

**FAMILY FORMATION ISSUES IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION:
THERAPEUTIC CHALLENGES**

Dennis O. Bowen, D. Russell Bishop & Lydia L. Bowen

Dennis O. Bowen, Psy.D. is director of Kiev Family & Counselor Training Center, Kiev Ukraine; D. Russell Bishop, Psy.D. is a clinical psychologist in private practice and Adjunct Professor at the Adler School of Professional Psychology (Sycamore, IL, USA). Lydia L. Bowen, M.A. is family ministry director for Kiev Family & Counselor Training Center, and serves with the Rapha Family and Counseling Center, Kiev Ukraine. Portions of this paper were presented by Dennis Bowen at the "Man & Christian Worldview" conference in Simferopol, Ukraine in 2004.

Abstract

Changes in every sphere of life in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) since perestroika have impeded young adults in the process of forming new families. From a social science perspective, multiple factors impact the launching of new families at various points in the family life cycle. From the religious perspective, this event has been called the "leaving and cleaving" process. Both social sciences and religious perspectives describe how various factors promote or impede the success and stability of newly formed families. Failures in family formation have resulted in major social problems such as the severely declining populations in European sector countries of the FSU. Research has shown that religious involvement can strengthen families and individuals throughout the life cycle. Additional research could lead to measures to maximize supports for the formation of families. Resilient families would contribute positively to the social, emotional, spiritual and material stability of this region.

Situation 1

"In our country it is almost impossible for an ordinary person to buy a place to live, and even renting is not easy. As the result of market reforms, democracy and the collapse of the totalitarian regime, the economic condition of the country has worsened. That is why buying a place to live is out of the question, because ordinary people must concern themselves with how to survive and to feed and clothe their children. My wife & I didn't manage to leave our parents' apartment because all of our income went to daily & weekly expenses.

In the beginning we got along with my parents pretty well. But then difficulties started. It was very hard on my wife because it is hard to have two cooks in one kitchen, even though they had a good relationship. For example my mother got used to doing dishes right away, but we wanted to wait until everyone is done eating. We argued about where, what and how different things should be put, and how to clean the house, etc. So these trifling problems greatly upset normal family life and led to arguments both with parents and between ourselves. Needless to say that even the refrigerator became a stumbling block, arguing about what belonged to whom. We also had difficulties in intimate relationships. Over time it created an atmosphere of hopelessness.

But eventually we found a cheap apartment to rent in the apartment building next to our parents. The apartment was in terrible condition. But we still

remember that apartment with a warm feeling, because it was the first time that we felt like we were a family. Now we are praying, hoping for a miracle, for \$5000 to buy a one room apartment.” – Russian man in his middle 20’s.

Stories like this one shared by a Russian man in his middle 20’s have been common place in our experience throughout our time in ministry in the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Economic, political and social changes since the early 1990’s have yielded significant challenges for young adults and there are conflicts apparent between “old” and “new” values and expectations for family structure. The Biblical concept of *leaving and cleaving* has shaped attitudes and behavior in this part of the world since the coming of Christianity. The vignette above, and others that follow, provide a context for understanding family formation in Ukraine and Russia today.

The rebuilding of the church has contributed to the rebuilding and strengthening of the family in the FSU. A strong family provides a foundation for social life and likewise helps leaders who are in a position to positively influence and strengthen the overall integrity of the countries of the FSU both politically and religiously.

There are barriers today in many of these countries for newly married couples wanting to form a strong marital bond and to begin a family of their own. This struggle is partly related to former Soviet state policies that impeded cohesive family formation. Policies in the Soviet era promoted loyalty to the state rather than loyalty to other institutions such as the family or church.

In addition, the FSU countries continue to be in a transition period politically, socially, culturally, and economically. All of these factors have a profound impact on the family. And so, the question arises: What are the social, cultural, and theological aspects of leaving and cleaving for young families in today’s new FSU countries? For the purposes of this paper, the term FSU will refer primarily to the countries in the European region, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova.

Facets of Leaving and Cleaving

The concept of leaving and cleaving is found in the book of Genesis which we use to place our discussion within the broad framework of Christianity and its culture. We will examine the concept in several ways.

