

Reviews

The Modern Encyclopedia of Religions in Russia and the Soviet Union edited by Paul D. Steeves. Vol. I (Aaron-Annunciation). Academic International Press, 1988. 255 pp.

In our present, fast changing world, Mr Gorbachev has made peace with the Pope. The Soviet president realises that religious believers are valuable members of society who need their position protected by new laws on religion which guarantee freedom of conscience. Now that the exchange of information between East and West is becoming ever easier, more and more material on different religious groups in the USSR will need to be processed and analysed. Serious scholars of religion in Russia and the Soviet Union are needed as never before.

In his introduction Paul D. Steeves, editor of *The Modern Encyclopedia of Religions in Russia and the Soviet Union* (hereafter *MERRSU*) observes how in the not too distant past the subject of religion in the context particularly of Soviet studies was regarded as unimportant. Now, however, the world of scholarship takes a different view and 'religious studies have won their certification as a legitimate department of academia' (p. VI). This new encyclopedia provides further evidence of this acceptance and is aimed at the specialist as well as at the seriously inquisitive 'general reader'. The entries in this series are planned to cover information from many fields of study: history, politics, law, economics, sociology, anthropology, archeology, education, literature, painting, music, architecture, philosophy and theology. And all this is aimed at illuminating the religious history of Russia; truly, a gargantuan task.

The editor of *MERRSU* will be doing scholars of Russia's religious history a service if future volumes maintain the standard of Volume I. The bibliographical material following each entry directs the reader to primary and secondary sources and is of an exceptionally high standard. Since there is no book in English covering the religious history of the Russian area, many of the entries are extensive making

this encyclopedia not merely a work of reference but also a textbook for the student of Russian history. The cross-referencing is good, and of particular value are the occasional long quotations from primary sources. For example (pp. 17-18) there is an extensive quotation from the *Zhitiye (Life)* of the 14th-century Orthodox saint, Abraham of Chukhloma, which describes the saint's discovery of a miraculous icon and his founding of the Novoezersk Monastery. Another quotation (pp. 20-21) from a *zhitiye*, this time describing the life of the 11th-century Orthodox saint Abraham of Rostov, vividly conjures up the scene of the saint destroying a pagan idol with a miraculous staff: 'Without any hindrance he approached the idol, pierced it with the rod in the name of John the Theologian and straightway Veles crumbled into dust before him.' With reference to the 20th century and the history of the schism within the Evangelical Christian and Baptist Church, a long quotation (p. 41) from the 'Letter of Instruction', issued by the AUCECB in 1961, is useful to the historian of contemporary church affairs as is the quotation (p. 60) from Bishop Afanasi's letter acknowledging Patriarch Aleksi's authority after the latter's election in 1945. Most impressive of all is the inclusion of the complete text (pp. 193-203) of the AUCECB's 'Confession of Faith', adopted in 1986.

On occasion the editor could have improved his contributors' texts by wielding his editorial pen more harshly: such phrases as 'portraying the Jew more in the mass than in the individual visage' (p. 35) and 'old Russia continued to be something of an immovable object religiously' (p. 120) could have been refined and thereby clarified. It is irritating to find the journal *Religion in Communist Lands* listed as being published (p. XIV) in Chislehurst with no mention of Keston College which produces this journal and which is not even situated in Chislehurst. A volume of such scholarly quality should also have been more carefully proof-read (see for example p. 60).

Not all the entries in Volume I are original: well over a third have been lifted or adapted from other reference works. But these are Russian reference works not accessible to the non-Russian speaker, and published before the revolution: for example, the *Russky biografichesky slovar'* (*Russian Biographical Dictionary*), published in Moscow 1896-1918, is used extensively, as are the *Pravoslavnaia bogoslovskaya entsiklopediya* (*Orthodox Theological Encyclopedia*), published in Moscow 1900-11, and the *Yevreiskaya entsiklopediya* (*Jewish Encyclopedia*), published in St Petersburg 1906-13. The editor states in his introduction that these reprinted entries have been updated and supplemented with the latest bibliographical material.

