

Institute for Christian Teaching
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**Christian Education in Russia
Past and Present**

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is the result of the reading and analysis of recent publications in periodicals on the topic of "Education in Russia," and reviews of recent conferences and "round-table discussions," as well as interviews and talks with church leaders. The aim of this paper is to introduce the main problems facing Christian churches in Russia in the domain of Christian education. Certain parts are devoted to various historical aspects of education in Russia.

Short Review of the State of Russian Education at Present

In spite of their different points of view, many authors of recent articles devoted to Russian education problems, agree that the Russian educational system is going through a deep crisis. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the appearance of a number of independent States on its former territory (each of these States has its own educational policies), the traditional system of Soviet education, which seemed to be very firm, is losing its meaning and content.

Now this tendency of decentralization is prevailing in the sphere of education. It is connected not only to the territorial and political disintegration of the country, but also to the deviation from fundamental principles and characteristics of the educational system which were formed in the country during the past 70 years.

The main purpose of this process is to overcome State monopolization in the sphere of education, thus obtaining freedom from dictatorship of the state in school affairs. Another major goal is to put an end to the dominant influence of communist ideology on educational content. The tendency to overcome uniformity, which sought to smooth away the individual characteristics of the person, is evident in the new educational system. The stated goals are proceeding painfully, with contradictions and in an anarchic way.

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What was the leading factor in the Soviet educational system? It was the myth of building the most perfect and just society: the crown of human development. One of the most important goals of the educational system was none less than the changing the nature of man on the basis of communist education. This goal was believed to achieved by the formation of a "new man." This "new man" should possess the most progressive and uniquely true Marxist-Leninist view of life, and must be faithful to the principles of collectivism and communist morale. This myth determined the fate of the country and its schools for many decades. All political changes, including changes of state leaders, did not influence the aim of forming "a new man." The system of education became a means of ideological coercion on growing generations.

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But if the content of the Soviet educational system's activities had been limited by this function only, it would soon have failed the regime whose interests it served. However, this did not happen for the following reasons: the Soviet school effectively solved a number of practical problems such as wiping out illiteracy, expanding the school system, preparing the work force, and forming the scientific potential of the country. The entire history of Soviet schooling is a balancing of faithfulness to the communist myth with the course for reaching pragmatic goals. These goals were connected to the satisfaction of the requirements of centralized and militaristic economics.

The educational system doomed itself to stagnation. It was separated from the world by "the iron curtain" of its totalitarian regime. The system stopped any attempts to "think differently" by all kinds of persecution. Prohibition to think differently became a real fact in this country in the 1920s and 30s. But the movement itself started immediately after the October revolution in 1917.

By the 1920s such subjects as religious training, Greek and Latin, philosophy, law and history had been excluded from the curriculum. History was restored in according to a government decision in 1936. By this time, a new subject: social science, had been introduced. It included elements of political economy, economic geography, history, philosophy, and sociology, all described from the communist point of view.

For many decades the centralized state organs of public education were responsible for working out methodological-educational principles for all levels of education, from kindergarten to higher education, in the former USSR. But in spite of being within an ideological frame, the Soviet educational system still managed to keep and maintain the great traditions in art and culture. The universities in Moscow, Leningrad, Tartu and Novosibirsk were original and creative scientific-cultural centres.

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Let us turn now to the important contemporary problems of the present educational system. "If we speak about the content of education today, we may view what is being done in this sphere as a revolution." E.V. Tkatchenko, the minister of Russian education, states that one of the most important problems at present is to work out standards of education. Criteria by which to value educational standards are not yet worked out. What is the basis of education at this point in time? Which criteria should be taken into account? Which should be considered the most important? These are the questions which trouble Russian educators.

Educational specialists consider the process of the formation of educational plans to be out of control and spontaneous. On the one hand this process liberates the school and teachers from ideological pressure and helps create an atmosphere of creative research in educational institutions. On the other hand, the process may lower the educational level of students and high standards of education may be lost. New types of educational institutions

have begun to appear in Russia: Lyceums, colleges, and gymnasia. There are also some commercial enterprises which offer educational services and the network of non-state schools is expanding.

But sometimes these changes are just superficial. Most schools are not ready for a new type of teaching. This would demand an extensive reformation of teacher-training in Russia.