Social science perspectives. In the social sciences, the concept of leaving and cleaving is generally identified as *family formation*. This process involves a man & woman (often young) after they meet. They move toward and then prepare for marriage. They take part in a culturally prescribed marriage process. This marriage process is the point at which a family is said to have been formed. Most often the process of family formation involves the couple’s plans for, and the event of childbirth.

Numerous factors directly affect family formation, particularly the learned characteristics and traditions of the families of origin.¹ A couples’ cultural and national identity, as well as their socio-economic status impact the process of family formation. These factors will be explored in detail below.

Theological perspectives. Leaving and cleaving begins with creation in God’s image. According to Genesis 1:26, “God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them” (NIV).

¹ D. P. Hogan, “The effects of demographic factors, family background, and early job achievement on age at marriage.” *Demography*, 15, 161-75; R. B. Miller & J. Glass, “Parent-child attitude similarity across the life course,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51 (1989), 991-997; W.A. Vollebergh, J. Iedema, & Q. A.Raaijmakers, “Intergenerational transmission and the formation of cultural orientations in adolescence and young adulthood.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63 (2001), 1185 – 1199; L. J. Waite & G. D. Spitzer, “Young Women’s Transition to Marriage.” *Demography*, 18 (1981), 681-94.

In Genesis chapter 2, there is the first use of the phrase, leaving and cleaving, “therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (KJV). The New Testament continues with this theme: in Matthew, chapter 19, Jesus Christ affirms the Genesis statements, saying, “What God has joined together, let no man separate” (NIV).

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul also quotes the Genesis passage, as, “the two will become one flesh . . . this is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. However each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Eph. 5:32, 33, NIV).

The Christian standard for marriage consists of the man and woman making a marital commitment and then (sometimes, depending on the culture) physically leaving their parents. This marriage relationship begins a new family, a joining together of two people, to become one in the marital union.

Contemporary Factors Related To Leaving and Cleaving In The FSU Situation 2

“Six years ago, when I was 17, I left my mother and father. I wanted to live on my own; I wanted to be independent, to do everything myself and to make my own decisions. That is why, the first chance I had, I left my parents to live at a different place. My parents were not anxious about my decision. They said that it was just another of my wild ideas; that it would disappear when I realized that it is not easy to live separately. As for me, I wanted to prove them wrong, and to prove that I could be independent. I also was very afraid to regret my choice. At first it was very hard for me. I didn’t know many things and didn’t do much. Besides I didn’t have much money. Basically I didn’t know how to wisely spend money because I hadn’t been taught that. Being away from home helped me to see how important my family was to me. Only after being away from them did I understand how much I loved them. I was able to appreciate their concern and care for me, and that they had taken care of my problems and provided for me. My relationships with my family also changed. When we lived together, we had many conflicts, because I was an obstinate child. Now we didn’t have this anymore and our relationships were smoother. Because I lived separately I learned how to understand my parents, their problems in caring for us children. I learned how to be self-reliant and as independent as possible.” ---Russian woman in her early 20’s.

Adolescent Factors. Various factors shape adolescents’ future formation of their families. Their beliefs and expectations in adolescence directly affect their later behavior, such as timing and setting of first pregnancy.² Their family environments have a clear effect on children’s and adolescents’ attitudes and later behavior.³ Socially rich family settings, along with high levels of parent and teen activity led to higher levels of moral identity formation.⁴

² B. Ham, “Self-confidence, future goals deter teen pregnancy,” *Health Behavior News Service*, accessed July 10, 2004: <http://www.cahf.org.hbns/news/goals07-06-04.cfm>; M. Starrels & K. Holm, “Adolescents’ plans for family formation: is parental socialization important?” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62 (2000), 416-430.

³ W. Axinn & A. Thornton, “The influence of parents’ marital dissolutions on children’s attitudes toward family formation,” *Demography*, 33 (1996), 66-81.

⁴ D. Hart, R. Atkins, & D. Ford, “Family influences on the formation of moral identity in adolescence: longitudinal analyses,” *Journal of Moral Education*, 28 (1999), 375-386.

