Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union
Some Recent Developments

Jason E. Ferenczi
Overseas Council International

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THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION... SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

by Jason E. Ferenczi

Jason E. Ferenczi is a Researcher/East European Consultant with Overseas Council International, an Evangelical Protestant funding organization specializing in theological education, based in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The last fifteen years have seen sweeping changes in the religious landscape of the successor states of the former Soviet Union in all aspects of their institutional lives. One of the most important has been the renewed development of leadership at all levels of the churches in seminaries, academies, Bible schools, informal and distance education programs and Christian universities. The proliferation of these programs in the last decade has taken place at a dizzying pace, as Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant groups have sought to strengthen their current leadership and develop a new generation of clergy, teachers and “thought leaders.”

While the early 1990s were characterized by a proliferation of semi-viable training programs across the region, the latter half of the decade has been a time of consolidation of several strong programs, the growth of denominational training networks, and emergent cooperative efforts. Nearly all programs still face significant challenges, including continued dependence on Western funding, the need for curricular reform, and remaining needs in the area of faculty, library and information technology resources. A common difficulty for all churches, and their educational institutions in particular, is the need to develop leaders who can articulate a Christian worldview in the context of extremely pluralistic societies in a way that answers the deep spiritual questions of a highly educated population. The following article will first consider the overall state of Christian theological education, and then examine more closely several issues relating specifically to Protestant institutions.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION

In 1993, Overseas Council International and Dr. Mark Elliott identified 44 Protestant programs of theological education in the 15 independent republics of the...
former Soviet Union. In addition, another 21 Orthodox and seven Catholic programs 
were identified.¹ Nineteen Protestant programs surveyed at the time had a total combined 
enrollment of 1,667, with an additional 3,184 students enrolled in six extension programs. 
Nearly all of these programs had been founded between 1989 and 1993 and were offering 
instruction well below the bachelor's level.

The last decade has seen an amazing proliferation of theological training programs 
throughout the former Soviet Union. Today, Overseas Council International is able to 
identify 381 training programs in this region:

Survey of programs by country and broad affiliation²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Orthodox</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Armenia</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>3718</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>11731</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Survey of enrollments by country and broad affiliation³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Orthodox</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³Reflects programs for which data was available, as included in IDTT.
Azerbaijan  
Belarus  415125  20  560  
Estonia  00  330  330  
Georgia  6890  75  764  
Kazakhstan  30N/A  386  416  
Kyrlygzstan  00  133  133  
Latvia  5255  232  339  
Lithuania  0705  75  780  
Moldova  3430  182  525  
Russia  8,614120  4,612  13,346  
Tajikistan  00  25  25  
Turkmenistan  00  0  0  
Ukraine  5,5861,397  13,808  20,791  
Uzbekistan  N/A0  105  105  
Totals  15,8852,402  20,333  38,620

**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN PROTESTANT THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

The most striking growth of training options has been among Protestant groups. In 1994, 1,667 students were identified in 19 training programs in four republics. Today, of the 215 Protestant training efforts identified by Overseas Council International, enrollment data is available for 103 (48%). A total of 20,654 students are enrolled in 103 programs in 14 nations. In addition to growth in quantity of students studying in these institutions, the quality of education in many schools has risen as well, as several key training centers have upgraded their programs, facilities, faculty and library resources.

**Strengthening and Diversification of Academic Programs**

In the early 1990s, nearly every Protestant training program was training below the bachelor’s level, usually a two-three year program. Today, the diversity of course offerings has become much wider. The following is a summary of Protestant degree offerings by republic:

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5 This data reflects total enrollment in theological training programs, including both residential (ochnye programmy) and extension (zaocnye programmy). Of the total, approximately 10,865 students have been identified in six extension programs.
6 Reflects only those programs for which data is available. Programs are classified by the highest degree granted.
### Protestant Degree Offerings By Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Certificate/Diploma</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Master's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all, seventeen Protestant programs offer graduate-level education, usually an M.A. or an M.Div. Several of the programs at this level have no validation and therefore, it is difficult to properly assess their quality. In late 2000, St. Petersburg Christian University (SPCU) received validation of its Master of Theology in Biblical Studies, which will be taught in cooperation with the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies and the University of Wales. In early 2001, Donetsk Christian University in Ukraine received similar validation for its own Master of Theology in Contextual Theology. Both of these programs, as well as other nascent graduate-level training centers, will allow students to pursue studies at a higher level without traveling abroad.

