

Russian German Lutheran 'Brotherhoods' in the Soviet Union and in the CIS: Comments on their Confessional Identity and on their Position in ELCROS

JOACHIM WILLEMS

An article by Sergei Filatov appeared in *Religion, State and Society* vol. 28, no. 1 (March 2000) entitled 'Protestantism in postsoviet Russia: an unacknowledged triumph'. I am taking the opportunity presented by this article to look back at the Lutheran communities in Soviet Russia and to examine the question of their perception of their confessional identity. First, however, I shall summarise Filatov's conclusions, which I also intend to discuss.

Filatov states that three Protestant confessions existed in Russia before *perestroika*, namely: the Baptists (in the form of the officially recognised All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (*Vsesoyuzny soyuz Yevangel'skikh Khristian-Baptistov*)) and the illegal Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (*Sovet tserkvei Yevangel'skikh Khristian-Baptistov*)); the Pentecostals; and the Seventh-Day Adventists.¹ Most Russian Germans, he continues, were officially regarded as Lutherans but 'in fact, the "Lutheran" German congregations were far from being Lutheran'. Since before the 1917 revolution the majority of the Lutheran communities had in fact been 'dissident Pietist congregations trying to free themselves from the control of the official Lutheran clergymen imposed on them by the tsarist authorities'. The Pietists had achieved this freedom as a result of the Soviet authorities' liquidation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC). As a result most Russian Germans had become Baptists or had joined the 'so-called Lutheran "congregations of brethren" ("*bratskiye obshchiny*")'.

Filatov portrays the developments which followed *perestroika* as a 'struggle for power' between the native 'Lutherans' on one side and a coalition of church, state and clergy from West Germany on the other. 'Pressure from the West Germans led to a German citizen, Bishop Georg Kretschmar, becoming head of the Church and clergymen from West Germany being appointed to almost all leading positions.' The aim of this coalition of German political and religious figures was, according to Filatov, 'to organise the national and cultural life of Russian Germans. The ELC was supposed to promote the social policy of the German government by discouraging German emigration from Russia.' As a result of this 'short struggle for power (1994–97)', Filatov claims, only a small number of the original Russian German believers remain in the Lutheran church in Russia today.² This concludes Filatov's theory.

In this article I contest the claim that the 'brotherhoods' of the Soviet era were not in fact Lutheran at all, drawing on conclusions I came to during the course of my most recent research trips to Russia in 2000 and 2001, as well as on other interviews and research materials.

Some of Filatov's other statements in my opinion require a more detailed examination than is possible in the framework of this article. I shall only briefly mention the following points.

On the subject of the claim that the 'brotherhoods' in the ELC were already striving for independence before the 1917 revolution and achieved their goal as a result of the change of regime, I refer the reader to the work of Wilhelm Kahle, in particular to his book *Aufsätze zur Entwicklung der evangelischen Gemeinden in Russland*, in which he describes the lives of the Pietist brothers in Old Russia, both within and outside the ELC. There were in fact a number of 'dissident Pietist congregations' which never needed to free themselves from ecclesiastical authority: the separatist congregations in Transcaucasia, for example, had already left the jurisdiction of the German Lutheran Church before they emigrated from Germany; they were also legally independent of the ELC when it was formed in 1832, and joined it only at its second General Synod in 1928, shortly before its dissolution.³

It is certainly true that there were tensions between the 'brotherhoods' and the representatives of the official church. The brotherhoods, however, cover a wide spectrum of members, including not only the radical brothers who actively sought to cause and preserve divisions, but also a variety of elements who coexisted and cooperated with the official church in fulfilling and fruitful ways.⁴

The theory that the Russian Germans were driven out of the ELC must also be examined more closely. The majority of Russian Germans who belonged to Lutheran congregations in the period before 1988 are indeed no longer in the ELC; however, this is a result of the emigration of considerably more than a million Russian Germans during the 1990s. The majority of those who have remained in Russia, if they still consider themselves to be Lutherans, still belong to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS).⁵ Groups of 'brotherhoods' do exist outside the church in the area around Kemerovo in southern central Siberia and in Ukraine. They left ELCROS mainly as a result of differences of opinion with the urban congregations of Russian Germans. This was, at least in part, an internal Russian – or internal Russian-German – problem. The relatively large number of West German pastors can be explained by the fact that only after *perestroika* was it possible to create a Lutheran theological faculty in Russia and that the congregations themselves, if they had no candidate locally to take on the role of preacher or pastor, consistently requested the services of German clergy.⁶ Although the appointment of clergy with completely foreign background and experience is certainly causing some problems, at present there is no alternative.⁷

