THE NEW SOVIET ECONOMY

WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE?

Re-discovering the dynamic balance between the Possessors and the Non-possessors. (An Historical Perspective)

By Michael T. McKibben

(First published in the new Russian historical anthology: The Organization of Work and the Work Ethic in World History by Professor Victor L. Malkov, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences.)

economy (iékôним) n. [older fr. Gk oikonomía household management, fr. oikonome household manager, fr. oikos house + nemein to manage] 1: the structure of economic life in a country, area, or period; specif: an economic system 2: the thrifty and efficient stewardship of material and nonmaterial resources (as effort, language, or experience) for the end proposed.

"When money talks," says the Russian peasant sagely, "truth falls silent." The economic silence in the former Soviet Union is, indeed, deafening. For months now businessmen in the West have been straining their eyes eastward, eager for the first glimpse of the phoenix of capitalism rising from the ashes of communism. They remain disappointed. Columnists such as Georgie Anne Geyer point out sadly that instead, "... in the absence of the values and principles of original capitalism (personal probity, a work ethic, and sober reinvestment and capitalization strategies), the racketeers in the Soviet Union are taking over the economy, McDonald’s has men riding shotgun on its trucks; Marlboro trucks have been constantly hijacked; whole trains ‘disappear.’"1

The truth -- though fallen silent at the prospect of Western investment -- is that the Russian world view has its roots in Orthodox Christianity. These roots are typified in the Possessor-Non-possessor struggle of the 15th century, and it is from these roots that truly Russian values will flower once again. Only then will we see a market economy -- and it may not be what we expect.

Mrs. Margret Thatcher: What makes man good?

Ex-Prime Minister Margret Thatcher strikes closer to the real issues in her recent Heritage Foundation speech in Washington D.C: "The practical case for capitalism had been made, but what about the moral case? No economic system itself makes man good -- and capitalism is no exception."

Here Mrs. Thatcher approaches what for me are the real issues. Let me throw another idea into the pot: Unless Western businesses and governments take time to learn and appreciate who the "Possessors" and the "Non-possessors" were in the life and history of the Russian peoples, they will never really understand the Russian world view and will likely fail in their attempts to interact substantively with it.

The world is now watching Western countries and their market economies salivate like Pavlov's dogs while trying to figure out how to proselytize and exploit a huge new set of "Eastern" consumers. The fundamental problem with this tactic is spiritual (or, if you will, philosophical) at its root.

East & West: Getting To Know You

We are watching an encounter of two peoples with divergent views about the human person. We are looking at two worlds which haven't had real dialogue with one another for over a millennia, and certainly not for the past seventy-four years. We are seeing two world views, shaped by the two halves of Christendom, interacting again. We are seeing the Western world, largely shaped by two forces, Roman Catholicism and the Reformation, meeting the Eastern world, largely shaped by Orthodox Christianity -- the root of Christianity that had no Reformation.

Pragmatists will dislike my thesis already reasoning that this historical baggage has no bearing on current circumstances. My contention is that this issue has everything to do with who we are as Westerners and who the Russians are as Easterners. These terms themselves give us our first clue; they describe the two halves of the Roman/Byzantine empire. This divergence occurred within Orthodox Christianity between the Greek theology of the Eastern half of the empire and the Latin theology of the Western half. These theologies shape our current views of man and his world, whether we realize it or not, whether we call ourselves "Christian" or not.

2. I vacillate between using the words "Soviet" and "Russian" in this essay. Whenever I use the word "Russian," I do so generically. Clearly, the former Soviet Union contains many states, nationalities and religious affiliations. To be accurate one would have to refer to Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Turkmenians, Armenians, Georgians, and so on. We face the challenge of how to refer to these diverse yet connected peoples. Therefore, I often use the term "Russian" as a general reference to this diverse group. So Ukrainians, Georgians, Estonians... please forgive me!

3. By "East" and "Eastern" I mean the regions that include Eastern Europe, the area formerly known as the Soviet Union, the Balkans, Asia Minor and the Middle East as opposed to the "Orient" or Asia, which is also sometimes referred to as the "East."
Different Histories, Different Outlooks

We in the West are familiar with Western history and woefully ignorant of Eastern history. Who of us has heard of Cyril and Methodius, of Vladimir, of Nevsky, of Rublev, of Tikhon, of John of Kronstadt -- all people of renown in Russian history and on an equal historical footing with Christopher Columbus, Thomas Jefferson, Whistler, Lincoln and Martin Luther King? Reformation Protestantism and Roman Catholicism and their many offshoots formed American and Western thinking. These two world views (along with various forms of secularism that emerged as a consequence of Protestant and Roman Catholic minimalism) have dictated, whether in a conscious or unconscious way, what we study in our schools, what is written in our textbooks and what the media chooses to emphasize.

Few would dispute the notion that Reformer John Calvin's "work ethic" laid a foundation for modern capitalism. However clinical one chooses to be in analyzing the pros and cons of Calvin's views, one must nonetheless eventually return to the issue raised by Mrs. Thatcher: Who is man? What makes him good? An economic system, any economic system, is only as good as the people who participate in it. My point here is this: Our Western view of man has not been informed by the Eastern (Orthodox Christian) view; and so it is incomplete. Under siege for centuries, the Eastern view still flourishes, ready to share its

4. e.g. pragmatism, reductionism, scientific rationalism, nihilism, scholasticism, realism, rational egoism, humanism, deism, atheism, authoritarian paternalism, nominalism, existentialism.

