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Lutheranism in Russia: Amidst Protestantism, Orthodoxy and Catholicism*

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When religious confessions that were suppressed or seriously persecuted in Soviet times are regenerating themselves, the result is sometimes quite novel religious movements that have no prerevolutionary precursors. To some extent this applies to all confessions. Even postsoviet Orthodoxy is nothing like the prerevolutionary Russian Orthodox Church. The metamorphosis of Russian Lutheranism, however, goes a good way beyond the norm for novelty in Russian confessions. In Russia today Lutheranism is unexpectedly becoming quite different, doctrinally and psychologically, from what it ever has been anywhere before. It could well play its own unique role on the future Russian religious scene.

Until the 1980s virtually the only Lutherans in Russia were communities of Germans, most of which had been deported from European Russia to the Urals and Siberia by Stalin. These were mostly old people with not much education, and their numbers were rapidly declining because of increasing emigration. All the signs were that there was no future for Lutheranism in Russia. Over the last 15 years, however, the situation has changed radically. Most Russian cities now have Lutheran parishes, and most of the parishioners are Russians. In some cities – for example Izhevsk, Vladivostok, Krasnoyarsk and Novosibirsk – the Lutheran parishes are several hundred strong. In some of these cities the number of practising Lutherans is comparable to the number of practising Orthodox. There has been just as much of a radical change in the social makeup of the Lutheran parishes, with young people, students and people with higher education now playing a prominent role. They are a living refutation of Dostoyevsky's famous dictum that 'Russian means Orthodox': they see themselves as Russian patriots but at the same time faithful followers of Lutheran teachings. There is a widely held conviction among them that they are more faithful disciples of the Wittenberg reformer than today's Germans or Swedes. At the start of the twenty-first century Lutheranism has turned out to be the religious niche most suitable for many Russians who are seeking God but have failed to find him either in Orthodoxy or in more radical forms of Protestantism.

What particular features of Lutheranism are so attractive to today's Russians?

*This is a translation of the chapter 'Rossiiskoye lyuteranstvo' published in the volume *Religiya i obshchestvo: ocherki religioznoi zhizni sovremennoi Rossii* (Moscow and St Petersburg, Letny Sad, 2002), pp. 315-35, updated and incorporating material from a more recent article by the same authors, 'Rossiiskoye lyuteranstvo mezhdru protestantizmom, pravoslaviyem i katolitsizmom', *Druzhiba narodov*, 8, 2002.

Lutheranism was historically the first successful Protestant movement. It has adopted none of the more extreme Protestant theological positions which are to be found in the Baptist faith, Methodism or Adventism, and has preserved a good deal of its Catholic heritage. While recognising the absolute omnipotence of God and salvation through faith as the gift of God, Lutheranism does not conclude that some have been predestined for salvation and others for destruction since before the creation of the world. Unlike other Protestant movements, Lutheranism is liturgical. It recognises the validity of the sacraments, baptism, communion, confession, marriage, ordination, confirmation. Lutheran services play a more important part in the spiritual life of believers than most other Protestant types of service do: they are more ceremonial and mystical. Worship is thus a prominent element in Lutheranism; at the same time there is less stress on the need to observe formal rules of morality in everyday life. God requires Lutherans to respond freely and consciously to his love rather than follow detailed commandments. For a Lutheran the Bible is the source of truth, but one does not look to it for concrete answers to practical questions; rather it provides the basis for contemplation and drawing one's own conclusions. Lutheranism makes a clear distinction between the Gospel – religious life as such – and the Law, which is the concern of the state. Lutherans can therefore accommodate themselves just as easily to life in a monarchy (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, pre-1914 Germany) as to life in a republic (the USA, postwar Germany, Finland, Iceland). Politics and life in society are an autonomous realm, into which the church does not intervene directly; but the believer is required to fulfil his or her civic duties since this is God's will.

Lutheranism provides a way of reconciling faith with reason; it is at once liturgical and intellectual. It has profound ties with European culture, and facilitates a similar link with Russian culture. It is orientated towards western political values, but is not so directly linked with them as the Baptist or Pentecostal faiths are. There is room for conservatives and liberals alike within Lutheranism. In addition to all this, Lutheranism is characterised by a rich parish life with all sorts of social projects.

Other Christian churches in Russia share some of these features, but only Lutheranism combines them all, and this makes it uniquely attractive to ever-growing numbers of Russian citizens today.

Russian Lutheranism is a new phenomenon; but Lutheranism in Russia is one of the oldest traditional confessions. Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral in 1517, and by 1576 the Germans in Moscow had built the first Lutheran church in Russia. Lutheranism did not produce the same idiosyncratic reaction in Russia as Catholicism. The centuries-old fear of the Pope of Rome planning his Catholic expansion in order to enslave Holy Russia did not extend to the modest ethnic faith of these merchants, engineers, doctors, officers and other professionals. There were very few cases of Lutheran missionary activity or voluntary adoption of Lutheranism by Russians, and the secular authorities and the Orthodox Church took good care to ensure that this German church stayed German. Any stepping over the bounds was harshly punished: a pastor Kul'man, for example, was burnt at the stake at the end of the seventeenth century for trying to preach to Russians.

At the same time as German Lutheranism was appearing in the larger Russian towns the Scandinavian Lutheran tradition was also establishing itself. The Scandinavian branch had been developing independently from the very start of the Lutheran movement. Sweden became Lutheran in the context of the Swedish king's struggle for independence from the Vatican, and the national Catholic Church was so convinced of the need for change that the entire clergy with their bishop at their head

voluntarily accepted Lutheranism; in their view it contained nothing to contradict the apostolic faith. The Catholic liturgy was altered much less in Scandinavia than in the German lands, with a more mystical understanding of worship and the sacraments than that of 'rational' German Lutheranism. Finnish parishes in what is now Leningrad *oblast'* which had become Lutheran when they were under Swedish control marked the start of the Scandinavian Lutheran tradition in Russia. They were located in those parts of northern Ingria (Ingermanland) that were occupied by Russia during the Russo-Swedish wars in the reign of Ivan the Terrible. The area subsequently changed hands several times. The earliest mention of a Lutheran parish, in Lemblovo, is from 1611. By 1641 there was an independent diocese based in Narva. At the time of Peter the Great's victory in the Northern War and the return of the mouths of the Neva to Russian control there were already 28 parishes in the area. Russia thus received from Sweden a Lutheran church with a developed organisation and infrastructure. From the time it was founded St Petersburg was home to the Swedish-Finnish parish of St Mary which then became the centre of the Scandinavian Lutheran tradition in Russia and remains so to this day.

German and Scandinavian Lutheranism developed quite independently in Russia until the nineteenth century. Until the mid-eighteenth century the Scandinavian tradition had more adherents (mostly Finns) than the German tradition. Up to the Revolution the Finnish Ingermanlanders, most of them villagers, remained a religious-national community with little influence compared with that which the German Lutherans exercised on all aspects of Russian social and civic life. After the collapse of communism, however, the revived Church of Ingria unexpectedly became very attractive to Russian citizens of various nationalities. Today the tradition of Scandinavian Lutheranism is just as important in Russian religious life as that of German Lutheranism.

