at work among all peoples, in all lands, bringing in His reign of fellowship, justice and peace.*
3. *God is at work among men and women of all religions.*
4. *Evangelism is that part of mission which is concerned with changing the evil structures of society so that the will of God for humankind may be done.*
5. *The Church is one Church everywhere and should help men and women transcend their sinful and selfish ethnic and personal hates, prejudices and pride.*
6. *Salvation is salvation today.*
7. *Conversion is turning from all that limits life, all that is contrary to God’s will for His people, to all that ennobles life.*
8. *The supreme task of the Church today is to liberate congregations and denominations from their egocentricity and mobilize them for new tasks in the world.*
9. *Horizontal relationships are much more important than vertical.*
10. *As regards evangelism and mission, the supreme authority in each country is the Church of that land.*

The critical attitude to the broad understanding of mission is close to the position held by many evangelical missionaries; unfortunately, it is not far removed from that of many Orthodox theologians. It was expressed, in particular, in a letter from participants of a regional meeting of the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in 1997 in Graz, i.e. not only Orthodox. The letter said that at Graz, as in other ecumenical meetings, horizontal theology had prevailed over the vertical type. I believe that it is this tension between the two approaches that needs to be removed today.

In my view, a certain misunderstanding has arisen, leading to conflict. The dispute between the adherents of the narrow versus the broad understanding of mission, and of vertical versus horizontal theology, is very similar to the old dispute about justification through faith versus deeds. It did not affect Orthodoxy because in the doctrines of synergy (man working together with God) and of worship, and in the Orthodox understanding of asceticism, these contradictions are all removed. The same may be said of social asceticism and the Christian’s participation in social and political life. If he or she participates in it for the sake of Christ and works to the glory of God and not for personal gain, this is, indisputably, ascent towards God. Strictly speaking, in dealing with this question we have come close to broaching the subject of what is Christian culture and whether it is possible. Culture includes science, technological development, the social and political systems, economy, the arts, the education of youth, the mass media, and so on. How can all these things be Christian?

### **Christian Culture as Central to Missiology**

For me, Christian culture is the central theme of Christian missiology, central to the debate on mission work, and, of course, for Orthodox missiology. The Bishop’s Council of 1994 proclaimed:

We must also construct the kind of synthesis of unified Christian culture that would be a creative representation of the eternal and unchanging truth of Orthodoxy in a constantly changing world. An important part of the Church’s missionary service

must be its contribution to culture, the arts, science and other spheres of national life. In this connection we must also examine the Church's contribution to solving problems in the economy, in ecology, peacemaking, the structure of the State and public life, and the participation of Orthodox Christians in mankind's attempts to resolve these problems.<sup>10</sup>

In the Exhortation of the Millennium Assembly in 2000, we read: "We must develop mission beyond the Church's walls - in enterprises, in the secular mass media, on public transport and in places that have no church nearby."

The theme of Christian culture defined one of the three parts of the paper by Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, "The Good News and Culture", which was read at the 1996 World Missionary Conference in Iguazu, Brazil. In the chapter headed "Culture as the Bearer of Christ's Good News", he speaks of the paramount importance of culture in the preservation of faith in Russia. This theme and this standpoint are very close to my heart. I am often heard to say that Russia was saved not by *babushkas* in headscarves but by a *babushka* called 'culture'. Metropolitan Kirill poses the question of culture in a poignant and principled way: "Not the inculturation of Christianity, but the Christianisation of culture - that is the purpose of Christian mission in relation to culture."<sup>11</sup> The issue of enculturation requires separate discussion, and is being widely discussed; there is also a need to develop an Orthodox discussion on it, but here we had better concentrate on the matter of the Christianisation of culture.

Another important point arising in Metropolitan Kirill's paper is the crisis of human personality and how to overcome it. The matter of which spirituality can solve the crisis may also be considered under the heading of 'culture'. The upbringing of a person and the formation of his value system are questions of education and culture. Christian asceticism (which has preserved itself better in Orthodoxy than in any other Christian tradition) is, I think, a powerful resource in today's battle against the global crisis. It is one of the tasks of Christian mission to instill in secular man a culture of restraint; there are many other qualities of personality to which this applies. It is, at the same time, a part of the Church's functions to root out the Pharisaism, the hypocrisy, the pride, the sectarian thinking and the intolerance which are, alas, encountered among members of the Church. It is these flaws in Christians, and even in the clergy, which sometimes strike first-time visitors to the Church.

A dominant theme in the discussion on Christian culture is "overcoming secularism". It is a problem being discussed by all the Churches today. We Orthodox often talk of secularisation as the dechurchification of society, by which we mean the de-Christianisation of culture, of our daily life and civilization. This topic is particularly well illuminated in an analysis of globalisation - a process which appears to be conducive to human unification but which in no way serves this cause; it is no more than

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<sup>10</sup> The Bishop's council of the Russian Orthodox Church of 29 November-2 December 1994. See *Orthodox Mission Today*, p. 8

<sup>11</sup> *Orthodox Mission Today*, p.32

a striving for wholesale homogenisation and standardisation. This results in the loss of spiritual potential, taste and achievements in various cultural areas. What is happening is a leveling of culture that leads to fragmentation and individualism, not unity. All of this happens because spiritual values are ceasing to be fundamental, and this is largely due to the fact that various human activities are, one after the other, disappearing from religious life and from the life of Christian churches. Basic Christian truths that underpin Christian morality are under threat. When religion is replaced by ethics, morality ceases to be a vital and living inspiration, a striving for goodness; it is reduced to external rules of conduct with no binding force. This is a central characteristic of so-called fundamentalism (or 'integralism' - this phenomenon, this complex behavioral package can be called different things, and should not be known only as traditionalism or conservatism). At its heart is not moral self-determination but a pharisaical morality which, to non-religious people, no longer seems convincing or socially necessary. To them, as to Laplace, God is a hypothesis and, as such, unnecessary. The people of the post-Enlightenment epoch may well have a tolerance towards religion as a private matter, a sphere of consciousness in which one may rely on the 'God-hypothesis'. This produces a culture in which there is no hierarchy of values. Incidentally, the reaction to, and rejection of, fundamentalism and clericalism promotes the formation of such a culture.

It is usual to regard fundamentalism as a reaction to humanism, secularism, liberalism and modernism, but missiology urges us to attend to the reverse mechanism - secularism, liberalism and modernism as a reaction to clericalism, fundamentalism, magic, obscurantism and so on - a mechanism which had worked before, in the period of the Reformation, and which continues to operate in our times, albeit on a different level.

Many orthodox theologians, in their reflections on culture, recall the discourse of the priest Pavel Florenskii: "The majority of cultures, in keeping with the etymology (i.e. that which develops from *cultus*) were precisely the germination of a grain of religion, a mustard tree which grew out of a seed of faith...."<sup>12</sup>

Believing in Christ our Lord and Savior, we acknowledge that *the form of this world is passing away* (I Corinthians 7.31); however, through the power of Christ it may be transformed into the image of Christ. It is in this understanding that we find the idea of Christian culture, the idea of sanctification of economic and political life, and even of nature.

Every sphere of life - art, philosophy, science, politics, economics - cannot be called self-sufficient entities, but are merely forms which are configured to this world, but only when and to the extent that culture is not conformed in the image of Christ. If in our culture we are not with Christ, then we are inevitably against Christ, for in this life there is not, nor can there be, neutrality in relation to God.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Pavel Florinskii, *Sobranie sochinenie (Collected Works)*, published in Moscow 1994.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.



We should not interpret these words as hostile or aggressive towards those who do not confess Christ, i.e., those who represent other religions, and non-believers. Our Christian task is to show how this or that phenomenon is in opposition to Christ, what things are truly inimical to Christ, irrespective of the slogan under which the phenomenon or idea exists. Very often, such slogans are Pharisaical, fundamentalistic, demagogic appeals, only nominally Christian but in reality leading away from Christ. (As a rule, everything which results in enmity and hatred and which does not contribute to the triumph of love is in opposition to the principles of Christian mission.)

The recognition of the need to construct a culture according to Christ does not at all mean that a particular socio-political or economic model may be understood as a Christian one, or that Christianity can rest on a set of cultural, scientific or economic tenets which are unshakeable and approved by Christianity. Every tenet of Christian culture can and must be given Christian meaning and transformed by Christian consciousness.

Modern man needs Christian culture, not window-dressing, but truly Christian and truly culture. In any case, each person must sincerely determine whether he considers such a culture possible. If not, then there is no reason to talk of Christianity and to delude ourselves and others with misty hopes of something unrealizable ... It then becomes naive to protest feebly against the rejection of Christian ideals because without Christian faith they are only hollow dreams which get in the way of life: If Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile... let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (I Corinthians 15.17 and 32).<sup>14</sup>

A Christ-centred culture is one of the main goals of the Church today. Every missionary effort to advance in this direction deserves the Church's support, the help of its members, and the attention and care of the clergy. The Christianisation of culture, its integration into the Church, does not at all mean the clericalisation of culture, which is so feared by the advocates of atheistic liberalisation, legalist-fundamentalists and other 'missionaries' of atheistic 'humanism'. The missiologist's view is that clericalisation today is not only unrealistic but even harmful. The central theme of missiological analysis, the focus of collective Christian concern and general discussion among Christians is how a programme to Christianise culture should be put into effect. On the one hand, there are clear possibilities for unity; on the other hand, there are equally clear conflicts of the language of cultures corresponding to the various Christian traditions. The criteria of "following Christ", "Christian piety", "proclaiming Christ as the supreme value - as Lord and Savior" determine the degree of Christian unity.

Before the eternally important and saving consciousness of Christ, any private difference of opinion between Christians becomes negligible, just as it does when Christians are in the service of this world. Both when they are uplifted in the faith and working in the world, all Christians are drawing closer together. If the Christians of one confession believed in the sincerity of the Christ-centredness of Christians of other confessions, there would probably be no divisions, and this would not be an

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

obstacle to differences of views. And, conversely, there would not be religious divisions, either, if we were to pronounce the Christian way a powerless and empty relic. But Christians are divided and hostile to one another, because they doubt the genuineness of one another's Christ-centredness, even though they do not doubt the meaning of commitment to Christ in principle. This applies not only to different confessions but also to different tendencies within particular confessions, and even to relationships between individual Christians. Christianity is riddled with mutual suspicion, malevolence and enmity.<sup>15</sup>

Florenskii gives a withering assessment of the state of the Christian world, saying that "it is rotten to the core because it lacks the activity of Christ and has not the courage or honesty to admit the rottenness of its faith". The events of the twentieth century (world wars, and the cruelty and barbarity of those who called themselves Christians) have done much to corroborate that assessment.