Unfortunately it is very difficult to solve these problems today, because the general economic situation in the country is deteriorating. The financial condition of the educational system is not good either. According to data from the Education Department of Russia, even the minimal financial requirements of the educational sphere are not covered (according to the law of education, education should have received 10% of the budget, but it actually gets only 5.5%). This is not even enough to pay wages to the teachers¹.

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Comparing Soviet schooling history to modern tendencies, we can confirm an unpleasant truth: the past teaches us that it did not teach anyone anything. Destructive tendencies prevail over positive ones in the modern educational system. This may be a reason for the rapid lowering of the level of education in recent years².

Scientists and members of the government who work in the sphere of public education suggest different ways out of the educational crisis: restoration and development of national roots and traditions, previous types of Russian educational institutions (Those which existed before 1917), returning to the way of the enlightenment (which Russia followed before 1917) and the imitation of foreign schools and colleges³.

When the educational system obtained freedom, the church received freedom as well. What follows? Will the church influence the process of change in the Russian educational system? What can the Christian Church suggest to young people and the entire modern society now and in the future? What is the past and the present of Christian education in Russia?

Christian Education in Russia After 1917

"By the order of Soviet power all spiritual educational institutions were closed, church publishing houses were abolished, religious education was forbidden, all kinds of social services to the Church and its participation in popular and state life was stopped." (Patriarch Alexei)⁴

The First Decade After The Revolution

By the decree: "On separating the Church from the State and school from the Church", published on January 23 (February 5) 1918, schooling was separated from the

church and the teaching of religious subjects was forbidden in all state, social, and private educational institutions where general subjects were taught. Citizens could study and teach religion only in a private way. Implementation of this decree made impossible the normal existence of orthodox parishes, cloisters and church schools⁵.

Before the revolution, Protestant and old-believer's churches were persecuted by the tsarist government, which was influenced by the Russian Orthodox Church. But after the new constitution was adopted they experienced freedom to a certain extent. Evangelical Christians, (the Baptists) had two Bible Schools (one in Leningrad the other in Moscow) from 1924 to 1928. The Seventh-day Adventist Church had opportunities to hold public meetings, give sermons in public places and teach the Bible (A.Demidov - Russia, A.Chavrenko - South of Russia and Ukraine). Adventists maintained two Bible Schools in Kiev (1921-29) and in Rostov-upon-Don (1925-29). In some places, youth study groups were organized. Publishing activity continued and in 1927 the Adventist magazines, "Voice of Truth" (Russia) and "Good News Bulletin" (Ukraine) were published⁶. These magazines contained articles for children, families and youth. Yan Vilson led courses for church ministers in Barnaul and Siberia. Pastor Tsirat worked in the Ukraine, P.Sviridov in Southern Russia and the Ukraine. These studies were semi-legal⁷.

Strengthening of Terror

On March 8, 1929, the Council of People's Commissars published a new edict about religious communities. This edict prohibited charitable activities by religious communities while private religious studies were interpreted as being no more than a right of parents to teach their children religion⁸. Mass closure of churches and prayer-houses began. Some temples were even destroyed (for example, in 1931 the temple of Christ Our Saviour in Moscow - one of the most beautiful and grand buildings - was blown up) and icons and books for divine services were burned. During cloister massacres, handwritten books and valuable archaeological memorials were destroyed and precious church plate was moulded into scrap-iron. The closure of Churches and temples and the destruction of sacred objects was accompanied by arrests, the exiling of church ministers, and their transportation under guard. "The Union of Militant Atheists", founded in 1925, adopted its five year plan in 1932. One aim was to close all church schools during the first year of this plan⁹.

1934 was the year of strengthening of Stalin's terrorist politics. The pressure upon churches increased. Three-thousand members of the Adventist church (out of 17-18,000 total members at that time in the U.S.S.R.) experienced arrests and exile. One-hundred and fifty ordained preachers were arrested and all churches were closed. In the unbearable conditions of prisons and camps, in famine and exile, many Christians did not give in to despair, they remained kind and faithful to Christ - consolers of others. Of course Christian teaching and preaching were out of the question at that time.

The Second World War Years and the Following Decade

The great danger threatening the existence of the state during the war years, the

necessity of national solidarity for the sake of victory, the patriotic position of the Russian Orthodox Church, pressure of aliens and agreements adopted in Yalta and the opening of the second front, all caused the Soviet government to change its religious policies. The idea of allowing Patriarch Sergei (the head of the Orthodox Church) to restore spiritual education in Russia, was finally brought to life¹⁰. In 1944, the Theological Institute and Theological Pastoral Courses opened in Moscow. The Church needed to restore lost personnel for newly opened churches.

