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Review: Soviet Evangelicals since World War II

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combatants in the debate. On the other hand, there are many quotations from notable contenders such as Calvin, Arminius, Baxter, Owen, Whitefield, Wesley, Toplady, and Gill.

A three-page glossary gives definitions of twenty-one key terms. Unfortunately, the definitions are too brief, too dated, and too ambiguous to be entirely satisfactory. There also seems to be some lack of consistency in the use of technical terms in the text itself. The term ‘supralapsarianism’ is defined in the glossary as “the view that the decree of predestination includes the decree to create man and to permit him to fall” (p. 101). By this definition Calvin would certainly be a supralapsarian and Sell properly labels this as the classical rather than the modern usage (p. 99). But in the text, Beza is represented as going beyond Calvin in “developing a supralapsarian scheme” (p. 3). It is later acknowledged that “Calvin inclines toward supralapsarianism” (p. 19), but the term “inclines” is far too weak if the classical meaning of the term is intended.

A similar problem appears with the term “universalism,” which is defined in the glossary as “the doctrine that by the mercy of God all men shall at last be saved, albeit via the purgation of death” (p. 101). But when Amyraldism is discussed, it is noted that this view was later labelled as “hypothetic universalism” (p. 30) (I wish that it had been noted that this is an unfair and highly prejudiced label). Apparently the concept of “universal atonement” is later expressed as a “universalism,” since there are frequent references to the “universalism” of the Arminians (pp. 76, 79), some Calvinists (p. 94), and of Wesley (p. 124).

Sell specifically places himself on the Calvinistic side of the controversy. This reviewer must disagree with his classification of limited atonement as a “crucial doctrine” (p. 41), and with his commitment to regeneration as antecedent to repentance and belief (p. 98). Sell does, however, plead for amelioration of Calvinism, and rightly labels Arminianism as “not strictly a heresy, but as a dangerous error” (p. 23).

This is not the book for one who is trying to develop convictions relative to the Arminian/Calvinist issues. History buffs and professional theologians will find that the copious documentation provides a useful resource tool.

CHARLES R. SMITH


As a result of his observations made on his crusade in the Soviet Union, a well-known American evangelist proclaimed that there was religious liberty there. As might be expected, there was worldwide reaction to this pronouncement. While those responses were mixed, to say the least, they had one thing in common—few had taken the time to see for themselves what was the actual state of religion in Russia. Reading this volume would greatly resolve the state of ignorance characteristic of many in the West.

As the author points out, most people see the condition of religion in the Soviet Union in one of two extremes. The one pictures the Bible-believing church to be in a state of warfare with the atheistic government. The other extreme is the view that there is plenty of freedom and believers can co-exist with the state peacefully. The purpose of the book is to examine these perspectives to see which, if either, is most correct. This leads to what is perhaps the most valuable feature of the book: “... it is both a history and descriptive analysis” (p. 15) of the evangelical movement since the turn of the century, with special emphasis on the movement since World War II. Another valuable feature which results from a reading is that “the Soviet evangelical experience sets one thinking about the way a church reflects its theology” (p. 13). While a great many questions are resolved in the book, this reflection does cause one to stand in amazement at the complexities which confront the Christian in a world like this.

While this volume reflects the expertise of one who is well-versed in both the Soviet Union and the evangelical movement, it also is written from a distinct theological perspective:

I have also introduced my own Anabaptist-Mennonite viewpoints rather specifically along the way. These viewpoints differ from ‘established evangelicalism’ in emphasis—noticable in such areas as discipleship, concept of the church and nonviolence. I feel close kinship with the ‘New Evangelicals,’ one of whom in particular has helped me see the potential value of applying an Anabaptist theological grid to the Soviet evangelicals (p. 18).

These presuppositions have not seriously altered the quality of the book as regards its historical information. The interpretation of that history is, however, another matter entirely. To this I will return later.