In the current interdenominational dialogue, all discussions about details, the subtlety of dogmatic formulae, the strictness of church ritual and of the canonical system must be conducted in the missionary context. We must not allow questions of faith to be addressed from without, from the point of view of outside observers or diplomats; otherwise, participants in the discussion lose all sense of spiritual reality and, like blind people, cannot see the whole picture. At the start of the third millennium, it is first and foremost the missionaries and missiologists, like prophets, and then the Churches, who must ensure that Christian unity becomes a key issue in the missiology debate, and that works dedicated to the realisation of Christian unity become the central focus in the Church's mission program.

### **Theological Education in Russian Orthodoxy 1917-1943**

For better understanding of the situation with theological education today we need know the history of theological education in the Soviet period (1917-1991). This is not just for the sake of historical accuracy, but that history helps us understand the incredible problems the authorities of the ROC had to face after the Second World War and, particularly, under Khrushchev.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, dry facts and figures often fail to explain diverse enigmas of reality. Quite a few western publications on the history of the ROC pay attention just to the statistics and concrete historic events.<sup>17</sup> But the most

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Pre-war situation is described by Alexander Bovkalo.

<sup>17</sup> The closure of the theological schools and the work involved in reopening them is described in Nikita Struve, *Christians in Contemporary Russia*, London: Harvill Press, 1967, pp. 120-137; Dimitry Pospelovskij, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime 1917-1982*, Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984, v. I-II; Matthew Spinka, *The Church in Soviet Russia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1956.

See also: D. Konstantinow, *Die Kirche in der Sowjetunion nach dem Kriege*, München und Salzburg: Anton Pustet, 1973; D. Konstantinow, *The Crown of Thorns, Russian Orthodox Church in the USSR, 1917 - 1967*, Zaria, 1978; Franz Jockwig, "Untergang und Wiederaufbau der theologischen Bildungsstätten in der russisch-orthodoxen Kirche- Die Zeit von 1917 bis 1945." in *Brueckenschlag zu den Ostkirchen. Franz Jockwig zum Gedächtnis. Eine Auswahl seiner Aufsätze*. Würzburg, 1993, s. 121-130; Abbot Georgii, "Theological colleagues in the USSR", in *The Russian Orthodox Church in the USSR*, Munich, Ts.O.P.E., 1962, pp. 195-227.

difficult thing is to convey the atmosphere, the spirit of life in the theological schools. This can probably be done by describing some personalities who were essentially determining the history of these schools.

The first part of this report [written by Alexander Bovkalo, see fn. 1] presents some archival data referring to the pre-war history<sup>18</sup>, while the second part is focused upon theological education and the atmosphere in the post-war Russian Orthodox schools.

Soon after the coup d'état on October 25, 1917, a Decree which handed over the administration of all types of religious schools to the Commissariat of Peoples' Education was issued (December 11, 1917). According to the Decree of January 23, 1918 which separated the Church from the State, all former Church property including schools and seminaries were nationalized and state subsidies were banned. The decree also banned the teaching of religion in all public schools. "Citizens may teach and be taught religion privately." Then on August 24, 1918, the Instruction which detailed the application of the Decree followed. According to this Instruction all the pre-Revolutionary theological seminaries and schools were closed. But the Church could organize special theological educational institutions providing that no general subjects would be taught there. Such an interpretation of the Decree made it possible to prolong theological education for another decade, though in reality it was becoming more and more restricted.

One of the main problems was the lack of funds. All government subsidies had stopped after March 1, 1918. The situation of the Theological Academies was extremely difficult. There was a plan to use 2% of the monasteries' value for the Academies' needs but even St. Patriarch Tikhon thought it would not be possible.<sup>19</sup> The Higher Church Administration several times announced its intention to cease subsidizing the Academies but even in January 1920 it was still planned to allot 30,000 rubles both for the Moscow and Kazan Academies for the first half of the year<sup>20</sup>. Sometimes certain sums were given as a help to professors (500 rubles for D.Vvedensky, 1000 rubles for M.Orlov instead of pension). As the publishing of books became practically impossible, the Academic Councils were granted in 1919 the right to accept manuscript forms of the magister thesis.<sup>21</sup>

The Moscow Theological Academy at first continued its activity in the Holy Trinity-St.Sergius Lavra. But in Autumn 1919 it was obliged to transfer to Moscow. After several removals it was placed, in August 1921, in the Vysoko-Petrovsky monastery. Several times during the year donations were gathered in Moscow churches. St.Patriarch Tikhon himself often gave considerable

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<sup>18</sup> See also: Sorokin V., Bovkalo A., Galkin A.K., "Duchovnoe obrasovanie v RPTz 1917-1925" in *Vestnik Leningradskoe Duchovnoe Akademii*, 1990, Tom 2, p-36-59; *Khristianskoe chtenii*, Tom 7, 1992, p-19-49; Tom 8, 1993, p. 7-27.

<sup>19</sup> Tzentralnyi Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Archiv St-Petersburg, fond 277, opis. 1, ed. khran. 3910, list 15.

<sup>20</sup> Rossiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Archiv (RGIA), fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 26, list 26.

<sup>21</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 24, list 109.

sums. Four students became candidates of theology (doctoral level) in 1920, the next year a further eight. Candidate works were reviewed as late as 1926.

The Kazan Theological Academy also continued its activity. In autumn of 1919, wishing to legalize the existence of the Academy, its Council decided to rename it as a Theological Institute or Theological School.<sup>22</sup> As the Higher Church Administration had no objections to the new name of Higher Theological Institute, it was given to the Academy probably in 1920. The institute existed till 1923.<sup>23</sup>

The Kiev Theological Academy was in a somewhat different situation. In September 1918 the Higher Church Administration adopted the Statute of the Temporal Administration of the Orthodox Church in the Ukraine. The Academy found itself under the authority of the Ukrainian Holy Synod and the Higher Church Administration did not recognize its situation. Nevertheless St. Patriarch Tikhon sometimes gave donations to it. Since 1918 new courses - Ukrainian language and literature, history of West Russian law - were introduced.<sup>24</sup> Despite all the difficulties there were graduates in 1919, and eight students graduated in 1920. Even one magister thesis was submitted for consideration.<sup>25</sup> After requisition of the Academy buildings the school was transferred to another place and existed as the Kiev Theological Institute as long as 1924. One of the graduates of 1924 became a candidate of theology in 1925.

The Petrograd Theological Academy was the only one that ceased its activity in 1918. As early as the beginning of 1918 there appeared a plan for uniting it with the University as a theological faculty, but providing it a vast autonomy and rendering it "under the subordination of the Church and with the Church". Though this plan, similar to that of the Kazan Theological Academy, was not to be realized, it was repeatedly discussed as late as December 1918. The Petrograd Theological Academy was also the only one which remained without a rector: the last rector Bishop Anastasy died on July 6, 1918, and the election of a new one was postponed till the beginning of the new academic year. It seems that the corporation strongly hoped that the lectures would begin in July. The acting rector Prof. S. Zarin asked for necessary sums from the Higher Church Administration<sup>26</sup> for repairing the building, and in August the Academic Council elected Prof. N. Marr as an honorable member of the Academy.<sup>27</sup> In the same summer the Academy building was occupied by another organization but the last

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<sup>22</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 25, list 52.

<sup>23</sup> Ot isdatelej, in: Nesmelov V.I., *Nauka o cheloveke*, Kazan', 1994, p.38.

<sup>24</sup> Tzentralnyi Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Archiv St-Petersburg, fond 277, opis. 1, ed. khran. 3906, list 231.

<sup>25</sup> Skliarova, M.. *Sosud isbrannyi, Istoria Rossiskikh duchovnykh shkol*, Spb, 1994, p.283.

<sup>26</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 20, list 137.

<sup>27</sup> Tzentralnyi Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Archiv St-Petersburg, fond 277, opis. 1, ed. khran. 3906, list 19.

conference of the Academic Council took place on December 12, 1918. It is worth mentioning that both in Petrograd and Kiev some students continued their education privately at home.

Nevertheless, it was in Petrograd that a new kind of higher theological institution was set up. In 1919 a plan was presented to St. Metropolitan Benjamin. A few months were spent on the elaboration of it and other formalities. Then on April 16, 1920, the Petrograd Theological Institute was opened. This Institute was to train “educated priests and other church workers”. Its main feature became its close connection with the University, many prominent scientists were its lecturers. One of its aims was the unification of the intelligentsia with the Church. Another peculiarity was that the lectures were held in the evening. Among its students were both men and women. Priests made up only a rather small part. The Institute existed only three years. Over this period there were more than 300 applicants but many students had no possibility to study regularly and only 26 of them received diplomas in 1923. At the end of that year two of them became candidates of theology.

The activity of the Institute was continued by the Higher Theological Courses which existed in Leningrad from 1925-1928. Some students of the Petrograd Theological Institute became candidates of theology there, among them - the first (and apparently the only) woman - nun Damiana (Soboleva). Several magister theses were also defended there. The authority of the Courses was witnessed by Metropolitan Sergei. In March 1928 when he planned to get permission for the convocation of the All-Russia Church Council he proposed to change the representation of the Theological Academies to that of the Leningrad Courses and the other Higher Theological Institutions, if these still existed<sup>28</sup> (did the phrasing mean that the Moscow Theological Academy already did not exist?). Although in 1929 a plan for a new Higher Theological Institution was elaborated it was not realized.

On October 2, 1917, the Womens' Higher Theological Pedagogical Institute was opened in Moscow. Professors of the Moscow Theological Academy and Moscow University were among its lecturers. In May 1918 two other lecturers were elected by its Council. They were confirmed by the Higher Church Administration in August 1918. Most probably the activity of the Institute ceased in the same year.