The new religious policies continued for 15 years after the war and were then changed under a new government. Spiritual schools were resurrected. The Moscow and Leningrad Theological Academies were opened. Seminary education was resumed in Kiev, Odessa, Lutsk, in Girovitski Cloister, Saratov and Stavropol. In the mid 1950s, the enrolment of students at all eight Orthodox theological seminaries increased¹¹. Since 1945 the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian-Baptists (AUCECB) was officially allowed to publish the only Protestant magazine in Russia: "Bratski Vestnik". At the same time AUCECB prepared eight different textbooks which were illegally propagated among the pastors. The translation and editing of materials for Bible correspondence courses was also occurring. The church received permission to initiate these courses in 1968.

It was to some extent the fault of Seventh-day Adventist church leaders, carried away by disagreement on the question of cooperation with the government, that they did not take advantage of the opening opportunities. However the church was strengthened and enlarged in the areas of West-Ukraine, Belorussia and Moldova and worship services took place in the registered communities. The USSR Union of Seventh-day Adventists: Ukraine Union, Baltic Society, and Moldova Society were founded. But even during that time the giving of Bible lessons to young people and children was forbidden and open to criminal prosecution. The post-war Soviet annexation of the Baltic countries, western Ukraine and Belorussia had brought about repression and the closing of almost all Catholic seminaries, except one in Litva and one in Latvia.

Khrushchev Politics

In 1958 some tendencies, caused by the worsening relationship between Church and State, appeared in the ideological position of the USSR. Nikita Khrushchev's political program, based on exaggerated communist principles, included the fight for "rooting out the religious remnants of capitalism from people's minds."¹² Attacks on Christianity became more common in the press. During Khrushchev's persecutions more than half of all Orthodox parishes were closed, and the enrolment of students in the theological seminaries was limited. Finally, five seminaries, in Stavropol, Saratov, Kiev, Lutsk and Girovitsk, were closed. In 1960 the all-Union Seventh-day Adventist organization was closed and the church broke up into territorial groups. That was the time of the inner schism of the church. Since 1928, the teaching of the Bible had not been allowed and Sabbath School was forbidden. It was held semi-legally under the title "The first part of the worship service" (there is no such designation anywhere in the world Adventist Church), but questions were not allowed.

Educational material was not published until the 1970s. Sabbath School lessons

were prepared by pastors, handwritten and sent to the churches. The church service was under the control of the KGB and the newly founded (1965) "Council of Religious Affairs" which was attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

After Khrushchev's retirement, the closure of churches stopped. However, churches were not returned to believers and strict supervision by the KGB was not abolished. K.M.Kharchev, former chairman of the Council of Religious affairs, remembers that the KGB participated in the enrolment of students to Orthodox educational institutions. Each young man went through careful verification and interviews with the representatives of this organization to discover their willingness to cooperate with the KGB. In case this was refused, an applicant had very little chance of studying in the theological education institution¹³.

Time of Stagnation

During this period, churches experienced a lack of personnel since the older generation of ministers was passing away. Closure of theological schools and the diminishing number of students made it impossible to compensate for the natural decrease of ministers with new seminary graduates. This is why some pious laymen without church education, sometimes even lacking a general education, had to be ordained¹⁴.

The same picture of educational decay among church ministers could be seen in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Some illegal preparatory courses for pastors were organized. These were taught by older pastors, who gave to the young people of their experience as well as an elementary dogmatic knowledge. This education was not of an elevated standard. Lectures were also given during conferences of church ministers. Church leaders obtained permission to hold such meetings, warning the government that, in case of refusal, certain anti-government reformist trends could appear in the disintegrated church.

Annually, one-hundred pastors studied the basic principles of dogmatics, homiletics, and church history through the correspondence courses run by the Baptists. From 1957 to 1959, four pastors obtained the opportunity to study abroad at the Baptist college in England. Later, 23 Baptist pastors studied in England, Germany, Sweden and Canada (in the 1960s and 70s). The Orthodox Church also had the opportunity to send people to study abroad. In the 1970s and 80s, Lutherans maintained a small theological institute in Tallin (Estonia). The Adventist Church did not have these opportunities since it did not have a very good relationship with the government and there were disagreements within the church itself. These disagreements were only resolved in the 1980s, after the Seventh-day Adventist church in the USSR was officially recognized by the General Conference Seventh-day Adventists.