Besides these graduate-level programs, several other programs have proven themselves to be playing a significant role in the training of leadership for churches in Eurasia:
### Selected Data on Several Protestant Seminaries (Academic Year 2000-2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Full-Time</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan - Almaty</td>
<td>Central Asia Leadership Training Center</td>
<td>14420</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova - Chișinău</td>
<td>College of Theology &amp; Education</td>
<td>182182</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia - Krasnodar</td>
<td>Krasnodar Bible College “Lampados”</td>
<td>11252</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia - Moscow</td>
<td>Moscow Evangelical Christian Seminary</td>
<td>3030</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia - St. Petersburg</td>
<td>St. Petersburg Christian University</td>
<td>8981</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia - Zaokskii, Tula Region</td>
<td>Zaoiskii Theological Academy</td>
<td>775275</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine - Donetsk</td>
<td>Donetsk Christian University</td>
<td>176130</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine - Kiev</td>
<td>Kiev Christian University</td>
<td>6565</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine - Kiev</td>
<td>Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary</td>
<td>615153</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine - Odessa</td>
<td>Odessa Theological Seminary</td>
<td>22239</td>
<td></td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Protestant theological training programs serve a wide range of denominations, both new and old. The largest number of programs, 36, serve the All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. These include five seminaries, two universities, one music academy, two institutes and eight regional Bible schools. The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of the Russian Federation has 34 training programs, with an additional 15 in other republics. Various Pentecostal groups reflect the second largest grouping of schools, totaling at least 46 throughout the CIS and Baltic States. The relationship between a theological institution and a denomination has proved to be of extreme import, perhaps more so than in many other parts of the world. Both Donetsk Christian University (DCU) and St. Petersburg Christian University (SPCU) have strengthened their relationship to the Baptist Unions of Russia and Ukraine. While both continue to serve students from a wide variety of backgrounds, and seek to encourage interdenominational cooperation, there is a recognition that what affiliation to a union provides is necessary for a theological institution to reach its full potential. DCU found that most prospective students want or need pastoral blessing to attend an institution, and

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*Of these, 22 have been identified by the author. Total enrollment for these is 4,245, according to "The Church and Religious Situation in Ukraine." National Security & Defense, no.10 (October 2000). Data based on statistics of the State Committee of Ukraine for Religious Affairs.


many pastors are unwilling to give a recommendation for any school other than one affiliated to their own union.\textsuperscript{10}

As in the Russian Orthodox Church, many Protestant programs first arose not at the initiative of a central denominational body, but as an attempt by a local church or region to begin to meet the pressing need for trained leaders. More has been done in recent years to develop training networks and common standards, whereby students can complete one or two years of their training in small schools before transferring to a major city to complete their degree. For example, Kiev Theological Seminary accepts students from Baptist Bible schools in Khmelnitsky, Kremenchug and Donetsk into the second year of its program.\textsuperscript{11} The Evangel Theological Seminary (Assemblies of God) in Kiev operates in much the same way, accepting graduates of seven two-year Bible schools across the former Soviet Union into its four-year program.\textsuperscript{12} The Eurasian Accrediting Association (EAAA) has also helped to bring common standards to many of the leading programs. Founded in 1997, EAAA now has 55 member organizations in eight countries. Five seminaries are now fully accredited by the organization. While most Baptist, Interdenominational and a few Pentecostal programs relate to EAAA, several other Pentecostal seminaries relate to the Eurasian Theological Association, headquartered in Brussels.

It is impossible to overstate the role of \textit{informal} theological training in the Protestant churches of the former Soviet Union. A number of major denominations remain ambivalent or opposed to formal theological training, preferring to continue to train their pastors within the churches through mentoring by senior leaders. This "\textit{ad hoc} apprenticeship system of pastoral training" was the only means available prior to 1989, and according to Mark Elliott, had the effect of "minimizing the distance between laity

\textsuperscript{11} Golovai 2.
\textsuperscript{11} From information included in \textit{Spravochnik Bogoslovske Uchebnye Zavedennia v Stranakh SNG i Baltii}. (Moscow: Association for Spiritual Renewal, 1999)
and clergy. The remnants of the unregistered Baptist and Pentecostal movements are among the groups who continue to develop leadership in this way. In the Islamic successor states, informal training and mentoring is widely used in the young non-Russian churches, often out of necessity. One denomination in Central Asia brings promising young people from outlying regions to a large church in the capital for nine months of hands-on training by a respected pastor, who introduces students not only to aspects of pastoral ministry, but also to some foundational biblical and theological information by means of materials he has translated from Russian into the local language.

