

The ASEC Newsletter

Association for the Study of Eastern Christian History and Culture

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE As ASEC proceeds with its formative steps as a scholarly organization, several things are worth noting. Our dissemination of information at the Toronto AAASS Convention (November 2003) proved encouraging. A number of individuals greeted the news of ASEC's formation with approval and joined immediately. The American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies graciously provided a meeting room for our first business and public meeting. Since the process of affiliation with the AAASS is to be completed this year, the coming annual meeting at the national convention should become a normal focal point for the year.

ASEC's treasurer, Professor Jennifer Spock, chaired an ASEC roundtable at the recent (February 26-28, 2004) Midwest Slavic Conference held at Ohio State University. The theme of the roundtable was: *Interconnection in Eastern Christianity: The Rewards (and Frustrations) of Research Across Time and Place*. We thank Professors Dan Collins and Jason Vuic of Ohio State University for helping to arrange the session. Two other ASEC officers, Professors Donald Ostrowski and Nickolas Lupinin, have organized and chaired a conference held at Harvard University (March 26-27, 2004). The theme was *The Modern History of Eastern Christianity: Transitions and Problems*.

Our Board of Advisers is now complete. Though ASEC is a fledgling organization, we have a Board that in its scholarly achievements is the equal of any organization in this country.

I enjoin all members to be pro-active and help us build a strong membership base. Hopefully, the enthusiasm with which ASEC's founding was greeted can be carried over to the pragmatics necessary to sustain it. Please send any information which relates to ASEC to the *Newsletter*. This could include your recent publications, participation in conferences, guest lectures, and various other materials.

Nickolas Lupinin, President of ASEC

HARVARD CONFERENCE A conference titled *The Modern History of Eastern Christianity: Transitions and Problems* was held at Harvard University on the 26th and 27th of March. It was sponsored by the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies and the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. We gratefully acknowledge their aid. Six sessions were devoted to specific themes. The names of the sessions and the titles and abstracts of all the presented papers follow.

Session I: Questions of National Identity and the Church: Russia and Ukraine

Serhii Plokhii (U. of Alberta), "The Church and Ukrainian National Identity."

The paper speaks of the connections between national consciousness and devotion to particular denominations/confessions, an especially problematic issue in contemporary Ukraine with the Kyivan patriarchate, the Moscow patriarchate, the Ukrainian autocephalous church and the Greek-Catholic church vying with each other. "Kyivization" rather than nationalization was presented as a descriptive concept with religious sensibility seen as frequently different from political sensibility.

Olga Andriewsky (Trent U.), “The Russian Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Question, and the Construction of a ‘Modern’ Russian National Identity, Late 19th- Early 20th Century.” The link of Russian national consciousness to Orthodoxy is a product of 19th-century Russian romanticism and of the effort of the Russian empire to extend its borders to all of what was Rus.’ The restoration of the Orthodox faith in the lost borderlands of the Slavic west was a special concern in the general project of reclamation. The rebuilding of Kyiv/Kiev and, especially, the renovation of its churches in a Russian Orthodox style was another manifestation of the campaign to link cultural loyalty to “one Russian nation.”

Lubomyr Hajda (HURI, Harvard U.), “The Contemporary Relationship of the Ukrainian Churches within a Historical Context.” There are major differences between Russia and Ukraine in terms of church development. The presence of a number of churches/ confessions in Ukraine creates complex relations between and within them. The Greek-Catholic Church (Uniate) while recognizing the hegemony of Rome also sees itself as an “Orthodox” church and a successor to Wolodymyr but not identical to the RCC and its policies and separates itself from the RCC which has a small presence in Ukraine. There is growing interaction between the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Church (Ukr. Kyiv Patriarchate; not Moscow) but relatively little interaction with the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church.