The entries range from the most obscure — on the magical 'Ainu fishing sacrifice' of Sakhalin and the meaning of the word 'Alka' in

the religious life of pre-Christian Lithuanians — to detailed coverage of important figures from pre-revolutionary Russian history. The reigns of the three Alexanders are treated in meticulous detail as are the life and work of Ivan Aksakov and his brother Konstantin. Those interested in the 17th-century schism within the Orthodox Church will find much material in this first volume on the Old Believers while they wait for the appearance of the volumes covering the letter 'O'. The student of 20th-century Russian church history will be well rewarded by turning to this new encyclopedia. The extensive treatment given to such a spiritual giant as Bishop Afanasi, the detailed exposition of the career of Patriarch Aleksii by Keston College's researcher Jane Ellis, and the long entry on Metropolitan Agafangel' all provide much information on the Russian Orthodox Church after the revolution. Equally well covered is the history of the main Protestant denomination, the Evangelical Christians-Baptists: such entries as 'Action Committee for Calling a Baptist Congress' and 'All-Union Council of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists' furnish the enquiring student with extensive and well-documented information.

The volume under review covers only 'Aaron' to 'Annunciation' — a tiny fraction of the final completed work. Paul D. Steeves envisages the production of *MERRSU* taking ten to 15 years. Let us hope he is right and that it will not be too long before further volumes are published which maintain an equally high scholarly standard.

XENIA HOWARD-JOHNSTON

Glasnost, Christen und Genossen (Glasnost', Christians and Comrades) edited by Norbert Sommer. Berlin: Wichern-Verlag, 1988. Paperback, 188 pp.

The millennium obviously provided the occasion for this collection of contributions by two dozen authors, which range freely in both scope and quality over the vast subject of Christianity in the Soviet Union. Amongst the authors are Bishop Albrecht Schönherr, Cardinal Joachim Meisner, Hansjakob Stehle, Tat'yana Goricheva and Gerd Stricker. Topics tackled include: the intrinsic 'religiousness' of the Russian people (via personal reminiscences and anecdotes of uneven value); religious themes and imagery in Russian and Soviet literature; the significance of Christianisation for Kievan Rus'; terminological difficulties ('Ukrainian', 'Russian', 'Soviet', 'Catholic', 'Orthodox'); religion in the Baltic States; Pope John Paul II and the USSR; Soviet

legislation on religion; religious prisoners in the USSR; the Russian Orthodox Church and the WCC; Pax Christi and the Russian Orthodox Church.

There are a number of factual errors (one author, for example, calls Estonia a basically Roman Catholic country), and statements with which one can take substantial issue (the contention by another author, for example, that the Russian Orthodox Church does not play a political role at the WCC). Other contributions have suffered from the fact that while correct when they were written they have quickly become seriously outdated — for example, the chapter on religious prisoners by Tilman Berger of Amnesty International.

Most of the book's content will already be familiar to students of Soviet affairs; but I take it that the aim of the compiler is to bring the whole complex topic before an intelligent but hitherto uninformed readership, and in this he is likely to succeed since there is something here of potential interest to almost any reader of this type. Why does the compiler seek to reach a new audience? Several contributions deal with the subject of reconciliation between citizens of East and West, and with the need to overcome 'enemy images' and unthinking anti-communism. Reconciliation through understanding is, in fact, the underlying theme of the book.

All this is of course laudable and necessary; yet there is a dated feel about the underlying assumptions of the book *Glasnost, Christen und Genossen*, less than two years after its appearance. The world has moved on, and new problems are shaping themselves to stand next to, if not to elbow aside altogether, the traditionally perceived paramount need to avoid nuclear catastrophe. One of these problems is that of the emergence of civil society and political parties in Eastern Europe, now that Soviet power is crumbling, and in the Soviet Union as *perestroika* plunges on.