Discussion on reorganization of theological seminaries and schools began as early as 1917. This problem was also discussed at the All-Russia Church Council in 1917-1918. On April 20, 1918, the Council decided to organize pastoral schools side by side with seminaries. Such schools were scheduled to open in Autumn 1918. Seminary buildings, monasteries and other church buildings could be used for them. Not all the clergy was agreed to it. For example, the Vladimir diocesan conference regarded pastoral schools as unnecessary.

The Higher Church Administration provided all the dioceses with an elaborate statute for the pastoral schools. Their students were to take an active part in divine services, preaching and parish life.

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<sup>28</sup> Skliarova M., *Sosud isbrannyi, Istoria Rossiiskikh duchovnykh shkol*, Spb, 1994, p.39.

All of these schools were to be subsidized by the dioceses, and the representatives of the clergy were among the members of their councils.

Also that summer the Higher Church Administration permitted the opening of the first pastoral schools: on August 5 in the Kaluga diocese<sup>29</sup> and on the August 9 - two schools in the Novgorod diocese (in Novgorod and Kirillov).<sup>30</sup>

After publishing the above-mentioned Instruction of August 24, 1918, some further changes were made in the Statute of the pastoral schools. Only those older than 18 years could study there. Another amendment looks very peculiar. Since general subjects could not be studied there, it became necessary to change the name of some of the courses: logic and elements of philosophy were to be taught as the history of the Christian doctrine, and psychology was now presented as Christian conception of the soul, even the Greek language was replaced by study of the biblical Greek language. Russian language and literature were excluded entirely from the program.

In September 1918 the Higher Administration sanctioned opening of pastoral schools: on September 13 came the reorganization of Bethany seminary (Moscow diocese)<sup>31</sup>, on September 19 - the Vologda one.<sup>32</sup> On September 26, 1918 it was stated that in some dioceses such schools had already been opened. The same day the Department of Schools of the Holy Synod was established. It replaced the former Educational Committee and School Council. Metropolitan Arseny (Stadnitsky) of Novgorod became the head of the new Department.<sup>33</sup> On September 30, 1918, the Petrograd Theological Seminary was closed and the theological-pastoral school opened in its stead.

Yet in reality organization of the new schools was not a simple task. The main obstacle was the confiscation of the Church property. In Ryazan the local authorities refused to give any premises in the former seminary buildings for the new school.<sup>34</sup> The Vologda diocesan council on November 26, 1918 postponed the opening of the school till "a more favorable time".<sup>35</sup> In Kirillov, Novgorod diocese, after the execution of Bishop Varsonofy (Lebedev) "the situation was not favorable" at all. The Novgorod school was not opened till the beginning of 1919.

Nevertheless, new petitions for opening new schools were sent to the Higher Church Administration (from Velikiy Ustyug, Tula, Kostroma). Besides Petrograd, new schools were opened in Kursk, Vladimir, Kostroma, Moscow. Several theological courses appeared in Petrograd and

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<sup>29</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 8, list 150.

<sup>30</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 20, list 42.

<sup>31</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 8, list 119.

<sup>32</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 15, list 96.

<sup>33</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 20, list 154.

<sup>34</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 22, list 44.

<sup>35</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 22, list 96.

Moscow. Professors of the Moscow Theological Academy elaborated programs for the new schools (I.Popov - "The Christian conception of the soul"<sup>36</sup>, D.Vvedensky - "Bible history and geography"<sup>37</sup>).

There were also some other proposals. In October 1918 the clergy of the Minsk diocese decided to maintain the seminary and all the existing boys schools but one and to reorganize the girls diocesan school into an orthodox gymnasium.<sup>38</sup> The Bishop of Orel was going to open short-termed theological courses. The Higher Church Administration approved.<sup>39</sup>

A few pastoral theological schools and courses were also appearing in the early 1920s. In 1920 such courses existed in Smolensk, and at the end of the year a school was opened in Uglich (Yaroslavl diocese). In 1921 it became possible to open a pastoral school in Vologda. In the same year such courses were registered in Kiev, some professors of the Kiev Theological Academy became lecturers there. Father Sergei Bulgakov was a lecturer at the pastoral courses in Simferopol. Pastoral schools and courses existed in many towns: in Ufa, Kharkov, Simbirsk, Kazan, Perm. Even as late as February 2, 1922, pastoral courses were opened in Smolensk, though they existed only for about two months.

All the above-mentioned theological educational institutions were organized in order to train future priests. But at the time interest in religion was quite high and some newer institutions were opened to satisfy this interest. But perhaps the differences between the schools were not that considerable. On June 24, 1918 an Orthodox Peoples' Academy was opened in Moscow. It consisted of 3 departments: public theological courses, higher theological courses and pastoral courses for priests. Within a month there were more than 200 students. The Academy existed till April 1922.<sup>40</sup> As to the provinces, another Peoples' Theological Institute was opened on October 15, 1918 in Ekaterinburg. In a short time there were more than 150 students in it.

There were also many courses for laity, especially in Petrograd and Moscow. Some of them existed even at parish level. A new Decree of June 13, 1921, again permitted special theological courses for priests and church workers. But as to the laity, it permitted only occasional lectures on religion providing they were not held systematically.

In Spring 1922 the confiscation of Church valuables began. It gave rise to numerous trials and persecutions of the clergy and led to the appearance of the Renovationists and thereafter, other Church schisms. This situation drastically influenced the theological educational institutions. In the Petrograd Theological Institute the rector and a few members of the corporation were arrested, several professors were exiled abroad, a few joined the Renovationists. Nevertheless the Institute survived only

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<sup>36</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 23, list 143.

<sup>37</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 3, list 83.

<sup>38</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 21, list 9.

<sup>39</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 23, list 57.

<sup>40</sup> RGIA, fond 831, opis. 1, ed. khran. 234, list 13.

for a year. Other schools, as for example, in Smolensk, were closed. But the Vologda school went under Renovationists' management and survived for some time.

As to theological educational institutions of the Renovationists, they will be mentioned here briefly. In 1923 the Renovationists Church organized its Educational Committee. As early as Autumn 1923 its Moscow Theological Academy was opened. It existed till 1935. The Higher Theological School in Kiev opened in 1926 and existed as late as 1928. The Renovationists organized pastoral theological courses in Voronezh, Ufa, Samara, Kaluga, Kazan, Arkhangelsk, Rostov-on-Don, Novgorod. There were about 20 such schools in 1923.

In Borovichy (Novgorod diocese) a few attempts to open a pastoral school were made after 1921. At last authorities granted opening it in 1922 providing it would be under the Renovationists' control.<sup>41</sup>

The most interesting phenomenon in the Renovationists' educational policy was organization of so-called short-term "mobile courses". Their Statute was approved by the Synod (in Russia) on the August 18, 1925. The need for such courses was very high as it was impossible to organize theological pastoral schools in each diocese. Such courses lasted from a few days to two weeks. The lecturers were professors of the Moscow Theological Academy and the Leningrad Theological Institute. As early as 1925 such courses were organized in Rostov-on-Don (July 3-14) and B.Titlinov (Leningrad) and S.Zarin (Moscow) gave 60 lectures, and in Krasnodar (July 17-24), where B.Titlinov, I.Kholopov (Leningrad) and S.Zarin, A.Pokrovsky (Moscow) gave 120 lectures.

The Ukrainian Renovationists' Church also organized such courses. The first ones were held in Chuguyev (May 17-18, 1926). The leaders of the Gregorian schism also planned to open their own theological schools but apparently it was not realized. As to the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church (Lipkovtsy) the authorities did not permit it to open any school.

On April 8, 1929, a new law on "the religious associations" was issued. This law and the followed Instruction of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs forbade any religious activity outside church walls. The legislation forbade the clergy to instruct children, youth, women. Any Bible-study religious education groups were banned. The organisation of theological pastoral courses in practice became impossible. It seems that the Renovationists' Moscow Academy and Leningrad Institute were the only institutions which survived this law for a few years.

In Autumn 1939 the West Ukraine and Byelorussia joined the Soviet Union. The next year the three Baltic states, Bessarabia and North Bukovina also became Soviet territory. Several theological educational institutions that had been functioning there (the Theological Institute in Riga, theological faculties in Tartu, in Kishinev and Chernevtsy, seminaries in Kremenets and Vilnius, theological courses in Tallinn) - were closed down.

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<sup>41</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Archiv Novgorodskoe oblasti, fond 481, opis. 1, ed. khran. 916, list 150.



After the beginning of the Great Patriotic war a sort of “religious revival” began in the occupied territories. Several thousands of churches were opened. In the north-west regions of Russia the Pskov Spiritual Mission was active. It opened a theological seminary in Vilnius and a theological pastoral course. Many candidates for priesthood sent by the Mission were studying there. The Theological Institute in Riga was also reopened.

But the policy of the German authorities towards Orthodoxy varied in the different religions. In Belorussia they did not permit opening the theological seminary in Minsk but only short-term pastoral courses. Such courses existed also in Vitebsk, in the Nowogrodok-Baranowicz y diocese, where there were also courses for church readers.

In the Ukraine the partisans of the Moscow Patriarchate were united by the Ukrainian Autonomous Church. In addition, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church was organized, which recognized the validity of the Lipkovtsy clergy. In 1943 the Autonomous Church reopened the seminary in Kremenets. In the same year it was planned to open classes in Kiev, but the city was liberated by the Soviet Army. Several pastoral courses were also opened in Poltava, Pochaev Lavra.

As to the Autocephalous Church, the Germans did not permit it to open a theological Academy and seminary in Kiev. Nevertheless a few pastoral courses (in Lutsk, Kiev, the last were prohibited by the Germans) were opened. In the Romanian zone of the occupation in Bessarabia and the South West Ukraine a seminary was opened on November 30, 1942, in Dubossary. Several pastoral courses also existed.

### **Orthodox Theological Education after 1943.**

Meanwhile in September 1943 the ROC was granted permission to open theological schools. Soon statutes for a Theological Institute and pastoral courses were developed. In June 1944 the Institute and courses were opened in Moscow in the former Novodevichy Convent.<sup>42</sup>

The need for the seminaries and different programs was very high. The greatest part of the newly ordained priests in the regions under the German occupation had no theological education. New priests though not so numerous were also ordained in the remaining territory. Nevertheless not one of the theological educational institutions in the formerly occupied territory continued its activity. All the seminaries were organized anew.