In spite of the partial stabilization of relationships between the Orthodox Church and the Government in the 1970s, and the growing number of students in theological schools, the personnel problem continued being the most serious one. The educational level of Orthodox and other ministers was very low. Only one half of all Orthodox clergy had theological education and almost half the ministers did not have general higher

education. This made it very difficult to choose candidates. According to some select data from sociological studies, the number of conscientious believers was 30-40 million (total population of the USSR - 140 million).

A tremendous gap between the educational level at the beginning of the century and at its end demanded special pastoral leadership for the new converts, who came from non-Christian surroundings. This was especially needful since, in Soviet Schools, religious education was substituted by perverted anecdotal representations of the church¹⁵.

Taking into consideration the lack of clergy, the most important problem the Church faced at that time was the preparation of ministers for pastoral work. The question of the development of theological science *per se* was consequently largely left in the background. The main requirement for ministers and schools was dedication to the Church¹⁶.

Short Summary

The Church managed to cope with the great experience of educating people under the atheistic regime. In spite of the illegal status of religious educational systems and programs, the Church found different ways to educate believers: worship services, reading of the Holy Scriptures during the services, organizing church choirs and recording church music, spiritual tutorship in orthodox cloisters, reading of classic philosophic and historical literature, spreading of self-edited religious literature, iconography in churches and museums, self-education and missionary work of the youth, and the witness and martyrdom of Church members.

Christian Education In Russia - The Present

"It is light and joyful to be a religious leader in Russia today: joyful because you see how people's faces become bright during conversation; light because people themselves are coming to hear the word of the gospel without force and fear." (Patriarch Alexi)¹⁷

Beginning with the jubilee year of 1988, (the 1,000 year anniversary of the baptism of Russia) which coincided with the coming to power of Gorbachev and the democratization of society which opened new opportunities for the improvement of spiritual health, the church began to give religious studies for believers and unbelievers out of the church and started participating in public dialogue about the problems with which people were concerned. Meetings of religious ministers with the public became more frequent in clubs, palaces of culture, institutes and schools.

Christian religious education, the structure of which was destroyed in the atheistic society, is little by little regenerating itself at this time. What has the church done and what is it doing for Christian education to become available to all, children, youth and adults, in this troubled and difficult time? And how can their special needs and levels of understanding be reached?

The Parish Church

At present, in Russia, nearly each parish church (Russian Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant) has Sunday or Sabbath Schools for children. As a rule, these schools do not have their own meeting-places and have to rent classrooms in state schools or lecture halls in colleges and other higher educational establishments and so on. A lack of qualified teachers and textbooks is another difficulty in the development of Sunday and Sabbath schools. It often happens that in a Sunday school, organized under the auspices of a Christian church, occult sciences, clairvoyance, and other pseudo-sciences, which the Christian church has always denied, are taught. This situation tells us something about the need for a careful selection of teachers, who interact with children, for church schools that provide a knowledge of Christianity and Christian teachings. Ministers of the church face immense problems when they try to organize Sunday schools in a Russian village. The indifference of local authorities, spiritual darkness, involvement in mass culture, a passive negativity in the attitude toward the church, and the substitution of the living Word by television, are some of the obstacles on the way to Christian enlightenment¹⁸.

Primary and Secondary State Schools

The years 1989 and 90, were unique for our schools in the sense that for the first time in the history of Soviet schools the study of religious worldviews was quite widely and freely practised. For the first time ministers of the church and believing teachers were teaching more or less standard courses of catechization, the church's understanding of the Bible, and making students acquainted with the beliefs and activities of different denominations¹⁹. They were doing this on an organized basis. However, the majority of directors, heads of departments and teachers who were themselves not well-enough oriented in a contemporary approach to such problems have adopted a guarded approach to such novelties and are afraid "to turn the continual communication of tender children's souls with the Bible into gradual conversion to the faith. Although it is highly humane and highly moral." They are afraid of substituting religious enlightenment at school for religious education. Many parents protest against the invitation of religious figures to the schools and many ministers do not have special training for working in schools.

Certain educational personalities want the other extreme: "The school, after it was finished with the atheistic period of its activity, must not be actively engaged in pro-church, religious propaganda, vigorously introducing what was earlier denied by itself." Research done in a number of schools in Russia reveals that the principle of secular education is not being realized in practice. As was shown, the borders between the secular and the religious in school activities are not well-defined and some students do join a religion, although it is not a mass phenomenon. The ways of coming into a religion are different and varied: the study of beliefs and texts of the Bible at optional classes, in groups with a private teacher, collective studying in the form of tours, and visits to the lectures of Western preachers, who are mainly Protestant. There are suggestions in the media that in future educational establishments of an alternative type, the Protestant influence on children will be strengthened²⁰.