5. Domination and brutality pre-dates (and includes) communism. It also includes: (1) Mongol Tartar domination (1237-1448), (2) the domination of the Orthodox Church by various Tsars and (3) 400 years of Turkish domination of Asia Minor and the Balkans.
Proselytizing Western Ways -- Are We Sure We're Right?

The formula of a Western capitalist is simple, "Hey Russians, be like us. Get a work ethic, make individualism your god, and embrace profit." My hunch is that Russians hear such simplistic suggestions with more than a little disdain. (My experience is that they keep this reaction to themselves, always maintaining a gracious demeanor.) I can imagine a Russian thinking, "Who do you think you are, Mr. American businessman? You fly into Moscow with your $500 suits and snake-skin briefcases. You're always in a big hurry, too impatient to take the time to know us. Then you jump right in telling us how to fix our country. You show little interest in our history, our language, our culture, our heroes, our traditions, our ways of life. You simply ride into town, shake your head, then tell us we need to be like you!"

I wonder how many high-powered Western businesspeople realize that Russians have seen this aggressive behavior before ... in the Communist Party apparatchiks and the KGB! Different agendas maybe, but the same behavior. 6

Now to the "Possessors" and the "Non-possessors." I contend that a Western company drastically cuts its odds for success unless it comes to understand and appreciate the basic human truths embraced by the Russian soul in the great Russian Orthodox Christian debate between the Possessors and the Non-possessors in the 16th century (a debate that pre-dates the Protestant Reformers' reactions against Roman Catholicism).

6. In the case of stereotypical Western business behavior, authoritarian paternalism simply replaces, in a Russian's eyes, the old Communist version which itself was of Western/Germanic/Reformation philosophical origin.
their property, living on its proceeds, and leaving it to the community on their death. Monasteries were reluctant to accept any one as a novice unless he brought with him a substantial sum. They became comfortable places in which to spend one's years supported by the labour of serfs. Against this trend Joseph inveighed. In his monastery near Volokolamsk he reinforced a strict rule which demanded severe fasts, hard work, and diligence in study. Learned and an eloquent preacher, he entered actively into the life of Russia. Although firmly insisting that the individual monk have no property of his own, he saw no sin in the collective possession of wealth by the monastery. Indeed, he encouraged the erection of great monastic buildings and espoused long services and gorgeous vestments, vessels, and altars. He made his monastery a school for the education of prelates, attracted to it the scions of the aristocracy, and encouraged the bishops and abbots who came from it to take part in public affairs. They could thus render Christianity a force in various aspects of the life of the nation. Before many years men trained in his tradition became outstanding in the Russian Church. Strict in their discipline, firmly orthodox in doctrine, strenuously opposed to all heresy, insisting upon the punctilious observance of traditional rites, they had little of the mystic about them and minimized meditation and the inner life of prayer. They were known as Josephites [later as the Possessors].

In striking contrast was a widespread trend in monasticism which had as its chief representative a contemporary of Joseph, Nilus (Nil) Sorsky (c. 1433-1508). Monks of this kind were numerous in the North, beyond the Volga, and were known as the Transvolgians, the Transvolga "elders" (starizë), or the Non-possessors. They preferred to live alone and to have no property, either singly or collectively. They devoted themselves to solitary meditation and prayer, supported themselves by the labour of their hands, wrote few if any books, and beyond giving spiritual counsel to laymen did not mix in the affairs of the world. They may have been influenced by Hesychasm. They also perpetuated the kenotic tradition...

...Nilus advocated a combination of the way of the hermit and that of the cenobite. He believed the religious life to be best nurtured in a small group, a skete, not exceeding twelve members, under the spiritual direction of a staretz ("elder"), their superior. The members were to live far from the habitations of other men. They were to practice complete poverty and the greatest simplicity, owning no land and working with their hands for the bare necessities of existence. They were not to be averse to accepting alms, but always in moderation, and were never to obtain anything by force.

True to the kenotic tradition, while orthodox himself and permitting excommunication for heretics and apostates, Nilus opposed capital punishment for them and advocated a degree of tolerance. To him the goal of the religious life was the union with God of the soul which had fully given itself to the love of God. The road of that union could not be taught; it must be shared. He

---

7. a form of spiritual contemplation championed by St. Gregory Palamas (1348-c.1360).
8. from Greek kenosis, an emptying.
wished not to be called teacher but simply to be a friend. Even devout conversations might divert the soul from its true road. Any appeal to the senses through elaborate church services and beautiful and rich accouterments of worship was a snare to be shunned. He advocated the repetition of short prayers to Jesus followed by interior prayer of the spirit, with no audible expression.

Probably it was inevitable that the Josephites (Possessors) and the Non-possessors should clash...

They did. And in the end Russian Christianity embraced both perspectives, emerging not with a compromise but with a paradox -- that a dynamic tension can and should exist between material possessions and human relationships. They affirmed a both/and perspective. Further, both Joseph of Volokolamsk and Nilus Sorsky were canonized as saints of the Orthodox Church.

Both/And vs. Either/Or Mentalities

This both/and world view is in sharp contrast to the Western either/or mentality. With whom would a Western capitalist have sided? With the Possessors of course, with some provisos. (The monastic disciplines and all-communal property would be out!) This is the issue at the center of the current debate about which economic system Russia will choose. My hunch is that they'll borrow good ideas from other systems, but in the end, they'll create something uniquely their own.

No history of a peoples can be summarized simply. However, each history does have its watershed events around which those peoples shape their futures. Such was the debate between the Possessors and the Non-possessors. Many Eastern historians describe the Russian experience as the ultimate encounter between East and West -- an encounter that is still being played out today. In fact, the great Russian novelist Feodor M. Dostoevsky (1821-1881) in his famous Pushkin speech, assessed the Russian experience this way: "To become a genuine and all-around Russian means, perhaps (and this you should remember), to become brother of all men, a universal man, if you please."

