

# Theological Education in Modern Society

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*Everything flows, everything changes.*

Heraclitus

*Truth is in Jesus.*

Eph. 4:21

## Introduction

**W**e live in a world where everything changes over time. The rivulets of different fates, events, and occasions meet together, change into streams, and subsequently unite in one powerful river of human history. It is impossible to enter the river of history twice. One cannot live through the same event two times.

Motion stipulates change. All things passing through time are changed and transformed. The implacable law of sowing and reaping constantly produces new fruit: new values, new worldviews, and new heroes. Thinking over all these dialectical metamorphoses, one is moved to ask: What is the role of the church in this process? What is the church: an unwilling observer that hardly manages to keep up with the steps of progress, science, and culture, and is compelled constantly to try to adapt to anything new and sometimes even to stand against it? Or is the church in the vanguard of motion and is the world in reality trying to keep in step with it? Is there any correlation between church and society?

To reason about any subject it is necessary to define its essence. To define means to limit, insert the concept into the circle of its essential signs, and thereby assert the single meaning in the usage of a given term. Talking about the church, we assume it to be “founded and led by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the society of those who believe in Him, who are redeemed and adopted by Him.”<sup>1</sup> The church



**Vladimir Vorozhtsov** was born in Kabardino-Balkaria, Northern Caucasus region of Russia in the family of an evangelical Baptist pastor. In 1998 he began his studies at Kuban Evangelical Christian University for the Bachelor of theology degree. After the successful graduation in 2002 he continued his ministry at the University as the Academic Dean. In 2002 he begun an MA in Philosophy program at the Kuban State University. Vladimir is married and has a daughter.

<sup>1</sup> M. Posnov, *Istoriia khristianskoi tserkvi: Do razdeleniia tserkvei—1054 god* (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 2005), 12.

can also be defined as a “large-scale, many-branched, and differentiated religious organization that brings religious activity into being, considers itself to be the only legitimate [one], and *is in a positive relationship with society*.”<sup>2</sup> The terms “society and world” in our discussion will be used to mean a “holistic system of social institutions, executing the functions of the regulation of economic, political, legal, moral and other relationships.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, the subject of our interest is to define what might be considered the correct relation between “the society of the redeemed” and “the system of social institutions.”

History presents different models for the coexistence of the church and the world. One of these models is the firm conviction that the church has nothing in common with society and the best thing for the church would be its total removal from society. This conviction comes from the identification of society with the kingdom of the devil, who is preparing it for a fiery hell. The consequence of this perspective in Christianity is found in the extreme manifestations of monasticism (the lifestyle of a recluse or hermit). Another extreme position is to regard the church as the kingdom of God on earth. The doctrine of the “two swords” of religious and secular authority given to the emperor by God is the model according to which the medieval paradigm of statehood was built.<sup>4</sup> In this case the church was

considered to be a kind of axis around which the whole life of the state revolved.

Since we reason from the Christian position, the study of this question is not simply idle talk about distracting things. For a believer this problem is very important because “it is impossible to both live in society and be free from it,” as Lenin declared. This question troubled Christians in the Soviet state when the boundary between church and society was clearly defined, and very often to be on one side or the other meant life or death. Today the issue has not lost its urgency, because in times of religious liberty it is important to understand how far the public activity of the church can spread and where are the limits that are better not crossed.

In order to evaluate correctly our position in relation to society, it is necessary to have a correct worldview (*Weltanschauung*).

Worldview is a system of positions concerning the objective world and the place of a person in it, the attitude of a person to the reality that surrounds him, to himself, and also the main life positions of people, their beliefs, ideals, principals of cognition, activities, and value orientations conditioned by these views.<sup>5</sup>

In any case, the main question of worldview concerns the “relation of existence to consciousness,” in other words the question of the correct understanding of that existence. In our time of relativity and nihilism the phrase “correct worldview” sounds defiant to some and primitive to others. Nevertheless, the Christian

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.glossary.ru>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.glossary.ru>

<sup>4</sup> G. Skirrbeck, N. Gilie, *Istoriia filosofii* (Moscow: Vlados, 2000), 204.

<sup>5</sup> <http://slovari.yandex.ru>

worldview is wholly defined, because it takes as its foundation God's revelation in the Bible and in the Son of God.

The Christian worldview (as, indeed, any other) presents itself as a complete system including epistemological, axiological, and ontological questions. The revelation of the Bible talks about the reason for existence, namely God, and reveals reality in a real-history perspective, describing, thereby, "the gap between two eternities": from Genesis to Revelation. The believer adopts the truth by means of faith, intuitively feeling "where the real truth is," which brings him to "the best" behavior.

One of the reliable tools for shaping the correct worldview is theological education. It is something greater than the study of academic disciplines. Theological education in its ideal form is nothing else but the shaping of a correct worldview in people who acknowledge the headship of God in their lives. The process of formation includes several ways of instilling truth, from theorizing about truth to its practical application in real deeds. The purpose of spiritual formation is to give clear answers to the questions asked at one time by Kant: "What can I know? What can I do? What can I hope for?"<sup>6</sup> The one who has answers to these questions and can rely on them in practice is a person of integrity, capable of correct behavior in society. The achievement of any other goal in spiritual formation would be the loss of the main motive.

<sup>6</sup> V. Alekseev, comp., *Khrestomatiia po filosofii* (Moscow: A. Panin, 1997).

It should be mentioned that society answers these questions in its own way. Consequently, the worldview of society differs from the Christian worldview. Since the secular worldview, which differs from Christian values, is active, there is a task facing the believer: to give a worthy answer to society's challenge. The mass answer of believers is formed as the church's answer to the world's challenge. Theological education must become the tool that helps give the correct answer to the challenge. The antagonism of the world's outlook leads to a crisis in the relationship between the church and society, and the crisis that has been overcome becomes for the church a means to rise to a higher level of sanctity and confirmation in truth.

