

EDITORIAL

If the faith of a Christian is to be more than the satisfaction of private inner spiritual needs, a limitation assigned to it by both Communist and western secular societies, if indeed Christian faith applies to the whole of life, then it would seem obvious that Christianity requires a social doctrine. Readers may well recall the masterly study of Ernst Troeltsch, a century ago, seeking to delineate the social teaching of the Christian Churches. As it turned out, Troeltsch found significant points of difference throughout Christian history, though he did provide us with the categories of church type, sect type and mystical (individualist) type of approach to the role of the Christian in society.

In this journal we have already drawn attention to the major event of the Jubilee Bishops Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (August 2000), at which the bishops approved a statement of social teaching, the first comprehensive statement in Orthodox history. It also approved a statement on relations to other Christians, which spoke directly to the issue of ecumenism and its understandings of mission and proselytism. We welcome in this issue an analysis by Fr. Benjamin Novik of the first five sections of the Social Concept. The challenge to the church, that he examines, is to determine how well the Social Concept managed to define the proper correlation between the heavenly - the eschatological - and the this-worldly components. Of particular concern to him is the question: how seriously does the ROC leadership take civil society? Or in what way has the ROC begun to move to integrate theologically an understanding of the good modern society shaped by the rule of law and high regard for human rights, necessarily a departure from the old Simfonia theory. Though he detects movement, the preference for the monarchical form of civil rule is unmistakable.

Although Fr. Kochetkov's short statement about dialogue on missions between Orthodox and Protestants appeared in the book *God in Russia* in 1999 (edited by REE associate editor Sharon Linzey) it seemed appropriate to offer it to REE readers as well in light of the Jubilee Council statement on ecumenism [see another assessment in REE Vol. XXII, No.2 (April 2002)]. Kochetkov's two questions to which he seeks positive answers are: Is there common ground between Orthodox and Protestants? And is it possible to witness about Christ in Russia without proselytizing?

Closely related to the common ground and common witness questions is the issue of the proper place for Protestants and Catholics in the territory of the former Russian and Soviet empires. In Andrey Ivanov's study of the rise of theories of conspiracy by which Orthodox and Tsarist officials sought to curb evangelical Protestant and Catholic activity during World War I, one recognizes the source of recent charges of similar calibre.

Finally, Paul Mojzes' report on the Dubrovnik Conference (September 12-14, 2002) reminds us of the ongoing task of the religious communities to travel the road toward

reconciliation. Conference participants appeared to find considerable common ground, such dialogue must surely continue. Mojzes' observations about how peacemaking gets taught, or misses the mark, in local congregational settings makes the urgency of addressing forgiveness and reconciliation issues at the religious level incumbent on us all.

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