From the time of Peter the Great Lutheranism essentially gained the privileged position of the second state religion. The Lutheran Germans, Finns and other Western Europeans were not restricted by the state authorities. Up to the very end of the Empire most of the Russian tsars married Lutheran princesses from the royal houses of Northern Europe. Of course these princesses had to become Orthodox when they married, but the result was that Lutheranism was never seen as something alien or threatening. There were a great many German Lutherans in the upper and middle ranks of Russian society. Throughout the realms of bureaucracy, military command, academe, business and the creative arts the heavy German accent of the Lutherans of Russia was to be heard. Family ties, higher education in Germany and the Baltic States and the conversion of some Lutherans to Orthodoxy meant that Lutheranism was a familiar and comprehensible faith. There is a great deal of research waiting to be done on the influence of Lutheranism on Russian Orthodoxy and culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In 1832 all the various Lutheran movements and organisations in Russia (but not those in Finland and Poland themselves) were united as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia (*Yevangelicheskoye-lyuteranskaya tserkov' v Rossii*) (YeLTsR). It was granted statutes recognising the Russian tsar as its head, but there was an agreement that he would not interfere in questions of religion. This was all in line with Lutheran doctrine: Luther himself said that as a social organisation the church is part of the secular state structure. From that time the Ingermanlanders were a minority in a predominantly German church.

It was in the nineteenth century that the Baltic States, and particularly Estonia, began to play an important role in Russian Lutheran life. The German Lutherans there

had very close links with Germany, the Estland Lutheran clergy were well known for their high levels of education, and Dorpat University, famed in Germany, was the centre for the training of Lutheran clergy for Russia.

Nicholas I built a structure for the united Lutheran Church in his favourite architectural style, which he had already used for the Russian state and for the Orthodox Church: authoritarian and bureaucratic, uniform and directly subject to the tsar. But cracks kept appearing in the building. One problem was the Finnish Ingermanlanders. They had now been brought together into three deaneries (*probstvo*) of the united church, but they were still unhappy about German cultural hegemony in the church and about the fact that the norms of German Lutheranism were obligatory – norms that differed in many important ways from Scandinavian practices. But another problem was the fact that divisions were appearing within German Lutheranism itself. Before the Revolution, German Lutheranism had taken the lead in attracting Russians; but it was founded by Germans.

The seeds of the conflict were sown under Catherine I. She was keen to invite immigrants, and especially Germans, to settle newly conquered areas in eastern and southern Russia. Most of her successors continued her policy. The first wave of immigrants (1763–68) was mostly economically motivated, but the second wave (1804–25), totalling some 50,000, came as the consequence of religious persecution in Germany at the hands of the official state Lutheran Church. Most of them were religious dissidents who disagreed with its doctrine and liturgical practice. They compared religious persecution at home with the religious toleration granted them by Catherine. Most of these dissidents were Pietists. This is a mystical movement whose followers hold that the essential thing for a believer is personal experience of God ('Second Birth'). They give prime place to the daily gatherings called *shtunde* (from the German 'Stunde', 'hour') during which they pray together and read and study the Bible. Hence they are sometimes called 'Stundists' (*shtundisty*). Pietism requires no complex form of service. Pastors are prized for their personal piety rather than the level of their education.

The aim of Nicholas I was to bring all the Lutherans of Russia into one denomination, and so he tried to appoint official pastors trained at Dorpat University to Pietist congregations. In reaction to this pressure the Pietists started founding so-called 'fraternal communities' (*bratskiye obshchiny*) (Stricker, 1998a). Churchgoing Lutherans were mostly town-dwellers of the middle and upper classes, while the 'fraternal communities' brought together peasants in the German villages scattered throughout Russia from Moldavia to the Far East.

The conflict calmed down to some extent in the second half of the nineteenth century (but only calmed down: as we shall show later, it is still going on today) as the Lutheran settlers realised that despite the efforts of the Russian authorities to impose their own church order on them it was still quite easy for them to follow their customary religious ways. A constant shortage of clergy meant that one official pastor would have 20 parishes to look after; 100 in Siberia. The church headquarters in St Petersburg was unable to control all the Lutheran parishes. Even by 1914 there were just 200 pastors for the 4000 German Lutheran villages in the Russian Empire. A fraternal community would see a pastor only once or twice a year. On his visit the pastor would celebrate weddings, baptisms and confirmations. This was all quite satisfactory as far as the communities were concerned. They held that infant baptism was essential, but that the sacraments of baptism and communion had to be performed by an ordained pastor. The rest of the time the community lived according to its own rules.

The fraternal communities thus carried on in peaceful isolation, until in the second half of the nineteenth century they began to become better known and an object of interest in wider Russian society. Russians were starting to be drawn to the Stundist gatherings of their German neighbours and to participate in prayer groups and Bible-study circles. Russian workers employed in prominent German households would also regularly attend the Stunde with their masters, and when they went back to their villages they would continue studying the Bible with their own families, often coming into conflict with the local Orthodox priests. Things gradually reached such a pitch that the authorities intervened with typical severity. The result was the 'Stundist uprisings' (*'shtundistskiye bunty'*) of the 1870s in the whole of southern Ukraine and parts of the Volga region. The authorities succeeded in putting them down, but the conflict between the fraternal communities and the official church continued until the YeLTs were dissolved in 1937, and it reopened when the church was restored.

It was from Russian-German Stundist circles that the first Baptists emerged (Stricker, 1998b). At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries the Russian 'Stunde' and the Baptist faith turned into one of the worst heresies as far as the Russian government and the Holy Synod were concerned. They waged constant war on it, and the Lutheran leadership in St Petersburg started thwarting any efforts by their anarchic German clergy in the villages to bring the light of truth to their Russian neighbours. This was a unique interlude, however. By the 1890s the Russian Baptist movement was developing its own new course, mainly at the expense of the Molokans. It cannot compare with what is happening today, when Russians are attracted to Lutheranism in all its aspects.

After the Revolution Lutheranism did not collapse immediately. In the 1920s, with government control removed, it even experienced something of a revival. In 1919 the Ingermanland parishes split off from the united Lutheran Church and in the face of opposition from the secular authorities formed themselves into a Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (*'Finskaya yevangelicheskoye-lyuteranskaya tserkov'*) in 1923. The German Lutherans, with their much closer links with the authorities, found it harder to adapt to the new conditions, and they took a good deal longer to do so, but in the 1920s they too set up their own church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Soviet Union (*'Yevangelicheskoye-lyuteranskaya tserkov' Sovetskogo Soyuz'*). With their tradition of compliance to the state, the German Lutherans even produced their own version of the Renovationist movement in the Orthodox Church, led by pastor Yakov Fritsler. The leaders of this movement declared the unity of Lutheranism and communism, and put revolutionary songs into the order of service (Veber, 1989, p. 370).