It is also questionable whether, as Filatov states, ELCROS is in some sense an instrument of the German government, used to discourage Russian Germans from emigrating to Germany and to organise their national and cultural lifestyle in Russia. Quite aside from the fact that such a statement could have dangerous consequences if it were taken up by the wrong political elements in Russia, there must be a distinction between the work of Russian German secular groups (such as *Wiedergeburt* for example) and the work of the church. In some areas the issue is confused by the fact that the German government has supported both the church and *Wiedergeburt* in the same way; for example in Orenburg the two are now housed in one building funded by the German state and the German Lutheran Church, while in Omsk the church

building (*Kirchen-und Begegnungszentrum*) is used for secular Russian-German activities (German lessons, groups interested in German culture and so on). Almost universally, however, those churches which had their origin in Wiedergeburt circles are now, after undergoing a religious self-identification process, making efforts to move away from that cultural organisation. The interests of a church which is not totally identified with a particular nationality often conflict with those of an organisation like Wiedergeburt, which promotes specific ethnic issues. This has been the case in Orenburg and Krasnodar, to name two of many examples.

But to return to the real subject of this article: how did the Russian German brotherhoods perceive their confessional identity in the Soviet era? Some light is shed on this issue first of all by the historical context. Lutheran congregations existed in Russia from the sixteenth century onwards, and as groups composed of national minorities (German, Scandinavian or Baltic), they were to a greater or lesser extent isolated from the Russian Orthodox majority. In these congregations, confessional identity was inherited and usually unquestioned. With the founding in 1832 of a national ecclesiastical organisation, the ELC, the question of a congregation's confessional identity could be defined through formal membership of this new national church. This was also the case for those groups which were critical of the church and tended more towards the Baptists or to Reformed (Calvinistic) congregationalism. In the mid-1930s, however, with the dissolution of the ELC, the closure of the last premises used for worship and the arrest of the last active pastors, the situation was dramatically altered. The deportation of almost the entire Russian German population of the Soviet Union in 1941 after Hitler's offensive was another turning-point for the Lutherans. Time and again it has been reported how, shortly after their deportation and in the most difficult conditions – under guard and enduring forced labour – small groups of believers would gather to pray together, to sing, and to read and study the Bible.⁸

How did they perceive their confessional identity, these groups which had to hold their meetings in secret, often disguising them as birthday celebrations or other festivities, who sang the German words of their hymns to the melodies of communist songs, knowing that they would be incomprehensible to any Russian informer? On what was their understanding of their identity based? It can be assumed that up until the restoration of the ELC in 1988 the believers and congregations covered the whole spectrum, from those who were hostile towards or critical of ecclesiastical structure to those who belonged to it, and that even in the first postwar generation this spectrum remained, each congregation's identity predetermined by that of its predecessors before the deportations. Radical Pietists will certainly have felt the loss of the church structure less keenly than the majority of the congregation in Tselinograd in Kazakhstan, for example. It was in Tselinograd that Pastor Eugen Bachmann managed in 1956 to register a Lutheran congregation with the Soviet authorities for the first time since the Second World War. He himself, the only clergyman ordained before the war to be officially recognised as pastor to a congregation, was the most prominent representative of 'the church'. Nevertheless, Bachmann himself also remarked on the existence of a radical element of brothers in Tselinograd, who refused to accept either the authority of the pastor's office or the regulations of the church.⁹

The congregations' understanding of their identity must have varied from group to group, both in intensity and in perception of denominational differences, as can be seen from many reports of 'ecumenical' house-groups, attended by Lutherans, Baptists, Catholics and Pentecostals. In addition, it is important to remember when

considering the question of confessional identity that most of these religious groups were extremely isolated from each other. Without pastors or traditional church structures there will have been less emphasis on issues of theological conflict than on the ways in which each congregation built up its parish life and which contacts they maintained. With these points in mind, two case studies demonstrate some of the ways in which the Lutherans' sense of confessional identity could be expressed.