The theological and liturgical conservatism of the Russian Orthodox Church clearly presents a problem for several authors. As Hansjörg N. Schultz observes querulously in his chapter on the ROC and the WCC, 'Die Herren aus dem sozialistischen Land sind innerhalb des fortschrittlichen Weltkirchenrates gewiss die Konservativen.' ('It is the gentlemen from this socialist country who are the conservatives within the progressive World Council of Churches.') He does not appear to perceive that this apparent paradox is in fact no paradox at all: it is precisely because the ROC has been involved in a 60-year struggle to survive that it has sought to safeguard unchanged what it sees as the truth. Bishop Schönherr, himself from a 'socialist' society, gives two insights here. On a visit to the USSR he asked why religion had survived and was told the reason was threefold: the liturgy, the *babushki*, and anti-religious propaganda. And why is that

religion so conservative in its ritual? 'Tradition ist das Stimmrecht der Toten' ('Tradition is the franchise of the dead,') — or, to put the same idea into words which will strike a chord with *RCL* readers, 'tradition is the dead saying "Be Our Voice!"' But the question today is: how can this kind of church begin responding quickly and creatively to quite new social and political demands and opportunities? As Lorenzo Amberg correctly observes in his chapter on treatment of religion in the Soviet press, 'Bei alledem fällt auf, dass die Russisch-orthodoxe Kirche als Institution an der ganzen Diskussion um Glasnost und Perestroika bisher kaum Anteil genommen hat, und zwar auch dort nicht, wo ihre eigenen Interessen berührt werden.' ('Nevertheless it is noticeable that the Russian Orthodox Church as an institution has scarcely taken part yet in all the discussions about *glasnost* and *perestroika*, and not even in those areas where its own interests are concerned.')

If the churches as institutions in the USSR are ill-prepared for creative activity in unfamiliar spheres, there are new problems too for individual believers. Tat'yana Goricheva discusses how believers have survived under persecution and perhaps unwittingly indicates where problems are likely to arise for them in the future in a world of rapidly accelerating change. She writes of the fact that those persecuted for their faith in the USSR have felt important: the KGB is picking on *me*! She writes of the danger in these circumstances of heroism without God. She says that Soviet citizens have been afraid, but at least they have known what they are afraid of. And they have clung together in fellowship with their friends and developed true community. People in the West, she has observed, are afraid too; but they have no real idea of what. And westerners tend to be isolated in front of their televisions and computer terminals. 'Talking about God is dangerous', as she has asserted in another context - and she means in the West. Do the development of political and cultural pluralism and the establishment of a market economy inevitably mean secularisation? What can the churches in Eastern Europe do about this danger? Can they learn from our experience as they and their fellow-citizens embark on reconstructing their societies? Such questions are not asked in the book under review; they will have to be central to future books in this field.

PHILIP WALTERS

Soviet Charismatics: the Pentecostals in the USSR

by William C. Fletcher. New York: Peter Lang, 1985. 200 pp.

Until the celebrated appearance of a group of Pentecostals in the US Embassy in Moscow in 1978 (an event given due coverage in this book) the Pentecostals in the Soviet Union were one of the least well-known of the Protestant groups. Fletcher's monograph is an attempt to make their history and present situation better understood, and as such deserves to be welcomed. The author gives a brief resume of the American roots of Pentecostalism and of 'ecstatic' sectarian movements in Russia which may have prepared the ground there, then offers a fairly full treatment of the history of the Pentecostals in Russia and the Soviet Union, with chapters on doctrine, worship and lifestyle, and quite a detailed account of the relationships between the Pentecostals and the Baptists on the one hand and the state on the other. Finally he brings his account into the 1980s by coverage of trends like the offer of independent registration to Pentecostal congregations, and suggests some basis in the social context of the Soviet Union for the persistence of this imported religious movement.

Fletcher has read widely in the Soviet secondary sources on Pentecostalism, and his book is well documented (25 pages of notes and nine pages of bibliography), but there are two main drawbacks to his presentation. Firstly, he is not sufficiently critical in his use of Soviet sources; this is especially problematic in chapters five and six (on doctrine and worship) where his only material comes from Soviet atheist sources, and in chapter eight (on lifestyle) where he seems to be unaware of western scholarly literature on Soviet sociology of religion, for example the work of Christel Lane. And secondly, the almost complete lack of any direct testimony from the Soviet Pentecostals themselves does much to reduce the book's value to something approaching a survey of the secondary literature.