On their side, church leaders are talking about the careful solution of questions

concerning the relationship between religion and education (but defending other interests at the same time). Their fears are based on the historical experience of Christian schools in Russia, where students were introduced to the ideology of Christianity rather than to Christ. A partial knowledge of Christianity often hinders people from crossing the threshold of the temple and coming into a true relationship with Christ.

What then is the meaning of Christian education? It often becomes a part of cultural history, losing its main ingredient: the spiritual training of children. Spiritual education is impossible without the spiritual work of the children themselves. The subject of studying religion at school, as Deacon Andre Kuraev thinks, must not be discussed in terms of a compulsory program, primarily because we do not have people who can teach the subject in a proper way. It is not sufficient for a teacher to have read one or two books; he needs a very deep and serious knowledge of the subject. Additionally, the main thing the teacher needs is the ability to rejoice and be enthusiastic about what he is teaching.

Andrew Kuraev sees a solution to the question that does not make it compulsory for either school or priest²¹. This is to make possible a time for a meeting of all those who desire it with the priest. In order to protect the child from spiritual coercion the teacher can play a big role, not by teaching Christianity at school with a superficial knowledge, but by fulfilling the decree of the Supreme Soviet of 1990 about religious freedom which deals with the necessity to revise educational programs and exclude all atheistic and ideological teaching from them. The main thing teachers can do is not to convince children of an incompatibility between science and religion, not to slander pre-revolutionary Russia (before 1917), presenting it as a rude and backward country, and to speak differently about the spiritual roots and values of Russian history and culture²².

Church Schools

"The State recognizes the right of its citizens to create, for the purposes of religious or atheistic training, their private educational establishments, including denominational institutions where the State has the right to control only the realization of programs of general education and the requirements of State educational standards."²³

Church schools existed in Russia before the Revolution of 1917 and only today do we stand at the edge of the creation of a new church school in the truest and most serious sense of this word. Schools which were established on religious foundations were strengthening and developing the religiosity of children. It is important to remember that the meaning of the church school does not exist in the covering of different information from the religious perspective but in the training of true spirituality which will enable the child to have a free development in the true Christian sense without disfiguring and distorting the mind of the growing individual. Only at such a school will Christian education not be limited by a partial knowledge of Christianity but be an island of church culture and play a creative role in the religious growth of children. It is difficult to imagine a church school on the governmental level. Russia can develop different types of schools, but the church school must be created only by the church community since it is only in the conditions of the church community that it is possible to bring to life the model

of a Christian school where the idea of upholding Christian values is supreme.

As we know, the two major ingredients of Christian education are the school program and the teachers. At present, when the church receives the opportunity to begin creating church schools in Russia, it has been revealed that not a single textbook was made during the past seventy years (the saddest thing is that instead of making new textbooks we reprint pre-revolutionary textbooks), that there is no modern research in the field of Christian teaching, that there are no modern programs which take into account the national experience of Christian education and that there is a lack of highly-educated, spiritual teachers having spiritual wisdom²⁴. Christian schools face great problems and only a few of them succeed in becoming a true Christian educational system while others have to make serious compromises with the secular educational system, particularly in terms of textbooks, teachers training, accreditation, finances and so on. It would be timely to create departments of education at Christian higher educational establishments in Russia or special programs for teachers who received secular education. These would acquaint them with the philosophy of Christian education, with the foundations of integration of faith and knowledge and prepare the teachers for a Christian approach in carrying out school programs.

Secondary and Higher Theological Education

In Russia Christian churches are traditionally subdivided into three large groups: Russian Orthodox Church, Catholic Church and Protestant Churches.

Following this tradition in this work the Adventist Church is not placed in a separate group but is compared with other in the section of Protestant churches.