Factors outside the family, such as tradition, culture and politics contribute to adolescents' attitudes and behavior. Similarly, religious activity contributes to youth attitudes and their later behavior. Involvement in religious activities affects self-concept, substance use, and amounts of sexual activity.⁵

Young Adult Factors. Both men and women highly value physical attractiveness in a mate. Mutual attraction and love have been found to be highly valued by both genders when considering mate selection. Men see a woman's financial prospects as important, but not a partner's domestic skills.⁶

Ethnic identity does not appear to be a strong variable in decisions relating to mate selection. Level of education, age, employment, and socioeconomic status appear to be more important to young men and women than ethnic status. Ethnic factors contribute somewhat to the decisions surrounding child bearing, but even then, individual characteristics exert more influence than does ethnicity.⁷ Gender characteristics affect family formation in Ukraine and Russia, in that women marry at a younger age than their male peers. This pattern is also the case in many other parts of the world.⁸

The Religious Environment. The different faith traditions within Christianity – Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism base their marriage views and doctrines on very similar themes. Some of the traditions however differ in relation to questions about sex, singleness, and marriage.⁹ For example, Orthodox priests are permitted to marry, but not Catholic priests. Various Protestant churches approach questions of marriage and divorce from divergent perspectives.

However, in the European area of the FSU, the Orthodox Church represents the primary expression of the Christian faith. For over 1000 years, the Orthodox Church has guided the development of the spiritual lives of the Slavic peoples. The Orthodox Church is represented in these countries by the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), plus the smaller Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. They share similar theological and liturgical practices and traditions.

Orthodoxy views the family as a spiritual unit. Further, each home is seen as family church, a place where children begin their education in Christian worship and practices.¹⁰ Divorce is disapproved of, but as Orthodox theology recognizes church tradition as authoritative, exceptions to prohibitions against divorce have resulted in a conservative yet realistic view of marital dissolution (In Communion website, 2006).¹¹

⁵ Y. Dai, R. Nolan, & Z. Sing, "Self-esteem of early adolescents: a national survey of 8th graders," Paper presented at the 109th annual convention of the American Psychological Association, San Francisco, CA. 92001); K/ Steinman & M. Zimmerman, "Study: religious activity equals less sex, drugs for some teens," *American Journal of Community Psychology*, accessed July 10, 2004, at: <http://researchnews.osu.edu/archive/adorisk.htm>

⁶ D. M. Buss, T.K. Shackelford, L. A. Kirkpatrick, & R. J. Larsen, "A half century of mate preferences: the cultural evolution of values," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63 (2001), 491 – 503.

⁷ B. K. Takyi & I. Addai, "Effects of ethnicity on the onset of parenthood in a developing country: Some evidence from the early 1990s," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 33, 1, (2002) 57-71.

⁸ K. Roberts, G. Osadchaya, K. Dsuzed, V. Gorodyanenko & J. Tholen, "Economic conditions, and the family and housing transitions of young adults in Russia and Ukraine," *Journal of Youth Studies*, 6 (2003) 71-88.

⁹ J. Maddock & I. Kon, "Sexuality and family life," in J. Maddock, M. J. Hogan, A. Antonov & M. Matskovsky, *Families Before and After Perestroika*, New York: The Guildford Press, 1994.

¹⁰ Orthodox Christian Information Center. Accessed July 18, 2006 at: http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/praxis/xc_home.aspx

¹¹ *In Communion*, website of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship. "Personal, family and public morality," accessed July 18, 2006 at: <http://www.incommunion.org/articles/the-orthodox-church-and-society/x>

Family Formation After the Marriage Ceremony

Immediately after a family is formed, a number of factors contribute to the degree of stability and strength of the new marital relationship. One of the strongest factors that predict marital adjustment is the husband's level of independence from his parents. Husbands' adjustments are more successful when there is less emotional entanglement with the mother, and when the husband is able to solve problems without his father's help. Husbands adjust to marriage partly based upon the degree to which both he and his wife both separate from the influence of their parents. A wife's adjustment to marriage depends on how well her husband separates from his parents.¹²

Newly formed families in Ukraine and Russia today face difficulties in obtaining places to live, like the difficulties their parents faced in the past. However, due to declining marriage rates, and a higher mortality rate, a young couple probably has a slightly better chance of having their own residence today. Further, social and economic changes in FSU countries have not led to delays in marriage and parenthood. In fact, even during the Soviet era, scarcities in housing did not delay marriage and childbearing.