Session II: Ideas and Issues: Aspects of the Ukrainian Church

John-Paul Himka (U. of Alberta), “Iconography as a Window on Modern Ukrainian Christianity.” The paper, with 76 PowerPoint slides, deals with the disintegration of the post-Byzantine pre-modern tradition of iconography in the Carpathian region and the transitional phase of Ukrainian Christianity to modernity. The focus is on the breakdown of ancient iconographic traditions during the 18th century. Scenes of the Last Judgment are viewed as indicators of the breakdown which was apparent in medium (moving from the traditional egg-tempera on poplar boards to tempera on canvas, occasionally oil on canvas, or frescoes on walls) and in content (the appearance of the grotesque, with the resurrection of the dead and the torment of sinners executed in especially graphic terms, along with a growth in prurience).

Gregory Freeze (Brandeis U.), “From Dechristianization to Religious Revival: Ukraine in the Second Half of the 1920s.” The repressive policies of the Soviet government of 1920-23 attacked the church as a juridical entity. This led to the disestablishment of the church as an institution and disempowered the hierarchy but had the effect of empowering parishioners who resisted the repression on a local level. Thus, a religious revival took place not only in the villages but in cities as well. Soviet policy proved counterproductive. Subsequently, the state changed the laws to make parishes a “juridical person,” thus setting the stage for the fierce repression of the 1930’s.

Valerie Kivelson (U. of Michigan), “Exalted and Glorified to the Ends of the Earth: Christianity and Colonialism in Seventeenth-Century Siberia.” Russia’s march across Siberia to the Pacific had two major aspects: conquest, control and profit as well as the spread of Christianity. The native peoples were to be subdued “by God’s grace and the Sovereign’s good fortune.” However, the rhetoric of the church about Christianization of Siberia was not in symmetry with the reality which was shaped by state economic needs (taxation). Christianization was not necessarily seen as a conversion of the native population but as the creation of Russian settlements which brought Christianity in its wake. But the state, for its own grandeur, had an interest in the multiplicity of peoples inhabiting its new lands.

Session III: The Early 20th Century as a Crucible for the Russian Church

Jennifer Wynot (Metropolitan State College of Denver), “Russian Orthodox Collective Farms: Monasteries’ Cooption of Bolshevik Institutions, 1917-1918.” The complex relationship of church-state includes the case of monasteries which co-opted Soviet institutions and used them to their advantage: socialist in form but religious in content, as it were. Many of the institutions were women’s monasteries (convents) and women ran them, often very successfully, as collective farms. The religious co-op movement encountered criticism from both sides. The Orthodox feared that the practitioners would lose their religious identity and the Communists feared the compromises which they were making. The pragmatic approach by the state was temporary, yet the monastery co-ops out-produced the state collective farms during that period.

Robert H. Greene (U. of Michigan), “Popular Devotion to as Yet Un canonized Saints in Early 20th-Century Russia.” With the context of Anna of Kashin’s decanonization and recanonization as background the issue of what canonization means to local believers was addressed. It was suggested that local saints were individuals who accomplished something for the local faithful, performed miracles. Physical proximity to the bodies (relics) and places of residence of the saints promoted faith and provided financial support for commemoration, e.g., the building of a church dedicated to the saint. Pledges, the promise aspect (“obet”) of venerating a saint, was seen as significant as was the power of local roots in providing cohesion to a cult.

George Kosar (Kennedy School of Government, Harvard U.), “The Russian Orthodox Church and the Disintegration of Empire in 1917-1918.” Three church councils were called in 1917 (in Kiev, St. Petersburg and Mtskheta, Georgia) in response to the accelerating changes in the empire. The Georgian council voted to re-institute the catholicos (patriarch) and to reclaim the autocephaly which had been lost in 1811. The Georgians sought to recover their traditions which dated from the 4th century. The Provisional government recognized Georgian autocephaly. The meaningfulness of setting up a Russian vs. Georgian church opposition thus comes into question since the polarized model does not always reflect reality. By 1917 the people, not canonical order, were driving and shaping events.

Session IV: Transitions and Trends in Eastern Christianity in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Nadieszda Kizenko (SUNY, Albany), “Modernity and the Practice of Confession.” While there is abundant prescriptive material on the nature of proper confession there is little evidence that is descriptive. The problem arises in determining “how much Orthodox believers in modern Russia internalized” the prescriptive goals. The statistics pointing to a high rate of people going to confession are hardly meaningful. But there is a unique sense of the inner state of the faithful—the written confessions sent to Father Ioann of Kronstadt. Usually such confession was restricted to literate deaf mutes and the paper was to be burned in the presence of the confessant. The “Kronstadt” confessions reveal the feminization of piety, (of 163 letters 121 came from women) and knowledge of formulaic Old Church Slavonic. With time the confession questions, as well as the expressed sins, remained the same but the priests’ instructions to the penitents became milder and assumed a therapeutic quality.