Thus, spiritual formation is the shaping of the correct (biblical) worldview, as well as the shaping of the ability to give an adequate answer to the challenge of a different worldview, the worldview of society.

## 1. The Theory of "Challenge and Answer" as the Basis of All Development and Motion

### 1.1. Who creates history?

At the beginning of World War II, the secretary of the Writers' Union of the U.S.S.R., Alexander Fadeev, received a telegram from the well-known fantasy writer H. G. Wells. On 16 July 1941, the day the telegram was received, Europe was already ablaze in the fires of war. Probably it was thinking over the problems of the war that compelled Wells to write these lines:

From the beginning of our century a deep revolution in the conditions of human existence has been taking place. Today the world is facing an absolutely new problem. Since 1900 three fundamental upheavals have taken place.

First, the abolition of space. Any place on the globe can be heard by any other place through radio. The existence of separate sovereign states, inevitable one-hundred years ago, now seems to be absurd and outdated. They are too small for present conditions. In our days it would be easier to control the earth as a united society, than it was to control France or England one-hundred years ago.

Second, an enormous increase in the production of energy. In our time one single bomb produces more energy than was expended on the conquest of England by the Normans. The whole world could be fed, clothed, and sheltered for one year on the energy that is dispensed during one week of modern war.

Third. For the first time in the history of mankind the broad public mass that used to be slaves and cannon fodder has learned to read, has been awakened, and has realized all unfairness and inequality.

From this it follows that the idea of worldwide unification, which before 1900 was only a dream has now become a real need, if there is only the desire to save mankind from the destructive power of its inventions. World unity in some basic ways has become not only possible, but also extremely necessary.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>H. G. Wells, "Chto oznachaet dlia chelovechestva prochnyi mir," in *Sobranie Sochineniy*, vol. 15 (Moscow: Pravda, 1969).

Reading these lines it is easy to imagine the mood of people during the first part of the twentieth century, their sense of events being apocalyptic. Humankind felt that it had reached a totally new, unknown, frightening historical zone—the epoch of globalization. And this entry was quite unexpected and unplanned. Life had given to humankind a challenge for which it was not ready. This is the reason for widespread apathy and disappointment.

The world is not ruled by chance as it is frequently said (sometimes as a joke, but sometimes very seriously). Certainly every Christian, even a child in Sunday school knows that the world is ruled by God. But stepping back from this true but banal statement we shall say the following: the world is ruled by the law of dialectic and development, which occurs in the interaction of opposing sides. History is ruled by crisis and the overcoming of crisis. God is the director of the whole historic play who allows the actors to improvise on the stage. All the details of history, all the personalities participating in the play are free-will beings, capable of action. The sum of these actions defines the vector of the development of society, culture, and history. Earthly history is not only the field of battle between two opposing sides, God and Satan, but it is also a complex construction made of moving, living, rational decisions and choices, of overcoming crises and the significant transformation of personalities.

Arnold Toynbee, the great historian, suggests considering history not as the realization of one determining

factor but as a combination of several factors; not as a single essence, but as the relationship of several essences.<sup>8</sup> History is created precisely by the relationships between several factors. Toynbee sees in history the realization of a divine beginning striving to the perfection of its cultural and historical incarnation, but encountering external obstacles, with opposing external necessities. However, these obstacles turn out to be the condition of progress. The Creator transforms the external opposition to His will into a constant stimulus that helps to realize the potentially possible creative variations.<sup>9</sup> The obstacle is perceived to have a creative origin as a “challenge,” the “answer” to which is associated with a new act of cultural-historical creation.

The initial deep level of challenge-answer lies in the confrontation of the devil by God. Toynbee asserts that the devil gives a “challenge” to God, spurring Him to an “answer,” that is, to new creative activity. The divine balance is disturbed by the satanic “eternal discontent.”<sup>10</sup> However:

...the devil is doomed to lose. Knowing that the Lord will not refuse the offered bet, the devil does not know that God waits patiently and silently for the offer to be made. Having received the possibility to destroy one of God’s chosen, the devil in his rejoicing does not notice that by this he gives God the possibility of performing the act of a new creation. And thereby the divine purpose is reached with the help of the devil.<sup>11</sup>

What is the role of man himself, who is the subject of the argument between God and the devil? Answering this question, Toynbee is inclined to think that the human person is the being that carries within the “divine” creative origin and the “devilish” longing for destruction. The development of culture is realized as a series of answers given by the creative human spirit to those challenges that are leveled at it by nature, society, and the inner eternity of the person himself. Different variations of development are always possible, because different answers to one and the same challenge are possible. The ongoing meaning of Toynbee’s concept is found in the realization of this fundamental condition.

The law of challenge-answer works not only for the individual, but also for society. Challenge spurs development. “By answering the Challenge society solves the problem before it, and by this means shifts itself to a higher and more perfect condition, according to the standpoint of complex structure.”<sup>12</sup> The more critical the conditions in which society is situated, the higher the level of development it is capable of reaching after overcoming difficulties. The weaker the challenge, the less its stimulus to growth and development. Toynbee confirms that, “the opinion, according to which favorable climatic and geographical conditions, will certainly promote social development, turns out to be invalid. On the contrary, historical ex-

<sup>8</sup> A. Toynbee, *Postizhenie istorii* (Moscow: Ayris-Press, 2002), 107.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

amples show that too good conditions, as a rule, encourage the return to nature, the cessation of all growth.”<sup>13</sup> Sometimes the whole world faces the challenge of circumstances that are the result of worldwide technical and cultural progress. And then the world community, as if looking around, tries to comprehend where it has ended up? Amazed humankind asks itself, how should we live now? Where do we turn in this situation where everything is new to us? Our historical experience has turned out to be useless in a new epoch! Most incomprehensible of all is the fact that we ourselves have created these conditions! That is when telegrams appear like the one Wells sent to Fadeev in 1941.