Good vs. Evil: What Makes Man Good?

An understandable question is: "Why are we being asked to find good in Russia when things are so bad there?" It's a fair question. Good vs. bad is the key. Perhaps if we Westerners will take a closer look at Russia's history, we will, in fact, observe the stage upon which the ultimate human conflict between good and evil has been and is being played out. Perhaps it is in Russia that humankind can observe all its many strengths and weaknesses in vivid


10. For more information on the Possessors and Non-possessors refer to the work of the eminent Orthodox theologians Vladimir Lossky and Georges Florovsky.

Noted scholar, historian, theologian and Orthodox protopresbyter, the late Alexander Schmemann, writes at the conclusion of his book, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*:

One must indeed admit that the history of Russia has been a tragedy, and it is this tragedy that makes it so important in the history of Orthodoxy. When we think of the great Russian literature, we have to acknowledge that it was not only inevitable for Peter [the Great] to turn to the West, but essential. Only in free encounter with the world could Russia become herself, grow to her full height, and find her true calling, which was to overcome the terrible gulf between East and West which had been the chief sin of the Christian world since the Dark Ages....

Fr. Schmemann continues,

In some mysterious way, not yet thoroughly explored, Russia’s primitive [unspoiled] Christian Orthodox inspiration turned out to be the soul, the conscience, the profundity of this upper-class Western culture. More than that, what Eastern Orthodoxy alone revealed, sensed, and perceived in the world, in man, and in life became the source of new depths and discoveries in Russian literature.

... It was not by chance that for Russians themselves, in the nineteenth century, literature gradually became more than mere literature. In no other country did the writer pay so frequently for his art by his blood and his life as in Russia.

There was much dispute about East and West in Russia, but Russia herself revealed a truth that had dropped out of sight in Europe long before: that this contrast was in itself false and even sinful, for it was a falsehood against the original unity of the Christian world, whose history goes back to the miracle of Pentecost. All the best that Russia has created is the result of the inward reconciliation of "Eastern" and "Western," of all that was true and immortal that sprouted from Byzantine seed, but could grow only by identifying itself once more with the general history of Christian humanity.

The tragedy is that this development in Russia was not the only one, but in fact, century by century and year by year, there grew as well that terrible divarication [wide divergence] which ended in the triumph of Bolshevism. Again there have been many disputes over the Western or the Eastern sources of this evil. Any oversimplification is inappropriate here. Never has the connectedness of everything in history, the inter-weaving of freedom and determination, of good and evil, seemed so clearly revealed as in the growth of the Russian catastrophe... Simultaneously with the growth of light in Russia there was a growth of darkness as well, and it is a terrible warning, judgment, and reminder that the darkness proved the stronger... [writing during Brezhnev's time] The way is not finished, history goes on, and while it continues there can be no final conclusion for the Christian.

One last quote from Fr. Schmemann:

I would like to add only that too many people regard the history of the Church as a temptation and avoid it for
fear of 'disillusionment.' I am afraid that in this book, too, they have found both temptations and disillusionment. In the record of Orthodoxy, as in the story of Christianity in general, there is no lack of defects and human sins. I have not wished to hide them, for I believe that the whole strength of Orthodoxy lies in the truth; moreover, 'discerning the spirits' of the past is a condition for any real action within the Church in the present.\textsuperscript{12}

Fr. Schmemann didn't live to see glasnost and perestroika; he died in 1983. However, he, perhaps better than any other in this century, captures the essence of the Russian experience. He helps point the way for both East and West. He articulates masterfully this world of paradox which is so Russian; and while foreign to us Westerners on one hand is so intuitively human to us on the other.

\textbf{Capitalism: Does The Emperor Have Any Clothes?}

My hope is that the eventual Russian economic system will teach us how to do capitalism right. In all our self-righteous suggestions to the Soviets we forget how corrupt our own systems have become. Wealth is gradually being consolidated into the hands of fewer and fewer people. Granted, our basic needs are met, needs that are unmet in the former Soviet Union. However, does the emperor have any clothes? Are we so sure our market economy is the right one for the Soviets? Hasn't our capitalistic system lost whatever dynamic tension it had? Where is the moral foundation Mrs. Thatcher is searching for? Capitalism may not be making man good, but it does a good job of making him greedy and narcissistic. In our system, we now see goodness as a weakness -- nasty boys rule.

The Russian psyche is not steeped in stories of George Washington, P.T. Barnum, Hemingway, the gold-rush, the Civil War, Protestant civil religion and civil rights. Their psyche has been formed by their experiences of the Possessors and the Non-possessors, Dostoevsky, Sergius of Radonezh, missions to Siberia and Alaska, pogroms, the reforms of Peter the Great, Seraphim of Sarov, Orthodox spirituality and Pasternak.

Divergent spiritual formations make for divergent ideas about economy. The Russian intellectuals I've talked to want a place in their new economy where both Possessors and Non-possessors can thrive. They want to make a place for everybody, not just the aggressive types. They don't see this dynamic in our market economies. What they see is wanton over-consumption and a sacrifice of personal uniqueness at the altar of what's good for the masses. They see that our economies have been fueled by cheap, immigrant labor (African, Irish, Italian, Eastern European, Middle Easterner, Mexican, Asian). They see that we have sustained our cultural and scientific advances by accepting refugees who were the cream of the crop in their trades and professions: Einstein, Von Braun, Barishnikov. They see that the American brand of capitalism now produces few artists, craftsmen, thinkers and philosophers of renown. While they admire our infrastructures for production and delivery, they see that we've sacrificed our own Calvinistic work ethic in getting them. For all our capitalistic boasting, we're ignoring our own ethical standards, scrapping our morals and labeling integrity as passé. They see a Western

business (and political) philosophy that can be summarized in five words: Get out of my way.