This period of relative freedom for the Lutherans in Russia did not last long. Between 1929 and 1938 Lutheranism was completely eradicated (Litsenberger, 1999). By 1937 all the church's buildings had been nationalised and all the pastors were in labour camps, where virtually all of them perished. Only three pastors survived the years of persecution. In 1937 most of the Finnish Ingermanlanders were exiled from Leningrad *oblast'* to Central Asia. In 1941 it was the turn of the Germans. It seemed at the time that not only the Lutheran faith but the very peoples whose faith it was were going to be exterminated. For all intents and purposes the 'church Lutheranism' of the Russian Germans ceased to exist. The churches closed, the pastors disappeared, and organised religious life came to an end. However, the Lutheranism of the peasants – the Finnish Ingermanlanders and the Germans with their 'fraternal communities' – survived underground. In some respects they even consolidated their strength. The fraternal communities had long done without a

theologically educated clergy, and did not need church buildings: they always met in private homes. Until the late 1960s the Germans, mostly peasants and mineworkers, had no chance of entering higher education and faced all kinds of barriers to social advancement; they found refuge in their faith and were perhaps the most religious national group in the USSR. Many Germans became Baptists, Adventists or Pentecostals and often turned out to be the staunchest believers in these communities and the ones most ready to defend their religious rights uncompromisingly in the face of the secular authorities. Most of the Germans, however, remained in the Lutheran fraternal communities, where they preserved not only their ancestral faith but their native language and their German national identity, which the authorities were keen to extinguish. At the same time their faith and religious life changed in content. Their communities closed in on themselves, often losing contact with other similar communities. Theological development ceased and religious consciousness became more primitive. Non-Germans were not accepted for membership and the German language of worship assumed a sacral character.

In the mid-1960s, under pressure from world opinion, the authorities dropped their policy of trying to destroy the fraternal communities and for practical purposes reconciled themselves to their continuing existence, while still denying them legal status. In 1980 they approved the founding of a German Lutheran deanery (*probstvo*) under pastor Haralds Kalniņš within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia. What the work of the deanery amounted to was a few visits by Kalniņš to the German churches in Siberia, where he performed baptisms, weddings and funerals and distributed Bibles; his visits did not however have any significant influence on the life of these communities.

Lutheranism in Ingermanland developed in the same general way, but in this case isolation and national self-seclusion were less extreme.

In the 1960s most of the Finns succeeded in returning to Leningrad *oblast'*. In neighbouring Estonia, where a similar language to their own was spoken, Lutheranism was not forbidden and two parishes had been founded with services in Finnish. Ingermanland Lutheranism was sustained by a few dozen *propovednitsy* ('female preachers') who organised secret prayer gatherings, frequently in derelict Finnish cemeteries, both in their own villages and in other villages where there was nobody else to organise them; they thus maintained contact between the villages.

By the late 1980s, then, Lutheranism in Russia was more or less in its death throes. The legal and semi-legal ethnic peasant communities were not developing, with few young people (the young Germans and Finns all spoke Russian, and were not familiar with the language of the services) and a lack of educated clergy and members of the intelligentsia. No one could have predicted the explosive development that lay in store for Russian Lutheranism after the fall of communism.

Everything started to change in the late 1980s. The national revival of the Ingermanlanders and the Germans led to the first efforts to found national churches. Lutherans in Germany and Finland offered support of all kinds to their fellow-believers in Russia. Lutheranism in Germany and Finland had developed in a liberal direction during the twentieth century, however, while the Russian Lutherans were virtually all of a conservative disposition. Relations between them and their western sponsors, teachers and supporters soon became a complex mixture of cooperation, conflict and even rivalry. Then in the 1990s missionaries from the conservative American Lutheran Church of the Missouri Synod¹ started appearing on the Russian Lutheran scene, providing a conservative counterweight to the Germans and Finns.

The most remarkable development, however, has been a large-scale turning to

Lutheranism among the Russians and other nationalities in the Russian Federation who have no historical tradition of Lutheranism at all. They are bringing their own spiritual and cultural experiences and their own aspirations into Lutheranism, and as a result a new type of Russian Lutheranism is being shaped. It is impossible to discern as yet what this new Russian Lutheranism will be like; for one thing, we do not yet know what will happen to the Ingermanland and German Lutheranism within which it is intimately developing.

The revival of the Ingermanland church began in the 1970s. This revival was part and parcel of the work of the church's charismatic leader at that time, Arvo Survo. An intellectual, musician and poet, seen in the semi-dissident artistic clubs of St Petersburg, born in the nearby old Finnish village of Gubanitsy, he persuaded his fellow-believers not to hide away but to make a firm stand for their rights. Petitions and demands to the authorities gradually had their effect. The Helsinki Accords had a decisive influence on achieving the opening of the first Ingermanland parish in Leningrad *oblast'*: under pressure from human rights groups in Europe and particularly Finland a community was registered in Pushkino in 1977 and given a church building. It came under the jurisdiction of the church in Estonia. Arvo Survo himself studied in the Lutheran seminary in Estonia before becoming pastor in Pushkino and *de facto* leader of the revival of the Ingermanland church and people. A small consolidated national group was able to make good use of the first glimmers of freedom in the second half of the 1980s. Dozens of Ingermanland parishes were founded between 1987 and 1990. The Ingermanlanders found themselves uncomfortable within the Estonian church, and not just because of the language barrier. Theologically the Estonians were more conservative and mystically inclined; their religion was closer to Orthodoxy, and they were less oriented towards the West. In 1989 Arvo Survo disseminated a manifesto calling for the revival of an independent Church of Ingria. The Ingermanlander parishes supported him, and the new church was proclaimed. This step seriously damaged relationships between the Ingermanlanders and the Estonians, but soon the Soviet Union collapsed and the whole issue ceased to be crucial. The Estonian church recognised the Ingrian church's independence.

In the first few years of its existence the Church of Ingria did not have adequate clergy or resources and was very much dependent on the Finnish church. Most of its pastors at that time, including the head of the church, Bishop Leino Hassinen, came from Finland, as did most of the church's financial support; the first seminarians studied in Finland. However, having just emerged from subordination to one church, the Ingermanlanders were not about to subordinate themselves to another. From the very start it was agreed that the Church of Ingria would be completely autonomous as far as doctrine, ritual and the appointment of officers were concerned. The Finnish church had to comply with the unyielding stance of its junior sister-church. This meant, for one thing, that the Finnish church did not send women pastors, since the Ingermanlanders do not recognise the ordination of women. At the same time there was always a certain tension between the liberal Finns and the conservative Ingermanlanders.

By the mid-1990s the Church of Ingria was starting to stand on its own feet. In 1996 the local Petersburg-born Finnish Ingermanlander Arre Kuukauppi became leader. From that time the Church of Ingria gradually began establishing links with a new 'foreign' strategic partner, the American 'Lutheran Church of the Missouri Synod', whose outlook is much closer to the conservative religious mindset;² these links soon became as important as those with the Finnish church. Most candidates for

the ministry now train with the Missouri Synod rather than with the Finns, and the Missouri Synod gives more financial support than the Finns do.

