



**Maria Kohler-Baur.** *Die Geistlichen Akademien in Russland im 19. Jahrhundert.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997. 159 pp. DM 78.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-447-03930-7.



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## Russia's Ecclesiastical Academies

As the author of this book reminds us, the Russian Orthodox Church during the Imperial period is a generally understudied topic, and its educational institutions, even more so. This study, originally submitted as a doctoral dissertation at the Universitat Regensburg in the winter of 1994-95, aims to help remedy that lacuna.

Kohler-Baur points out that the history of the spiritual academies (*dukhovnye akademii*) lasted almost exactly a century, from 1814 until the Bolshevik Revolution, although their roots can be traced to earlier times. The academies, whose functions were analogous to those of secular universities, provided advanced theological training to young men who had graduated from seminaries (*seminarii*), which themselves were the ecclesiastical equivalents of secular *gimnazii*. There were four academies serving the entire Russian Empire, located in St. Petersburg, Moscow (actually, Sergiev Posad), Kiev, and Kazan'. Kohler-Baur's book, which focuses particularly on the decades after 1855, deals with the academies' history in a series of thematic chapters on their administrative structure, their educational activities, their faculty and student bodies, their intellectual life, and their role in

implementing censorship laws.

After a brief introduction on the previous history of Russian ecclesiastical education, Kohler-Baur offers a detailed survey of the administrative structure of the academies under the statutes (*ustavy*) of 1814, 1869, and 1884. The reader learns much that is quite interesting on the organization of these institutions, particularly the carefully balanced relationship that was mandated between the faculty, the rector and other administrators, the local bishop, and the central authorities in St. Petersburg. This information should prove quite useful to anyone beginning a research project on the topic. The attentive reader will also detect evidence of Russia's evolving *Zeitgeist* in these regulations, from the religious cosmopolitanism prevailing in 1814, to echoes of the Great Reforms in the 1869 statute, and to efforts in the 1884 version to limit access to higher education and centralize administrative controls. It is unfortunate, however, that the author largely confines herself in this section to a summary of the *ustavy* (which are printed in the *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*), so that many fascinating questions surrounding this topic go mostly or en-

tirely unexplored, such as the motivation behind each of the statutes, their connection with contemporary political and cultural developments, or the manner in which they were actually implemented, to name but a few.

The following chapter focuses on Kohler-Baur's main source, the periodicals that the various academies published. Clearly, both the curriculum and the publications of the academies were strongly preoccupied with Russia's position vis-a-vis the non-Orthodox West. On the one hand, Latin was long the principal language of instruction, and many educational materials and library resources were imported from the West, particularly Germany and France. These influences diminished after the middle of the century, however, as Russian came to dominate the classroom and more Russian-language printed materials were used. At the same time, however, the academies' journals both followed and critiqued foreign religious developments from an Orthodox perspective. Catholicism was more harshly criticized than Protestantism in these articles, and Kohler-Baur notes that the Kievan academy (whose location made it an outpost against Polish Catholicism) was more defensively nationalistic than its St. Petersburg counterpart, which reflected that city's traditional role as Russia's gateway to Europe. The St. Petersburg journal (*Khristianskoe Chtenie*) also distinguished itself by its willingness to discuss such decidedly secular topics as Marxism, though naturally from an Orthodox perspective. The Moscow academy's journal, on the other hand, carved out a specialty for itself by publishing Russian translations of patristic texts.

The book thus makes clear that a rich intellectual life existed at the church academies. One wishes, though, that a broader range of sources had been used to complement the academies' journals, since presumably only a small—and not necessarily representative—part of the schools' intellectual life could be displayed in them. Likewise, it would be interesting to know more about the academies' (and the journals') place in the broader spectrum of Russian thought before 1917.

The chapter on the students at the academies is likewise based mostly on the academy journals, although secondary sources and a few memoirs are cited as well. In some ways, this is the most successful chapter at mak-

ing the academies "come alive." The author discusses the evolving enrollments of the academies (a total of just under 1,200 by 1883-84), the policies on admission and financial aid, and the students' conduct within the academies and their responses to events in society at large. Discipline problems evidently were rare, aside from occasional dress-code violations or drunkenness, and student political views ranged from "extreme right-wing to moderate left-wing" (p. 95). That characterization is illustrated with examples of student participation in political demonstrations after 1855, but also their enthusiastic support for the wars against the Ottoman Empire in the 1850s and 1870s.

As for the administrators and faculty members, Kohler-Baur analyzes the careers that most of them pursued in the ranks of the clergy, focusing particularly on the bishops in whose eparchies the academies were located. In addition to a general analysis, she provides a brief summary of the career of each one (forty-one in all), arguing that none of the available reference works (such as the *Brokgauz & Efron Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* or *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*) contains full, accurate information on all of these individuals. She then surveys the evolving role of classical and modern languages at the academies, the scholarly study of theology, the involvement of the academies in training missionaries, and the academies' role in enforcing the censorship laws.

The book's main strength lies in its thorough, systematic survey of the information contained in the academy statutes and journals. Its principal weakness is the modesty of its analysis and the limited range of sources used. Little effort is made to place the academies into the broader context of Russian cultural, political, social, or even ecclesiastical or educational history, or to transcend the inherent limitations of the legal statutes and official journals by consulting archival, memoir, or other sources. However, anyone interested in a factual introduction to the structure and general activities of the academies will benefit from reading this book.

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