Patriarch Aleksii and other leading hierarchs were received by Stalin and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Molotov on April 10, 1945. Metropolitan Nikolai’s report of the encounter gives some information. In addition to the already functioning Moscow theology school, eight schools were to be

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<sup>42</sup> According to one witness the consecrating was on 5.05.44. He writes that at the beginning of the year Alexei, Metropolitan of the Leningrad and future Patriarch had meetings with the Archbishop of York and later the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain in Novodevichy Convent. “Otkrytie seminarii”, *Moskovskii Tserkovnyi Vestnik*, 1991, Nr. 18, p.8.

founded in other cities, and a printing press was given to the Church on Stalin's order, in connection with which the hierarchs asked Stalin for the right either to build or to have a block of buildings for a publishing establishment, a higher theological institute, pastoral courses, etc.<sup>43</sup>

On July 15, 1945, theological courses were opened in Odessa, on November 1 - in Lutsk (Volhynia)<sup>44</sup>, on November 22 - in Leningrad in the building of the former seminary near the former St. Alexander-Neviskii Lavra.<sup>45</sup> There were 24 students, 22 of whom later graduated from the seminary.

Ten seminaries and three academies (in Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev) were planned. This plan was only partly realized.<sup>46</sup> The plans concerning an independent church press were never to be realized, although the need to have a block of buildings for educational purposes was satisfied by the return to the Church of the huge Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery, where the Moscow theological schools were transferred. At a session of the Holy Synod on August 26, 1945 a Committee on Education was established under the aegis of the latter.<sup>47</sup> On August 31, 1946, the Institute in Moscow was reorganized into an Academy, and the courses - into seminaries. Of 200 applicants for the Moscow theological schools, the total number of students in 1946 in the seminary (including the courses) was 147, and of the Academy 14.<sup>48</sup> Shortly after that time four more seminaries were opened: in Stavropol (Northcaucasus, November 15, 1946)<sup>49</sup>, Kiev (February 18, 1947), Minsk (Zhirovitsy, September 16, 1947) and Saratov (November, 16, 1947). It is worth noting that besides the theological subjects several non-theological subjects (Russian language, history of the USSR, foreign languages, the Constitution of the USSR) were also taught there.

The seminary in Kiev at that time had only 5 teachers (and the Rector). For the first year it received 11 students<sup>50</sup>. In Zhirovitsky-Minsk seminary 112 students were admitted (69 in two parallel first classes, 29 in the second and 14 in the third).<sup>51</sup>

All the newly-opened seminaries were not sufficient for the Church needs: the shortage of priests was high. In some dioceses short-term (1-month) pastoral courses were organized. Most of the known courses were run in the western dioceses: Grodno (1947)<sup>52</sup>, Minsk (Zyrowicy, 1948), Pinsk

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<sup>43</sup> "Na prieme u Stalina", *ZhMP*, 1945, Nr. 5, p. 25-26.

<sup>44</sup> *ZhMP*, 1948, Nr.9, p. 69.

<sup>45</sup> *ZhMP*, 1946, Nr.1, s. 41. This building was destroyed during the time of the Blockade.

<sup>46</sup> The additional planned seminaries were for Lvov and Novosibirsk. See e.g. Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime 1917-1982*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984, v. II, p. 302. He mentions private conversation with Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad.

<sup>47</sup> It was headed for many years (1964-1985) by the Alexii II (today Patriarch and at that time bishop, later Metropolitan).

<sup>48</sup> *ZhMP*, 1946, Nr. 10, p. 3-5

<sup>49</sup> 12 Juni, by D.Konstantinow, *Die Kirche in der Sowjetunion nach dem Kriege*, Muenchen und Salzburg: Anton Pustet, 1973, s. 184.

<sup>50</sup> *ZhMP*, 1947, Nr. 6, p. 6-10.

<sup>51</sup> *ZhMP*, 1947, Nr. 12, p. 52.

<sup>52</sup> Bishop Varsonofii of Grodno and Lida organized a month-long theological course for priests in the city of Grodno during the summer of 1947. 25 students attended this course. *ZhMP*, 1947, No. 8, p. 40.

(1947 - for Church readers - and 1948) (Belorussia), in the Donetsk diocese (1947, “with a missionary bias”), in the Kiev seminary (1947 - for the rural clergy), in the Brailov monastery (the Vinnitsa diocese, 1947), Chernovtsy (1946, 1947) in the Ukraine, Kishinev (1947), Orel (1947), Voronezh (1947). As to the dioceses which were not under the German occupation and where the reopened churches were not numerous, such courses are known to have been held in the Ivanovo diocese (even in 1952). But all these courses were organized by the dioceses themselves: there is no information about lectures read by the Academy professors.

In those dioceses where such courses could not be run, different ways of resolving the educational problem were sometimes found. The conference of deans in the Ryazan diocese decided that clergymen had to train in Ryazan under the guidance of experienced clergy and within a fortnight they had to be examined by the bishop.

There were 2 academies (Moscow-Zagorsk, Leningrad) and 8 seminaries (Moscow-Zagorsk, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk-Zhirovcy, Odessa, Saratow, Stavropol, Lutzk) in 1960<sup>53</sup>. Since the early fifties the single form of theological education remained that in seminaries and academies. Theological education in the post-war period, and, practically speaking till the 1990s was characterized by an unfailingly strict control over programs and over every move of the theological schools on the part of the ideological structures of the communist party via the KGB organs. Yet one should recognize the fact that even under these circumstances the ROC could afford a quite efficient, if not healthy, system of training would-be priests and theologians.

With reference to the control, it was exercised as early as the stage of selecting among candidates for scholarships (well-educated candidates faced all sorts of obstacles). It was impossible to introduce any new subject that might broaden the students’ outlook, rendering them able to discuss social or scientific problems from a Christian standpoint. In 1984-85, just on the threshold of perestroika, I was asked by the then Rector of the Leningrad Theological Academy to work out a program for a course in psychology. There was one condition I could not break. This course was not allowed to be called “psychology”, I was to introduce it as a part of some of the theological courses already authorized (e.g. practical guidance for priests).

During the first two or three post-war decades one could meet among the lecturers those who graduated from pre-Revolutionary theological schools. This provided for some continuity through faculty and not only through statutes that were based on the old ones. As before, theological education was directed toward training future clerics, and the schools did not have any contacts with secular educational institutions (e.g. universities).

The most oppressive time for the theological schools, as for the Church in general, was the last years of Khrushchev’s rule (1960-1964). This renewal of Church persecutions and the regime’s

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<sup>53</sup> *ZhMP*, 1960, Nr. 4, p. 41.

efforts to decrease the growing influence of the Church, affected theological institutions as well. By 1962, only five seminaries remained open. The Kiev, Saratov and Stavropol' seminaries had been closed<sup>54</sup>. By 1964, the Minsk seminary was closed also.<sup>55</sup> The Volhyn seminary (Lutsk) was closed.<sup>56</sup> After this period of mass closing down of churches and monasteries (1964/1965) only three seminaries and the two Academies (in Moscow, Leningrad and Odessa) remained active. Much attention by the Communist party was applied to induce priests to defect from the Church. About 200 priests defected and most of them became active propagandists of atheism, and some of them soon achieving scholarly degrees in "scientific atheism".<sup>57</sup>

It was only due to the wise and subtle policy of such bishops as Metropolitan Nicodim that these schools were saved. These were the years when the ROC got energetically involved in ecumenical activities. International contacts, a new faculty for foreign students were the only excuse for their existence in the eyes of the atheistic regime.

The personality of Metropolitan Nicodim (Rotov) is a key for understanding the religious situation in the USSR in the 1960-70s, as well as for understanding the problematic situation for the theological schools under the communist regime. No specific acts can help us to understand the role and the true essence of the compromise with the communist regime by the church hierarchy. Everything depended on personalities. The example of Metropolitan Nicodim shows us a very strong church activity. All his steps, deeds, contacts with state and party representatives were hard work for inventing any possibility to support and strength the Church. He devoted particular care and attention to the training of the Church's future priests.<sup>58</sup>

Theological schools received his priority care. Renewing the corps of professors, increasing the number of students, actively involving the best students in ecumenical contacts, education of some orthodox students abroad were his priorities. His devoted personal, individual interest and attention to each docent and student made for a special creative and free atmosphere to flourish at that time in Leningrad's theological schools. As a result of the influence of his great personality many intelligent people with university degrees came to the seminary as candidates (in 1970s).

Despite his many responsibilities and constant busyness, he always found it possible to take a close part in the teaching and educational process. From entrance examinations to graduation, the seminarians and the academy students were constantly under his attentive eye. On the days when he received applicants, he would spend many hours talking with them in order to determine their overall maturity and develop a picture of their internal world, spiritual state and feelings. He would on several

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<sup>54</sup> *ZhMP*, 1962, Nr. 5, p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> *ZhMP*, 1964, Nr. 3, p. 24.

<sup>56</sup> *ZhMP*, 1965, Nr. 4, p. 47.

<sup>57</sup> For example, Duluman, Darmansky, Chertkov.

<sup>58</sup> e.g. Annual Account of the Leningrad Metropolitanate for 1975, pp. 9-10.

occasions during the course of the academic year have personal interviews with the students. Metropolitan Nicodim also took care to see that the future pastors should have a broad outlook, a knowledge of modern life and the achievements of scientific thought.

Metropolitan Nicodim's lectures at the academy in which he expressed profound ideas about the seminary's and the academy's tasks, about the duties of the teaching staff and students alike, deserve mention at this point. He gave one such lecture on October 9, 1965, at the academy's annual convocation: "Both the priests and theologians who graduate from our theological academy and seminary must in every possible way develop themselves and increase their spiritual advancement in order, having understood the aspirations of modern mankind, its needs and wants, honorably and usefully to carry out their duties in which the high ideals of Christian ecumenism and peacemaking should inspire their daily services."<sup>59</sup>

In his speeches Metropolitan Nicodim frequently emphasized the need to link theology with life, "which restrains the mind from being carried off into realms of abstract speculation useless to the matter of salvation."<sup>60</sup> He recommended that they should delve ever more deeply into their study of the Word of God, taking it into their minds and hearts in order to further their spiritual creativity and growth,<sup>61</sup> and to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the patristic works as these would help them to understand the Holy Scriptures better, increase their spiritual experience, and enrich them with practical spiritual advice.<sup>62</sup> In order to develop and maintain the students' constant interest in the patristic heritage, Metropolitan Nicodim gave instructions for the reading in the refectory at mealtimes of not only the Lives of the Saints, as had previously been the custom, but also of the works of the Holy Fathers.