Couples who today delay family formation and parenthood are not doing so because they are having difficulty in the labor market. Actually, young couples who earn improved wages are moving into their own apartments, partly due to inheritance or outright purchase. Instead, current trends in family formation and childbearing in the FSU are due more to new lifestyle options and preferences than to economic burdens.¹³

Gender identification has its own character in FSU countries. Russian men hold traditional masculine attitudes and beliefs to a greater degree than do western men. At the same time, they are being encouraged to modernize and reject traditional male gender stereotypes.¹⁴ Of course this is not a simple task for men in these countries.

Women in FSU countries generally enjoy equality in level of employment, education, and income, but women have less occupational status than men. The economic and social changes since perestroika have led to even greater emphasis on traditional gender attitudes and practices, both from Slavic traditions and from soviet culture.¹⁵

When family formation does not occur optimally, several outcomes may result: children being born out of wedlock, divorce, or couples cohabitating. The Russian Academy of Sciences reports that 28% of children are born to unwed mothers today. Single mother households are among the poorest households, with only 5% of absent fathers taking any part in their children's upbringing. Approximately half of marriages in Russia today end in divorce. After divorce, it is the mother who most often heads the resulting single parent household. These children of broken families suffer the effects of these failures in family formation.¹⁶

The experience of cohabitation has a strong influence on values and outcomes related to family formation. Studies show that cohabiting couples are more similar to other cohabiting couples than they are to couples who marry, in respect to age and religious preferences. Many

¹² W. Amstutz-Haws & B. Mallinckrodt, "Separation-individuation from parents and marital adjustment in newlywed couples," Paper presented at the 104th annual convention of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Ontario, 1996.

¹³ Roberts, Osadchaya, et.al, 2003.

¹⁴ R. Levant & K. Richmond, "Masculinity ideology among Russian and U. S. young men and women and its relationship to unhealthy lifestyle habits among young Russian men," *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 4, 1 (2003), 26-36.

¹⁵ D. Vannoy & L. Cubbins, "Relative socioeconomic status of spouses, gender attitudes and attributes, and marital quality experienced by couples in metropolitan Moscow," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 32 (2001), 195-217.

¹⁶ "So where are all the men?" *Economist*, 8/3/2002, 364 (8284), 43-44.

cohabiters live with a partner whom they would not marry. Cohabiters anticipate spending a limited amount of time together, while couples who marry anticipate a lifetime together.¹⁷ The experience of cohabitation also reduces people's preferences to have children, and increases their tolerance of divorce.¹⁸

When Ukrainians or Russians speak of adult life, they use the word self-reliant — not even the word independent - instead of the word adult. When they use the word adult, it means they are having problems, like “the cares of an adult,” and it has a negative connotation of serious worries. People even into middle age might deny being an adult (meaning they aren't having adult worries), but would describe themselves as self-reliant, or independent.

Situation 3

“My self-reliant life started very early. My parents divorced when I was 7. Even a year after my parents' divorce, when I was 8 years old, I didn't often think about my parents. I rarely saw my mother. She would go somewhere for a couple of days, and then I won't come home for several weeks. I lived with my mother until I was 11. Then she went to prison after she was falsely accused of stealing money. My father took me to live with him. I felt uncomfortable in his house. Very often I would stay at my friends' houses. Their parents didn't care if I stayed there. When I was 16 I was arrested. My father came to court and officially rejected me before all the people in the court. I understood that he did this because he was a Communist official and I was a juvenile delinquent. He was not lucky to get a son like me. When I became older, I tried to re-establish relationships with my parents, but I didn't have any success. There were too many unpleasant moments in the past. It is difficult for me to say exactly when I left my mother and father and started my self-reliant life. It seems to me that our family didn't manage to experience normal family life because we didn't have God with us. Many people suffered. Many are still suffering, including my father and mother, my sister and I. We can leave our earthly parents, but we cannot leave our Heavenly Father.” - Russian man, mid 30's.