Eugene Clay (Arizona State U.), “Charismatic Spirituality in the Orthodox Church at the End of the Old Regime.” Charismatic movements sought direct, unmediated access to the divine. John (Ioann) of Kronstadt was linked to several such movements, one of which saw him as the embodied Christ. A contemporaneous book on praying by a monk named Hilarion, which posited three stages of prayer: 1) physical, 2) internal and 3) union with God, spurred the movement, which often was referred to as

“imiaslavie.” The established church largely saw the movement as irrational and excessively zealous. But it was supported by Russian monastic communities on Mt. Athos. The movement is seen as a response to the disenchantment with the world of modernity. There were divisions within the church in dealing with the movement, but ultimately more than a thousand monks were defrocked, laicized and denied communion.

David Goldfrank (Georgetown U.), “The Ancient and the Modern in 20th-Century Monastic Reform.” A historic overview of the development of monastic rules in the Orthodox Church and in Russia with particular interest in 19th and 20th century developments but not including the Soviet or post-Soviet periods. Monastic rules, though private, also have a public function especially in the case of an official state religion in which monastics are to live an exemplary Christian life for the benefit of clergy and laity. The church, backed by the state (Synod of 1681), published a general monastic rule which then became a public document. The external affairs of a monastery were under state supervision while spiritual matters were under ecclesiastical rule. Reading lists published by various hierarchs for the spiritual growth of monastics are excellent indicators of the values and sensibility of particular periods as well as of their authors.

Session V: The Early Modern Period: Culture, Politics, and Religion

Andrei Pliguzov (Dumbarton Oaks), “Russian Non-Possessors in Historical Context.” The possessor—non-possessor controversy is revisited. Nil Sorskii attempted to shield his skete from worldly affairs. Yet he was dependent on the Kirillo-Beloozerskii monastery for essential goods and services. Nil did not preach the denial of worldly/monastery aid; he merely called for the rigorous regularization of this aid. Contrary to established opinion, Nil also accepted monks from the Volotskii monastery. The Josephites did not consider his status as an elder diminished in any sense. They eagerly copied and propagated his books with laudatory terms. He was not placed in a counter position. It was the elder Vassian who, after the death of Nil in 1508, began to create the reputation of his predecessor as a non-possessor.

Maria Salomon Arel (U. of Ottawa), “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Merchant Diaspora, Xenophobia, and the Issue of Faith in Muscovite Russia.” Ethnocentrism and xenophobia long attributed to Muscovy are reexamined. The practice of various confessions was permitted in the 16th and 17th centuries. Protestants had full religious liberty, their own churches, ministers and public worship. Catholics were restricted to private worship (conflict with Poland was a factor here). In comparison, policy in England at this time was far more repressive. Sweden, in contrast and particularly for mercantile considerations, welcomed and guaranteed rights to foreigners and members of other religions. Such policies were reflected in Muscovy where the church was subordinate to the state and pragmatic trade interests often dominated.

Isolde Thyret (Kent State U.), “Accounts of the Transfer of Relics and Cults of Saints in Muscovite Russia.” The application of the methodology of Western medieval studies to the Russian area is often non-productive. This is especially true concerning saints’ lives and the transfer of relics. Current practice in the Russian area assumes a top-down approach which is not very meaningful when canonization is the issue. The relationship between saints’ lives and the church hierarchy needs to be re-examined and the traditions and practice of local cults should be the object of a new methodology which should be concerned with “the organic development of cults.” Local cult aspects have been largely overlooked by church historians.