The history of the congregation of Sol'-Iletsk is the first example. Sol'-Iletsk is on the border between Europe and Asia, south of the Urals, a few kilometres north of Kazakhstan. This town, with a current population of 20,000, was built in 1754 as a fortification to guard the southern border of the Russian Empire against nomadic tribes from the south. Prison camps were established in the town shortly after; the prisoners were put to work in the local salt mines ('sol' means 'salt'). The nearest town of any size is Orenburg with 600,000 inhabitants, the administrative centre of the region which bears the same name. As early as 1768 the Russian military in Orenburg appointed a divisional pastor for the Lutherans in its ranks. It is likely that there were Germans in the Russian army posted to Sol'-Iletsk, and that they were also tended to by the pastor in Orenburg.

It is not possible, however, to follow the roots of today's Lutheran congregation back beyond the Second World War. The oldest people I spoke to had come to Sol'-Iletsk as deportees. As in other towns, the atheist authorities had forbidden the Lutherans to practise their church life. Naturally, the congregation also had no pastor. For these reasons, as in other towns, Christians of different confessions would meet, united above all by their common German language in which they read the Bible and sang hymns. One 90-year-old woman, who had lived through the entire history of the Lutherans after their deportation, told me that in the 1940s her house-group had suffered in particular from a lack of men: the men were conscripted into the so-called 'labour army' (*trudovaya armiya*), a forced labour system under a military regime, or put into special camps, where the conditions were not much better than in the camps of the Gulag. In any case, then as now women were more prominent than men in church life.¹⁰ She herself had read the sermons preserved in prerevolutionary collections and performed baptisms in private houses, even though, as she understood it, these tasks should really be carried out by a man. When a man was found to take over, a Mennonite brother, she gladly relinquished her responsibilities to him.

In the early 1970s, when the political situation had eased, the congregation collected money and built a prayer-house. At the same time, the Mennonite preacher also gained a Lutheran 'assistant'. In addition, the congregation was now allowed to register with the authorities and achieve legal status. As it remained inter-confessional, it was officially known as the 'Mennonite-Lutheran Congregation' (*Mennonitisch-Lutherische Gemeinde*).

Up to this point the history of the Sol'-Iletsk community – which is far from atypical for the Soviet Union – appears to confirm Filatov's theory. How can one speak of a Lutheran identity when for decades the community has been 'infiltrated' by 'anabaptists', whose 'false teaching' is clearly rejected in all Lutheran confessional texts? Here we need to look at the inner life of the Mennonite-Lutheran Congregation. According to members of the congregation, sermons were preached by brothers of both confessions, and – here was the link – always in German. However, although all those I spoke to assured me that the relationship between the two confessions was very good, the differences between the Mennonites and the Lutherans remained visible, especially on the question of baptism. The above-mentioned old

woman told me that the Lutherans had baptised their children during the course of the shared church service (and without this leading to any problems with the Mennonites). Other women, on the other hand, described open-air Mennonite baptisms in the river and emergency Lutheran baptisms in people's homes, although these had taken place in the period after *perestroika*. Some members of the congregation had had their children baptised by missionaries of the New Apostolic Church from Germany, who also used the community's prayer-house for a short time.

It appears to me that the crystallisation-point for confessional identity in this case was not a specific confessional text or the membership of a confessional organisation. In the conditions at that time, neither would have been readily accessible. The members of the congregation relied much more on the rituals which they had learned as children. When some of the people I interviewed explained the reason for their refusal to be baptised into another confession it was clear to me that the reason did not lie in theology or in the failure of the other congregation to attract their interest but in the fact that they considered it sinful to give up their own faith, or, in other words, their own 'inherited' confession. A married couple, both over 70 years old, told me that they had moved to another town where there was no Lutheran congregation and as a result they had attended the local Baptist prayer-house. When after a while the Baptist pastor had asked them if they would like to become full members of the congregation by undergoing a second, Baptist, baptism, they refused indignantly and ceased to take part in any further services or meetings. It was clearly not the case that the couple had disliked the Baptist congregation; they had been participating in the Baptists' community life for a long time. Rather, they perceived a second baptism – a 'rebaptism' or 'anabaptism' as they put it – to be a betrayal of their roots. Elsewhere in the interview, both told me that one must not abandon the faith to which one was born. This echoes the situation as it really was in pre-revolutionary Russia, where the borders of the confessional landscape followed those of the ethnic. At that time, equations of ethnic and religious identity were accepted as the norm: the Russians were Orthodox, the Poles Catholic, the Germans Lutheran and the Tatars Muslim.