Problems and Challenges for Leaving and Cleaving

Some problems resulting from economic and social changes include population decreases and changes in the fertility rate, which have economic impacts. Fertility rates have dropped dramatically in Russia since 1987, falling to 1.4 births per woman in 1994. Contraceptive use has not been widespread until recently, and abortion remains the most widely used contraceptive method. Abortions outnumbered births by a 2 to 1 ratio in the 1990's. The fertility trends have paralleled the trends toward earlier marriage and earlier childbearing.¹⁹

High abortion rates along with increased mortality rates have resulted in a population decrease in Russia and Ukraine. Population shrinkage has been described as a "demographic crisis".²⁰ While Hollander (1997) indicated no viable plans were in place to reverse these declines, *Blog.kievukraine* (2005) reported that today in Ukraine there is currently an incentive program which

¹⁷ R. Schoen & R. M. Weinick, "Partner choice in marriages and cohabitations," *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 55 (1993), 408 -414.

¹⁸ W. Axinn & J. Barber, "Living arrangements and family formation attitudes in early adulthood," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59 (1997), 595 – 611.

¹⁹ Axinn & Barber, 1997.

²⁰ A. Antonov, "Depopulation and family failure in Russia," *The Family in America*, 15, 7 (2001), 1-6.

pays a \$1500 subsidy for the birth of each baby.²¹ Unlike Ukraine, throughout the industrialized world population decreases continue.²²

Some of these problems are linked to the economic transitions since perestroika. The standard of living for families with children has dramatically declined in this period. Approximately 69% of young families, and up to 76% of families with several children, live below the official poverty line in Russia. For many poor families, up to 72% of the family income goes for food. These factors are disruptive to family functioning and to the orderly transmission of adaptive attitudes and values.²³

For families of believers there are special challenges in addition to these. In Russia, 43 % of the population identify themselves as Orthodox, and another 7% describe themselves as Christian ("Religion by the numbers," 2005). Buddhism and Judaism each account for approximately ½ of 1% of the population.²⁴ Islam is one of the fastest growing major religions in Russia, with about 3% of the population claiming affiliation.²⁵

In Ukraine, greater religious diversity exists within Christianity. The Russian Orthodox church still maintains a visible presence with about 12% of the population claiming affiliation. The Kiev Patriarchate Orthodox church (22%) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox church, 1%, also exist alongside. The Greek Catholic (8%) and Roman Catholic (1%) churches likewise have a strong presence in the country.²⁶ Protestant denominations are smaller, yet visible. Among missionaries sent to other FSU countries, Ukrainians make up the largest percentage. Historically, Protestant revivals began in Ukraine and spread northward.

In Belarus, Russian Orthodox is the largest church denomination, with 80% of the population. Catholic membership is estimated to be about 12%, with the remainder being Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, and other.²⁷

As in most of Europe, attendance and adherence to doctrines is low. For Russia, attendance is approximately 2% weekly; for Belarus, an estimated 6% attend weekly, and in Ukraine, attendance is around 10% weekly. Polosin describes this phenomenon as a "passive faith," one which involves people who may turn to religion as a ritual, but may not hold a personal religious faith.²⁸ For families in these categories, a passive faith would not promote transmission of strong moral teachings to children.

For some, external factors can greatly impinge on religious tradition and belief in the sphere of family life. In Russia, repression of Catholic and Protestant followers has been increasing since a 1997 law began to limit religious freedoms. Belarus has firmly restricted all but the Russian Orthodox churches since president Alexander Lukashenko signed into effect a strict 2002 law on religion.

²¹ D. Hollander, "In post-Soviet Russia, fertility is on the decline; marriage and childbearing are occurring earlier," *Family Planning Perspectives*, 29 (1997), 92-94; "Ukrainian government bets on subsidies," accessed November 18, 2006 at <http://blog.kievukraine.info/2006/06/ukrainain-government-bets-on-subsidies.html>

²² G. Dobell, "East Asia follows Europe trend toward population decline," accessed November 18, 2006 at: <http://www.abc.net.au/correspondents/content/2004/s1211916.htm>; "No easy answers around the world to population decline," accessed November 18, 2006 at: <http://www.worldpress.org/Europe/1979.cfm>

²³ G. Klimantova, "The Family in the Process of the Transformation of Russian Society," *Russian Social Science Review*, 43 (2002), 16-23.

²⁴ "Religion by location," accessed Feb 12, 2006 at: http://www.adherents.com/adhloc/Wh_287.html#636

²⁵ "Religious denominations, Russia, 1999," accessed February 12, 2006 at: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/services/index.html>

²⁶ "Major Religions," accessed February 10, 2006 at: <http://www.risu.org.ua/eng/major.religions/>

²⁷ adherents.com, 2006

²⁸ V. Polosin, "Russian religion by the numbers," *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 7,1 (1999), 4-6.