Unlike the Church of Ingria, which developed independently, the German Lutheran tradition has experienced its revival since *perestroika* under the direct influence of the German church. At the first opportunity the German government and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany set up a German Evangelical Lutheran Church under the Lutheran Church of Latvia on the basis of the deanery run by Haralds Kalniņš, and quickly set about recreating the Lutheran Church which had once been headed by the tsar and which disappeared in the 1930s. In a speech to the General Synod Archbishop Georg Kretschmar acknowledged that 'the restoration of the Lutheran Church in Russia started in an unplanned manner ... the idea of restoring what had been there before came up ... but the facts of life forced the YeLTs to work out its own clear programme distinct from the German one' (Otchetny, 2000, pp. 25–31).

The situation began to change after the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. The German Lutheran Church no longer needed the formal umbrella of the Latvian church, and moved under the direct jurisdiction of the church in Germany. The Lutherans in Germany sincerely wanted to help their fellow-believers, who had lost their church under communist persecution, while the German government was hoping to head off a wave of immigration by helping to finance and organise the founding of a social institution so important for the Russian Germans. Things did not go according to plan, however. Instead of acting as a brake on emigration the new church structures provided a new channel for it. Church leaders reckon that over the decade of the 1990s four-fifths of their potential flock emigrated to Germany. In the mid-1990s the German government stopped financing the Lutheran Church.

Meanwhile the church personnel from Germany found themselves having to deal with Lutherans who had a completely different understanding of their faith. The tradition of 'church Lutheranism' had been pretty well destroyed in the 1930s, and even before the Revolution there had been wide a gulf between the beliefs and practices of the 'fraternal communities' and those of the official Lutheranism of Germany. Since then German Lutheranism has liberalised its attitudes to the Bible, family and sexual morality, forms of worship, women clergy; and now it is even more difficult for a pastor from Germany to find a common language with the fraternal communities with their unchanged and extremely conservative doctrines. There were of course plenty of reasons for the Russian Germans to join the new church: they wanted German help and protection, and national sentiments impelled them to link up spiritually with their ancestral homeland after long years of isolation and discrimination. The most important thing, though, was their belief system, and here there was too much of a gulf between them and their brothers from Germany. The fraternal communities in fact reacted in a number of very different ways. Some joined the new church and accepted its values. Some joined it but continued to stand by their own convictions. Some 'sort of' joined it, in semi-friendly association. Some joined the Church of Ingria, where they felt more at home doctrinally. Some kept their independence, refusing to have any contact at all with the 'heretics'. Attempts by the German leadership to loosen up the structure of fraternal communities and make them more open have led some communities to join the Baptists. Conflict between clergy from Germany and fraternal communities joining the new church was particularly sharp in the first half of the 1990s. The leaders of the fraternal communities had assumed that it was they who were going to be running the new church since their communities were providing most of the faithful. The Germans, however, saw this as a daughter church for which they were going to provide liberal leadership to bring it

into line with the image of the church in Germany. The conflict came to a head at the General Synod of 1994. This was the Synod which named the new church the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Central Asia (*Yevangelichesko-lyuteranskaya tserkov' v Rossii, na Ukraine, v Kazakhstane i Tsentral'noi Azii*) (YeLTs). It was also at this Synod that the question of the church leadership was debated. The fraternal communities wanted the leader (the archbishop) to be Nikolai Shneider from Omsk, a pastor of the exiled Germans. However, the delegates from Germany deployed their financial and administrative resources to get the Synod to vote for their fellow-countryman Georg Kretschmar, and most of the key leadership positions went to German citizens as well. It was only in 1998 that the situation beyond the Urals began to settle down, largely thanks to the very tactful policies of Bishop Fol'ker Zailer who understood the specific features of the region and allowed Lutheranism to develop in its own way to some extent. However, with rare exceptions the clergy from Germany have not succeeded in becoming pastors of the fraternal communities, with their traditional values from Soviet times.³

Traditional communities which do not wish to cooperate with the YeLTs leadership still exist in many parts of Russia. The centre of the 'unreconciled' is the city of Prokop'yevsk in Kemerovo *oblast'*. In the early 1990s the leader of the fraternal communities which declined to recognise the YeLTs was Al'fred Rottermel', but in 1996 he emigrated with his family to Berlin where he became the leader of a fraternal community of Russian German immigrants. His son Viktor is also a brotherhood pastor and he often goes from Germany to Siberia on preaching trips. After Rottermel' left he was succeeded as leader of the unreconciled fraternal communities by the 'elder brother of the elder brethren of western Siberia and northern Kazakhstan' Emmanuil Betts, who had been ordained by Rottermel'. Most of the communities in Kemerovo, and a good many communities in other parts of Siberia too, are not only not members of the YeLTs but refuse to have any contact at all with YeLTs representatives. Since 2000 some fraternal community leaders have been having intensive talks with the Church of Ingria about possibly joining it, and one or two communities have already done so (in Saratov, Minusinsk, Abakan and Sayanogorsk). Some communities are in friendly contact with the Biblical Lutheran Church (see later in this article), and the question of a possible merger with this church too has often come up in conversation. In 2003 some fraternal community leaders have started seeking contacts with the Independent Lutheran Church in Germany (see Note 2).

The Lutheran Church has developed completely differently from how its leaders expected. Lutheran parishes with pastors from Germany have started up and are growing vigorously in places where previously there were no Lutheran communities, in big cities mostly in the European part of Russia. The new parishes usually start off in Russian German cultural associations and secular social organisations which have nothing to do with religion. These are meeting places for members of the intelligentsia. Some of them are of German origin, but most of them do not speak German and are married to Russians or have one Russian parent. Others are Russians who teach German or have an interest in German culture. These organisations may be secular, but Lutheranism carries considerable cultural weight, and since the second half of the 1990s leading members of these organisations have been founding religious societies and have been asking Archbishop Kretschmar to send them pastors. The unexpected result has often been strong religious societies with effective educational and cultural programmes, on German models, which demand a good deal of self-sacrifice, even though they receive German financial support.

The YeLTs quickly started taking on a Russian character. In some cities there are Lutheran communities headed by charismatic pastors from Germany who are well educated and have immersed themselves in Russian culture and are well aware of current social challenges. Any community like this is mushrooming, and will be bringing in Russians; there is after all a distinct dearth of Germans in Russia today. One pastor of this kind is Manfred Brockmann in Vladivostok. He is a theologian, a poet and a musician; his concerts in the church and the Philharmonia hall play to full houses. He is married to a Russian; he has become a Russian citizen and is committed to Russia for life. A leading female parish member describes how she came to join the parish:

About five years ago I felt God was calling me. I went to the Orthodox church a few times, but I was put off by the atmosphere of rudeness, intolerance and low regard for people. Everything's different here. Fr Manfred says that he's not trying to get people into church but that he's just trying to help us to find the road to God. ... This church is humble before God and therefore it's humble before people too. Here they teach you how to think things out, and you come to realise that the Christian faith is all about freedom. This is what Luther taught. Fr Manfred tells us that you can find God in any church, and I go to the Orthodox church sometimes; well, I was baptised Orthodox, so in a sense I'm Orthodox. I can only take Orthodoxy in small doses, though. It's the Lutheran church I feel at home in. Lutheranism isn't a German religion, it's for everyone. Of course Fr Manfred gives us a spiritual view of European culture, but he takes a close look at Russian culture too – closer than the Orthodox do. Russian Lutherans are better Russian citizens than the Orthodox are, more responsible ...