When coming into contact with members of related confessions, such as Baptists or Mennonites, who also share the same ethnicity, the Lutherans' own sense of confessional identity can become somewhat muted. In many cases, however, as in this case, it has not been completely extinguished, even though those people I spoke to had lived for decades under the influence of an atheist state doctrine without any connection to church or religion. Instead, the Lutherans' confession regains its decisive importance as soon as it is called seriously into question – for example as above, when individuals are challenged to give up their 'inherited' faith.

In this way, the 'Mennonite-Lutheran Congregation' in Sol'-Iletsk could clearly withstand the differences between the two confessions for many years without either breaking up or being forced to amalgamate the two. The situation began to cause problems only when the congregation was forced to make a decision to join one confession or the other. This occurred in 1998 with the arrival of a young preacher from Kazakhstan who refused to allow the Lutherans to attend the communion service unless they accepted rebaptism. At about the same time there also arrived a pastor from the Evangelical Lutheran Church who laid great emphasis on ecclesiastical ambience and furnished the prayer-house with altar, cross, chancel and piano. He also held strictly confessional views.

The congregation – or the congregations – do not seem to have been involved in any process of decision-making. One woman reported how an elderly Mennonite

woman had been reduced to tears by the separation, whilst an old Lutheran told me, drawing on 1 Corinthians 1: 12–13, that division among Christians (Mennonites and Lutherans) was a fault.

The Lutherans appear to be coming to terms with the separation by laying the blame on the young Kazakh preacher. Because he speaks Russian instead of German and has Baptist characteristics, the Lutheran congregation now makes a distinction between the Mennonites, whom they regard as ‘good’ and ‘German’, and the Baptists, who are seen as ‘bad’, ‘intolerant’ and ‘Russian’. The innovations introduced into their own services, for example the piano accompaniment to the previously unaccompanied hymns, were accepted after a time, apparently because they could be assimilated into the congregation’s own interpretational practices. The new Lutheran pastor told me that at the very least the congregation had been convinced by his argument that churches in Germany also used pianos and the like during services.

The case discussed above shows two details which have a bearing on the question of the Lutherans’ sense of their own identity. First, the Lutherans display great openness towards others, as long as they are able to maintain their own identity. If they are unable to do so, however, divisions occur. Second, we see the close relationship between confessional and ethnic identity. The congregation is bound together by the members’ common German language and origins, and it is probably this which makes the interconfessional unity possible at all.¹¹ Alterations can even be accepted, if they are necessary for integration into the national identity. This can be seen, for instance, in the introduction of new elements into the service, which are justified by the authority of the Lutheran churches in Germany. Another prerequisite for this acceptance is the wish of the congregation to meet the demands of their confession in the ‘correct’ way. The connection between confession and ethnic identity is also demonstrated in the way in which the Lutherans came to terms with their separation from the Mennonite congregation: by now defining their former brothers and sisters as ‘Russian’ (and ‘Baptist’).

The question of national identity appears again and again especially among the older Russian German Lutherans. Nevertheless, the fact that their Lutheran identity contains a sizeable element of ‘Germanness’ cannot be counted as an argument against the existence of their confessional profile. One might just as well ask whether the Anglican Church is actually Anglican at all, if in the minds of some of its members it is also a part of their national identity. The same is true of Greek or Russian Orthodoxy, Italian Catholicism, Judaism and countless other confessions.