### 1.2. The role of crisis in the movement of history

Thus, the main value produced by the mechanism “challenge-answer” is a crisis. The crisis is the most important factor in the creation of the new. At first glance it seems to be a contradiction: How can anything destructive be creative? And how can something that endangers established traditions and forms and denies stability simultaneously be positive and essential for development? The answer is simple: the crisis, as mentioned above, liberates those powers in a person or society, which, being realized by free choice, bring the person or society to a significantly new level of existence. “Challenge spurs growth. By means of the answer to a challenge, society resolves a problem, by means of which

[society] transfers itself to a higher and more perfect condition from the point of view of a more complex structure.”<sup>14</sup>

This process has been noted in the development of every civilization that has ever existed. The adequacy with which a given civilization answered the challenge given by life defined its future. Those civilizations that were not able to grasp the spirit of the time could not give a worthy answer to their circumstances, were degraded, and disappeared from the arena of history. Today we may observe the remains of former might and the greatness of the past, whether admiring the pyramids of Egypt or the temples of Central and South America. We shall look at several examples that Toynbee considers in *A Study of History*.

The first challenges to be identified in human history were made by the deltas of the Nile, Jordan, Tigris, and Euphrates Rivers. In the Nile valley, the answer was the genesis of the Egyptian civilization; in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates it was the Sumerian civilization. The courage of the people transformed this marshland into the most wonderful oases, supplied by a complex system of dams and channels. In the fight with nature, people learned to think in the abstract, make diagrams, invent mechanisms, and create labor organizational structures for the solving of collective problems. In this way, overcoming the crisis of the opposition of nature reaped a double benefit: not only favorable outward conditions of life (drained territory, fertile soil), but also the formation of science in its initial phase, from which Thales

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 126.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

of Miletus originated and all of Greek philosophy.

Another example of an adequate response to a challenge is that of Greece. Theodore Gomperz, the authority on Greek philosophy, notes the premises of the establishment of Greece as the cradle of European philosophy, culture, and art:

The most grateful gift laid in the cradle of the Iliad by a good fairy was the “scarcity that was characteristic from the beginning.” In three ways scarcity was an enormous influence on the growth of culture: as threats, continually rousing the concentration of strength; as defense from invasions (the land was not a desirable prize); and as a powerful stimulus to trade, to seafaring, to colonization.<sup>15</sup>

Yet Greece correctly interpreted this “crisis of scarcity,” becoming a country based on trade. The colonization of new lands brought new, fresh ideas. Young, strong people embarked on travels were truly the best people of Greece, sent in quest of impressions. In this way, rocky, agriculturally-poor Greece became the cradle of European civilization. Even after the Roman occupation when it lost its political freedom, Greece continued to rule the ancient world. Horace wrote, “Greece in captivity captured the untamed victors, bringing art to severe Latium.”<sup>16</sup>

Many other examples could be given confirming the formative role of crisis. One could remember the Spartans responding to the lack of

a conquering military by creating a military division the size of an entire country and, as a result, by the sixth century B.C.E., “frozen with weapons at the ready,” as if on parade while other cities continued their dynamic growth.<sup>17</sup> One could mention the Eskimos failing to deal with the most serious crisis of a severe climate and remaining suspended in their level of social development. One could speak of Russia “hurt by its own size,” as Berdyaev stated, and of crowded Europe: where there was no place to run the problem of one’s neighbors had to be solved. It is enough to conclude that crisis is important in the development of history. The circumstance that challenges a nation or an individual certainly is the power that can rouse to action and create freedom to make the best decisions. It is impossible to ignore the challenge, for circumstances rule over a human being.

### 1.3. The criterion of adequacy in the answer to a challenge

It is necessary to ask the question: What is the criterion for an adequate response to a challenge? What is the best behavior in a crisis situation? What can be done to ensure that a crisis becomes constructive rather than destructive? The answer to these questions can be formed from a complex of positive results that appear as a consequence of the overcoming of a crisis.

First, responding to the difficulties. Here it is appropriate to recall the saying, “Everything that does not kill me makes me stronger.” As Hegel asserts in *The Science of Logic*, a crisis

<sup>15</sup> T. Gomperz *Grecheskie mysliteli*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: Aleteyia), 6.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.gerodot.ru>

<sup>17</sup> Toynbee, p. 210.

brings about qualitative changes in an object, shifting it from one condition to a totally new one.<sup>18</sup> Both a civilization and an individual, in overcoming difficulties and solving of problems, in some sense becomes something new and different. Experience in solving problems accumulates; it flows into the general stream of knowledge; it takes the future into account and leads to the organizing of life on a higher level. For example, Toynbee writes that the “disappearance of woods forced Attic architects to work not in wood, but in stone, and as a result the Parthenon was born.”<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, a corrective is made to laws, rules, and traditions. When Einstein proclaimed the theory of relativity, several scientists, his opponents, committed suicide. This happened because the foundation of their experience, all their hard work and achievements, had been destroyed. Thomas Kuhn in his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, writes that any advance, even the slightest breakthrough in science, begins with the breakup of tradition, the old way of thinking and the “paradigm shift.”<sup>20</sup> This term received wide circulation due Stephen Covey’s book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, where it is the key notion in his theory. In Kuhn’s book it refers to the conflict between old beliefs about a subject and new discoveries about its nature. Orthodox-thinking scientists

try to squeeze nature into an existing paradigm, a pre-fabricated box. Those phenomena that do not fit into this box are often missed altogether. With such an approach, it is difficult to refute outmoded theories. Flexibility, the ability to change one’s standpoint or to look with “a new eye” on the world is a guarantee of real development.