Standing in stark contrast to our Darwinian survival-of-the-fittest behavior is the Russian (and Orthodox) sentiment about personhood and brotherhood expressed eloquently by Dostoevsky in his classic novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880): "The true security is to be found in social solidarity rather than in isolated individual effort."

Equally disturbing to Russians is the stressfulness and drivenness of our capitalistic system. They see few places for contemplative people to survive (much less thrive) in a system that demands action, results, product... NOW. Fritz Lang's classic 1926 silent film *Metropolis* illustrated a society in which man had become the slave of technology. That time has come. When can man rest with a 24-hour worldwide stock market?

**Non-exploitive Economy -- Is It Possible?**

I believe that we Westerners can learn from the sense of fairness and humanness which characterizes the bright side of the Russian soul (which is essentially Orthodox). I'm betting that beneath their current chaos is a pearl of great price, a truth yet to be articulated, ideas suppressed by seventy-four years of nonsense, an economic principle based on the dynamic tension between the Possessors and Non-possessors. Perhaps Russians intuitively understand something about human nature that will unlock new vistas of non-exploitative human endeavor.

Ms. Geyer rightly points to the horrendous problems the Soviets now face: corruption, bureaucratic inertia, racketeering. However, one makes a big mistake if one assumes by inference that the Russian people have no tools with which to solve these problems (and by extension must therefore simply use our capitalistic tools). This is the flaw I find in Georgie Ann Geyer's argument: "... in the absence of the values and principles of original capitalism..." Russians have these tools already. They have the Possessors' ethics of property, hard work, diligence, education and participation in public life. They have the Non-possessors' examples of meditation, manual labor, spiritual counsel, common life, simplicity and moderation. They lack only a modern expression of these truths to the generations who have grown up under communism.

Russian Patriarch ALEKSY II doesn't shy away from admitting the daunting task facing his country and the Russian Orthodox Church. In a recent speech to a gathering of youth in Moscow he said:

... The society into which you will enter (or the one into which you will be taken) will be completely new in the course of all history. This is said not to praise it, but to serve as a warning to you. You see, the situation is, that for the first time, a society of competitive economics is being established under conditions of spiritual ruin.

The Patriarch then points out that Protestant puritanism and Counter-Reformation Catholicism provided moral guidance for the development of market economies in Europe. The Russian Orthodox Church also stands ready to provide spiritual guidance, "But how many are actually ready to listen?" He continues:
The truth is that today our society is devoid of any national sense of values, and the people who are in charge of remaking our society do not themselves possess any religious inspiration or convictions... May God grant you the courage and patience, the ability to overcome adversity, and most important, may God grant you the sense to know when, by your own actions you may actually be hurting others... It is difficult to be a Christian. But remember that it is Christianity which keeps the world ever young.13

East-West Dialogue: Let Us Learn From Each Other

Isn’t it ironic that while we in the West are mourning the demise of our historic economic principles, namely those values that emerged from the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Patriarch ALEKSY is saying that the chaotic Soviet economy needs a similar set of principles for stability? He has good reason to fear the kind of system that will emerge at the hands of the current set of Russian officials. With no real principles to replace the spiritual heritage they ignore, these officials turn to Western economic specialists for help; specialists who have crafted market systems that have thrown such principles overboard.

We in the West face an equally difficult challenge. We need to be re-educated. All that forms our opinions, all that shapes our behaviors, especially in relation to Soviet business opportunities, is based on prejudiced information called "Western history." Our Western cultures have yet to hear from and be informed by Eastern history and experience. An East-West dialogue has yet to occur. When it does, I truly believe the world will be better for it.

Unfortunately, right now the cacophony is one way: we’re all shouting at the Soviets to do this and do that. The Soviet response is to grin and bear it, for they take no pride in the mess they are in. If we in the West insist on our exploitative proselytization of Western ways, I think a lot of Western companies will bankrupt themselves in their attempts to do business in the former Soviet Union. On the other hand, if we can approach the Soviets as equals, then maybe together we can learn what that wise Russian peasant knows about money, truth and human economy.

+++  

Introduction to the Next Essay on Organization

The New Soviet Economy essay spawned this next essay. A new resident of Columbus, Ohio, Professor of Mathematics, Konstantine V. Malkov, read it and passed it along to his father in Moscow, Professor of History, Victor L. Malkov. Professor Victor Malkov recently contributed an article titled, "Federation or Confederation?" to the international business magazine, Business In The [former] USSR (September 1991). The article was a most intriguing historical analysis of early American government. Professor Malkov illustrated how the original attempts at confederation in American government (freedom for all from all) had, in the words of Thomas Paine, created "... a country without law, without government, and without any form of authority other than the one presented out of courtesy [from the states to the Congress]."

Professor Malkov went on to illustrate how Alexander Hamilton became an outspoken critic of confederation. Instead, Hamilton favored a federal system of checks and balances that empowered a central government and at the same time could prevent the transformation of central power into a new tyranny. "...To much power leads to despotism, too little leads to tyranny...," Mr. Paine said.