Are there further indications as to how the congregations of the ‘brotherhood’ tradition have perceived and continue to perceive their Lutheran status? In pre-revolutionary Russia and during the first decades of the Soviet Union pastors and brotherhoods lived side by side or even together in many areas. As long as church life continued to function, the brothers could perceive themselves (at best) as the ‘hard core’ of the congregation, holding their own meetings in addition to attending church services, or (at worst) as the ‘true’ believers, those who maintained a distance from the ‘secularised’ church or even spoke out against it. The situation after the Second World War, on the other hand, was fundamentally different, given that church life had now been destroyed. The role of the brotherhoods at that time was also no longer the same as it had been before the war. Johannes Schlundt draws attention to the fact that the groups which came into existence at this point (the Lutheran congregations of the period from the 1950s to the 1980s) were ‘no longer “brotherhoods” in the earlier sense’, but

rather church communities in which services are held according to the traditional church order of service and the sacraments are dispensed. These services are attended by those who have not joined the brotherhoods, but simply wish to maintain and cultivate their Christian faith. As well as the services themselves, prayer-meetings or meetings of the brothers are held several times a week.¹²

Eugen Bachmann reports that the services held by congregations in the 1950s conformed largely to the pattern of read services as set out in the prerevolutionary *Agende für die evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinden im Russischen Reich* (*Liturgy for Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in the Russian Empire*).¹³ If the congregations were openly placing themselves in the tradition of the old Lutheran Church by using its liturgy, we must again question Filatov's theory, and address the issue of how the Lutheran congregations' identity during the Soviet era can be more accurately described.

As a second case study I shall examine the congregation in Karaganda, Kazakhstan. This congregation provides an example of what Filatov may be referring to when he writes of a lack of Lutheran identity among the brotherhoods. According to a parish record from the 1970s the Evangelical Lutheran congregation in Karaganda was the largest in the Soviet Union with 3700 members.¹⁴ To date, this parish is not a member of ELCROS. Heinrich Rathke made regular visits to the Soviet Lutheran communities from the 1970s onwards as bishop of the Mecklenburg Evangelical Lutheran Church and in 1992–93 was ELCROS's episcopal visitor in Kazakhstan. He reports that even in the past the atmosphere prevailing in Karaganda was very different from that, for example, in Tselinograd, the first Lutheran community to gain official registration from the Soviet authorities after the Second World War, and also one of the largest communities in the country.¹⁵ This is probably mainly because the Tselinograd congregation had had the benefit of a pastor who had been ordained before the war, Eugen Bachmann, before his emigration. The pastors in Tselinograd, according to former bishop Rathke, wore robes, unlike those brothers who held the services in Karaganda.

So far, the example of Karaganda seems to bear out Filatov's claim. Nevertheless, this case also deserves a more thorough inspection. Rathke, for instance, attributes the decision of the Karaganda brothers not to wear robes not to an opposition to liturgical vestments on principle but rather to the brothers' great sense of reverence, which prevented them as laymen from wearing clerical clothing. Rathke further claims that he himself, as a Lutheran bishop, encountered no fundamental rejection on the part of the brothers, although many members of brotherhoods were outspoken in their dislike of an excessive insistence on the importance of ecclesiastical rank – a trait which could be traced back in part to traditional antiecclesiastical views. On the contrary, he had usually been allowed access to the congregations, although sometimes after undergoing many questions from leading brothers on his Biblical knowledge and personal faith. There are various reasons, according to Rathke, for the lack of contact between the brotherhoods and ELCROS. Aside from a strong anti-pastoral stance among the brotherhoods, there is also an equally strong sense of their own identity as separate from Riga or St Petersburg (the seat of the Lutheran archbishop), which are both far distant. The Karaganda congregation regards itself as the head diocese, the centre which itself oversees a large number of subsidiary dioceses in the area. Added to this, the brothers have had difficulties with Archbishop Kretschmar's emphasis on hierarchy.