It was on his initiative and with his participation that question-and-answer evenings were held and these contributed to a free and useful exchange of ideas on various subjects concerning the life of the Church, ecumenical problems, and peacemaking. During the last two years of his life Metropolitan Nicodim taught Russian Church history at the academy, giving lectures on the post-synodal period which began with the work of the 1917-1918 Council and the restoration of the Patriarchate.

Metropolitan Nicodim frequently took part in the meetings of the Council of the Schools and directed the thoughts of the teaching staff towards improving the quality of their teaching, providing the students with necessary textbooks and giving more thought to the education of future pastors and Church workers, as well as to the organization of the students' leisure hours. In reviewing the results of and prospects for their teaching activities as reflected in the journals and minutes, he did not simply ratify them but expressed his approval, made comments, entered suggestions, asked for explanations -

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<sup>59</sup> Metropolitan Nicodim, *Collected Works*, Leningrad, v. II, p. 225.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.* v. II, pp. 255, cf. p. 259 and 312.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, v. II, pp. 299-300.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p. 291.

in a word, examined every detail of the teaching staff's work. Metropolitan Nicodim's speech "On the Tasks of Theology Today" (October 9, 1968)<sup>63</sup> was remarkable for the profundity and clarity with which it examined the theological problems involved in the solution of certain urgent questions of modern life. In his speech of October 9, 1976, he placed special emphasis on Holy Tradition, the authority of patristic theology, faith and knowledge, theology and ecumenism, the topicality of modern theology, the teaching of homiletics, moral theology, canon law, ecclesiastical history, and other disciplines.<sup>64</sup> These were not mere formal phrases in the message from the teaching staff of the Academy on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Metropolitan Nicodim's appointment to the Leningrad Metropolitan: "in all the multifarious activities of the Leningrad Theological Academy - its theological work, its practical applications of theology to the life of the Church, its services to Holy Orthodoxy, its ecumenical witness, its efforts in the struggle for peace - you, Your Eminence, have participated as a wise leader and talented organiser".<sup>65</sup> And really, his thoughts, feelings, and efforts were directed throughout all the years toward theological education.

During the time of Metropolitan Nicodim's tenure in Leningrad diocese the quantity of students in the theological schools increased 8-10 times (from 6-8 persons in the first class in 1963 to 65 in 1977). The situation in 1959 - 1961 was very bad. The number of new students in the Leningrad seminary decreased from 37 in 1959 to 16 in 1969 to 1 in 1961.<sup>66</sup> Very difficult barriers were set up by ideological party structures. Some examples were described in West<sup>67</sup>. As was mentioned above the seminaries in Saratov, Stavropol, Kiev and Odessa were closed<sup>68</sup>. And later the seminary in Lutsk also was closed. But few documents, which bear witness to the persecutions and oppressive measures against theological schools and candidates for students have been published till now.<sup>69</sup>

I think that it is not yet time for good and objective describing and analyses of the relations of the ROC and the state because most important archives are not yet open. Not that many interesting materials were published.<sup>70</sup> It is very important to underline that some formal witnesses are not so good for understanding the truth of that time, of its reality. Very useful are personal witnesses and memoirs. There are some very interesting external witnesses as for example a thorough account which

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<sup>63</sup> *ZhMP*, 1968, Nr.12, pp. 63-69.

<sup>64</sup> *ZhMP*, 1977, Nr.3, pp. 11-17.

<sup>65</sup> See The Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the LTA and LTS of November 1, 1073, No. 5 (637), supplement No. 2, p.4.

<sup>66</sup> *Nauka i religija*, No 2, 1962.

<sup>67</sup> Bourdeaux, Michael, *Patriarch and Prophets. Persecution of the Russian Church Today*, New York - London, 1970, pp. 116-117. Struve, *Christen in der UdSSR*, Mainz, 1965, p. 335, 537.

<sup>68</sup> Struve, 538.

<sup>69</sup> The situation has not changed very much. In 1988 Herbert Bodewig writes that "Nur wenige Dokumente berichteten von direkten polizeilichen Massnahmen gegen Seminare". In: *Die russische Patriarchatskirche, Beitrage zur aeusseren Bedrueckung und inneren Lage 1958-1979*, Erich Wewel Verlag, Muenchen, 1988., p. 56.

<sup>70</sup> There are some exceptions, e.g. Father Sergy Gordun spoke about this situation on the basis of documents of the archive of the "Komiteta po dela religii".

was written in 1974 by Rev. Raymond Oppenheim, who served as Episcopalian chaplain at the American Embassy in Moscow. But more interesting are the witnesses of people who studied there, specially foreign students because of having a different mentality. For example, a Dutchman Theo van der Voort, who studied in Leningrad Theological Academy during 1974-1975, has written a full and lively account of it based on his own experience.<sup>71</sup> But the experience of Russian students is also very important. It would be very good to collect today some memoirs of theological students from those days.

A widely held opinion among specialists<sup>72</sup> and some church people was that the theological seminaries and academies contained a number of actual and potential government agents, indispensable to the communist dictatorship for its permanent and unsuccessful struggle against religion.<sup>73</sup> Till now we have discuss this theme without success. I have no personal experience from the 1950-60s but I think that in the 1970-80s there were other opportunities. Among the good and pious believers (lay people and students of the seminaries) there were enough people with a soviet mentality. They were not materialists and Marxists but they were “pious” soviet citizens. And among priests and theological students there were enough people which tempted to have good church careers. From these individuals the KGB could find good assistants, who were not against the Church. Until today they remain certain, that they have no guilt. The problem of Communist infiltration remains very unclear till today.

If we discuss this problem only in a formal sense, then one can think that all activity of the ROC was influenced by the ideological structures of the Communist party and the ROC was a marionette of KGB. We can find some papers which reveal the contacts of many priests and bishops with the special service. But if we try to be objective and if we search for truth about the ROC and concretely about the theological schools, we see how much the life of these schools was self-sufficient. We can understand the following description of their life as publicity for foreign people and propaganda, but it was indeed true. “The entire tenor of academic life is oriented towards Church life, based on prayer, labor, and the rules of Christian communal life. Daily divine services (morning and evening) are celebrated with obligatory participation of students as readers, singers and assistants in the sanctuary - the best practical training for future member of the clergy.”<sup>74</sup>

“Churchization” of all theological subjects, preservation of the truly church trend in Russian theology underlay the activity of the theological schools of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is interesting, that one of the church dissidents (a deep believer, but a free thinking man) such as A. E.

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<sup>71</sup> *Vestnik RKhD*, No. 130, 1979, pp. 317-324.

<sup>72</sup> See e.g. Walter Kolarz, *Die Religionen in der Sowjetunion*, Herder, 1963, p. 92.

<sup>73</sup> See e.g. D.Konstantinow, *The Crown of Thorns*, p.195.

<sup>74</sup> *The Russian Orthodox Church*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982, p.97-98.

Krasnov-Levitin characterizes the spirit, atmosphere of the theological schools as strongly church oriented. He mentions that he could not study there longer than two weeks.<sup>75</sup>

After 1965, due to the wise and subtle policy of such personalities as Metropolitan Nicodim, the ROC had a slow but stable increase in the number of theological students. A compromise between Church and State was found, which was the new line in Soviet politics.

Patriarch Pimen spoke about the increasing of number of students in theological schools in 1977/1978. At the end of 1977 there were 788 students (and 15 post-graduate) and 814 students per correspondence.<sup>76</sup> In Moscow there were three parallel first year classes and in Leningrad and Odessa there were two each.

It is not easy to speak about statistics in that time. After 1960 it was very difficult to find statistics on theological students. It was not the intent of the Moscow Patriarchate to hide these figures. This problem was very well described by Jane Ellis<sup>77</sup> with tables drawn from many sources<sup>78</sup> (for 1971 - 1984). The author showed a clear rise in the numbers of both residential and correspondence students. One should note that it was not until some time between 1975 and 1977 that the estimated 1955 level of 1 500 students was regained. The expansion in the number of theological students during the 1970-80s was theoretically sufficient to stabilise the numbers of parish clergy below retirement age. But it does not mean that theological education was available for all who wanted it. There were four or five applications for every available place.<sup>79</sup>

The Moscow and Leningrad theological schools admitted as students representatives from nearly all the Local Orthodox Churches and Ancient Eastern (non-Chalcedonian) Churches. There were post-graduate students from Catholic and some Lutheran Churches (from Austrian, Finland, Germany). In turn, graduates of our theological schools continued their theological education at the Theological Faculty of Athens University, at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University and at the Orientalium Instituto, at the theological schools in Paris and Regensburg, at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey (Swiss). The situation was very ecumenical. It is enough to mention that at the Leningrad Theological Academy in 1976-78 Jesuit Father Miguele Arranz from Rome was a visiting professor of Orthodox Liturgy. In today's situation that is practically impossible.

The character of theological schools in today's situation in a free country when compared to the era of communistic totalitarian society during 1945-90 can be considered very positive. The positive aspects are evident in the dedicated service of many members of the new generation of priests,

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<sup>75</sup> V poiskakh novogo grada, Vospominaniia, (russ.) part III, Tel-Aviv, 1980, p. 305.

<sup>76</sup> Patriarch Pimen, in: *Prasdnovanie 60-letia vosstanovlenia patriarshstva*, M., Isd. Moskovskoe Patriarkhii, (russ.)1979, p. 14.

<sup>77</sup> J. Ellis, *Russian Orthodox Church...* pp. 101 -123.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120-121.

<sup>79</sup> For example, Archbishop Vladimir stated in an interview in 1974 that in the previous year three-quarters of the 200 applicants had been turned away. *RCL*, v.2, No. 3 (1974), pp. 5,7,8.



who have proved themselves worthy of their calling. A new chapter in the history of theological schools of the Russian Orthodox Church begins after 1988 - the year of Millennium of the Baptism of Russia. From two academies and three seminaries in that year the situation changed to 7 seminaries<sup>80</sup> and 14 theological schools (uchilishschie).<sup>81</sup> Currently there are 5 theological academies, 3 theological institutes, 33 theological seminaries, 39 small seminaries with pastoral courses in Russia. There are a total of 4095 students in the seminaries plus 4710 studying by correspondence; 1060 students are enrolled in the theological academies, with a further 990 studying by correspondence. There are also 4696 Sunday schools.<sup>82</sup>

### **Philosophy and Theology of Education.**

The old Latin saying *Non scholae, sed vitae discimus*<sup>83</sup> is the best possible way to depict the main course theological education should keep in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. We are learning (and teaching, too) for life and not for school. Or, rather, this is what we should be after. This seems to be the nerves of the process of rehabilitation and development of the system of theological and religious education that takes place nowadays all over the post-communist and post-atheist space of eastern & central Europe.