Russian Orthodox Church

In 1988, the intake of applicants in Russian Orthodox seminaries increased. In the very same year, in Smolensk, there was an opening of the first inter-eparchial spiritual college. After it, new spiritual colleges were opened in Kisev, Chernigov, Minsk, Novosibirsk, and Stavropol. In 1989 new seminaries were opened in Kiev, Tobolsk, and Minsk. At the local council in the July of 1988, special attention was paid to the contemporary problems facing the spiritual schools and the necessity of opening new educational establishments was noted. The development of scientific theological thought in the spirit of the best traditions of national theological science was also noted. Today, there exists an educational committee at the synod of the Russian Orthodox Church which governs the two spiritual academies and numerous seminaries, the number of which is increasing²⁵. The Russian Orthodox Church is attempting to solve the problems of catechization by training catechism teachers through the Orthodox courses established for this purpose in Moscow in February of 1991. There are over 500 people being trained, most of whom have received a secular higher education. At the close of 1992, the Orthodox Svyato-Tichonovsky Theological Institute was established. The Russian Orthodox University is the other educational establishment of the Russian Orthodox church. The president of the university is the chairman of the department of spiritual education and

religious enlightenment for the Father-Superior John [Economtcev]. There are three departments at the university, Philosophy and Theology, Biblical Studies and Patristics, and Historical and Philological, with fifteen students in each. There is a desire to open two more departments: Medical and Orthodox art. The main goal of this establishment is the combination of secular and theological education and the training of theologically-educated laymen. Aleksei the Patriarch thinks that spiritual and secular cultures should no longer live in enmity and separateness. The Russian Orthodox Church took steps toward cooperation with secular educational institutions by establishing the theological institute and the Orthodox University. The Ministry of Education of Russia and the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church have been discussing the problems of regenerating Orthodox traditions in the modern education of Russia. For the first time since the 1917 Revolution a treaty was signed which established foundations for the interaction of church education with secular education. The participation of both sides was enlisted in the federal program "The Spiritual Enlightenment of Russia."²⁶ In its turn the ministry of education of the Russian Federation sees good prospects for further cooperation with the Orthodox Educational Society and other religious educational institutions. It is encouraging to witness the mutual longing of the Russian Orthodox Church and government entities for closer cooperation and the creation of mutual educational institutions. However, the attempts of the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church to protect Russian people from the enlightening influence of other Christian churches puts us on guard since it considers this influence pernicious for the Russian man. "It is impossible to make a Protestant from a Russian man," is what the leaders of the Orthodox Church try to persuade Russians and the members of other Christian denominations of. At the same time they are persistently trying to pass a new law concerning religious organizations in Parliament. Article 38 of this law concerns the state of religious education and constitutes a threat to the democratic rights of many Christian and non-Christian denominations and also to Russians as a whole²⁷.

The Catholic Church

At present, the Catholic Church has two higher educational institutions in Russia. The college of Catholic theology, named after Thomas Aquinas and located in Moscow, has been open since October, 1991. This is an educational establishment with an residency program in which representatives of all denominations and secular people can freely study without charge. Additionally, evening classes are available and a correspondence program is operating. Together these two groups have about 200 students. The entire program lasts three years. The college has a library of several thousand volumes. A Seminary belonging to the Catholic Church is also located in Moscow. This seminary was opened in 1993 and has only 14 students. It offers a six-year program taught by foreign teachers from Holland, Italy and Canada. The seminary prepares ministers and accepts only members of the Catholic church who have recommendations and directives from the church. These Catholic educational institutions have difficulties with the renting of meeting halls as they possess no buildings of their own. They also lack Russian literature and national teachers²⁸.

Protestant Churches

After decades of prayer, Protestant churches, for the first time since the 1917 Revolution, received an opportunity to open their own theological institutions on the territory of Russia in 1987. The first was the Zaoski Theological Seminary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Between 1990 and 1992, with extraordinary perseverance, 44 additional programs of theological education were created. With few exceptions these Protestant Biblical schools and seminaries still lack textbooks, libraries, permanent teachers and necessary equipment. They do, however, have the main thing: enthusiasm, high hopes and a great desire to study. Eleven Protestant Biblical schools and seminaries have 1,667 students participating in one-year programs (see appendix). Eight large institutes have from 100-220 students each. The other 11 have between eighteen and seventy-five students. More than 1,000 students received education through courses from three weeks to six months in length. 3,000 pastors are studying by correspondence. As a rule, Protestant theological institutions are located mostly in big cities, capitals such as Moscow, Kiev and Riga or large regional centres such as Novosibirsk, St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg. The high price of programs, the dimensions of the country, transportation problems, and the urgent need for pastors in local churches who are unable to leave their families for a long period of time delineate the necessity for correspondence courses.