There is also however the following to consider. When in 1988 Pastor Harald Kalnin of Riga was made bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran parishes in the Soviet Union, his name was put forward in a letter produced by twenty leading representatives of Lutheran congregations. One of the signatories was Johann Gudi from the congregation of Karaganda!¹⁶ The refusal of some Lutheran brotherhoods to join ELCROS can therefore not be put down merely to a lack of a sense of common confessional identity, but appears instead to be the expression of differences of opinion amongst fellow-believers. This is also true of the unions of brotherhoods in Ukraine and Siberia which also remain outside ELCROS (see above). If once again the emphasis in these brotherhoods lies more on the 'evangelical' and less on the 'Lutheran', this is still not enough to justify describing such congregations as 'so-called Lutheran'. Instead, this suggests that we should investigate further what these congregations themselves consider to be 'Lutheran' and how their Lutheran identity manifests itself.

I used the issue of baptismal practices as a symbolic illustration of the Sol'-Ilets'k congregation's confessional self-definition. In the case of Karaganda, more light can be shed by examining the second sacrament recognised by Lutherans: communion. In this respect, according to Rathke, the Karaganda congregation has continued pre-revolutionary traditions. Before the ELC was dissolved, it counted Reformed congregations among its members (although the ELC was a purely Lutheran church and not a united Lutheran/Reformed movement). Even before the revolution it was usual for one pastor to be responsible for the members of both denominations. This tradition was continued in Karaganda and was noticeable above all in the communion service. The Lutherans, who made up the great majority of the congregation, knelt to receive the Body of Christ and the wafer was placed directly in their mouths. The Reformed, on the other hand, remained standing and received the bread in their hands.¹⁷ It is possible to argue that such external differences in form do not constitute proof of awareness of a particular confessional identity. However, if we were to allow ourselves to be convinced by such an argument, we would be making generalisations from the viewpoint of our modern, western, historically aware or scientific theological understanding of the 'core' of a confession. If believers have continued after decades of persecution to hold on not only to their faith but also to the differences within their congregation, then these must have significance for those concerned. If on the other hand a discussion about the meaning of the words used at the consecration of the elements (does the word '*est*' in '*hoc est corpus meum*' really mean '*est*' or instead '*significant*'?) does not take place and the congregation fails to follow in the directions set by the conflicts between the Reformed and the Lutherans in the sixteenth century, this is scarcely surprising. It reveals an evaluation of the importance of religious questions which one might expect to find in a persecuted congregation made up of a national minority which has not benefited from classical theological training. We discover the same qualities among the thousands of members of the Karaganda congregation as in the tiny community of Lutherans in Sol'-Ilets'k. First, a great openness towards other denominations as long as this does not compromise one's own tradition and as long as there is some form of consensus. A common language and national identity are not unimportant in creating this consensus but it is primarily formed from common reliance on the Bible and in Karaganda in particular also from a common liturgy, the prerevolutionary liturgy of the ELC. Second, the determination to hold on to inherited tradition, in which it is clear that 'formalities' and rituals (in the sense in which the anthropologist Mary Douglas uses the word) make up a large part of the congregation's identity.

If we now summarise to what extent a specific profile of those Lutheran communities in the Soviet Union and in the CIS influenced by the 'brotherhoods' can be established, the demarcations between the Lutherans and the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches become obvious; among others in the widespread creation of a Lutheran lay clergy, a development which enabled the congregations to survive the arrest or murder of their pastors, and in the Lutherans' direct reliance on the Bible (in Lutheran tradition the '*sola scriptura*'). The difference between the Lutherans and the Baptists is visible primarily in their different baptismal practices. The Lutherans probably retained their own confession's baptismal rites precisely because of the contacts they had with the Baptists and their very different practices. The example of the Karaganda community reveals the differences between the Lutherans and Reformed, which appear in their different communion practices.

Much more could be said about the significance of German origins and language for the congregations I have discussed above, or about the conflicts within ELCROS on issues such as the ordination of women, but in this article I intended primarily to contest Filatov's theory, which holds that there were no Lutherans in the Soviet Union. Above all, we must bear in mind that the question of what constitutes 'being Lutheran' requires careful study. It is clear that Filatov's sweeping statement cannot be accepted as it stands, regardless of how we choose to define Lutheranism – on the criteria of the Lutheran texts (for instance the *Confessio Augustana VI*), or on the criterion of membership of the international Lutheran community,¹⁸ or simply on the basis of each individual's perception of his or her own confession.¹⁹