Even within denominations that actively support formal theological education, there is a desire to assure that a proper balance is achieved between knowing and doing. Over the past decade, there has been much discussion of the need to develop theological education structures that preserve the close link between the church and the theological academy. David Bohn, speaking at the Consultation on Theological Education and Leadership Development held at Oradea, Romania in October 1994, stated that "Theological education and spiritual leadership development occupy the same space at the same time. To wrongly distinguish between them may produce ways of thinking about each that could prove unhealthy for the growth of the church in post-communist Europe, as it has in Western Europe and North America." Bohn continued with an admonition to proceed cautiously toward full-scale development of Western models of institutional theological education. Absence of options for academic and institutional theological training for 70 years, combined with the "intense yearning of theological educators in the East for academic respectability" has led to a strong focus on the development of formal, institutional programs, graduate-level theological training and other academic resources. The development and diversification of the church in Eastern

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14 David Bohn. "What forms of Theological Education are Appropriate for Post-Communist Europe - A Response to Mark Young," Paper presented to the Consultation on Theological Education and Leadership Development in Post-Communist Europe: Oradea, Romania, 4-8 October 1994.
15 Elliott 1995, 69
Europe in the past decade continues to confirm that all forms of theological education, including residential, non-formal and distance forms, are necessary to meet the need for leadership in the churches.

**Improvements In Infrastructure - Facilities**

In the early 1990s, very few Protestant theological seminaries owned their own facilities. Most institutions functioned in small, often marginal facilities. By the end of 2001, the vast majority of upper-level seminaries in Russia and Ukraine own or are developing their own facilities. In 2000-2001, St. Petersburg Christian University, Moscow Theological Seminary, Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary, the Theological Seminary of the Russian United Methodist Church and the Central Asian Leadership Training Center all purchased new campuses. Significant campus development is underway at Donetsk Christian University, Moscow Evangelical Christian Seminary, Odessa Theological Seminary and Kiev Christian University, among others. Improvements in the physical campuses of these institutions has allowed for increased student enrollment, expansion of program offerings and in many cases, a more cohesive academic community.

**Improvements In Infrastructure - Library & Textbook Resources**

In February 1993, representatives of twenty-two theological programs gathered in Moscow to discuss the state of theological education in the region. The greatest need expressed by participants was for quality theological literature. While the lack of quality theological literature remains a challenge, especially for the development of graduate-level programs, much has been accomplished in the last eight years. The Russian Protestant Theological Textbook Project, launched in 1993 as a cooperative effort between Overseas Council International and Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, identified and collected titles on Russian Protestantism already in print, most dating from before the 1917 Revolution. In the years that followed, works deemed to be of continuing use were reprinted. Additional works have been translated from English and other Western languages.

17 Jack Graves, "Theological Educators Meet in Moscow," *East West Church and Ministry Report*. 1, no. 2 (Winter 1993)
Several Christian publishing houses, including Mirt and Bibles for Everyone in St. Petersburg, Triada in Moscow and Bogomyslie in Odessa offer books designed for all levels of biblical and theological study. In February 2001, publishers and distributors from Russia gathered to form the Evangelical Christian Publishing Association, to bring greater coordination to publishing efforts in Russia. While much more quality theological literature in Russian, and especially in other languages of the region, is needed, significantly more resources are available to scholars, pastors and laity today. The size of library holdings in many Protestant schools has risen dramatically. Of 68 institutions for which library statistics are available, there is an average of 10,893 volumes in each. A survey of five leading theological seminaries in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, Donetsk and Odessa shows an average number of Russian and Ukrainian language books of 7,307. These figures are still merely a fraction of the size of the average North American theological library, which contains 111,000 volumes.

**Improvements In Infrastructure - Faculty**

The development of upper-level programs has been seriously hindered by a lack of properly trained local faculty. Until recently, there were no means of receiving validated degrees higher than a bachelor's within the former Soviet Union. As theological training institutions looked at furthering the studies of promising young faculty members, programs in the West were often seen as the solution. While numerous faculty at institutions in the region have completed master's and doctoral degrees in the USA, Canada, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Western Europe, far too many have not returned to teach in Russia. Often, the two-four years spent in the West dramatically affects a student, and especially their children. Cost is another factor making studies in the West difficult. The average cost of tuition and fees for a basic ministerial degree in

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19 It is very difficult to begin to assess the quality of these collections. Many schools keep copies of textbooks used for students as a part of the library collection. Regardless, libraries in institutions in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev and other major cities continue to grow.
a median U.S. theological school is $7,972. For an advanced theological research degree (i.e. Ph.D., Th.D.), the cost is $10,858.\textsuperscript{21} These figures do not take into account the amount of money needed for living expenses for the student and their family.