The Biblical example of negative conservatism is the New Testament Pharisees who were not able to read “the signs of the times.” For them, the norms of the Law that had long been a blessing for Israel and had preserved its moral standards were as if set in concrete, thereby limiting the possibility of understanding “fresh” revelations from God about Himself. Unwillingness to change, to develop their views, to react adequately to life, brought them to stagnation in traditions, to exchange fresh outlooks for the letter of the Law. Meanwhile, ordinary people in the time of Christ were disposed to receive His teaching because their mind was ready to perceive something unexpected. Therefore the Messiah dancing at the wedding in Cana and dining in the house of a tax collector did not contradict the image of sainthood for them. The ordinary people received goodness in all its purity, not through the prism of beliefs about good.

Third, the acquisition of prognostic abilities. The resolved crisis leads to the acquisition of experience that allows for the avoidance of “sharp corners” later on. An example of this is the Youth Legal Defense Movement whose slogan today is, “*Kristallnacht* - never again!” At a press conference

<sup>18</sup> Hegel, *Nauka logiki* (Moscow: Mysl’, 1998), 172.

<sup>19</sup> Toffler, *Metamorfosy vlasti* (Moscow: AST, 2001), 135.

<sup>20</sup> T. Kuhn, *Struktura nauchnykh revoliutsiy* (Moscow: AST, 2004), 605.



in Moscow on 15 November 2004, conducted together with the European Network against Nationalism, Racism and Fascism, Liudmila Alekseeva, the president of Moscow Helsinki Group, made the following statement: “After terrorism, xenophobia is the most dangerous phenomenon for Russia. If citizens want fascism, nationalism, and xenophobia to stop flourishing, they must publicly express their negative attitude to such phenomena. Formerly the YLDM could confine itself to educational work on the problem of fascism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism; now we challenge young people to active nonviolent actions.” “It is shameful to be fascist!” declared Anastasiya Nikitina, the coordinator of a youth network against racism and intolerance.<sup>21</sup> Truly, our world is only too well acquainted with racism and fascism and can well predict all the disasters they can bring.

Fourth, shaping the ability to think historically. Overcoming a crisis develops the ability to link one’s own existence with the past and the future. Being a transitional period between the two, the crisis points to the flow of time and makes it possible to feel changes.

Fifth (the main and generalizing point)—an adequate answer to an accepted challenge forms and corrects the worldview, both individual and societal. For example, it is well known that after the Ecumenical Councils the concept of the incarnated Christ had been changed. The crisis of opposing opinions led to the identification and judgment of heresy so that “truth

was born in dispute” and the church received a corrected belief about Christology. If there were no crisis and no contradictions, who knows in what form Christianity would have been handed down to us?

## 2. The Challenge of Society to the Church

### 2.1. “Everything flows, everything changes...”

Before we begin to consider the quality of relations between church and society nowadays, it is necessary to repeat once again that society itself is not hostile to the spirit of church. Church is a part of the society in which it is situated due to historic premises. To perceive the world of people, even those who are not Christians, as something hostile is not an evangelical approach. What in the gospel is called “the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eye and the pride of life” is not just the world of people, but the dominant worldview that excludes honoring God. Christ, in proclaiming His teaching, never makes it His goal to reform the organization of public life. His goal was not to make life better by ending slavery, by changing the form of government, or by sharing everything equally between people. The teaching of Christ is apolitical. The goal of Christ was to change people’s beliefs about life, the world, and God. This is what distinguishes Him from Caesar, who “by changing the laws of life, transformed the souls of people.” Christ, on the contrary, changes the laws of society by transforming souls.

<sup>21</sup> <http://opencity.hrworld.ru>

However, it should be noted that society consists of separate individuals, each one of whom has a personal outlook on life, that collectively form a group where the prevailing worldview becomes general and dominant. Where society's beliefs about existence do not correspond to the teaching of Christ, Christianity acquires an opponent that stands against it in the proclamation of life principals. In this way the Christian worldview proclaimed by the church encounters questions, the "inquiry" or challenge of the non-Christian worldview preached by a non-Christian society. This confrontation can be seen throughout church history from the persecution of Stephen and the first Christians by the Jews up to the popular claim of Nikita Khrushchev that the last believer in the U.S.S.R. would be shown on TV in 1980. The clash of these worldviews, the cruel challenges to the church by the Roman emperors, sent John to Patmos and Clement of Rome to Crimea. Christians had to give answers to the challenge of the temptation of power in the post-Constantinian Empire. A very complex challenge to true Christian values was given in the Middle Ages and in the secular mist of the Renaissance. The church had to answer the challenge of open aggression in Communist China and the Soviet Union.

However it must be acknowledged that every historical period has its own peculiarity, its own challenge. Today in Russia, where the law on freedom of religion makes it possible to confess any religion, the church faces questions different from those asked by the world two decades ago.

"Everything flows, everything changes..." Alas, Heraclites was certainly right, declaring that in a flowing river it is impossible even for a minute to quiet down, feel stability, and grow accustomed to the sensation of water washing over one's feet. Today, in a constantly and quickly changing world, one must as never before pay attention to the adequacy of the answer that follows life's challenge.