A starting-point for our reflections is the conception of education as formulated within the WCC structures, i.e. "Education is more than just learning. It is about daring to know, do, relate and become. Education is contextual"<sup>84</sup>. To this, one can only add that education is also sharing the teacher's personal experience with the student and sharing the experience of one generation with another. Every generation transmits to those younger the fullness of its experience: religious, scientific, technological, social, political, moral. Thus the word education implies not only the academic routine of communicating some knowledge, fostering some skills and training specialists for various fields of action, but also a strategic task of the whole culture. Education is the dynamics of culture.

The main purpose of the WCC Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) program is monitoring the process of training prospective ministers and priests, but the program also assists churches in infusing new life into this task. A broader understanding of the nature of ministry (lay, ordained and collective) is connected with a new understanding of the contemporary mission of the Church. Peculiarities of the regional context of eastern & central Europe and the renewed relevance of

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<sup>80</sup> *Nauka i religiia*, 1992, No 1, p.7.

<sup>81</sup> About these new schools see "Mezheparchialnye uchilishschie - novoe sveno v sisteme duchovnogo prosveschenia". Interview with archbishop Kirill, *ZhMP*, 1989, No.5. p. 22.

<sup>82</sup> See <http://www.patriarchia.ru/text/28832.html>

<sup>83</sup> A well-known paraphrasing of Seneca's words; Seneca was reproaching armchair philosophers who reduced the purport of their scholar pursuit to developing and defending doctrines of their respective philosophical schools. Seneca minor, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, *Epistula CVI*.

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/education/index-e.html>

the word mission to theological education in general and with special reference to the demands of the region will be viewed below.

Theological and religious education are not the same, but under certain circumstances and in certain contexts of argumentation, it is vitally important that their unity and their common goal should not be overlooked. No doubt, it is quite natural to take religious education as the first step and sort of catechization, and theological education, as a higher level of including Church life that in the first place implies vocational training. Each one of these steps, however, not only presupposes gaining information, but rather, being involved and absorbed in the mystical experience of the Church, making oneself ready for the sacraments and taking part in the common doings of the Church. The word liturgy (leitourgia) means in Greek “common doings”. These common doings are crowned with communion, i.e. unification, koinonia with Our Lord in His Body, in the Church of Christ, so the very commencement of this process is sacred. To see the true place of education in our church life, one can resort to the following image: Education as a Liturgy before the Liturgy.

### **Education as a Liturgy before the Liturgy**

This phrase can be more easily understood now when social service has come to be referred to generally as a “liturgy after the liturgy.” The first to coin this image more than forty years ago was the present-day head of the Albanian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Anastasios Yannulatos. Later, it was frequently used by father Ion Bria. He would say that the Liturgy is not a self-centered service and action, but is a service for the building of the one Body of Christ within the economy of salvation which is for all people of all ages. There is a double movement in the Liturgy: on the one hand, the assembling of the people of God to perform the memorial of the death and resurrection of our Lord “until He comes again.” And it also manifests and realizes the process by which “the cosmos is becoming ecclesia.” Therefore preparation for the Liturgy takes place not only at the personal spiritual level, but also at the level of human historical and natural realities. In preparing for Liturgy, a Christian starts a spiritual journey which affects everything in his or her life: family, property, authority, position, and social relations. It re-orientates the direction of one’s entire human existence towards its sanctification by the Holy Spirit. “Liturgy after the liturgy” means that when renewed by the Holy Communion and the Holy Spirit, the members of the Church are sent to be an authentic testimony to Jesus Christ in the world. The mission of the Church rests upon the radiating and transforming power of the Liturgy. It is a stimulus in sending out the people of God to the world to confess the Gospel and to be involved in human liberation.

Now this concept of “Liturgy after the liturgy” is very popular and it helps us to see our charity activity as a sacral responsibility, as a part of our liturgical life, our church life. The same logic, I think, brings us to the concept of “liturgy before the Liturgy.” Religious education, evangelization, catechization, and having the believers ready for Eucharist is worship: a “liturgy before the Liturgy”.

It seems reasonable that this phrase should embrace not only the process of catechization, not only religious education or theological education, but education and formation as a whole. Receiving communion demands of an Orthodox member of the Church a certain preparedness, that is a period of abstinence, special prayers, penitence. Such matters as testing one's conscience with special attention to the dogmata also belong here. It should be clear that checking up on one's own conscience and confession also means testing one's beliefs and ridding oneself of vagueness and obscurities. A member of the Church is expected to keep oneself aware of one's attitudes toward every religious rite one participates in and to be ready to the best of one's abilities, spiritual maturity and morality for intelligent Christian answers to the questions life poses to us. One should not only, if asked, be able to give an account of one's faith ("be ready at any time when you are questioned about the hope which is in you, to give an answer in the fear of the Lord and without pride" (1 Peter 3, 15)), but should first and foremost answer for oneself.

Continual learning is needed not only in the comprehension of the revelation of Holy Scripture and Tradition, but also in perceiving the revelation discernible in nature, the sciences and social structures. Being a well educated person is a virtue; a neglectful attitude towards education moves one further away from God, because ideally, education should prepare one for meeting Christ, for thanksgiving, for Eucharist, for grateful service to Our Lord. The way towards Christ is a way towards Light, for "Christ is our Light." He is "Light of reason", "Light of truth"; "the Light of Christ enlightens all persons."

The Light of Christ emanates upon everybody, but focusing its beams and turning them to educate, enlighten and warm an individual person is a peculiar service of the Church; it is a service to God, it is a liturgy before the Liturgy. "The one who seeks after the Truth seeks after God, whether or not he is aware of it".<sup>85</sup> To help a seeker after the Truth means to contribute to this service to God through education and enlightenment, thus participating in a liturgy before the Liturgy. And we ought to stir the instinct of this thirst for the Light of Our Lord within the one who does not seek after the Truth and has not experienced the joy of acquisition of knowledge, and then to cultivate his or her taste so that they might recognize the fruits of true spirituality, to distinguish the true Light of Christ from artificial luminescence.

Thus theological education should also be interpreted as a prerequisite of liturgical life. Besides, it is precisely theological education that serves as a basis for religious education and provides the society with trained catechists. Education ranks among the objectives of the Church, it is a common cause, it is a "liturgy before the Liturgy" and the beginning of the liturgy. However, this conception may include a religious constituent found in secular education, too, in any science or art, if they help students to find the Way, the Truth and the Life. The first words of evangelization will also be a

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<sup>85</sup> The words of blessed Edith Stein.

liturgy before Liturgy. That is why one of the tasks of theological education is close cooperation with non-theological disciplines and secular educational institutions. The phrases a “liturgy before the Liturgy” and a “liturgy after the Liturgy” are not dogmatic definitions; rather, they are imagery. The impressiveness of the language of theology, however, like that of the language of the arts, lies in its imagery, not its definitions.

It is essential that education not be separated from formation and nurture and here again, Seneca's paraphrased saying comes to mind, together with the interpretation of these words by Michel de Montaigne: “Non vitae, sed scholae discimus. We are not to tie learning to the soul, but to work and incorporate them together; not to tincture it only, but to give it a thorough and perfect die”.<sup>86</sup> Seeing education as an essential and inalienable constituent of spiritual life, even as a mystery, is of the utmost importance for a post-communist society that has lost to a great extent a sense for religion, and even now in the process of religious revival tends to mistake religion for an ideology.

### **Main Directions in Ecumenical Cooperation for Religious and Theological Education**

Some of the ideas and recommendations which are suggested in this article have come not only from personal experience of the author but also from the experience of participating in the ETE program of the WCC as a consultant for eastern & central Europe for the past two years. Especially important was the ecumenical consultation, “Challenges Faced by New Europe and Our Concepts of Theological Education in Eastern and Central Europe. Interchurch Cooperation in Education” which took place in St. Petersburg, Russia, October 26-29, 2003.

As we underlined at this consultation:

1. Education must become a real priority in the strategy of reviving of church life. This understanding must directly affect the distribution of resources. Support of education is a long-term strategy and, besides time, it requires considerable investment. However, it is the most effective means of ecumenical development. It is also the most effective missionary strategy, if by mission we mean internal mission and resolution of social problems.
2. The quality and effectiveness of education in the region depends a lot on whether Eastern European models will be integrated into the overall-European and world systems of theological education. The elimination of provincialism in theological education is among the most important tasks faced in Eastern and Central Europe.
3. The realization of a number of internet projects may greatly assist in raising the quality and accessibility of theological education. Some of these projects were discussed in detail and concrete suggestions were made.

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<sup>86</sup> Michel de Montaigne. ESSAYS. Of Pedantry. Translated by Charles Cotton. <http://www.aber.ac.uk/~jmcwww/Montaigne/essay024.html>

4. The first meeting of the representatives of the Eastern European and Central European theological schools must be considered just the beginning of a long-term cooperation between them. The workshop "Education for Unity and Unity in Education" which is planned for 31.10 - 2.11.2004 in Prague is expected to contribute to further development of this program.

It is evident that our regional problems and the tasks of ecumenical education in Eastern & Central Europe are a significant part of the problems and tasks of ecumenical education of Europe as a whole. The ecumenical movement will never be a success if prospective pastors and priests are not involved in the movement, if they do not see themselves as missionaries of an ecumenical vision of Christianity. As General Secretary of the CEC Keith Clements remarked: "At times, for all emphasis in principle upon the need to give students and especially ordinands an awareness of the universal church, in practice too many pastors, educators and church leaders have emerged from their theological formation with no real understanding of other confessions or the human issues which all churches and Christians are having to face together in the oikumene, the one inhabited world which God made and loves." Materials from the Consultation of Theological Faculties in Europe which took place in Graz July 4-7, 2002 show well the relevance of these pan-European topics in the situation of European integration, especially after the Bologna resolutions adopted in 1999 by European ministers of education and cultural affairs. "Europe, whether inside or outside the enlarging European Union, is fast moving towards an integrated and co-operative life at many levels, not least in higher education."