As Professor Malkov points out, "Alexander Hamilton was ahead of his times by half a century..." The notion of confederation in the United States was tested once again by the bloody American Civil War. In rejecting the various Western European forms of authoritarianism -- forms inseparably intertwined with matters of Western church and state, America's founding fathers tried to articulate a better and more human balance for authority and power. And, they were trying to do so in a secular context; a context that avoided fragmented Western Christian polemics but that still appealed to generalized Christian ethical stances ala 18th century French philospher Jean Jacques Rousseau's notions of "civil religion."

The federal process we ended up with in America looks surprisingly similar to the ancient Orthodox Christian Trinitarian theology of hierarchical conciliarity which I present in the following essay. Even though the ethical content of that process has deteriorated in our time, the process may have eternal roots.
As I pointed out in the article, Russians seem to embrace the notion of paradox; they see paradox not as a conflict of mutually exclusive points of view but rather as a dynamic tension among ultimately related aspects of truth. Historically this can be attributed to an Eastern (Orthodox Christian) world view. The Possessors/Non-possessors debate is one illustration. Other foundational issues need to be explored in the process of better understanding Russia and Russians. This notion led me to my "discovery."

This "discovery" is in the realm of Orthodox Trinitarian theology, namely the dynamic of *hierarchical conciliarity*. I use quotation marks around the word "discovery" simply to highlight that I haven't really discovered something new. Rather, I am articulating certain observations and applications of this ancient and venerable theology in a contemporary vernacular.

**The Enlightenment vs. Orthodox Christianity**

A final barrier we must remove before we can understand hierarchical conciliarity is the notion that theology is somehow divorced from "real life." The Enlightenment ushered in this peripheralization of Christian theology, and it remains to this day.15 The scientific method come to understand and appreciate the dynamic and formative role of Orthodox Christianity in Russian history and culture.

15. Theology used to be known as "the Queen of Sciences" or "the Noble Science." That is, it provided the framework in which all other disciplines could be understood. To an Orthodox Christian, St. Paul's debate with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers of Athens indicates the absolute centrality of true theology — the knowledge of God — in understanding human identity. St. Paul emphasized to these philosophers: "For 'in him [God] we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said" (Acts 17: 28). All issues of human identity in Orthodox Christianity revolve around this issue of "being." By way of example, practically all Orthodox iconography depicting Christ contains three Greek letters in His halo, they are "ο," "ο" and "N," which mean when translated into English: "The Being" or "The One Who Is."

16. "Ethos" is one of those rich Greek words that has no exact parallel in the English language. The ethos of a people is the spirit and character of the people, their world view if you like, as expressed in their culture, institutions, ways of thought, philosophy and religion. The Russian Orthodox Christian ethos, while wounded by the communist reign of nonsense, has survived.
Human Organization & The Holy Trinity

At the center of Orthodox Christian theology is the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Travel to Russia and you will become quite aware that Orthodoxy is a Trinitarian faith. God is three in one and one in three. Visit St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow and you will see a huge mosaic of the Holy Trinity on the outside of their cathedral. Russia's most famous icon is Rublev's Trinity icon which depicts the Trinity in the persons of the three angels who visited Abraham and Sarah by the oaks of Mamre. It is on permanent display at Tretyakoy gallery in central Moscow. Observe Orthodox believers at worship you will be struck by the punctuation of every reference to the Trinity by their crossing of themselves.

As a professional organizational development consultant, I am a student of "organizational dynamics." I am always observing and asking myself, "What makes people working in this organization tick? What is it about human organizations that causes us to classify some as 'good,' some 'mediocre' and some 'bad?'" Organizational dynamics theories range from the E-myth to Total Quality and theory Z. Hierarchical conciliarity might be just another of the many. However, something in me (and experience with it) says it is different.

As I proceed to describe some foundational Orthodox Trinitarian theology, please keep in mind that the Western Church (and thus the Western world) with its scholastic and systematic approaches, subtly but significantly altered these revelations, thus helping create in profoundly fundamental ways the differences between "East" and "West."

Also keep in mind that the genesis of "The Reformation" which initiated Protestantism within the Western Church likely occurred in part because of these alterations to Trinitarian theology. However, in their reforming efforts the Reformers failed to address these fundamental Trinitarian issues, and thus perpetuated the alterations to this day.

The Unitarian West

Just before I overview certain essential elements of Orthodox Trinitarian theology, the reader will likely find it useful to hear from a prominent early 20th century American Protestant theologian, H. Richard Neibuhr. Dr. Neibuhr points out that many Protestant denominations, while giving lip-service to the doctrine of the Trinity, tend to unitarianism in one form or another. To paraphrase Dr. Neibuhr:

Most Western Christian theologies are unitarian.

17. The major problems within the Roman Church which were the causative factors for the Protestant movement, now called the Reformation, can be ultimately traced back to skewed Trinitarian theology a la Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas and the subordinationist changes brought about by the filioque insertion into the Nicene Creed which, from the Orthodox point of view, fundamentally altered ancient understandings about the relationship among Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the resulting affect this change had on Roman notions of primacy. See James C. Skedros, "The Historical and Theological Dimensions of the Filioque Controversy" (Honors thesis in Middle East Studies, University of Utah, August 1985), p.77-79. Also see Michael T. McKibben, Orthodox Christian Meetings. Columbus, Ohio: St. Ignatius of Antioch Press, 1990, p.55-66.

18. To an Orthodox Christian, "theology" (fr. Gk, fr. theo- + -logia) means "words appropriate to God." Far from being sterile or lifeless points of research data, true theology is life-giving, just as God Himself is life giving. Jesus Christ Himself is the Logos, the Word of God – He is true theology. Therefore, even using the word "theology" to describe the fragmented and contradictory viewpoints within Western Christianity makes an Orthodox Christian cringe; it's a scholasticization of the word.
Some are unitarians of the first person of the Trinity, others are unitarians of the second person of the Trinity, and still others are unitarians of the third person of the Trinity.