### 2.3. The challenge of the world to the modern church

#### 2.3.1. *The challenge of nihilism and materialism*

The main challenge to the church in all times has been the denial of God's existence. At various times this statement has sounded differently; at certain times it has been hidden or assumed. In recent decades it has been open, given full voice without allusions or hints. The idea of the denial of God's presence in the world today forms "the whole way of thinking of science," philosophy, and politics. Heads of state are present at various church services not because they believe in God, but because of political correctness only. The Soviet Union drank the cup of atheism all the way to the bottom. Atheism, like a religion, is a "scientifically motivated" worldview. As a consequence of this, at the end of the eighties Russia was a spiritual desert with a few plants spiking up that by a miracle had not been cut down by the "combine of enlightenment."

Changes after Perestroika brought freedom of speech to Russia. But it was used not only by Christians but

also by many false teachers. Someone has called the appearance of “extrasense” healers such as Kashpirovskiy, Chumak and others, on central television the “spiritual Chernobyl.” Millions of people have been bound by the occult. Millions of the people have not heard the truth, or have heard something that is pseudo-truth. Having gained the image of religiosity, Russia is pining away from unbelief and godlessness just as it did in Soviet times. Self-organized market economics imparted new utilitarian values: comfort, food, safety, pleasure. These values have determined the purpose of life. Inasmuch as the goal has turned out to be false, all of life has become a delusion. Thinking over these problems, one recalls the words of Teilhard de Chardin, that, “the greatest danger which modern man fears is not a catastrophe from the outside, not a cosmic catastrophe, hunger, nor plague. It is spiritual disease that is the most frightening, because it is the infirmity that touches most directly all that is human, concluding with the loss of the taste for life.”<sup>22</sup>

It cannot be said that the “Christian West” is in the best condition today. A little more than forty years have passed since the prohibition of general prayers in the public schools of the U.S.A. in 1962. During this time, America has made striking progress in moving away from God. In December 2005 the British newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*, published an article about a federal U.S. court declaring il-

legal the teaching of creation theory in schools as an alternative to evolution. The suit defending Darwinian theory was made by the parents of eleven students in Pennsylvania who were concerned about a new school curriculum on biology. According to the conclusion of the court, the teaching of the alternative to Darwin’s views is nothing but an attempt to make religious education obligatory in contradiction of the U.S. Constitution. The court’s decision applies only to public schools in the state, but in the opinions of experts, a national discussion of this subject must be initiated. Before the decision was made, thirty-eight Nobel Prize winners addressed the committee and asserted that creation theory is unscientific, while all the results of modern science point to evolution.<sup>23</sup>

In 1977, in Great Britain, a poem by James Kerkap “Love that Dared to Name Itself” telling about erotic feelings for Christ with frank elements of necrophilia and homosexuality, was forbidden. In 2002 the twenty-fifth anniversary of this event was celebrated. Opponents of the law against blasphemy made a public reading of the poem on Trafalgar Square. Oddly, the State did not interfere in the conflict. In 1998 they had already faced the difficult task of interpreting the law in such a way so as not to contradict the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>24</sup>

The extirpation of Christian values leads to what Paul wrote to the Romans (1:18-25). Here is another example illustrating the challenge of the

<sup>22</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, *Fenomena cheloveka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987).

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.lenta.ru/news/2005/12/21/>

darwin

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.religio.ru/relicoc/140\\_print.html](http://www.religio.ru/relicoc/140_print.html)

contemporary world to the church. In the newspaper *Novie izvestiia* dated December 21, 2005, there was an article entitled, “The gay triumph of Elton John: He did it.” Here is a brief outline:

Today in Britain, in the city hall of Windsor the wedding ceremony of well-known musician Sir Elton John and his long-time friend David Furnish took place. That is the place where, in April of the same year, Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles were married. John and Furnish registered their marriage on the very first day of a new law on civil partnership in England. It is expected that in the near future 687 unisex couples will be registered.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain wished Elton John and David Furnish and other unisex couples well. “I think this is a modern, progressive step forward for our country, and I am proud that we have done this,” he said at a press-conference in London.<sup>25</sup>

In a time when the world is losing its mind—and doing it intentionally and legally—intelligent and law-abiding Christians face a challenge: What do we do now? How do we answer the challenge of the world? Is it fair once more to call society “fuel for hell” and shut ourselves off in monasteries? What will be the next metamorphosis of the relationship between society and the church? Will at least the voice of the old man Democritus sound aloud, stating his principles of good

sense? He asserted that, “the worst we can teach youth is frivolity because it generates those pleasures from which vice develops.” Or the voice of our contemporary Viktor Frankel, who wrote in a fascist concentration camp about the healing of the soul by means of sense: “Our deepest need is not enjoyment, not power, but meaning and a goal in life?”<sup>26</sup>

### 2.3.2. *The challenge of communication*

Alvin Toffler, the philosopher-futurologist in his remarkable book *Powershift* (published fifteen years ago and somewhat outdated) suggested that humankind consider its entrance into a new epoch of the power of information. The rough power of violence and total power of “factory chimneys” remain in the past. “For many centuries and millennia the main resources of nations were space and gold. Modern time has brought to life a new resource—information. In the coming age, this resource will become definitive. Today the society that tries to save itself as an independent state has to be totally computerized.”<sup>27</sup> When in 1844 Samuel Morse opened the first telegraph line between Baltimore and Washington, the first telegram he sent made history. Its content was as follows: “What hath God wrought.” With this message Morse opened a new era of telecommunication. He began a powerful process which has not been completed even today.<sup>28</sup> The epoch of the authority that flows from information is a new challenge to the church that requires a clear answer.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.rambler.ru/db/news>

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.newacropolis.ru/magazines/9\\_2005/smysl\\_zhizny/](http://www.newacropolis.ru/magazines/9_2005/smysl_zhizny/)

<sup>27</sup> A. Toffler, *Metamorfozy vlasti* (Moscow: AST, 2001), 6.