It is a missionary question, and a question of our theological and religious education, whether the churches are going to make a specific contribution to European life at this level, or are going to be left behind. Thinking about the regional peculiarities of Eastern & Central Europe leads us first of all to recognize losses in the history and traditions of theological institutions there, and then specifically such problems as the quality of teaching, lack of professors and literature, provincialism, lack of material resources, anti-ecumenical tendencies and other shortages of that sort. Ideologically, there are tendencies to overestimate national or confessional patriotism and underestimate our common Christian values. We should understand also that only ecumenical cooperation can help us to solve many problems of education. There is no chance to be a good scientist now without knowledge of scientific research in other countries or other scientific schools, and without keeping in dialogue with representatives of other scientific schools. The same is true of theology.

So, pragmatic and missionary evaluation of the situation in our religious life and education shows that it is neither for the school nor for our confessions alone that we need to study and to teach, but for life. *Non scholae, sed vitae.*

### **Education as Mission: Ecumenical Vision of Education as Missionary Perspective**

If we hope to change the mentality of society we need an instrument. This instrument is education, plus a strategy of education and some concrete models of children's education for peace, tolerance, understanding the mystery of life, and for the veneration of God's gifts.

Today, Orthodox theological education (like non-Orthodox) must be mission-oriented and considered a fundamentally important part of the mission of the church. Theological and religious education must work for the destruction of false stereotypes and atheistic dogmas, which took root in the public consciousness even before the communist regime. Theological education is one of the widest possible social and cultural issues to address. It encompasses religious upbringing and the teaching of religion-connected disciplines at various secular schools. Crucial to theological education is its connection with the church, its rootedness in the Lord's revelation, and its faithfulness to the Holy Scriptures and holy tradition. Such a faithfulness does not manifest itself solely in personal silent piety but also in living according to the moral values and ideals commanded to us by our Lord and Savior. Preaching Christian mission and carrying the gospel to people are inconceivable outside the context of the Holy Scriptures. The foremost task of Orthodox theological education, possibly more urgent now than ever, is to reveal fully to believers, and at least partially to non-believers who seek the truth, the sense and significance of holy tradition, and the meaning of the church. This is also the foremost task of Orthodox missionary action today.

A special task for theological and religious education in Eastern & Central Europe is to include social topics in the curricula of different theological schools. Leafing through Russian Orthodox seminary programmes of the 19th century, one finds basic courses in medicine and even bee keeping. The introduction in today's programmes of such disciplines as missiology, psychology or Christian cultural studies is quite natural. Probably, there also should be basic political science, finance, and law. Courses in medicine are needed now, as well as special knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the abuse of drugs, to prepare future priests for pastoral work with the sick and their relatives.

The Eastern and Central European context as a general post-atheist context requires a thorough analysis not only for the sake of the countries involved but also for the Western European countries and even other continents. The events that are taking place here today are of the utmost importance for the whole Christian world. It is a kind of experimentation *in vivo*; Russia is, in fact, a laboratory of missionary activities. At the same time, the offer is open to all the Christian churches to contribute to reanimating the religious life within the space where many had believed that the church was unable to influence social growth any longer. Today, there is a chance, and the challenge should be met ecumenically.

One of the most important challenges for Eastern & Central Europe today is ecumenical cooperation in education and mission. The concrete and effective way of supporting missionary activity in each church, and of improving ecumenical understanding of our common task, is to reorganize our

theological education and give it a missiological perspective. Theological education seems to be nearly the last source to which the churches can resort for missionary recruitment. Renewal of parochial life is only possible if there are eager and competent priests and believers who have been trained and instructed by their church for working with parishioners and for pursuing new missionary tasks. The activities of the World Council of Churches, which are so significant and important for the Christian world at large and for its member churches, will, however, not be interesting and meaningful for church members unless the latter are continuously and intelligibly taught relevant subjects. Education is a priority everywhere nowadays, but first and foremost in the countries - and in the churches of the countries - that have recently begun a new life and where changes in past ideologies and views of the world are necessary.

The first step in this direction in Eastern Europe is to introduce missiology onto our theological agenda. However, this makes sense only if it is ecumenically oriented. Missiology can provide an ecumenical perspective to Christian mission. Only a common Christian mission, a "shared mission", will meet the requirements of the new democratic open civil society, and be a fertile and efficient path. It is essential that on this path of joint efforts the value of tolerance should be recognized. A peaceful life is impossible in our multi-confessional and multi-religious world without preaching tolerance as a value, and without cultivating a taste for tolerance. Tolerance can be differently defined and referred to; it can be treated as a liberal value. Nevertheless, tolerance must be one of the priorities in ecumenical education. This should also make it possible to interpret controversial aspects of mission adequately, for example, the phenomenon of proselytism. It is noteworthy that in the new Russia, the government approved a special state programme for fostering tolerance among the citizens of the country. For a society that has for years lived under a totalitarian regime, this is significant. Had such education been a reality in the past, many inter-confessional and inter-religious conflicts might have been avoided.

### **Three Aspects of Theological/Religious Education and Overcoming Fundamentalism**

The churches should pay the same attention to religious education and to "religious science" education in various higher level schools as it must pay to theological education. Theological education in the Russian context usually means a system of clerical education, i.e. normally the preparation of priests. Recently, we have also introduced some new forms of education in the sense of preparing lay theologians for church needs. There is now a great discussion about how we can develop theological departments in universities, and what the role of churches is in that matter. How can we solve the problem of denominational responsibility? It is a very new subject for the now democratic Russia. Some experiments have begun recently with theological departments in state and non-state universities. The Study Committee, a department of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), is responsible for theological education matters on behalf of the church.

We speak of religious education when we mean catechism through Sunday schools and other structures, or the teaching of religion in schools and in families. This kind of religious education is carried out by a special “religious education and catechization” department of the Holy Synod of the ROC. Thirdly, there is still another direction in education, namely “religious science” (in Russian *religiovedenie*) which exists in state and non-state universities. This is the study of various religions, including Christianity. Currently, most professors are former Soviet “scientific atheists”. However, new people are entering this field, including believers. Today, we still encounter negative attitudes from some church circles toward religious science and it is a great missionary task to find ways of cooperation between church-related scientific work, such as theology and church history, and “religious science”. Currently, no special structure exists within the church for dealing with “religious science”.

A coordinated approach is needed between theological, religious education and religious science education in order to destroy false stereotypes and atheistic dogmas, which had taken root in the public consciousness even before the communist regime. Such a coordination is the responsibility of the churches. To deal with interrelations between these three dimensions of education is a social and cultural issue, as well as a missiological one. A question that needs to be addressed concerns the place of religious education in the state system of education.

In every sphere of education it is possible to show (and we need to do so) that conflicts between Christians do not arise because of denominational motives but out of a clash between two types of mentality, viz. fundamentalist and creative. The same is more or less true with reference to any inter-religious conflicts.

Fundamentalism is tempting, and a main obstacle to common mission. Following a general definition, it is a conservative movement... arising out of the millennialist movement of the 19th century and emphasizing as fundamental to Christianity the literal interpretation and absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures, the imminent and physical Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Birth, Resurrection, and Atonement<sup>87</sup>.

If this is what we mean by fundamentalism, then we can refer to Orthodoxy as fundamentalist in its underlying principles. However, nowadays both denotative and connotative meanings of the word have come to be differently understood by those who use it. A fundamentalist position implies attitudes of exclusivity, sectarianism and, sometimes, even aggressiveness. Research into this phenomenon seems most urgent because the future of Christianity depends to a large extent on its capacity to overcome the disease of fundamentalism. According to Jürgen Moltmann and Hans Küng, individuals, groups and peoples will not be able to live in peace if those who have commandeered the “fundamentals” for themselves believe that they can deny others the right to exist, or if non-

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<sup>87</sup>*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1994-97, article “Fundamentalism.”



fundamentalists do all they can to exclude fundamentalists, or in intellectual arrogance simply pass them by. There will be no peace without a readiness for understanding on both sides<sup>88</sup>.

In its current usage, the term fundamentalism refers to a position which includes being in opposition, plus the rejection of hermeneutics, pluralism and relativism, the denial of evolution and development, and the tendency towards apocalyptic millennialism, and so on. Orthodoxy observes Holy Scriptures and holy tradition faithfully, but the Orthodox approach to Holy Scripture does not insist on adhering strictly to the letter. That would mean a lack of respect for exegetics and hermeneutics, and a lack of concern about the necessity to have the holy texts translated into modern languages from an ancient language that is treated as sacred, etc. However, the Orthodox approach tends to be accompanied by other strict rules. These include the refusal to compromise any principles (referred to by the terms *akrivia* versus *oikonomia* in Byzantine theology), absolute asceticism, nationalistic fervor (trimmed with anti-Semitism, but seldom openly so), closeness, anti-ecumenism, triumphalism (exultation due to the triumph of Orthodoxy), obscurantism to culture, antidemocratic positions, the support of monarchism, and Pharisaism. All of these are frequently combined with a sympathy for Soviet and Communist demagoguery. The weakest point of the position thus briefly described is a lack of the love our Savior spoke of when he said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).

A characteristic manifestation of Orthodox fundamentalism in Russia (in particular, at the post-Soviet stage) is the search for an enemy. In other words, there is the necessity to create an enemy complex:

It is our enemies who are to be blamed for our misfortunes; we must find them, expose them, and suppress them. For fundamentalists, the main enemies are the "renovationists" or "neo - renewalists" of the Church.<sup>89</sup>

Fundamentalism also manifests itself very often in the form of the aspiration to be a state church (this may be declared openly or cherished secretly), and by attempts to cut off all contacts with the rest of the world and to have church publications censored.

Sectarianism is an essential feature of fundamentalism. This carries with it a strongly negative attitude to other Christian traditions and denominations, and a particularly negative criticism of other religions, which are considered not to contain any divine revelation of truth. Such sectarianism is combined with a hostile view of Judaism, and, above all, anti-Semitism. The kind of sectarian spirituality that claims it alone holds the truth may be found anywhere. It would be incorrect to consider fundamentalism as just a synonym for conservatism, traditionalism or strongly held faith.