While such a statement is surely confusing to those unfamiliar with the theological permutations and combinations extant within Western Christendom, Russians are beginning to meet the proselytizers of these various viewpoints in ever greater numbers as these purveyors of unitarianism now flock to Russia to convert the Russian masses to their particular forms of Western Christianity and Western business. Although many Western Christian creedal statements are technically Trinitarian, at the practical level their clergy and members are functionally unitarian. Carrying Dr. Neibuhr's logic to its natural conclusion, unitarians of the first person, the Father, are Roman Catholics and mainline Protestants. Unitarians of the second person, the Son, are evangelicals and fundamentalists. Unitarians of the third person, the Holy Spirit, are charismatics, pentecostals, and the fringe cults. However, none of these lines can be drawn so cleanly. The fact is that each group has within its own ranks a myriad of variations and none seems able to maintain theological balance and to accept paradox.

Beliefs Affect Behavior

Do such beliefs and world views affect behavior? Most certainly. Note with what aggressiveness many of these Western Christian groups proselytize. Then note the similar aggressiveness among many Western businesspeople. Who gave birth to whom? Why are they proselytizing Orthodox Christians? It is because they are fundamentally unitarian, not Trinitarian. It is this unitarian outlook that compels them to "sell" their particular ethical slant at the expense of other viewpoints that they see as competitors.

Orthodox Christianity teaches that man is made in the image and likeness of God Himself. However imperfectly, our human nature reflects God's own Trinitarian nature. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The attributes of the Father are unique to the Father, yet inseparable from those of the Son and Spirit. The attributes of the Son are unique to the Son, yet inseparable from those of Father and Spirit. So this relationship goes for the Spirit as well. In other words, each person of the Godhead has unique attributes which distinguish Him from the Others, yet none are individualistic attributes; they exist and find their completeness only within the context of the community of divine persons.

Orthodoxy believes this is also true for the Church and for all human community. We are all unique persons, uniquely created and endowed with that creative spark which is a part of God's image in man. And yet, to find its fulfillment, that uniqueness needs a community of unique persons.

19. I speak from experience; I was an evangelical Protestant missionary before becoming an Orthodox Christian. During the late 70's I directed the European offices for a missions organization. We organized rather extensive activities within the Baltics, the Ukraine and European Russia. Unfortunately, the groundwork I laid is now being built upon by my successors, much to my chagrin.
Unique yet inseparable is one essential Trinitarian relationship.

A Guiding Principle For The Organization of Work:
Hierarchical Conciliarity

The other essential Trinitarian relationship is really a unity of two attributes: hierarchical conciliarity.

"Hierarchy" as defined by all English dictionaries which I have seen define a Western, not an Orthodox understanding. However, in practice Orthodoxy has had Her problems with this wrong definition. Much has been written about "The Western Captivity" of the Russian Church. The present leadership situation is decidedly more hierarchical than conciliar. To blame the communists would be wrong, although conciliarity certainly suffered along with an oppressed hierarchy. The present tendency toward a power hierarchy can be traced to the "Western turn" of Peter the Great. He simply imported things Western even when it was at the expense of things Eastern. To Czar Peter, West was best. And to a certain extent that same mentality exists today.

Much of the current institutionalized thinking within Russian Orthodoxy appears to be captive to a skewed, Westernized definition of hierarchy. However, if we look at Orthodoxy's core identity, a rigid and authoritarian top-down definition of hierarchy is fundamentally un-Orthodox. Where it is manifest and supported by the behavior of Orthodox "hierarchs" and people, such behavior is a sin against the Church, not a sin of the Church. A true definition of hierarchy still resides in the bosom of Orthodoxy. It is to this definition that we must look for guidance.

Webster's dictionary defines hierarchy as an ordered structure of authority, and/or a ruling body of clergy organized into ranks and orders each subordinate to the one above it. While certainly a tempting thought for those in power (as a way to justify holding on to their power), this definition, by itself, is not an Orthodox theological understanding. It misses the mark.

Hierarchy in the Holy Trinity expresses the revelation that the Father is the source of the Godhead, and to use the very precise language you may be familiar with from the ancient Nicene Creed: the Son is begotten of the Father and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. The Father is the "first among equals." Just as one cannot take meaningful action before one first has the idea for that action conceptualized in one's mind, likewise, the Father is the source of the actions of Son and Spirit. Thus the authority of the Godhead is ordered. But, this is only half the definition, the half which the Western Church chose to keep.

In Orthodox theology, one cannot speak of hierarchy without also speaking of conciliarity in the same breath. According to the Russian theologian S. Bulgakov, "this idea [conciliarity] has never been officially expressed in words... But the practice of the Church... presupposes the idea of conciliarity." Fr. Alexander Schmemann writes in his book Church, World, Mission:

---

20. The thesis that many Western theological concepts have woven their ways into the practices of Russian Orthodoxy.

The Church is conciliar and the Church is hierarchical. There exists today a tendency to oppose these two qualifications of the Church, or at least to emphasize one over the other... The Trinity is the perfect council because the Trinity is the perfect hierarchy.  

Conciliarity in the Holy Trinity expresses the revelation that Father, Son and Spirit are an inseparable community of divine persons, equal in honor, who operate in unity, love, harmony and agreement (conciliarly) with the Father being the Source (hierarchically) of that unity.