Session VI: The Force of Ideas: Religion and Society

David Prestel (Michigan State U.), “Fathers and Sons: The Monastic Legacy of Paisii Velichkovskii.” The monastic legacy of Paisii and the form which it took in Russia at Optina Pustyn’ and Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov* is examined. The novel is viewed as an amplifying vehicle which introduced the tradition of spiritual elders (*starchestvo*) to the general reader. This is especially evident in Book One of Chapter Five. Eastern style spiritual guidance is traced back to the desert fathers and is seen at the center of desert monasticism. In contrast to cenobitic monasticism, it was the spiritual direction of an elder, “charismatic rather than institutional,” which shaped the inner life of a monk. By extension, such spiritual life could be practiced beyond the monastery walls by being “a monk in the world.”

William G. Wagner (Williams College), “The Transformation of Female Orthodox Monasticism in Nizhegorod Diocese, 1764-1929 in Comparative Perspective.” The flourishing of women’s monastic communities in Europe and especially in Russia is considered. The changes in organization, social composition and orientation of women’s monastic orders are analyzed with the women’s monastic communities of Nizhnii Novgorod province serving as models. The rapid growth in women’s communities was not reflected in male communities which were relatively stagnant. In Nizhnii, the religious fervor of women transformed monasteries from homes for elderly women to religious centers for all women, accessible to the lower classes (peasants), and moved the monasteries from cities to rural areas making them centers of religious activity and culture which engaged the outside world. Such monasteries became the focus of pilgrimages and the women in them assumed an apostolic role.

Roy Robson (U. of the Sciences in Philadelphia) “Solovki as Symbol in the 20th and 21st Centuries.” Three principal questions are addressed: 1) the public representation of Solovki 2) the issue of Solovki attempting to create its own representations as opposed to images thrust upon it and 3) whether the representations of Solovki tell us anything of Russian society in the last hundred years? Solovki’s late 19th-century self-created image as a religious and patriotic shrine is examined. With the emancipation of the serfs and the development of steamships, the monastery became a popular destination of pilgrimages, presenting itself as the “Athos of the North,” greatly enhancing its financial state. All that radically changed during the Soviet period. By the 1930’s it became a symbol of all labor camps. Its rehabilitation has been underway since the 1970’s. In 1992 it was returned to the Orthodox Church and the UN designated it as a World Heritage Site that same year.

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News of the Profession

The faculty of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary has readied for publication its premier issue of the *St. Tikhon's Theological Journal*. This annual publication is an anthology of articles and book reviews written by the school's own professors, graduates, and other Orthodox Christians of the academic world. The first issue includes the following articles: "Suffering: A Theological Perspective" by Prof. Harry M. Boosalis; "St. John's Chrysostom's Letter to the Italian

Women" by Prof. David C. Ford; and "A Homily on the Precious and Life-giving Cross by St. Gregory Palamas" by Prof. Christopher Veniamin. The issue also includes three book reviews: *Orthodox Spiritual Life According to Saint Silouan the Athonite* by Harry M. Boosalis, reviewed by Prof. Mary Ford; *Women and Men in the Early Church: The Full Views of St. John Chrysostom* by David C. Ford, reviewed by Prof. Paula Holoviak; and *Orthodox Spirituality* by Dumitru Staniloe, reviewed by Prof. Harry M. Boosalis.

Subscription fee for the Journal is \$ 10 per year in the United States and \$ 15 per year outside of the U.S. In order to facilitate the Seminary faculty's first efforts at publishing the journal, a two-year subscription (\$ 20 in the U.S. and \$ 30 outside the U.S.) is requested.

The faculty invites anyone interested in submitting theological articles and book reviews for consideration for publication to send them to the address below. Subscription requests should be directed to the same address. Checks should be made payable to *St. Tikhon's Theological Journal*. The address is: STTJ, P.O. Box 130, South Canaan, PA 18459

Members' publications: Roy Robson, *Solovki: The Story of Russia Told Through its Most Remarkable Islands*. New Haven: Yale U. Press, 2004

Jennifer Wynot, *Keeping the Faith: Russian Orthodox Monasticism in the Soviet Union, 1917-1939*. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2004

ASEC Newsletter Address

ASEC Newsletter
Russian Department
Bryn Mawr College
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

Email address: gpahomov@brynmawr.edu