Notes and References

- ¹ Sergei Filatov, 'Protestantism in postsoviet Russia: an unacknowledged triumph', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 28, no. 1, March 2000, pp. 93–103, here pp. 93–94.
- ² All the quotations referring to the Germans in these two paragraphs are from *ibid.*, p. 98.
- ³ Wilhelm Kahle, *Aufsätze zur Entwicklung der evangelischen Gemeinden in Russland* (Leiden/Köln, 1962), p. 101.
- ⁴ See *ibid.*; also Kahle, *Geschichte der evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinden in der Sowjetunion 1917-1938* (Leiden, 1974), Kahle, *Die lutherischen Kirchen und Gemeinden in der Sowjetunion – seit 1938/1940* (Gütersloh, 1985), and Johannes Schlundt, *Die Gemeinschaftsbewegung unter der deutschen Bevölkerung in Russland bzw. der UdSSR in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart: Erfahrungsbericht* (Steinau a.d.Str., undated [after 1973]).
- ⁵ See Gerd Stricker, 'Lutherans in Russia since 1990', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2001, pp. 101–13, here pp. 107 f.
- ⁶ *ibid.*, p. 106.
- ⁷ On the history of ELCROS, see Georg Kretschmar and Heinrich Rathke, *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Russland, der Ukraine, Kasachstan und Mittelasien (ELKRAS)* (St Petersburg, 1995), and Gerd Stricker (ed.), *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas: Russland* (Berlin, 1997), pp. 397–406.
- ⁸ Stricker, 'Lutherans in Russia ...', pp. 103–5.
- ⁹ See Eugen Bachmann, 'In Ihm geboren. Ein persönlicher Bericht über den Dienst in der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche in der Sowjetunion 1929–1972', in Johannes Schleuning, Eugen Bachmann, Peter Schellenberg, ... *und siehe, wir leben! Der Weg der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche in vier Jahrhunderten* (Erlangen, 1982), pp. 205–42, here p. 235.
- ¹⁰ Stricker, 'Lutherans in Russia ...', p. 103.
- ¹¹ This point should not, of course, be taken as a general rule. Russian Germans who have been largely assimilated and can no longer speak German are frequently found in Russian-speaking Baptist congregations alongside Russian Baptists and Mennonites. Gerd Stricker examines the migration of linguistically-assimilated Russian Germans from the Lutheran

- brotherhoods to the Baptist faith in Stricker, 'Lutherans in Russia ...', pp. 104 and 108.
- ¹² Schlundt, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
- ¹³ Bachmann, *op. cit.*, p. 235. In my view the comments of Schlundt and Bachmann show that Stricker's statement ('Lutherans in Russia ...', p. 104) that the three ELC pastors remaining active after the Second World War tried 'without great success' to revive the liturgical traditions of the Lutheran Church is too sweeping. Either as a result of these pastors' work or quite independently, these liturgical traditions were indeed continued, at least in some areas.
- ¹⁴ Heinrich Rathke, 'Kirche unterwegs. Der weite Weg evangelisch-lutherischer Christen und Gemeinden in der ehemaligen Sowjetunion', in Kretschmar and Rathke, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
- ¹⁵ Former bishop Rathke in an interview with the author, Schwerin, 15 November 2001.
- ¹⁶ See the copy of the letter reproduced in Erich Schacht, *Erinnerungen an Russland* (Lahr, 1999), p. 179.
- ¹⁷ For details of the different practices in the communion service in mixed congregations in the prerevolutionary era, see Kahle, *Aufsätze ...*, p. 153. For the period since the 1970s I draw on comments made by former bishop Rathke on 15 November 2001 (see above, note 15).
- ¹⁸ Although the ELC was dissolved in the mid-1930s there were attempts – sometimes successful – to make contact, both on the part of the congregations in the Soviet Union themselves and on the part of the Lutheran World Federation and the Protestant Church in the German Democratic Republic. See Rathke, in for example Rathke, *op. cit.*, pp. 81 f.
- ¹⁹ According to Rathke, the Little Catechism was 'certainly' in use and 'next to the Bible it was their [i.e. the Lutheran congregations'] basic resource'. Comments by Rathke, 15 November 2001 (see above, note 15).

(Translated from the German by Rachel Kellett)