For me, mutually inclusive definitions for hierarchy and conciliarity are facilitated by putting the two words into a phrase. The phrase I have chosen is "hierarchical conciliarity."

Without getting much deeper into theological terminology, allow me to describe a few practical organizational manifestations of hierarchical conciliarity as a way of getting at a definition for this Trinitarian dynamic.

But first I need to digress for a moment. At the outset I pointed out that this hierarchical conciliar dynamic, like the Possessor/Non-possessor debate, is one of those critical paradoxes within Orthodox Christianity; a paradox easily dismissed in the West as the irreconcilable differences between two opposing ideas. A hypothetical conversation might go something like this: "You can't have it both ways. Sounds to me like you don't have the guts to stand up to the crowd and declare your leadership. Our problem here is that we've got too many chiefs and not enough Indians."

A problem in human relationships is that hierarchy and conciliarity are too easily dismissed as oil and water: ideas that don't mix. Not so in Orthodox thinking. To an Orthodox they are the mutually inclusive aspects of truly healthy relationships in which each person takes full responsibility for the vitality of the group. And, in which the members of the group together agree that a leader is necessary to shepherd the shared vision and to hold them mutually accountable to the vision as they hold the leader accountable to it.

Authoritarianism = Bad Hierarchy

Unfortunately, most human organizations manifest bad hierarchy. For quite human reasons (the proclivity to sin), political, economic and social organizations operate in all sorts of rigid "hierarchical," authoritarian and often paternalistic systems; systems which enforce clear distinctions between leaders and followers, bosses and subordinates, have's and have not's, winners and losers. Conciliarity in such systems only happens "unofficially," meaning that despite unhelpful hierarchical philosophies, human beings still communicate with one another, express love, and try to work out harmonious environments. Unfortunately, hierarchical propensities within such systems enforce rules that perpetuate the imposition of bad hierarchy at the expense of conciliarity. The true Orthodox position on legalism might be stated something like this:

legalism is always present where the grace of the Holy Spirit is absent.

Orthodox Trinitarian hierarchical conciliarity advocates a divine middle ground. In a truly balanced community, the leader will be a "first among equals." This person's job is to facilitate the articulation and implementation of a commonly held vision, not to impose it or dictate it. The other participants in the community, all equal in honor (but not in authority) will contribute their unique talents and gifts to the community for its up-building. Each person, participant and leader alike, will work in an environment of love, manifested by mutual accountability and unity. Because the community's vision is a shared vision, a shared enthusiasm for that vision will be the motivating force behind its articulation and implementation.

Such a community dynamic reflects the image of the Holy Trinity. The Father is the source and, it might be said, facilitator of vision within the Godhead. The Son implements/incarnates that vision and the Spirit empowers and motivates that shared vision. And, they are committed to one another; none acts without the agreement of the others. The Holy Trinity is a circle of interpenetrating love; not filial love, but an overarching divine love.

23. One cannot carry this comparison between the Father's role (as the Source of vision in the Godhead) and a community leader's role too far. While it is true that a leader often initiates and facilitates vision in the life of a community, it would be a mistake to say that a leader is "the source" of vision in a community. Such assertions, believed by the leader, too easily lead to authoritarianism, dictatorship and megalomania. While he may exhibit attributes of the Father's role in his role, there is an essential difference between them: a leader is fallible... and he is not God the Father! That is why human organizations need the mutual accountability inherent in hierarchical conciliarity. The beauty of the Trinity's example to us is that even God the Father, the SOURCE of all, holds Himself accountable to the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Trinitarian Image & Likeness in Human Economy

To be truly human, the organization of human economy must come to grips with these most basic elements of human identity and person: the Trinitarian image and likeness in every human being. In my person, it defines the dynamic relationships between my ideas (vision), my words and behavior (incarnation of vision) and my motivation (sustaining force for vision). In families, it defines the unique yet inseparable roles each of us fulfills (or should fulfill!) in our families. In work groups and organizations, it defines the roles and responsibilities for mutual accountability among leaders and participants alike. In a country, it defines the hierarchical conciliar dynamics that are essential for the facilitation of vision and mutual accountability among the various and unique aspects of a government and society. In world economy, it defines the nature of interdependence in a true community; both an equality of honor among all participants and yet a "first among equals" role for the facilitators of that community's common vision.

There is much more to explore regarding the Trinitarian image and likeness in humanity, especially regarding how this understanding of human identity can help guide practical solutions to the problems of economy we face. I hope I have sparked interest in these subjects among the readers of Professor Malkov's book. I have written several works where I explore these issues further. One is a book entitled Orthodox Christian Meetings and two are essays entitled Teamwork and Creative Thinking.

By way of summary, my premise in The New Soviet Economy article is that Westerners will never come to grips
with the dynamics of working in Russia until they come to understand and appreciate the influence Orthodox Christianity has had on the Russian psyche. I have now used that premise to suggest that an essential Orthodox Trinitarian theology, namely hierarchical conciliarity, is likely to be a fundamental guiding principle (embedded, as it is, in the Russian psyche after 1000 years of Orthodox Christianity) behind the organization of this emerging, uniquely Russian economy.

The Work Ethic & East West Dialogue

My recent experience and conversations with Russian intellectuals further confirms this hunch of mine, that thinking Russians are yearning for the dynamics of hierarchical conciliarity in their spiritual life, be it political, economic or social. However, I'm concerned, even worried. A reading of 18th, 19th and early 20th century Russian history tells me that all sides of the issues surrounding the hierarchical conciliar dynamic were being seriously discussed by prominent minds prior to the Bolshevik Revolution. Visions of the new, changed Russia evoked, at one and the same time, great anxiety and great optimism among them. Unfortunately, opportunities for these honest inquiries were brutally suppressed in the wake of the communist reign of nonsense. Will such dialogue be allowed time to flower once again in the late 20th century? Or, will it again be suppressed in the wake of a capitalistic onslaught from the West or an authoritarian backlash from within?