Without a doubt, leaving and cleaving is a most difficult undertaking for young couples today in the FSU. Transitions in culture and the economic sphere place significant barriers on youth moving toward family formation, in addition to these pressures and impediments that already existed.

Situation 4

Tanya lived at home with her son, Sasha, and her parents, Anatoly and Sveta. Also at home were Tanya's brothers, Roma, 21, and Alexi, 15. Their cousin, Valeri, 18, also lived with them about six months of the year. All seven lived together in a two-room apartment. Sveta had a government job, while Anatoly worked for a local factory on an occasional basis. He had just returned from 8 months in prison for stabbing his brother-in-law in an argument.

Tanya had been married for about a year. She and her husband never had their own place, and there was no room at either parent's apartments for them to have their own room. They were able to meet occasionally, and it ended up being kind of like steady dating. Then, finally, her husband divorced her, and Tanya became a single mother at 23. Her young son Sasha was the delight of the whole family. Tanya would come over sometimes to borrow a cup of milk for Sasha. Alexi and Roma would gather with their friends in the hallway, since there was no room in the apartment for them to have their friends over. And so there was almost always cigarette smoke in the hallway.

Other young people would hang out on the stairways. Sometimes there was the aroma of marijuana in the hallway, and sometimes there were syringes on the floor or outside on the ground. Every morning there would be pop bottles, beer bottles, and cigarette butts strewn about on the cement floors. One time two teenage boys wearing ski masks came to the door with a gun. It must have been their first robbery attempt, because they ran off after only a few seconds. - American living in Russia, 50's.

Future Directions for Leaving and Cleaveing

Pastoral counselors and others invested in promoting positive development and adjustment in young adulthood can emphasize prevention strategies as well as interventions to address difficulties after they have occurred. We encourage consideration of several matters regarding prevention, particularly related to the influence of religious values and pre-marital preparation. Useful intervention strategies may be bolstered when a variety of socioeconomic and practical considerations are provided for. These ideas are followed by a brief review of directions for future research.

Prevention. In the literature of family and religion, family formation is linked with higher rates of church involvement for both men and women. This appears to be a mutually supporting association. Involvement in church life supports a positive valuing of family formation, and childbirth strengthens peoples' attitudes related to their faith tradition.²⁹

²⁹ P. Becker & H. Hofmeister, "Work, family, and religious involvement for men and women," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 40 (2001), 707 – 722.

Religious involvement is likewise linked to better physical health.³⁰ Religiously committed individuals live longer, have a lower suicide rate,³¹ lower level of drug & alcohol use,³² less criminal behavior, and less divorce than individuals with low or no level of religious involvement.³³ The proverb says, "This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones." (Proverbs. 3:8, NIV) Recent research findings appear to support this proverb. It seems likely that if the family described in Situation 3 could have been encouraged to have some connection with a religious community, there could have been some buffer against the marriage break up, criminal involvement, and ongoing family relationship strain. As this young man recognized, when we are involved with God there are distinct advantages.

Religious involvement is also associated with a higher level of life satisfaction, and with improvement in mental health status when participating in religious practices.³⁴ For young families, the participation in faith traditions provide support that can strengthen families who will be able to take part in building strong communities. Having strong community provides opportunities for youth that can prevent them from gravitating toward the kinds of teenage behavior described in Situation 4.

For pastoral counselors in these FSU countries, work can be done to prepare young people before marriage. Preparation for marriage begins while children are learning their identities in their earliest years. Such preparation could have provided the woman in Situation 2 with skills and resources to help her more successfully manage her developmental transition. Pastoral counselors and other church leaders can begin with parent training. Parent training would help parents in learning how to prepare their children for healthy gender identity as they grow and for appropriate socializing experiences as they approach the age of marriage. Such training would include not only sexuality education. Parents trained to teach their children would also prepare them to have a healthy view of courtship, dating and mate selection well before they are ready to begin relationships with the opposite sex.

Teaching parents to help their children prepare for marriage helps them in leaving. Preparation for cleaving would also be the responsibility of the church. Some curriculum material and texts are already available on pre-marriage preparation. Pastoral counselors would have a critical role to play in preparing young people for marriage, and for teaching others in the church to present similar material.