If one compares the themes of the church councils of the first seven centuries and the last two centuries, one can easily note a difference. The councils of the ancient church and the church of the early Middle Ages were assembled to decide dogmatic questions concerning Christology, soteriology, formation of creeds, and battles with heresies as they appeared. The councils of recent times have proclaimed as their main purpose the solving of the problems concerned with spreading Christian beliefs, the extension of social ministry; probably the main emphasis has been how to increase the influence of Christ and the church in society.

Summing up all these observations we may assume that the Christianity of the first centuries was trying to solve “the problem of the vertical” (understanding the nature of God and ways of interaction with Him). The church of recent days is solving the problems of “the horizontal”: How to find a common ground for different denominations? According to what standards is it possible to unite the church to jointly influence society? What church structure can be considered the most acceptable and progressive in our time?

Certainly, there is a quite reasonable explanation of the observed tendency from the point of view of the history of church development and growth. The problems facing Christians in the first century were different from those being confronted now—and there is nothing to be con-

cerned about in that. Each stage, each period of church life has its own particularities and features. One question seems to be important for contemporary Christians. It sounds simple enough: How does the church influence society? The church is found in a developing society, in a society with its internal competition and struggles, and consequently has continually to improve its form of organization. The globalization of economics and politics forces the church to think progressively and in new ways. Those who are not successful in following the rhythm of life remain on the sidelines. It is no wonder that the church of the last two decades has changed so crucially after having adopted modern communication methods, modern political moves, mass media initiatives, management, global planning, and forecasting. Again, this is not nonsense; this is an attempt to adequately answer the elemental demands of contemporary life. If, in the time of St. Augustine, the highest mark of education was whether a person could read without moving his lips (which, by the way, Augustine noted as a quality of his teacher, St. Ambrose of Milan), today, a church leader needs to know a foreign language, have computer skills, be able to use Internet, know the latest news, be able to write a newspaper article, etc.<sup>29</sup> What or who will be able to equip the modern church for life in the modern condition of total communication? Who can do it quickly, in step with the times, to assist pastors become psychologists, and deacons—managers in order to address actual needs?

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

### 2.3.3. *The challenge of globalization and ecumenism*

Another no less significant challenge for the church today is globalization. Today one can clearly see the tendency of countries joining together into one united community with a united center of control. The telegram by H. G. Wells, quoted at the beginning of this paper, is only a hint of what we can see now. Moreover, we must note that the movement to association is accelerating. Every year the process becomes more and more intense and absorbs new spheres of life. Developing technologies of communication, democratic apparatus, frequent catastrophes, and terrorism lead to the creation of worldwide institutions. In this process religion cannot stand aside, because it is one of the key factors in the shaping of a human worldview. The secularization of religion, the sorting out of common principles in different confessions, the subservience of religion to the service of politics invariably leads to the phenomenon called ecumenism.

The World Council of Churches, founded in Amsterdam in 1948, today unites over 330 churches, confessions and communities in more than one hundred countries of the world, representing about 400 million Christians. Today among members of the W.C.C. are almost all Orthodox Churches (including the Russian Orthodox Church), two dozen confessions of the historically established Protestant churches: Anglicans, Lutherans, Cal-

vinists, Methodists, and Baptists as well as broad representation of united and independent churches.<sup>30</sup> How do we regard this phenomenon of uniting? How adequate is the process of uniting among the different confessions? The question is open. There are movements even more global than the W.C.C.

Let us remember the prayers for "world peace" in Assisi with the participation of not only Christian denominations, but Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. In 1986 in Assisi something unheard of happened: the Roman Catholic church of St. Peter was given to representatives of Buddhism for the completion of the prayer service. An idol of Buddha stood on the throne! Muslims gathered in the monastery of St. Anthony; American Indians were praying in the church of St. Gregory, preparing peace pipes at the altar, and the Shintoists were offered the Benedictine monastery.<sup>31</sup> Something very serious is happening: What will happen to the church, its doctrines, and traditions? We are standing on the brink of incredible changes!

Who can help Christians form a correct, biblical outlook on life? Where are there to be found the features of a correct worldview? What is the correct way to react to the present and the future? Right now these questions are facing church leaders as well as theological educational institutions. If a firm foundation is not provided for today's young generation of Christians, who knows whether the church of the future will remain the church or become something else?

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.religio.ru/dosje/03/120.html>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.nektaria.ellink.ru>

### 3. Theological Education—an answer to the challenge of the godless modern worldview

#### 3.1. The essence of theological education

It may seem strange to say that theological education is expected to provide a basis for the shaping of a worldview. It may also seem strange to say that it is precisely theological education that is capable of withstanding a godless worldview and giving a worthy answer to its challenge. Usually the church is regarded as playing this role. Undoubtedly, the church is the main and only opponent of godlessness. Nobody dares deny it. What does theological education have to do with it? And what, in general, do we mean by these words? By “theological education” in this article we mean “the formation of the personality and character in the light of a biblical outlook for the spreading God’s Kingdom in modern society.”<sup>32</sup> A theological educational institution is the environment where different methods can be applied to the formation of the personality. In this case the school does not “substitute” for the church, but is its faithful helper, working for the church and providing ministers ready to extend God’s Kingdom.

It should be noted that the general purpose of both the church and the theological school is the proclamation of the truth. It is the truth that sets us free (John 8:32). Christ came to testify about the truth (John 18:37).