What, you may ask, does all this talk of organizational dynamics have to do with "the work ethic?" In my experience, the motivation for truly creative work comes from within a person, not from without. Bad hierarchy may control enough of a person's external environment (salary, security, social support structure) to force him to work. But, a healthy hierarchical conciliar work environment, centered around shared vision and mutual accountability empowers him to work. He wants to work because such work enables him to reach his (and the community's) goals.

Quality Work = Process & Content

This is not enough however. The process of hierarchical conciliarity is only half the issue. One might argue that a group of ungodly men and women could come together around a common vision and reek havoc upon the world, as in the Tower of Babel! Such behavior, at best, would be a skewed form of hierarchical conciliarity. The related (unique yet inseparable) issue that must be added to the process is content: What is your vision? Clearly, Orthodox Christian vision centers on The Holy Trinity. Essential qualities of that vision enable a human being to find wholeness and fulfillment in life. By inference, our work, or our work ethic if you like, to be truly dynamic needs to be informed by and formed by the Trinity's example of love, harmony and mutual accountability. To an Orthodox person, God's intentions for humankind come as a whole package. Picking and choosing is what gets us in trouble.

The New World Order

A re-discovery of hierarchical conciliarity will mean change, and such changes are always difficult. Consider any experience you have had in trying to get an abusive authoritarian figure in your life to consider other people’s opinions and viewpoints (someone like an overbearing boss or an abusive spouse). Such changes don’t come without pain and suffering as everyone involved in an authoritarian relationship, and especially an abusive one, must re-adjust; this is a microcosm of the societal challenge we face. Sociologists acknowledge that we live in an age of unprecedented change. When major social forces are re-arranged, as we are watching occur in the former Soviet Union, people’s ways of thinking, feeling and behaving all must change. When this happens a cultural shift occurs. Bernard Lonergan says, "Social and cultural changes are, at root, changes in meanings that are grasped and accepted... changes in the control of meaning mark off the great epochs of human history."25 Could we be watching an epoch-making change where the meanings of hierarchical conciliarity and the fundamental Trinitarian imprinting of humanity are the truths being grasped for? Acceptance can come, as I have experienced in my own life, but not without a great deal of hard work and commitment to the vision.

Is it possible that in all the current turmoil in the former Soviet Union we are watching a society coming to grips with her divine destiny? I pray so. Worn-out Western philosophies are poised to dictate yet another "new world

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael T. McKibben is President of Planning Works International, Inc., a management, organizational development and software development consulting firm in Columbus, Ohio. He has written a number of management books and booklets for Orthodox and general audiences, including *Planning For Success*, *Up & Running*, *Teamwork*, *Creative Thinking*, *Orthodox Christian Meetings*, *Common Ground For Christian Unity* and *The Road to Orthodox Christianity*. He also conducts vision and implementation seminar/workshops for businesses and for Orthodox parish councils across the United States. He helped found an international consortium of business consultants who are Orthodox Christians called East West Connexion. This consortium assists Western businesses in setting up business ventures with Russian companies. He has recently formed a software joint venture with the Russian firm, Dialogue. Along with his business involvement in the former Soviet Union he consults to the Orthodox Church in America’s (OCA) Parish-to-Parish program which has begun to link Orthodox Churches in America with sister Churches in the former Soviet Union. (The Russian Orthodox Church is the OCA’s parent Church.) Maybe most importantly, Mr. McKibben was an evangelical Protestant prior to becoming an Orthodox Christian. He, along with a growing number of Westerners, has been wrestling in his own spiritual journey with the many East/West differences in perspective.

Planning Works, Inc. (PWI) specializes in assisting companies and management teams to: (1) identify growth needs, (2) clarify vision, mission and goals, (3) formulate strategy, (4) orchestrate key person "buy-in," (5) structure and guide implementation, (6) build accountability, (7) solve
complex problems and (8) grow professionally.

Planning Works' seminar/workshops include these implementation-oriented programs:

- Creative Thinking
- Teamwork
- Planning For Success -- The Personal Planning System
- Selling For Success -- Sales Time/Territory Management
- Compression Planning -- A Problem-solving Workshop For People Who Haven't Got Time
- The Goal Achievement Workshop
- Executive Skills Assessment
- Stress Management

PWI's Business Development Program (BDP) is a series of workshops designed for growing companies who are so busy working in their businesses, they haven't made the time to also work on their businesses. BDP helps build the company's teamwork infrastructure for growth, change and to fully capitalize on new opportunities.

Planning Works' clients include Chemical Abstracts, PaineWebber, the Higher Education Management Institute, The Bank Administration Institute, The Ohio Credit Union League, Commercial Parts & Service, and the National Aero Space Plane Project.

Mr. McKibben wishes to acknowledge the help and contributions of his wife, Nancy, Mr. Nicholas Chapman and the clergy and lay participants in The St. Barnabas Project, an Orthodox Christian leadership forum which has been meeting quarterly in Columbus, Ohio since 1988; a forum which he co-facilitates.

ADDITIONAL COPIES

This booklet is available in quantities of 5 or more at $2.50 per copy. Please call Planning Works, Inc., 6665 Huntley Rd., Suite K, Columbus, OH 43229, VOICE: (614) 436-5300, FAX: (614) 436-7108.