Pre-marriage preparation has been recognized to not stop at the wedding day. Many pastoral counselors plan to provide parts of premarital preparation curricula after the wedding. Many newlyweds are even more receptive to preparation material after the honeymoon has ended. Beyond this, churches worldwide have begun to recognize the value of strengthening existing marriages via marriage seminars, encounters, and published material.

³⁰ P. N. Duckro & P. R. Magaletta, "The effect of prayer on physical health - experimental evidence," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 33 (1994), 211-219; H. G. Koenig, J. C. Hays, D. B. Larson, L. K. George, H. J. Cohen, M. E. McCullough, K. G. Meador & D. G. Blazer, "Does religious attendance prolong survival? A six-year follow-up study of 3,968 older adults," *Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences*, 54 (1999), 370- 376.

³¹ D. B. Larson, J. P. Sawyers & M. E. McCullough, "Scientific research on spirituality and health: a consensus report." Rockville, MD: National Institute for Healthcare Research (1998).

³² T. Wills, A. Yaeger & J. Sandy, "Buffering effect of religiosity for adolescent substance use," *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 17 (2003), 24-31.

³³ J. Gartner, "Religious commitment, mental health and prosocial behavior: a review of the empirical literature," in E. Shafranske (ed.), *Religion and the clinical practice of psychology*, Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1996.

³⁴ K. I. Pargament, *The psychology of religion and coping: Theory, research, practice*. New York: Guilford Press, 1997.

Intervention. As noted above, it is unusual for a young married couple to have their own place to live after being married. Therefore, a challenge for churches and pastoral counselors will be to help extended families to learn how to live together successfully under one roof. The struggles described in Situation 1 may not have been preventable, but these struggles could have been aided if relevant intervention was available. Leaving and cleaving is demanding regardless of the living arrangements and much more so when adjusting to living in a multi-generational household. A working knowledge of family systems and interventions will be beneficial for those working with newly formed families living with their extended family members.

Pastoral counselors may benefit from incorporating strategies developed as a result of studies like that by Snell-Johns, Mendez, and Smith (2004),³⁵ to address the unique needs of FSU families, which have many parallels to under served families in the U.S. In order to encourage parents to access and connect with supportive resources, pastoral counselors may need to help for example, with transportation, providing home-based services or addressing parents' individual needs for support.

Future research. Clearly, additional research will be necessary to understand how government, education, social services, the church and society in general can become involved in supporting and strengthening families. The forces that impact families in the FSU must be identified, and the strengths that are available for families and their children need to be identified and upheld. Research into these areas can then influence policies that strengthen families, from public and private spheres, in secular and sacred perspective.

Potential research agendas could include: contextualization and effectiveness of pre-marital preparation; parent training programs; family ministry adaptation to Slavic congregations; adaptation of family psychologies and therapies to local cultures. The church also plays a critical role in promoting healthy families. Historically, the church has helped to strengthen families in many specific ways. As families in the FSU face new challenges, the church is adapting to respond to these many needs.

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BOOK REVIEW

Ines Angeli Murzaku: *Returning Home to Home: The Basilian Monks of Grottaferrata in Albania*. Italy, Grottaferrata, Αναλεκτα Κροπτοφερρησ, 2009. Reviewed by Francesco La Rocca.

“If I have seen further it is by standing on ye shoulders of Giants”, wrote Isaac Newton. This sentence is particularly true even in the field of interreligious dialogue: the great developments of ecumenism in 20th century came from ages of attempts, successes and failures previously made by those who wanted to overcome the divisions among faiths and confessions. For instance, from the point of view of the Catholic Church, the creation of Byzantine rite Churches in the East was a way, in the mind of that time, to re-establish the unity of Christ’s Church after the so-called schism of 1054 between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. This “policy” was followed by the Vatican until very recent times, and one of the last attempts to establish a Greek-Catholic community was made in Albania at the beginning of the 20th century. Ines Angeli Murzaku’s new book, *Returning Home to Home: The Basilian Monks of Grottaferrata in Albania*, reports this interesting and almost unknown episode in the life of Eastern Christianity.