Pastor Brockmann is ecumenically and liberally minded; he does not teach his flock a particular confession (Lutheranism) but a kind of 'general Christianity'. The Lutheran features of his parish are the form of the service, a questioning and intellectual approach to faith rather than firm dogmatics, and a recognition of the importance of charitable, educational and cultural activity. In his words,

The Lutheran Church is a church of people who have consciously chosen to become believers, people who think things through. At the heart of Luther's teaching is a call for a rational and critical approach to faith, rather than his own opinions on various matters, which were shaped by the age he lived in. Conservatives latch on to details in his teaching but miss its essence (Brockmann, 1999).

Brockmann is never afraid to borrow theological, liturgical and cultural elements from other denominations.

The approach of a pastor like Brockmann easily strikes a chord amongst intellectuals who are interested in religion but who do not attend a church regularly. His religious views sit well with the political values of his flock (a preference for democratic values and for citizens' rights and freedoms), with a cultural orientation towards both western and classical Russian culture, and with a fairly liberal attitude towards family morality (a tolerant attitude towards divorce) and a high level of social responsibility expressed in involvement in charitable work.

Even amongst pastors from Germany Brockmann stands out as particularly ecumenical, open to traditions of all kinds, not concerned with consolidating Lutheran

doctrines among his flock. His preaching is at once mystical (every individual has to find his or her own unique road to God) and intellectual (opening everything up to rational discussion). Brockmann is rather untypical even of German pastors, but the success of his ministry and the unique authority the Lutheran community carries both with the authorities and with the general public in Vladivostok demonstrate those features of liberal German Lutheranism which are capable of attracting a Russian flock.

Brockmann is arguably the most prominent liberal pastor from Germany, but his success is not unique by any means. In a whole series of Russian cities, including St Petersburg, Yaroslavl, Ul'yanovsk, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, Khabarovsk and Kazan' (where, incidentally, Lutheranism is attracting many Tatars) communities of the YeLTs led by pastors from Germany have become a notable feature on the local religious scene. They may have originated in German cultural associations, but now they consist mostly of Russians, and in some places you can count the Germans on the fingers of one hand. Around 2000 it was becoming obvious to the German leadership of the YeLTs that in 10 to 15 years' time the church they had set about reviving for the Russian Germans was going to be a basically Russian church with just a trace of a German accent. According to Kretschmar, 'The Lutheran Church in the Russian Federation (*Rossiiskaya lyuteranskaya tserkov'*) is steadily turning into the Russian Lutheran Church (*Russkaya lyuteranskaya tserkov'*)' (Otchetny, 2000).⁴ A striking feature of these YeLTs communities is that they consist more or less totally of members of the intelligentsia – teachers, writers, artists, doctors, students. If one excludes the mainly rural German fraternal communities, which have a difficult relationship with the YeLTs leadership, the YeLTs today is sociologically the most intelligentsia-based church in Russia today.

In the West many Protestant churches accept the ordination of women. In Russia hardly any do except the Lutherans and the Methodists. The Methodists are completely new in Russia and have found it easy to introduce women ministers; it is not so easy for the Lutherans. They have to try to overcome traditional views on this issue held by Russian Germans who have retained their faith and by ethnic Russians. Opposition has been so strong that the church in Germany tends to send men only as ministers; at the same time, however, liberalism is putting down its roots, especially in places where there are pastors from Germany.

There is only one female dean in the YeLTs: Inessa Tirbakh in Orenburg.

I didn't want to become a pastor. I didn't like the idea of women priests. My grandfather was a pastor in the Volga region and he died in the camps. I wanted to stay faithful to the old traditions, but right from the start I was leader of the initiative group to set up a parish, then I became the community's elder, and then for a few years there was no suitable male candidate to be our pastor. Since I became pastor of the Orenburg parish it has been growing really fast, and people in our city think highly of it. It no longer seems strange to me that Orenburg girls are studying in Lutheran seminaries. There'll be a lot of us soon.

Several more women are now training as pastors, and in a few years they will be featuring quite prominently in the life of the church.

One reason why the YeLTs is doing so well in Russia is that it occupies the emptying 'liberal Christian' niche. The Orthodox, as well as most Protestants and Catholics, to say nothing of the Old Believers, have traditional views on the literal truth of Holy Scripture and on moral issues. This is something of a paradox in that

while the churches in Russia maintain this traditional stance most of the population is more secularised than in the West. People go to church less regularly and they do not hold traditional Christian beliefs or observe Christian morality. A kind of cultural code in Russia says that if someone becomes a practising believer (the Orthodox term in 'votserkovlenny') it will be as a conservative believer. The fact that the liberal YeLTs was imported to Russia and that its clergy are mostly people who have had no previous experience of involvement with any other Russian church fits in with this picture.

Given that Russian religious attitudes are so traditional it is not surprising that Russia has produced a conservative alternative to the liberal Lutheranism imported from Germany. Actually what happened was that conservative Russian Lutheranism started to develop a few years before the liberal YeLTs embarked on its expansion course.

Russians started showing an interest in Lutheranism in the mid-1980s, and the first converts even pre-dated *perestroika*. The place where Lutheranism was most popular was probably Leningrad. Semi-legal young people's rock-and-roll clubs were one of its birthplaces. Dissident-minded young people who were attracted by the idea of religion had only a vague idea about what Christianity was, but their hazy vision of a church came to take the form of efforts to create a Russian Lutheranism. Two men were important in influencing this outcome: Arvo Survo, who was the real founder of the Church of Ingria, and Iozef Baron, the pastor of the Lutheran church in Leningrad, which had opened in the mid-1980s under the jurisdiction of the Latvian church.

Arvo Survo was leader of the religious revival among the Ingermanlanders but he certainly did not shun a Russian audience. He was a member of various Leningrad intelligentsia groups where his views on Lutheranism aroused lively interest. In his view Luther had not intended to break completely with Catholicism but had been forced to do so by a combination of historical circumstances. Survo emphasised and revived those aspects of Lutheran teaching that are akin to Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Survo and his followers think it is very significant that while Luther was desperately trying to find a solution to his conflict with the Vatican, but had not yet made the decision to found his own church, he thought about becoming Orthodox. This was only a short episode in Lutheran history, with no lasting consequences, but Russian Lutherans today regard it as of great significance in that it justifies them in trying to borrow elements of Orthodox theology and liturgy.

Survo lays emphasis on the mystical and traditional features of Lutheranism, which he sees as rooted in medieval Catholicism and Orthodoxy, and even in the early undivided Church. Many Ingermanlanders do not like being called Protestants, and will say that they are a particular variety of either Catholic or Orthodox, depending on the particular speaker's ideas and aesthetic views.