He Himself was the revelation of truth (John 14:6). What is truth? According to the simplest definition it is “an adequate reflection of things and phenomena by means of knowing the subject.”<sup>33</sup> That is, the truth is an understanding about things that reflects their real (rather than farfetched or artificial) essence. Any change of the meaning of things leads to pseudo-truth, the perception of a thing which it is not. From this it follows that if we talk about essence, we are obliged to acknowledge that the essence and sense of things really exists. Thus, meaning is given by someone; it is put into things. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that everything has its destination and purpose for existence; otherwise we could not explain the presence of the variety of things and phenomena in nature. Variety is not chaos, but, on the contrary, is the system (the whole), in which every thing has its own place and fulfills its destiny. Only such an understanding of being creates the possibility of perceiving life intelligently. Otherwise life would sink into the semi-darkness of nonsense.

Obviously, the godless worldview system differs from the Christian one. The difference is that in the system of perception of life that excludes God, things have a different meaning because they do not include God. The Apostle Paul confirms that a godless world outlook is the product of a “wrong mind,” to which people “who did not glorify God” are subject (Rom. 1:18-24). The truth for them

<sup>32</sup> See *The Missionary Statement of Kuban Evangelical Christian University* at <http://www.kecu.ru>

<sup>33</sup> *Filosofskiy entsiklopedicheskiy slovar'*, ed. by E. M. Gubskogo (Moscow: Infra, 1999), 189.

is replaced by a lie, i.e. an incorrect belief about things. Out of this lie a worldview system is created; within this system there are links that in the end turn out to be false. Since a “distorted meaning” is assigned to the whole of the existing order, all things (although each has its own sense, given to it by the Creator) are used “contrary to their purpose.” Things are profaned; they are used incorrectly! Sometimes their use is, in some measure, a reminder of their original purpose. It is as if a camera were used for hammering nails. One cannot deny that it is possible, but nor can one confirm that hammering nails is the main purpose of a camera! It is possible to use such a complex instrument so primitively only in two cases: either by ignoring its original purpose or by not understanding what it was made for.

In any case, we come to one final choice: it is necessary to recognize the established system of being that places the print of sense on every object. Such an approach will lead us either to the question of the “Creator of sense”—God—or to the rejection of established sense, the rejection of God, and thus “send the truth to be crucified” as Pilate did. The opposition of these positions is the opposition of godless and Christian worldviews. The “challenges” named in the previous chapters that are given by the godless worldview are an inducement for Christians to give a worthy answer to the world. The role of theological education is obvious here: to build a system of correct worldviews. In essence, the choice determines one’s direction: toward God or toward nonsense.

### 3.2. The primary tasks of theological education

Since we have defined the essence of theological education as the shaping of personality and character in the light of a Christian worldview, mention must be made of the main directions entailed in this task. There is a goal facing the theological school: to give the personality a new look at reality, to graft in the skills of Christian thinking, to make the Christian believer capable of influencing society. This task can be done through the achievement of a number of subgoals, the first (and probably main) one of which is the proclamation of God’s existence.

#### *3.2.1. The proclamation of God’s existence*

The only thing that the devil tries to convince people of at all times is that God does not exist. This tradition began in the Garden of Eden and continues to the present. If the denial of the Creator’s existence sounds too primitive, the devil moves to the next step: he tries to obtrude on mankind an image of God that does not correspond to reality. If we look closely, without any effort we will see these two lines of thought in the godless worldview.

The church, together with theological education, destroys these distortions. Theological education must offer as its primary task, not the increase of students’ intellectual knowledge, not the learning of languages, not the development of practical skills, but the inculcation and proof of the



first and most important truth: God exists and has a character that can be defined. This statement must become the foundation of the student's view of the world and of life. In spiritual warfare godlessness, for several millennia already, destroys the foundation of human life, steals the meaning of existence, by convincing him that God does not exist. This line is steady and clear. But how often do Christians "destroy the foundations," or "capture the flag" from the bastions of the enemy, asserting that faith in God affirms morality and healthy relationships in society, helps one live, and so forth?

This opposition, essentially, is the main answer to the world's challenge and consequently to the challenge of the modern worldview that excludes the truth about God. This is the crisis that must give birth to qualitatively new people who are deeply convinced of the truth, capable of moving against the general flow of life. The negation of godlessness is actually the negation of the negation, which, according to the laws of logic follows affirmation. It is impossible to confirm non-existence; it is possible only to deny existence. The devil cannot confirm the non-existence of God; he only can deny His existence. Therefore, the refusal of godlessness is the refusal of emptiness, of "nothing," the refusal to see the vacuum into which the world is sunk. The classic Russian writer Dostoevsky allows the hero of *Crime and Punishment* to give a very complete characterization of

godlessness: "If there is no God, then everything is allowed!" When everything is allowed it means there is a lack of values, an absence of certainty, of specification, of a single meaning. Godlessness is the absence of meaning in life. The task of theological education is the destruction of the lie about God's existence. "God exists!"—such is the main thesis which must provide the axis for Christian thinking; it must be instilled and proven in theological institutions.

### *3.2.2. The proclamation of God's character*

The answer about the existence of God is invariably developed in the next question: What do we proclaim about the existence of God? The existence of what kind of God will cancel out a godless worldview? This question is of the greatest importance because the image of a deity is copied from the image of the worshipper. Even in antiquity Xenophon declared that people create deities like themselves: "If horses and oxen could create they would create gods to look like themselves."<sup>34</sup> It is important to represent God exactly the way He is in reality. What character traits must be known in order to have the most correct possible understanding of Him?

The first we would like to note is that the God of the Bible is living, personal, active, and engaged in the lives of people. He is not Deus invented by the Epoch of New Time, frozen on engravings and frescoes. He is not an idea, not an image of beauty, not an inspiration, not the thought of a philosopher or a poet. He is the main

<sup>34</sup> T. Gomperz, *Grecheskie myslitely*, vol. I, (St. Petersburg: Aletheia), 152.

actor in the play of all history which is big enough to encompass the width of the universe. The God of the Bible is the One who thinks, feels, suffers, rejoices, desires. He appears in the incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ, about whom history witnesses. He cares for each and every one personally. He is ready to reveal Himself to each one and the needs each one, simultaneously having put everybody into ontological dependence upon Himself.