Returning Home to Home is a well-documented and complete research on the history of the mission that the Basilian monks of Grottaferrata, a little town near Rome which hosts the last of the Italo-Byzantine monasteries, held in southern Albania from 1938 until the establishment of Enver Hoxha’s regime. The monks were sent there by Propaganda Fide, the Vatican congregation which was charged with the spreading of the Catholic faith (now Congregation for the Evangelization of People), as they were regarded to be the most suitable missionaries to convert the Albanian Orthodox, due to their knowledge of Byzantine spirituality and to the fluency in Albanian of some monks coming from the Italo-Albanian ethnic minority. Once arrived in Albania, the Basilian monks had to cope with hostility among the different religious communities, as well as the diffidence of the political power (first the Ottoman Porte, than the Zog’s kingdom, the Italian and Nazi occupation and eventually the Communists) and even the coldness of the Latin-Catholic community, who regarded the Byzantine spirituality as heretic and alien. In spite of the difficulties, however, the monks managed to obtain the respect of many Albanians, and were on good terms with several religious leaders: Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim Sunni and Bektashi alike.

Murzaku starts her book with a robust theoretical introduction: to evaluate the history of the Basilian mission in Albania, one ought “to see life through the eyes of another century”, taking in consideration the Catholic missionary mentality which existed before the II Vatican Council. Only by avoiding a present-centred point of view can one approach such a delicate issue in the right way.

The first chapter deals with the origin of the schism which divides Western and Eastern Christianity: starting from reciprocal excommunications of the bishops of Rome and Constantinople in 1054, Murzaku analyses the attitude that the pontiffs had towards the “schismatics,” and which strategies they elaborated to regain them. Here the topical issues of Uniatism and of the ecclesiological and soteriological view which led to the Catholic missions in the East are treated exhaustively.

The second chapter is focused on the history of the Byzantine tradition in Italy, where the Basilian missionaries came from, and particularly on its two most important branches: Italo-Byzantine monasticism, which nowadays survives only in the great monastery of Grottaferrata, and the Italo-Albanian or Arbëreshë tradition, which flourished among the communities founded by the Albanians who emigrated to Italy after the Ottoman invasion. The role of the Arbëreshë was crucial, as many of the Grottaferrata monks who were sent to Albania came from that community,

had a special tie with Albania and felt the responsibility to help and evangelize their brethren in the Balkans. Interesting to note, the current tendency of the Italian Basilian monks is to point out their originality with respect to the Arbëreshë Church.

The third chapter reports the events of the first Basilian mission in Albania, which was undertaken between the 17th and the 18^h century in the southern region of Himarrë. The reconstruction of these events shows the reader some important elements which will recur in the 20th century mission in Albania: the hostility of the political power, the innovative attitude of the monks towards Orthodoxy (more respectful and sympathetic in regard to the then Latin mentality) and the ambiguous approach of the Albanians on religion.

The main topic of the book, namely the vicissitudes of the Basilian monks in 20th Albania, is the subject of the last five chapters. Here the author describes minutely the succession of events, as well as the personalities of the main characters of the mission. The scholar of Albanian history will be nicely surprised to see how the history of the Basilians crossed the paths of some of the most important exponents of Albanian culture and literature, such as Gjergj Fishta, the writer of the Albanian national epic poem; Fan Noli, head of the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church as well as Prime Minister, writer and translator; Shtjefën Gjeçovi, the Kosovar Franciscan who gathered the oral traditional law of the tribes in Northern Albania. A collection of pictures of the mission selected from the archive of the Grottaferrata monastery closes the book.

Ines Murzaku kept to what she promised in the introduction: avoiding any kind of present-centred mentality, she describes the history of the Basilian mission reporting both vices and virtues of that experience, always bearing in mind (and reminding the reader) the characteristics of the then Catholic missiology. Moreover, together with the history of the Basilians in Albania, Murzaku provides a broad overview of the Catholic attitude towards Orthodoxy until Vatican II, an attitude whose consequences are still harshly debated.

Returning Home to Home is a useful book, which will turn out to be helpful for different categories of people: those who are interested in the history of Albania, as well as those who are interested in the history of the Eastern Churches. Last but not least, all those who are engaged in interreligious dialogue will surely find several cues for thinking, by reading the history of Italo-Byzantine monks who dealt with Orthodox in a predominantly Muslim country of the Balkans.

Reviewed by Francesco La Rocca, University of Bologna, Italy.