Evangelicalism has been present in the Soviet Union since the 19th century. It grew and prospered and at first welcomed the Communists, expecting their long desired goal of religious freedom. At first this was realized, only to be taken away in the great national upheavals of the 1920s and 1930s. For all practical purposes the church ceased as an identifiable entity. It is ironic, however, to note that the rebirth of evangelicalism can be traced to World War II. With the energies of the state directed against the invading Germans, the church became somewhat important to the state. The great War of Liberation united all the Russian people, including the evangelicals. As a result of their valuable participation in the war, they were given new freedoms by the state. This led to the foundation of the AUCECB (All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists) which, to this day, remains the only officially recognized evangelical movement. That relationship continues only insofar as the church exists in symbiosis with the state. That contribution revolves around the willingness of the evangelicals to support the state, to project the view that there is religious freedom, and to support the peace movement fostered by the state.

Increasing state pressure on the church and especially its leadership led to a major split within the AUCECB and the formation of a new evangelical witness called the CCECB (Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists) in 1965. The split continues over the major issue of the relationship of the church to the state. The CCECB has argued vehemently that the leadership of the AUCECB has compromised itself irreparably in its dealings with the state authorities. The author’s evaluation of this split takes up much of the book.
BRIEF REVIEWS


1. Milton K. Reimer, "The Study of Sociology: An Introduction" (pp. 11-27); 2. Paul V. Johnson, "Research Methodology in Sociology" (pp. 28-46); 3. Stephen A. Grunlan, "Biblical Authority and Cultural Relativity" (pp. 47-65); 4. Robert McCluskey, "Socialization" (pp. 66-89); 5. Russell Hedendorn, "Status and Role" (pp. 90-108); 6. Dawn McNeal Ward, "Social Stratification: Social Class and Social Mobility" (pp. 109-24); 7. Don Gray, "Deviance and Social Control" (pp. 125-49); 8. Winston A. Johnson, "Groups" (pp. 150-66); 9. Donald L. Conrad, "Marriage and the Family" (pp. 167-87); 10. Stephen A. Grunlan, "Economics" (pp. 188-203); 11. Stephen G. Cobb, "Politics" (pp. 204-25); 12. Marilyn J. and Charles E. Weldin, "Education" (pp. 226-44); 13. Richard J. Stellway, "Religion" (pp. 245-63); 14. Robert McCluskey, "Formal Organizations" (pp. 264-89); 15. Richard Perkins, "Minority-Majority Relations" (pp. 290-310); 16. Stanley A. Clark, "Collective Behavior and Social Movements" (pp. 311-35); 17. Donald L. Conrad, "Demography, Population, and Ecology" (pp. 336-61); 18. Kenneth Gowdy, "Communities and Urbanization" (pp. 362-84); 19. Ronald Burwell, "Social Change" (pp. 385-400); 20. Stephen A. Grunlan, "Sociology and the Christian" (pp. 401-14).


1: THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES — 1. "Her Seed (Genesis 3:15)" (pp. 5-8); 2. "The First Human Birth (Genesis 4:1)" (pp. 6-7); 3. "The Seed of Abraham (Genesis 13:15, 17:8)" (p. 8); 4. "Until Shiloh Comes (Genesis 49:10)" (pp. 9-10); 5. "Sin and Atonement (Leviticus 17:11)" (pp. 11-17); 6. "A Prophet Like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18)" (p. 17); 7. "The Curse of the Law (Deuteronomy 27:26)" (pp. 18-19); 8. "The Virgin-Birth Myth (Isaiah 7:14)" (pp. 20-28); 9. "Who Is the Child? (Isaiah 9:5-6)" (pp. 29-32); 10. "The Messianic Age (Isaiah 11)" (pp. 33-34); 11. "The Suffering Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)" (pp. 35-68); 12. "A Woman Encompasses a Man (Jeremiah 31:31-34)" (p. 69); 13. "Jeremiah's New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34)" (pp. 70-73); 14. "Hosea and the Second Coming of Jesus (Hosea 5:15)" (pp. 74-75); 15. "Bethlehem Ephratah (Micah 5:1)" (pp. 76-77); 16. "One Ass or Two? (Zechariah 9:9)" (pp. 78-79); 17. "Who Was Pierced? (Zechariah 12:10)" (pp. 80-82); 18. "Elijah the Prophet (Malachi 3:1, 23-24)" (pp. 83-86); 19. "You Are My Son (Psalm 2)" (pp. 87-89); 20. "The Psalmist and the Resurrection of Jesus (Psalm 16:9-10)" (pp. 90-94); 21. "The Psalmist and the Crucifixion of Jesus (Psalm 22)" (pp. 95-99); 22. "A Familiar Friend

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