Laying perhaps too much stress on the difference between the Scandinavian and German Lutheran traditions, Survo emphasises his own adherence to Swedish Lutheranism. (The Lutherans of Finland were part of the Swedish church until the eighteenth century.) Survo and his followers hold that when the whole Catholic Church in Sweden, led by its bishop, broke with the papacy in the 1530s and accepted the Lutheran doctrine of salvation it succeeded in avoiding Protestant extremes, retaining the concept of apostolic succession, a basically Catholic liturgy and a traditional mystical approach to the sacraments. They explain this by the fact that, in contrast to what happened in Germany, Lutheranism in Scandinavia was adopted peacefully, without fierce confrontation of the kind that impelled the German Lutherans towards 'heretical' Protestant extremism and later towards liberalisation

and secularisation. The Ingermanlanders tend to overestimate the conservatism of the Lutheran churches of Scandinavia, and even when they admit that the Scandinavian churches are not in fact essentially much different from the German churches as far as the degree of their liberalism is concerned, they tend to put this down to the corrupting effect of the influence of German 'heretics'. The Swedes and the Finns are cast as the passive victims of spiritual aggression on the part of the German liberals.

Russians started appearing in the parishes of the Church of Ingria in Leningrad in the late 1980s, and this was partly due to Iozef Baron. When he started work in Leningrad he immediately began attracting large numbers of semi-dissident young people because his services were in Russian and he talked to his flock in the language of youth culture. When the community started up it was closely linked with young people's music clubs – so closely that the parishes in Baron's church were sometimes called 'rock-and-roll parishes'. Some of the church's income came from the sale of music tapes. At services you would find members of the Church of Ingria, German Lutherans and ordinary young people with an interest in religion. Baron was a good organiser and preacher, but doctrinally these parishes followed Arvo Survo. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 Baron tried to set up his own United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia (*Yedinaya yevangelicheskoye-lyuteranskaya tserkov' Rossii*), but the attempt was not successful. His flock and their pastors joined the 'historical' churches and he gave up active church work. His flock retained its 'conservative Russian Lutheran' character, however, and the spirit of Baron's work lives on within the Church of Ingria and the YeLTs.

Russian Lutheranism thus first began to take shape in Leningrad where dogmatically it developed under clear Ingermanland influence. It then began to appear in other towns and cities, sometimes as a result of initiatives from Leningrad, but sometimes completely independently. The remarkable thing was that in all cases it was doctrinally very close to the teachings of Arvo Survo. In the 1980s a number of Russians in the Baltic States were already turning to Lutheranism; they are now actively at work spreading Lutheranism in their native land. Most have them have gradually joined the Church of Ingria. Some of them, usually for pragmatic reasons, have become pastors in the YeLTs where they constitute a conservative opposition to the German leadership: one example would be the Moscow pastor Dmitri Lotov, who became a Lutheran in Latvia before *perestroika*. Some of them have been trying to set up their own Lutheran organisations independent of the traditional YeLTs and Church of Ingria. Here we might look at the career of Vyacheslav fon Ditlov from Yekaterinburg. (His many enemies would tell you that the name in his passport is Bolotnik and that he has no German blood at all.) In the late 1980s he received a remarkable 'divine vision revealing the absolute truth of the Lutheran faith'. In the late 1990s he founded an independent church called the Yekaterinburg Evangelical Lutheran Consistory District (*Okrug Yekaterinburgskoi yevangelicheskoye-lyuteranskoi konsistorii*) comprising three rapidly growing communities. (One of these consists entirely of former Yekaterinburg followers of the liberal Moscow Orthodox priest Fr Georgi Kochetkov: they eventually decided to join the Lutherans because of the constant attacks on Fr Georgi by Orthodox clergy and his uncertain position in the Russian Orthodox Church.) Fon Ditlov favours an orthodox interpretation of Luther. He translates Luther's liturgical texts himself and incorporates them into his services. He finds that all Lutheran churches he has visited have fallen away from true Lutheran teaching and therefore declines to join his church with any of them. (He has actually now established contact with one tiny American Lutheran church and they seem to be working well together.) The other Lutheran churches have no contact of

any kind with fon Ditlov. This has however not prevented him from building up a very good reputation amongst the other Christian churches in Yekaterinburg and with the Sverdlovsk *oblast'* authorities, who have the highest regard for him as a local religious leader.

The most successful effort to found a Russian Lutheran Church is been the one by a theatrical producer from Novosibirsk, Vsevolod Lytkin. He was baptised into the Estonian church in the late 1980s; he trained there as a pastor and became the spiritual pupil of the archbishop of Tallinn, Jan Kiivit. In 1993 he founded a Lutheran community in Novosibirsk under the aegis of the Estonian church, and by 2000 this had become the Biblical Lutheran Church (*Bibleiskaya lyuteranskaya tserkov'* (BLTs)), with parishes in many Siberian cities. The BLTs is canonically linked with the Estonian church but is not under its jurisdiction.

Lytkin is a Lutheran Russian patriot. In his view his church satisfies people who are drawn to Lutheranism without obliging them to immerse themselves in an alien national culture, whether German or Finnish. ('Russians need their own Russian church: why should we have to accommodate ourselves to foreign religious ways?') Lytkin sees western Protestant religiosity and Russian Orthodox religiosity as two extremes, the former too rational and secularised, the latter too mystical and emotional.

He has harsh things to say about Lutheranism in Germany today: 'it's shot through with Calvinist, Baptist and feminist ideas and moral relativism and secularism, and it's an example of real spiritual degradation'. Russian Lutheranism avoids both extremes; 'in line with the apostolic tradition it combines reason and emotion, the best features of a modern understanding of reality with undamaged Christian faith'. Central to the religious life of the BLTs is the service of worship. Lytkin even speaks of 'liturgical Lutheranism'. He is open to the idea of venerating icons; so far this is just theory, but it is still unusual for a Lutheran. He borrows liturgical practices from both Catholicism and Orthodoxy, which he regards as 'equally valid spiritually', but he thinks that the Catholic liturgical tradition is better suited to the spiritual profile of Russians today: 'Since the end of the Soviet system the Russians have become Western Europeans rather than Byzantines, and we feel more at home with western spirituality.' Most of his borrowings are from Catholicism. There are a good number of academics from Novosibirsk's Akademgorodok in Lytkin's church. They see Lutheranism as giving them a chance to achieve an organic synthesis of 'reason and faith, the rationality of science and the irrationality of religious experience'.