CHALLENGES FACING PROTESTANT THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Regionalization

The former Soviet Union was a land united, at least on the surface, by a common ideology – Communism – and a common language – Russian. The changes of the last decade have allowed the distinct cultures and languages of the fifteen successor republics, along with those of dozens of smaller groups within these countries, to reemerge. Although Russian remains a lingua franca across the former Soviet Union, many young people under the age of 20 in the Baltic States, Central Asia and the Caucasus no longer consider Russian a useful language. Secular education, while still relying heavily on Russian, is rapidly moving toward instruction in local languages. While many of the people groups in the region had no evangelical church 15 years ago, significant communities now exist among Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Azeris, Tatars and other groups. All of these factors present unique challenges for the continued development of theological education in the region.

Several theological educators in Central Asia who are leading 2-3 year programs are finding that an increasing number of students from rural areas are not able to handle Russian-language instruction.\textsuperscript{22} In addition to language issues, theological educators in Central Asia who attempted to provide training in Russian with translation into a local language found that different levels of knowledge and learning styles made this impossible. The Central Asian Leadership Training Center (CALTC) in Almaty, Kazakhstan found Kazakh students generally had less knowledge of the Scripture at time of admission, but were much more likely to engage in lively discussion and questions than

\textsuperscript{21} See Factbook on Theological Education: 1999-2000, Table 4.1.
\textsuperscript{22} Based on interviews with leadership of seven training programs in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in June 2001.
their Russian classmates. In addition, students training for ministry to Russian-speaking congregations were preparing for a different environment than those training to be pastors to the emergent Central Asian church. Theological education programs in local languages generally need to include a greater focus on Islam, especially the unique aspects of Central Asian Islam. Because of this, CALTC has developed a parallel program in which instruction in Russian and Kazakh is offered separately, taking into account the cultural and educational needs of both groups. The different patterns emerging in the Central Asian church also can make training of future leaders in Russia or Ukraine problematic. A ministry leader in Uzbekistan shared with the author that two students who completed studies in Russia returned to Uzbekistan slightly disoriented, uncertain how to make their high quality education applicable to their day-to-day ministry in Central Asia.

The move toward instruction in local languages happened even quicker in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia where every known Protestant institution is teaching in the local language (although some offer teaching in Russian or English as well). The question of theological education in the Ukrainian language certainly will continue to grow in importance in the next decade.

Evangelicals have more easily adapted to the increasingly heterogeneous cultural and linguistic map of the region than the Orthodox. They have been helped by the fact that “... the evangelicals are a multinational movement. a quality that Orthodoxy lacks.”

Whereas new evangelical churches have begun the process of interpreting the Gospel in the cultural context of Central Asia and other regions, Russian Orthodoxy is still considered to be just that — very Russian. The strong sense of foreignness of Russian Orthodox Christianity has drastically affected the new evangelical churches in Central Asia. The desire to distance themselves from a Christianity that is Russian has led to the development of a new religious lexicon. In place of Russian terminology for Christ (Iisus Khristos) and the Old and New Testaments (Staryi Zavet, Novyi Zavet), terminology more familiar to Central Asian ears is used (Jsa for Jesus, the Arabic Taurat and Inzhil


The immense size of the region, and the immensity of the Russian Federation, has provided another challenge for the development of theological education. While major training institutions in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Ukraine have students from across the former Soviet Union, vast distances, cultural differences, and the threat of “brain drain” when students grow accustomed to the lifestyle of major cities have all necessitated the development of training programs in Siberia and the Russian Far East. Significant growth in the Baptist church in Novosibirsk led to the founding of a new 4-year seminary in Akademgorodok in 2000. Novosibirsk, Siberia’s largest city, is now home to seven theological training institutions of Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Evangelical Christians-Baptists, Pentecostal, Presbyterian and Lutheran churches.

Continued Financial and Faculty Dependency

Another serious difficulty facing theological training institutions in Eurasia is an unhealthy level of dependence on Western faculty and financial assistance. Of ten institutions for which current data is available, the average operating budget (excluding extraordinary expenses such as construction and renovation) received only 14% of its funds from local sources, including student tuition payments. While this represented a slight growth in local income from 1998, the figures were still well below the averages for other parts of the world. Such a heavy reliance upon Western sources of funding not only puts programs in jeopardy should these sources of funds disappear, but also can bring undue Western influence on the academic and theological nature of a program.