Nevertheless Fletcher does cover much useful ground, and provides a clear picture of the attitude of the Soviet state to the Pentecostal movement and its representatives, together with some important matters of detail (for instance in his treatment of the thorny question of Pentecostal-Baptist relations). In a field where many questions remain unanswered and much work remains to be done it is useful to have this contribution.

The KGB: Police and Politics in the Soviet Union
by Amy W. Knight. London: Unwin Hyman, 1988. 348 pp.

Far too often books purporting to discuss the Soviet security services turn out to contain plenty of lurid stories of spies and defectors, but do little to extend our knowledge of the KGB. Amy Knight's work is an exception. Part I chronicles the evolution of the security police since 1917, focusing on their involvement in political struggles within the Kremlin. Special attention is devoted to the period since 1954, the year in which they became known as the *Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti* (KGB). Part II looks at the structure and organisational life of the 'organs', paying close attention to the career patterns of the KGB's leading officials and to the way in which the party maintains political control over its secret police. The third part examines various tasks performed by the KGB in combatting dissent, guarding Soviet borders, keeping a close watch on the military, and carrying out foreign operations.

Inevitably, given the nature of the beast, there are omissions and gaps in Knight's coverage. Readers of *RCL* will learn little about the role of the KGB in controlling religious institutions, something often noted by dissidents and more recently criticised by Boris Yel'tsin in the Supreme Soviet. Religious dissenters are mentioned, although the reference to Orthodox priest Dmitri Dudko as a Lithuanian Catholic is rather unfortunate. Some will also question Amy Knight's statement that at the time of the revolution 'the Bolsheviks had no legitimacy whatsoever' (p. 306). These minor points should not, however, detract from the value of this book or prevent us commending Amy Knight for producing the first truly adequate treatment of the KGB's role in Soviet political life.

JOHN ANDERSON

Every Person is First of all a History by Fr Mykhaylo Havryliv.
Rome: Ukrainian Press Service, 1987. 158 pp.

Father Havryliv's autobiography is actually most useful for the view it gives of the late Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod and his influence in the thought of the Russian Orthodox Church, particularly in the 1970s. A student at the Leningrad theological schools, Havryliv was a protege of Metropolitan Nikodim.

According to Havryliv's account, Nikodim was a convinced Catholic, and had some formal relationship with Pope Paul VI; a group of crypto-Catholics functioning within the Moscow Patriarchate (the Russian Orthodox Church) formed around the metropolitan. If Havryliv is to be believed, some of these people must have found life spiritually strained — he recounts how one priest served all the Russian Orthodox services in public for his congregation, whilst also celebrating the Roman Mass — in Latin — in the parish house in private.

But it is difficult to tell just how much of Havryliv's account can be believed, and several passages show that the author is writing from a very partisan position. Although Havryliv is a militant apologist for the ultramontane Catholicism, he is clearly not in accordance with the Second Vatican Council, or the normal Roman understanding of Eastern Orthodoxy (persons who knew him in the Leningrad seminary have testified that he paid no attention when Catholic professors from Rome itself tried to assist him).

The book may also reveal — inadvertently — the spiritual consequences of the lack of normal religious life during the Brezhnev period. Havryliv thinks that he has embraced Catholicism — but anyone who is familiar with current Roman Catholic thought and practice in most of the world will realise at once that the author's understanding of the Catholic Church is hopelessly out-of-date; he would be far more at home with Msgr Marcel Lefebvre than with Pope John Paul II. But as Catholics in the USSR have wider and more frequent contacts with the Catholic world, this problem may become acute.

Those concerned with the life of the Ukrainian Catholic Church (an expression which the author deprecates on p. 88) in the Soviet period might expect to find this book particularly interesting — but Havryliv actually gives little information on the functioning of this church. *Every Person is First of All a History* should be read with cautious attention.