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<sup>88</sup>Moltmann, Jürgen, and Hans Küng, eds, *Fundamentalism as an Ecumenical Challenge*, London, SCM Press 1996, p. VII.

<sup>89</sup>See a collection of articles, "A trap set by the 'Renewed Orthodoxy'" (in Russian, V setiakh obnovlenchestva), Moscow, "Russkiy Vestnik", 1995.

At first glance, one may think that fundamentalists are the most active and traditionally pious preachers. Yet a careful observation will reveal that without creativity and the freedom of choice, such piety is superficial. Usually, it is fundamentalism that makes many people remain outside the church, either just outside its door or far off. I mean people for whom the values of a democratic society and principles of liberalism are essential. Their number is not insignificant in today's Russia.

Overcoming fundamentalism will serve the interests of society at large as a way towards creating its stronger unity, and a life without distrust, nationalism, pseudo-patriotism, and obscurantism. Overcoming fundamentalism is a spiritual task for which churches need to use all the resources available, and especially theological education. Today, the problem of fundamentalism has a new implication. For the time being, the danger of a terrorism that resorts to religious fanaticism for ideological support does not seem to exist in Orthodoxy. However, there are some periodicals in Russia, like *Orthodoxy or Death*, a magazine which is published in St Petersburg, that advocate for compulsion in inculcating piety upon the Russians. It is quite a popular magazine and is published by a group of Orthodox lay people. Another similar publication is the newspaper, *Russia Orthodox (Rus' pravoslavnaia)*. These are some of facts that oblige us to take very seriously any manifestation of fundamentalism.

At the beginning of the third millennium, it is first and foremost the missionaries and missiologists, like prophets, and then the churches, who must ensure that Christian unity becomes a key issue in the missiology debate, and that works dedicated to the realization of Christian unity become the central focus in the church's mission programme. This ecumenical strategy must include different topics such as globalization, women's context, new values in mission (e.g. tolerance, human rights) and others. One of the most important missionary tasks today is to support the integration process in Europe, and to introduce Eastern European theological institutions into the world system of such institutions.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>One of the responses to this challenge was the setting up in 1994 in St Petersburg of the Orthodox Institute of Missiology, Ecumenism and New Religious Movements (PIMEN). In 1998, PIMEN became part of a legally registered "Interchurch Partnership" called "Apostolic City - Nevskaya Persepctiva" (see [www.pimen.ru](http://www.pimen.ru)). "The Apostolic City" is a publishing house. Another interesting and important initiative in St Petersburg in the same direction was the setting up of The Russian Christian Institute of Humanity (see [www.rchgi.spb.ru](http://www.rchgi.spb.ru)). It was an Orthodox initiative but now is a cooperation of Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants in education. These two initiatives alone cannot change the situation but they are models which show the effectiveness of mission together. My analysis of the situation and my suggestions which were described above are based not only on my own experience in these two structures, but also on my six months' experience on behalf of the Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) program of the WCC, as the person responsible for ecumenical cooperation in theological education in Eastern and Central Europe.

## **Ecumenism and Teaching Ecumenically as an Aspect of Mission of the Church**

Christ's world is not a world of compromises and diplomatic negotiations but a world built on trust and love, a world which is the fruit of unity. Regarding the formal, external striving for unity, and the effectiveness of a number of ecumenical organisations, I should reiterate the words of the Orthodox thinker Florinskii, first uttered three quarters of a century ago, which I have cited many times already:

“No church office, bureaucracy or diplomacy will inspire unity of faith and love where it is lacking. Any external labels will not only fail to bring unity, but will cause disconnection between denominations... In the face of the impending crisis of Christianity, all who call themselves Christians should ask themselves the ultimate question and repent *with one voice and one heart* (Romans 15.6), proclaiming: *Lord, help my unbelief* (Mark 9.24). Then the question of Christian unification will move from the office into the fresh air, and what is hard and impossible for men will become entirely possible to God.”

Fresh air is an image accessible today to people who are weary of ideology and those who thirst after faith. Why are the charismatic communities successful? Because their enthusiasm and their practical worship are taken as evidence of fervent faith, whereas in the traditional Churches these fruits are less visible, and one of the main directions of Christianity today is witness - witness by the fruits of faith and the Spirit.

An admission that humanity will never renounce cultural pluralism does not exclude the possibility of deepening, broadening and strengthening Christian culture. We should, however, emphasize the confessional nature of cultural pluralism, which does not impede inter-church collaboration in mission.

While acknowledging the need for collaboration in mission, we should remember that by no means all Orthodox believers agree. As we have said, the very fact of the Missionary Council's entry into the WCC in 1961 drew the criticism of a number of Orthodox theologians and evangelical missionaries. In particular, Archpriest Meyendorf noted:

“... the Orthodox cannot agree with those premises which seek to justify the incorporation of the mission into ecumenical organisations such as the World Council of Churches, because they are associations of divided Christians. The Orthodox, however, believe their Church to be united, not divided, i.e. indivisible theologically and biblically. They think that any association between “divided” churches is nothing more than an attempt to work *ad hoc* on the unification of Christians, or a means of collaborating in those areas where it may be possible, including Christian announcement of the Good News to the world. Mission, however, in its highest theological sense, is an expression of the Church itself. It cannot be born out of divided Christianity, but only from a United Church, and it leads to the conversion of people to this United Church.”<sup>91</sup>

Here I should like to express my total disagreement with the conclusions of Archpriest Meyendorf. If we understand Christian mission broadly, not only as proselytism (such a danger exists, since even the

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<sup>91</sup>*Orthodox Mission Today*, p. 80-81.

conversion of an atheist can be understood as proselytism), the possibility and necessity for inter-church collaboration is obvious. In relation to the world of non-believers, to the non-religious world, we - Christians from different traditions and denominations - are undivided. One further aspect of the subject is the relationship between mission and proselytism. At the World Missionary Conference in Brazil, and in numerous papers, Metropolitan Kirill has spoken on the problem of proselytism: "Ecumenism and proselytism are incompatible." Thus, in order to overcome the move towards proselytism, in order to resist these tendencies, we must develop inter-church collaboration. It is important to note that rejection of proselytism - according to the fundamentalists - is a betrayal of the commandments of mission. The interests of Orthodox fundamentalists and anti-ecumenists are in harmony with the interests of the most radical fundamentalist communities of Protestantism. It is the evangelical fundamentalists who today are against the principle of the missionary responsibility of the local Church and in favor of those who have not yet heard the Word of God.

Mission together is the pooling of energies and resources, co-ordination of efforts, exchange of experience and mutual complementation in things that the collaborative partner may lack. The fruit of this mission is not only an increase in the flock but also a steady and, where possible, visible Christianisation of culture.

We need the broadest and, I therefore suggest, deepest understanding of mission. The church *is* mission. The rebirth of Christianity in Russia, of its ecclesiastical understanding - that is mission. Even the strictest Orthodox agree that, in our theology and theological education, in parish organisation, and in the running of the eparchies and the entire local Church, we must place emphasis on mission, on resistance to false religions, to pseudo-Christian cults, to the re-awakened militant atheism. The Christian mission is a call to unity. The basis of the missionary aspect of ecumenism and of the ecumenical view of missionary work were always the words of the Savior: "That they may all be one: even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17.21).

### **Conclusion**

Not only the study of church documents on mission, but also the modest ten years' work of the Orthodox Institute of Missiology, Ecumenism and New Religious Movements in St Petersburg prompts me to express a few wishes. Our research organisation has been the visible fruit of the collaboration in mission between the St Petersburg Church Academy, the Russian Christian Humanitarian Institute, the Inter-Church Partnership "Apostolic City - Nevsky Prospect", and a number of the city's state universities. For many years the Church Mission Society has actively participated in the collaboration, by sending volunteers and providing financial support. It is an example of ideal fraternal mutual understanding in mission work. Such relationships are not formal ecumenical links but working Christian collaboration that is strengthening Orthodoxy in Russia.

1. The experience of this collaboration allows us to say that it is vitally important not to divide mission into theory and practice, that it is necessary to promote collaboration between missiological and missionary centers, science and the church's mission; missionary funds must also support missiological research projects and appropriate forms of education.
2. The theme of "Christian culture" must be a central theme in missiology, which is a new subject in Russia's religious institutions and which we need to try to teach in Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran and other religious and theological schools.
3. In the current process of reform of theological education in Russia, it is important not only to improve its structure but also to bring into it a missionary imperative and missiological analysis. It is interesting that the new theology arising in Asia and Africa has a strong missiological orientation.<sup>92</sup> And it is there that we are seeing the greatest rise in the number of Churches.
4. One of the concerns of mission work should be the seeding and fostering of theological science, with missiology as a priority element. The collaboration between our theological schools and Selly Oak Colleges and other British missiological centres is very necessary, and the interest is possibly mutual. Chapters in missiology such as "Mission as social ethics" must also be included in new programmes (in order to agree with this, one need only refer to the Orthodox Church's social doctrine, adopted at the Archiepiscopal Anniversary Council in 2000).
5. One further missionary task of theological education is to include religious background studies, such as the sociology of religion and other aspects of 'practical theology'. Such subjects are taught in western programs, but we could subsume them under missiology. Another task is to bring religious background studies into the church. We cannot significantly expand the programmes of religious educational institutions but we can collaborate with secular universities to change the situation in religious studies departments; we can help to train, for this purpose, church-orientated specialists and believers. Most Holy Patriarch Aleksii II has reminded us a number of times that we need to analyse the religious situation across the country, using real figures.
6. It is vitally important to find the right models of collaboration between church and secular education for training lay people to carry forward the Church's missionary work. It is relevant to mention the initiative in St Petersburg that has created the Inter-Institutional Department of Theology based on the Russian Christian Humanitarian Institute, with the theological curatorship of the St Petersburg Church Academy and with the participation of the Inter-Church Partnership, which has been able to provide inter-church collaboration in theological science and teaching. The legal aspect of inter-confessional participation in state programs is important today, and the participation of the Inter-Church Partnership will help in addressing this problem.

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<sup>92</sup> See Johannes Aargard, "The Soft Age Has Gone", *Missiology*, 1982, No. 10, pp. 263-277.