24 Svaashchennnaiia Kniga: Smyslovoi Perevod izbrannogo iz Taurata i Inzhila (Bishkek: Al Salam, 1999)
25 For example, Donetsk Christian University has trained students from Chukhotka, Yakutia and the Tuva Republic, while Moscow Evangelical Seminary has had students from Irkutsk and Aldan. Numerous students have trained students from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and other parts of Central Asia.
27 Based on annual surveys of Overseas Council International partner institutions in 63 countries.
28 For further treatment of this subject, see Elliott 1995.
The lack of adequate numbers of properly trained faculty also leads to dependence on Western professors. While the percent of full-time faculty who are nationals has increased to 70% at eight schools for which data was available, significant parts of academic programs are still taught by visiting faculty, or in some cases by faculty who do not have the proper credentials. While foreign lecturers certainly play an important role, they also lack appropriate contextual tools. Miriam Charter states that “Educators may be conscious that the imported education models are contextually ‘different’ but either they are not sure what would be more appropriate or the pressures of time dictate the use of that with which they are already familiar.”

**Development of Eurasian Theology**

The profound changes that have taken place in all religious communities in the former Soviet Union in the past decade have created a situation unique in the history of the church. Churches which had been prevented from functioning and developing as they saw fit, and whose thought and public witness were often sublimated to the ideology of a communist state suddenly found themselves in a position where they were not only free, but called upon to exercise a greater voice within society. The institutional weaknesses of many churches and the deep divisions that quickly reappeared within the Christian community, coupled with the massive influx of foreign missionaries and resources, led to a church and church institutions unsure of how to function in the way most appropriate for the Eurasian context. Many educational institutions have been too busy carrying on the daily work of organizing an academic program, meeting the financial and managerial needs of an organization and the myriad of other responsibilities facing administrators and board members of theological institutions to give serious time to consideration of the unique characteristics and needs of theological education in their region.

The need for defining evangelical theology within the Eurasian (especially Russian and Ukrainian) context began to be expressed more fully as a greater number of young pastors and teachers completed training in nascent Russian and Ukrainian seminaries.

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This issue was raised at the biannual gathering of the Eurasian Accrediting Association held outside of Kiev in October 1999. Sergei Nikolaev, President of St. Petersburg Theological Academy stressed that “to be able to communicate with people in comprehensible terms we have to find an effective way to combine the enormous experience of evangelical theology of the West with our native religious quest.”

Out of this desire grew a conference for teachers in Eurasian theological schools, held in Donetsk in April 2001, entitled Eurasian Theology on the Edge of the New Millennium. At that time, a new organization was created to deal with questions of theology, church history and other disciplines especially applicable to the Russian and Ukrainian world. The new organization seeks to “bring together those with professional interest in the development of Christian education and local evangelical theology in the CIS, with the goal of mutual cooperation and coordination in these areas.” The group plans its first gathering in the summer of 2002. The next decade will certainly see much work done in the area of mining the rich history and beliefs of Protestantism in Eurasia.

DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES

Not all institutions of Christian education in the former Soviet Union are theological seminaries. Numerous Christian universities and institutes have also been founded since 1990. Ten programs have been identified in the 15 successor republics that offer subjects other than those typically offered in a seminary, such as teacher education or business. Five of these grew out of Protestant initiatives; five from Orthodox initiatives. A number of other seminaries in the region are considering moves toward this kind of program. The largest of these, St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Institute in Moscow, has nearly 3,000 students enrolled. Lithuania Christian College (LCC) in Klaipeda, Lithuania enrolls 359 students in business, English and theology programs. Russian-American Christian University (RACU) in Moscow enrolls 135 students and

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offers bachelor's-level instruction in business, social work and English language and literature. Both LCC & RACU are affiliate members of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, and maintain close links with Christian colleges in the United States.

CONCLUSION

Much of the West's attention to the churches of Eurasia in the last decade has focused on statistics, stories of mass evangelism and financial hardship. During that same time period, the churches of the region have worked very hard to establish the infrastructure necessary to properly minister to Christians and preach the Gospel in a way that resonates with their society. The very diverse efforts to train leaders in the region have all experienced their share of successes and failures. Most were begun in order to meet an immediate, local need, and organizational and physical infrastructure has grown up around them. Several programs are beginning to reach a kind of maturity, feeling that they are meeting the immediate, local need for which they were formed, and thoughts are turning to ways to strengthen cooperation, strengthen common standards, and continue to give voice to Christianity in the unique context of Eurasia. The challenges that remain are serious - lack of financial self-sufficiency, at times questionable relationships with local churches, a still unstable and rapidly changing surrounding world. Yet much has been accomplished, and today's efforts in the area of theological training continue to produce positive fruit.