In the 1990s the signs were that Lytkin's BLTs or some other purely Russian Lutheran initiative was going to produce the main conservative Lutheran church for the Russians; but it is the Church of Ingria that is now seeing the most vigorous growth of parishes in all parts of Russia, including Siberia, the Urals and Central Russia, and it is becoming clear that this is the church that can count on eventually becoming the basis for a Russian Lutheran church. Pastor Sergei Preiman is responsible for the Russian-speaking parishes in the Church of Ingria. Right from the start he was seized by the idea of Russian Lutheranism, so much so that he joined Iozef Baron's church; he has a good grasp of the prospects for Lutheranism spreading among the Russians and is actively working for this. He holds that 'the Church of Ingria is more attractive than the YeLTs, which is in quite a chaotic state'. Indeed, many pastors and community elders in the YeLTs, not to mention ordinary church-goers, think that the church in Germany and the leadership of their own church 'have fallen into the power of Satan, they twist and question the Scriptures'. This is no secret opposition but a view shared by quite a large number of Russian clergy. Even

Vladimir Kyuntsel', the deputy of Siegfried Springer, bishop of the European part of Russia, openly brands the official teaching of the YeLTs as heretical and holds up the Church of Ingria as a model. The prospects of growth for the Church of Ingria thus look quite favourable. Its leader, Bishop Arre Kuukauppi, reckons that Finnish Ingermanlanders now make up no more than a third of the church's parishioners, and most of these are confined to Leningrad *oblast'*. Even Arvo Survo, who in the late 1980s was in at the start of the revival of worship in the Finnish language, was by the 1990s promoting the wider use of Russian in the church; meanwhile the YeLTs introduced the general use of Russian only in 1999. The Church of Ingria requires its members to adhere to the basic Lutheran dogmatic teachings, a literal understanding of the Bible as divinely inspired and traditional Christian morality. At the same time, however, it accepts variety in forms of worship. Some Russian parishes have part of their service in Old Church Slavonic, while in others the service is reminiscent of the Catholic rite. It also accepts the need to satisfy national feelings. Some Russian parishes show as strong national feeling as some Orthodox parishes do, while in Komi⁵ and Mordovia⁶ Lutheran parishes are now the religious centres for the revival of the indigenous nationalities. With a mixture of honest hard work and a sense of social responsibility the Finnish Ingermanlanders have produced a model for church life, with a high level of lay involvement in charitable, educational and cultural activity, and this is now becoming the norm in Russian parishes too.

During the 15 years it has been establishing itself in Russia, Lutheranism has shown convincingly that it is capable of responding to the most urgent spiritual demands of the day while other Christian denominations have failed to do so. The Lutheranism that has taken shape in Russia provides a way of bringing disparate phenomena together: the liturgical and mystical Russian religious tradition and the requirements of reason; the attraction of classical culture and evangelism; faithfulness to a Christian tradition stretching back centuries and a commitment to democracy and human rights. It also provides a way of reconciling Russian patriotism, loyalty to national culture and westernism. Whatever jurisdiction or tendency they belong to, and however much internal strife they may be experiencing, all Lutherans in Russia today have a sense of belonging together in one community and one culture with its roots in Russian soil. In the words of BLTs pastor Vyacheslav Plyaskin from Irkutsk,

There are basically two faiths in Russia, Orthodoxy and Lutheranism. Together they've been shaping Russian culture, science and political life since the sixteenth century. Russia would be only half-there if it wasn't for the Lutheran contribution. And we Lutherans aren't just the minor partner. There's no end to the things Lutherans have given Russia. The revival of Lutheranism in Russia is just restoring the natural order.

The conviction that Lutheranism is one of Russia's traditional faiths is often accompanied by messianic visions of its future role. The elder of the YeLTs parish in Smolensk, Ol'ga Sergeyeva, who is one of the most prominent activists on the Russian Lutheran scene today, asserts that 'Lutheranism is a breakthrough to a new world structure, a new model for Christian life, the salvation of Russia'. On her initiative various national cultural societies have started up in Smolensk. The Smolensk human rights movement and the *Yabloko* political party have a high regard for her work: 'doing one's duty as a citizen and charitable activity are part and parcel of a genuine faith'. Sergeyeva may be one of the most outstanding exponents of the need to fulfil one's citizens' duties, but it is a very widespread conviction amongst the majority of Lutherans in Russia today.

One poorly educated Russian woman from the Saratov region may have provided us with the most succinct summary of why 'Lutheran culture' is attractive to Russians:

The Lutheran church has respect for individuals, and people here have respect for each other. Our pastor tells us that 'nobody who has bad table manners has a true religious faith'. You may laugh, but I'm convinced he's right. All day long you're surrounded by crude, boorish, deceitful, violent people swearing and getting hopelessly drunk. When I come to church I feel as if I'm in heaven, as if I'm already saved.

Even though Russian Lutherans of all the various strands quarrel with each other, going as far as to accuse each other of heresy and falling from Grace, they still have a sense of belonging to one confession; they still stay in contact with each other and discuss their theological differences. Lutheranism is developing in Russia today as if it were newly sprung from Luther's early years of preaching, when he had not yet broken finally with Rome and was still thinking of becoming Orthodox. Protestantism, Catholicism and Orthodoxy are all interacting within Russian Lutheranism today. It contains Christian traditions in all their variety, and for that very reason we can use C.S. Lewis' term for it: 'mere Christianity' – all this plus the well developed internal church life and spirit of community which are typical of most of the Lutheran parishes. This is conducive to an atmosphere of freedom in which thinking can continually go on about the basic issues of Christian theology. There may not yet be any educated professional theologians among the Russian Lutherans – practically all the clergy are relative youngsters with various types of education – but no other confession in Russia provides such favourable conditions for the emergence of serious original religious thinkers.

Russian Lutheranism is developing into a serious spiritual and intellectual challenge to Russian Orthodoxy; the latter is soon going to have to take notice of it and, we may hope, formulate its own genuinely creative response.

Notes

- ¹ There are also missionaries at work in Russia from the American Lutheran Church of the Wisconsin Synod. This is an extremely conservative church; its members consider even the Missouri Synod too liberal and refuse to join in worship with it. They are sometimes called 'Lutheran Old Believers'. The Wisconsin Synod has founded a number of parishes in Novosibirsk and Omsk *oblasti*.
- ² Immediately the Church of Ingria was founded, and mainly on the prompting of the Finnish church, it joined the liberal Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which includes all the Lutheran state churches of Europe. There is now a growing body of opinion among more conservatively minded church members, especially Russians, that the Church of Ingria should leave the LWF and join the conservative International Lutheran Synod (ILS), of which the Church of the Missouri Synod is a leading member. Through the ILS the Ingermanlanders have established links with the small conservative Independent Lutheran Church (*Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche*) in Germany, and are now trying with its help to attract the Russian fraternal communities. (The Independent Lutheran Church was formed in Germany in 1972, bringing together a number of Lutheran churches which had asserted their independence in the nineteenth century when the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Germany united to form the main German Protestant Church (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*).
- ³ There are nevertheless some examples of fraternal communities which have been open to western ideas. The fraternal community in Perm', for example, found it easy and natural to accept the teachings of the pastors from Germany, and in due course David Rerikh, from the fraternal community, became the dean in Perm', enthusiastically supporting the values

of liberal Lutheranism. He has managed to attract a large number of Russians into the community.