In February 1993, The Overseas Council for Theological Education and Missions sponsored a conference in Moscow for representatives from twenty-two new Protestant Bible schools and seminaries.

From the exchange of views and information it was possible to draw the following conclusions concerning the problems and difficulties these educational establishments face:

(1) Teachers

There are very few qualified teachers in Protestant educational establishments because only a few of them have received special theological training. All Protestant seminaries are inviting foreign teachers who teach with the help of a translator. In this decade, the training of teachers for seminaries is available only in Europe and North America. In order to accelerate the process of teacher training, it is possible to teach them in short (when compared to doctoral programs) master's degree programs and encourage the Western churches to organize single-session programs of a high academic level, as well as investing further in the work of Western teachers teaching in Russia.

(2) Theological Literature and Textbooks

There is a lack of textbooks and theological literature; translation of western literature is often of low quality and is not controlled. The extant translations are also often not published. Over 400 Protestant works have been printed in Russia however, and 100 in the Ukraine. It was noted that classics of Protestant theology have not been widely distributed in Russia from the 16th and 17th centuries up to our day. For example, only in 1992 and 1993 were John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion and John Wesley's Standard Sermons translated into Russian.

(3) Libraries

The largest library, containing over twenty-thousand volumes (compare this to the library of St. Petersburg Academy, which has 300,000 volumes), belongs to Zaokski Theological Seminary. The others consist of only several hundred volumes at the most.

(4) Class-rooms

One of the major problems is to obtain or to construct academic facilities. Many of the recently established seminaries and theological schools have to rent halls or hotels for classes and as quarters for students.

Zaoksky Seminary is in a better situation in this respect. In 1988 in Zaoksky there was finished the construction of the first academic building which made it possible to start a full-time department in 1989.

In 1991 the Musical Department was started. At the same time there was established the branch of Andrews University Theological Seminary and the MA in Religion extensive program was started.

At the present time the enrollment is about 200 students in both full-time and extension Departments. Besides there are 40 students taking the MA in Religion program. Zaoksky Theological Seminary aims to start some other departments.

The Seminary owns about 34 acres of farming land which makes it possible to carry on the gardening training program. Starting from 1989 agricultural students have been taking training in the intensive farming.

The Extension Department of the Seminary which was reorganised in 1993 provides for the special theological education on its three-years courses while its six-years' training program gives the opportunity to get a higher theological education.

In 1993 in the campus there was finished the construction of a new building which includes the dormitory, the temple, the cafeteria and study rooms. The construction of the library and the multifunctional hall is being finished.

The Publishing Department of the Seminary is preparing to publish a series of textbooks on theology in Russian.

No less than fifty Western organizations assist new Protestant schools at the present time. Protestant educational establishments in Russia hope to receive help and to interact with the West. But they do not want the West to dictate to them, thus leading to a state of total dependence. However, Russians do understand the necessity of studying the rich experience of Western educational establishments.

At no other time or place has the growth of Protestant theological establishments and programs been so rapid as in the former Soviet Union. All the more wonderful is the fact that these began from nothing.

Alternate Forms of Religious Education

At present, television and radio help to maintain a serious dialogue concerning Christianity, spiritual enlightenment and education as well as acquainting Russians with the lack of churches.

The orthodox church has two radio stations, "Radonezh" and "Sofia", but not a single program on television. The leadership of the church is only now considering the creation of an Orthodox television channel and about their own TV studio.

An Adventist Radio/TV Centre, Voice of Hope, has already been in existence for three years. One out of every two Russian citizens knows about or has heard these broadcasts. Many of these listeners have completed or are studying Biblical courses offered by the Voice of Hope.

The Christian Cultural Centre, "Faith For Today", organized by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ryazan, offers their viewers a half-hour live broadcast twice a week which provides information and education concerning questions of health, family, morality, the raising of children and human relationships. It is the first TV program in our country which is produced by a Christian Church in Russian. About one-thousand viewers are studying the correspondence courses or attend on-site classes offered through the cultural centre's "New Life" program.

There are English language schools created jointly with ITS in Kiev, Moscow, Tashkent, Ryazan, Nizhny-Novgorod, and St. Petersburg. These schools help people to become acquainted with Christians and students are invited to take Bible classes.

We must should also mention other forms of alternate religious education which are being born in Russia at present. These include Christian youth groups, children's camps, pilgrimages, excursions to historical places and museums, ecumenical workers' camps, rebuilding of churches and monasteries, and various other projects for meeting people's needs.