The Razing of Romania's Past by Diav C. Giurescu.
New York: United States Committee/International Council on
Monuments and Sites, 1989. 68 pp. plus photographs

As a first-hand account of the destruction of historic architecture in Romanian towns and villages, this book provides valuable evidence of how far the Romanian government went with its urban and rural resettlement plan. The author is a distinguished historian and former member of the Romanian Central State Commission of the National Patrimony, a body set up in 1977 by the Romanian government which had 'a limited, consultative role in territorial systematisation planning when matters of the cultural heritage were involved'.

Giurescu lists many important Romanian towns affected by systematisation, which began well back in the 1970s, including the historic towns of Iasi and Suceava, respectively the present and former capitals of Moldavia. Giurescu recounts how large sections of towns have been destroyed to make way for new, uniformly designed buildings. Whole streets of 17th-century to 19th-century houses, as well as historic monuments and churches, have been lost. This has happened despite a growing movement in Romania to save and restore the national architectural heritage. Although this movement, the Directorate for the National Patrimony, was very effective in the early 1970s, the government showed a change of attitude to the campaign when it replaced it with the Central State Commission for National Patrimony in 1977. It was from this point on, just after the 1977 earthquake in Romania, that large scale destruction and rebuilding began in Bucharest, which Giurescu deals with in the last part of the book. There is also a unique map showing precisely which parts of the capital city have been affected. The implementation of the systematisation of the villages is also recounted. Giurescu's account of the planning behind the scheme shows a change of aims since it was first drafted in 1973.

This report contains an extensive set of photographs, taken by the author, of Romania's rural and urban architectural heritage. They constitute valuable evidence of architecture already lost in Romania.

FIONA TUPPER-CAREY

Books Received

Listing of a book here neither implies nor precludes review in a subsequent issue of RCL.

- Abramov, Fedor**, *Iz kolena Avvakumova: povesti, rasskazy*. Moscow: Sovremennik, 1989. 560 pp.
- Chao, Jonathan** (editor), *The China Mission Handbook: a portrait of China and its church*. Hong Kong: Chinese Church Research Center, 1989. 272 pp.
- Derksen, Peter (Isaak)**, *Es wurde wieder ruhig: Die Lebensgeschichte eines mennonitischen Predigers aus der Sowjetunion*. Winnipeg: Mennonite Heritage Centre, 1989. 183 pp.
- Hill, Kent R.**, *The Puzzle of the Soviet Church: an inside look at Christianity and glasnost*. Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1989. 417 pp.
- Jonge, Wilco de** (editor), *Living in Truth. Catholics in Eastern Europe (report of the Pax Christi International Congress, Hilversum, October 31-November 4, 1989)*. Den Haag: Pax Christi Netherlands, 1989. 210 pp.
- Kääriäinen, Kimmo**, *Discussion on Scientific Atheism as a Soviet Science 1960-1985*. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1989. 196 pp.
- Kamarás, István**, *Lelkierőmű Nagymaroson (religiográfia)*. Budapest: Vita, 1989. 315 pp.
- Kruglov, Anatoli Agapeyevich**, *Razvitiye ateizma v Belorussii (1917-1987gg.)*. Minsk: Belarus', 1989. 368 pp.
- Lavrov, Petr Lavrovich**, *O religi*. Moscow: Mysl', 1989. 414 pp.
- Mezentsev, Vladimir Andreyevich**, *O sulyeveriyakh — vser'ez*. Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1989. 240 pp.
- Petrushenko, Viktor Leont'evich and Shcherbakova G. N.**, *Vera v dukhovnom mire lichnosti*. Lviv: Vyshcha shkola, 1989. 96 pp.
- Pospelovsky, Dmitri et al.**, *Histoire de l'Église russe*. Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1989. 229 pp.
- Poulton, Hugh**, *Minorities in the Balkans*. London: Minority Rights Group, 1989. 42 pp.
- Rashkova, R. T.**, *Vatikan i sovremennaya kul'tura*. Moscow: Politizdat, 1989. 416 pp.
- Riordan, Jim** (editor), *Soviet Youth Culture*. London: Macmillan, 1989. 148 pp.
- Zhdanov, N. V. and Ignatenko, A. A.**, *Islam na poroge XXI veka*. Moscow: Politizdat, 1989. 352 pp.

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