- 4 'I reckon that over the last ten years four-fifths of the parishioners Haralds Kalniņš expected to have when he took over as bishop of our church have gone to live permanently in Germany ... Distinctive geographical features of the apostolic tradition were wiped out long ago. There are Orthodox churches in western countries, and why shouldn't western churches function in areas which were originally Byzantine missionary territory?' (Otchetny, 2000, pp. 34, 52).
- 5 The Komi Lutheran community originated in the Komi people's national revival party *Zashchitim sebya* (We Shall Defend Ourselves). For a long time the Komi nationalists could not decide between paganism and Christianity; they organised discussions and round tables where they debated what was the most suitable faith for their people. In the end they decided against paganism, on the grounds that it was a dead religious culture from the past, and focused on the faith of their Finno-Ugrian brethren: Lutheranism. This happened in 1996 after Arvo Survo had decided to pay them a visit with the Finnish preacher Yukha Veliakho, during the course of which the leader of *Zashchitim sebya*, Nadezhda Mityusheva, had half an hour's conversation with Survo and was baptised. By 2000 the Church of Ingria community in Syktyvkar totalled 200. They bought a building and installed as pastor one Sergei Yefimov, a Komi who came from a strict Old Believer family. (He was baptised as a *skrytnik*: the *skrytniki* are one of the most radical Old Believer movements, requiring their members to sever all contact with the world as the realm of Antichrist.) Russians started joining the community, and the nationalist Mityusheva had to agree to hold some services in Russian. The political organisation *Zashchitim sebya* started gradually metamorphosing into a religious community and coming to terms with its 'Russian element'. Lutheran communities started appearing in other towns in the republic.
- 6 The history of Mordovian Lutheranism is closely bound up with the personality of its founder Andrei Aleshkin, an Erzi artist from Saransk. He was a believer from boyhood; concerned about the future of his nation, like many other members of the Mordovian intelligentsia he became disillusioned with Orthodoxy. He saw the Orthodox Church as a 'russifying force', suppressing the language and culture of the Mordovian people. While studying at the Leningrad Academy of Art Aleshkin got to know pastor Arvo Survo, whose energy and talents brought about the revival of the Ingermanland Lutheran Church. Aleshkin came to the conclusion that Lutheranism would be able to adapt the national traditions of the Mordovians so as to become the best foundation for the spiritual revival of the Erzi and Moksha peoples. The 'national revival' in Mordovia began in 1990–91. In this climate Aleshkin gathered together a group of supporters from among the Saransk intelligentsia, mainly people from the humanities side. In 1991 the first Lutheran community in Saransk was registered, under the jurisdiction of the Church of Ingria. Right from the start, however, the aim of the community's founders was to 'mordovise' the church and to set up an independent Mordovian Lutheran Church. In 1991 the Finnish Lutheran Church sent material aid, and later so did the Church of the Missouri Synod. In 1991 the community was given a piece of land in the centre of Saransk and a foundation stone was blessed in the presence of the local authorities and representatives of the Finnish Lutheran Church. However, technical and organisational problems as well as opposition from the Orthodox diocese meant that a church was never built. Services are held in Houses of Culture. The Lutherans of Saransk actually prefer not to call themselves Lutherans but 'Mordovian Christians'. They are introducing elements of traditional Mordovian culture into the Lutheran form of service, such as mourning for brides when they leave the parental home and mourning for the dead, and are adapting folk songs to sing at services. Bits of the Mordovian national dress are being incorporated into pastors' vestments. The Erzi make no secret of the fact that they are also borrowing from Orthodoxy: they rule out the ordination of women, they are keen to introduce icons and they say that their understanding of the sacraments is more Orthodox than Lutheran. The main way church members do missionary work is to travel round the towns and villages as the folklore ensemble *Torama*, putting on performances of folk songs interspersed with Lutheran preaching and worship. These tours mean that the Lutherans are now known in most parts of the republic. By 2000 the congregations of the two Lutheran parishes in Saransk were pretty well 100 per cent members of the intelligentsia, up to a quarter of them Russians. The larger of the two parishes (with over 200 members in 2003) is led by Aleshkin, and consists mainly of Erzi

and Russians; the smaller parish (with about 35 members) is Moksha and is led by Deacon Vladimir Mikish. From 1992 the Orthodox Church has been vigorously attacking the Lutherans in the local press and elsewhere, calling them 'heretics', 'Catholics' and even 'spies'. Bishop Varsonofi of Saransk and Mordovia has issued warnings about the activity of these home-grown Lutherans led by Mikish and Aleshkin: 'With the blessing of the Finnish Lutherans they have gained a bridgehead in Mordovia; they have registered two communities and their goal is now to lutheranise the republic. Perhaps they do not realise that what they are doing will be divisive for the Mordovian nation ... they claim to be concerned about preserving the languages of Mordovia, but they are just stirring up trouble and alienating Mordovians from Russians.' (Obrashcheniye, 1995)

The Lutherans respond by accusing the Russian Orthodox Church of pursuing a policy of russification, for example resisting the use of the Mordovian languages in the liturgy. On the initiative of the Helsinki Bible Institute the Gospels and some of the books of the Old Testament were translated into the Mordovian languages in the 1990s by teachers at the Mordovian University in Saransk. In the Lutheran parishes, services are conducted in the Mordovian languages and in Russian.

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Appendix

Lutheran Jurisdictions in Russia Today

- (1) *Yevangelicheskoye-lyuteranskaya tserkov' v Rossii, na Ukraine, v Kazakhstane i Srednei Azii* (YeLTs). Leader: Archbishop Georg Kretschmar (St Petersburg). 350 parishes.
- (2) *Yevangelicheskoye-lyuteranskaya tserkov' Ingrii*. Leader: Bishop Arre Kuukauppi (Kugappi) (St Petersburg). 70 parishes.
- (3) *Karel'skaya yevangelicheskoye-lyuteranskaya tserkov'*. Leader: Bishop Raimo Yakkinen (Sortavala). 15 parishes.
- (4) *Bibleiskaya lyuteranskaya tserkov'* (BLTs). Leader: Pastor Vsevolod Lytkin (Novosibirsk). 10 parishes.
- (5) *Khristianskaya yevangelicheskaya lyuteranskaya tserkov' (Yevangelicheskoye lyuteransky sinod Viskonsina)*. Leader: Pastor Michael Ewart (Novosibirsk). 5 parishes.
- (6) *Okrug Yekaterinburgskoye yevangelicheskoye-lyuteranskoye konsistorii*. Leader: Dean-Pastor Vyacheslav fon Ditlov (Yekaterinburg). 3 parishes.
- (7) *Lyuteranskaya tserkov' Missuri Sinod*. It has no parishes of its own in Russia, but conducts a broad programme of missionary, educational and charitable work within other Lutheran jurisdictions. Leader: Pastor John Melk (Moscow).
- (8) *Yedinaya yevangelicheskoye-lyuteranskaya tserkov' Rossii*. This church existed from 1991 to 1996. Records at the Ministry of Justice show that some 30 communities were registered in 1993 (see S.B. Filatov and L.M. Vorontsova, 'Kak idet religioznoye vozrozhdeniye Rossii', *Nauka i religiya*, 6, 1993, pp. 14–15). Most of its parishes then joined the YeLTs. Leader: Pastor Iozef Baron (St Petersburg).

(Translated from the Russian by Philip Walters)