Second, the God of the Bible is not the Universal Mind suggested by the New Age. He is not a Spirit poured out in nature, flowing in the blood of all living beings. He cares what people think of Him. The God of the Bible is "God the individualist." Confessional traditions of worship matter to Him; He cares to be honored exclusively.

Third, the God of the Bible is the One who crowns the whole system of the universe with Himself. Only He is self-existent (John 5:26). All other creatures receive their opportunity to exist from Him. Even the devil, no matter how great he might be, exists because he receives life from God. In that case the attempt to declare some kind of autonomy from the Creator is no less absurd than the attempt of a diver to disconnect the oxygen hose when he is five meters under water. One cannot be free from God; everything is connected with Him. Everything "lives and moves and exists in Him" as Paul declared on the Areopagus (Acts 17:28).

Fourth, the God of the Bible offers life values that differ from the values

of a godless worldview. The highest value He proclaims is Himself! The first commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart..." (Matt 22:37). The whole universe, the whole of history revolves around this value. It is a real blessing for people to have God as the highest value. The reason is that only God is able to give real meaning to life, because He is the Creator of everything, the One who gave meaning to existence.

Fifth, the God of the Bible is the God of the contemporary. He is not the God of antiquity only; His presence was not limited to the Middle Ages. He exists today, and He reveals Himself to people who are searching for Him. Nowadays the world needs Him as never before. Today, when disillusionment in life has reached its highest level, the God of the Bible is ready to be revealed to people!

Theological educational institutions must proclaim this God. The features of His character are shown in theology and traditions. The preparation of ministers who have a renewed consciousness based on the worship of God—this is the real purpose of every theological educational institution!

### *3.2.3. The shaping of the worldview system*

The main point of theological education is the shaping of a worldview system. As stated above, worldview is "the system of views of the objective world and the place of a person in it."<sup>35</sup> Since worldview is a "system of views," it implies wholeness because "system" is "wholeness," or "integer" in Greek. The truth about God

<sup>35</sup> <http://slovari.yandex.ru>

destroys the godless worldview, because it “cancels” its main elements: the concept of God, the human being, the meaning of life. In place of the old cancelled view comes the new one, based on the biblical view of the world.

Human consciousness is looking for a system. It is looking for just such a description of existence in which everything would complement, explain, and motivate everything else. The system of views and beliefs about life must be closed; it does not tolerate emptiness. Since the godless worldview excludes God, it narrows down to the explanation of the meaning of things only through themselves. In an attempt to preserve wholeness, secular consciousness builds up a primitive system of views and explains existence according to its own narrowness. When faith in God generates in the human soul, the former narrowness “explodes,” the former system of views disintegrates; it is as though the Christian rises up among the ruins of his previous convictions. From that moment the gradual construction of a new system begins, a system that is wide and includes God’s presence and headship.

Theological education helps receive a renewed understanding of things as well as to include them in a system, to build new worldview. This is the reason for creating curricula! Such curricula have to include a variety of disciplines and methods by means of which a person comprehends the world in a new way. It is essential that theological education becomes holistic and is offered in a way that stimulates personal development and can be imme-

diately applied. It must be added that it would be a great mistake to consider education simply as the sharing of fragmentary knowledge. The attempt to give “one hundred answers to one hundred questions” is a distortion of the very idea of education.

It is obvious that one, three, or even five years of study are not enough to obtain a formed, completed worldview system. Does that mean that theological educational institutions do not achieve their stated purpose? Not at all. The indicator that the goal is reached is, first of all, the presence in the system of basic elements, the “markers” of worldview. The second indicator is steady motion in the correct direction, toward the broadening and motivation of everything that earlier was recognized as truth.

One must not forget that knowing God is a process that transcends the framework of rationality. In getting to know God, we deal with the recognition of super-rational reality. Our mind is unable to “grasp” some aspects of His existence. That is why one of the instruments of theological education is the nurturing of faith. In this way the knowledge of God is a phenomenon that is not only rational but also mystical.

Conclusion: The purpose of theological education is the shaping of personality and character in the light of the Biblical worldview

Modern society goes its own way. Its way was made by people who have their own concept of reality. The goal of the devil is to hold humankind in the illusion of beliefs about the world. Meanwhile, souls depart for destruction with no possibility of return. The

task for the church today, as in former times, is to proclaim the truth, proclaim the correct situation of things in the world.

The society armed with a godless worldview presents a challenge to Christians today. This challenge is not made in a whisper; it is not a timid call. It is a powerful onslaught of progress bound by the anti-Christian idea: to build without God its own “kingdom” on earth. Will the church be able to give a worthy answer to the contemporary world? The answer to this question depends on whether the church will exist tomorrow or turn into a sham organization that serves politics.

The crisis of the opposition of the Christian and godless worldviews, marked today so clearly, is of vital importance for the church. Either

the church will be able to give a worthy answer to the world and move to a new height of experience and development, or spiritual apostasy will submerge it. Does this retreat not open the door for the antichrist?

The greatest task of theological educational institutions is that they are found in the first ranks of the opposition to godlessness today, destroying the secular worldview, showing the real meaning of things and the sense of life. The goal of theological educational institutions is to make correct values popular, to offer the correct system of views on the world and things. Theological education must form in the student the personality of a servant with a biblical worldview who will proclaim the truth in modern society. All other goals are secondary or false.

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