CONCLUSION

Russia has received freedom, including the freedom to choose to follow the way into knowledge of Christ. The Russian system of education is at a crossroads. Christian education has only just been born. Neither the Russian Orthodox church nor any of the other denominations are ready to fully use this sudden and unexpected freedom. Much will depend upon how we as Christians work in our missionary and educational activities at this complex time. The country needs the true light of the gospel, a revival of Christian values and the obtaining of a Christian worldview. At this time it is possible to begin to set up an independent tradition of Christian schools using the rich experience of education which has been accumulated in the world's Christian teaching endeavours.

Appendix

The following table lists the nineteen Protestant Bible schools and seminaries known in the former Soviet Union²⁹.

NAME	AFFILIATION	DATE OF FOUNDING	LOCATION	ENROLLMENT
Calvary Bible Institute	Pentecostal	1991	Riga, Latvia	220
Zaokski Theological Seminary	Adventist	1987	Zaokski, Russia	170
Odessa Bible College	Evangelical Christian Baptist	1991	Odessa, Ukraine	160
St. James Bible College	Nondenominational	1991	Kiev, Ukraine	132
Baptist Theological Seminary	Evangelical Christian Baptist	1991	Kiev, Ukraine	129
Logos Christian College	Nondenominational	1990	St. Petersburg	114
Riga Lutheran Seminary	Lutheran	-----	Riga, Latvia	110
Victory Theological Institute	Pentecostal	1992	Moscow, Russia	102
Bible Training School	Pentecostal	1991	Moscow, Russia	75
Lutheran Theological Institute	Lutheran	-----	Talinn, Estonia	70
Theological Seminary of Christians of Evangelical Faith	Pentecostal	1990	Ternopol, Ukraine	65
New Life Theological School	Nondenominational	1992	Kiev	62
Donetsk Bible College	Nondenominational	1991	Donetsk, Ukraine	58

contd...

NAME	AFFILIATION	DATE OF FOUNDING	LOCATION	ENROLLMENT
Moscow Theological Institute	Pentecostal	1992	Moscow	54
Baptist Training Centre	Evangelical Christian Baptist	1991	Moscow	50
Temple of the Gospel Seminary	Evangelical Christian Baptist	1991	St. Petersburg	30
Theological Faculty, University of Tartu	Lutheran	-----	Tartu, Estonia	28
Latvian Baptist Seminary	Evangelical Christian Baptist	-----	Riga	20
Estonian Baptist Seminary	Evangelical Christian Baptist	1989	Tartu	18
Total				1,667

End Notes

1. E.V.Tkachenko, Minister of Education in Russia, "The big Change", *Night School*, (1991), No.2, p.5
2. V.P.Borisenkov, "The School of Russia", *Pedagogika*, (1993), No.4, pp.3-14
3. See Ravkin Z., Member of Russian Educational Academy, "Does the Past have a Future?", Goncharov I., Professor of Russian State Pedagogical University after Gertsen A.I. in S.-Petersburg, "How will the Russian School be?", *Education of Schoolchildren*, (1993), No.5, pp.8-15
4. V.Zipin, *History of Russian Orthodox Church 1917 - 1990*, Moscow: Chronicles, 1994, pp.5-8
5. Ibid., p.30.
6. A.V. Teppone. *SDA Church History in Russia*, Kaliningrad: 1993.
7. Interview with Kulakov M.P., Director of the Institute of the Bible Translation and the former leader of the SDA church in Russia, (April 17, 1994).
8. V.Zipin, *History of Russian Orthodox Church 1917-1990* , Moscow:Chronicles, 1994; p.92.
9. Ibid., p.103.
10. Ibid., p.133.
11. Ibid., p.150.
12. Ibid., p.155.
13. A.Negnii, *Devil's Commissar*, Moscow: Protestant ,1993, p.186.
14. V.Zipin, *History of Russian Orthodox Church 1917-1990* ,Moscow:Chronicles, 1994; p.168.
15. Ibid., p.186.
16. Father Superior John Ikonomtsev. "The 300-th anniversary of Moscow Theological Academy", *Orthodoxy. Byzantium and Russia*, Moscow:Christian Literature, 1992, p.122.
17. Patriarch Alexei: Speech on his election as Academician of the Russian Educational Academy; March 1993.
18. B. Niginirov, "Remarks on Sunday School", *The Way of Christianity*, Moscow: (1993), No.2