



# Novosibirsk Biblical Theological Seminary

## INFORMATIONAL NEWSLETTER

Issue #2

### The Importance of Theological Education

*The things which you have heard from me  
in the presence of many witnesses,  
entrust these to faithful men  
who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2)*

In Russian, the word “education” is “obrazovanie” (from “image” and “to form”). The prevailing idea is that of a spiritual component in development of a personality and formation of image, like that of God’s Son. “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined [to become] conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

In the English word “education” – derived from Latin *ēducāre/ēducere/ēduce* which means *to lead, pull, drag forward* – the sense is more pragmatic, toward development of a personality, forward movement and progress.

As I see it, spiritual theological education combines both spiritual and practical components in the development of a personality. At the present time, there are two

value systems prevalent in the world: humanistic or “universal” versus the traditional – the Christian one. Both systems contain eternal truths, but nevertheless there’s a great difference between them.

The humanistic values system differs from the Christian in that the former rejects the Christian understanding of sin and evil. Evil in the world is explained away by blaming it on imperfect social structures. Humanism exalts man, and thus substitutes the Christian ideal of Jesus Christ as God Incarnate for their ideal of man as his own god. In other words, humanism is man-centered, while Christianity is God-centered. This is today’s challenge in preparing the next generation of Christian pastors, teachers and leaders.

Historically, Christians founded schools to instruct new converts, where believers were taught the basics of faith, practical Christian living and the skills of writing and reading. The main goal of a Christian school is to teach the understanding of Holy Scripture. It is to this goal that Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary (NBTS) is committed—giving the best equipping to our students in the study of Scripture, and passing on God’s truths both



#### The number of our graduates

Master of Theology	5
Master of Divinity	7
Bachelor of Theology	33
Bachelor of Divinity	13
Preacher	12
Basic Theological Education	60
Sunday School Teacher	244
Music School	15

#### The number of our students

Master of Theology	7
Master of Divinity	16
Bachelor of Theology	20
Bachelor of Divinity	30
Preacher	10
Sunday School Teacher	22
Music School	12



to believers and unbelievers. And we are thankful for your partnership in helping to provide this vitally important training.

The disciplines of Christian education flow out of Holy Scripture, and include prayer, worship, preaching, discipleship, fellowship and service. The purpose of education at N BTS is the transformation and renewal of the minds of students for knowing God's will (Romans 12:2). The syllabus of Christian education is grounded on Holy Scripture and oriented on glorifying God and His divine actions.

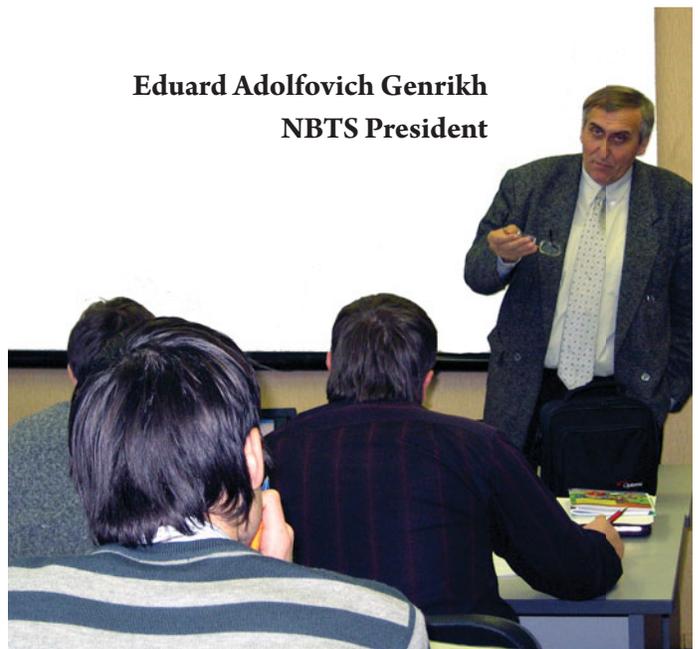
Evangelical revivals in our country, both in the early and late 20th Century, led to the planting of new congregations and churches, and this, in turn, raised awareness of the need for theologically equipped ministers. During a 1909 Russian Baptist Congress, the desire was expressed to establish a domestic seminary as a full-time higher religious educational institution. But the historical events that followed shortly forced the delay of this idea for nearly 80 years. It was only in the early 1990s that religious schools of differing levels began to emerge in Russia. Schools began to spring up very quickly—so great was the thirst of UECB believers to study God's Word. After 20 years of religious freedom, much has changed in Russia, and among those changes was the attitude to education in the Russian UECB. The need for trained pastors, teachers and leaders of different levels became even greater. However, it is only now that we as a brotherhood have truly realized the importance of theological education, as well as lifting up the importance of pastoral ministry in the brotherhood. The churches are adopting a respectful attitude to leaders, and secondly, we expect that a minister's character should meet high biblical requirements, and their knowledge and skills should be up to the standard.

In other words, today's pastors should be ready to answer today's challenges both within their congregations, as well as

in secular society. And this requires pastors to assume higher responsibility in the selection of candidates for training, so that their moral and intellectual level meets the high qualifications of a religious educational establishment like N BTS.

The Union leadership has decided to support our existing Christian higher educational establishments by recommending that every church create a line item in their budget for education, and have regular prayer included in church activities for the Bible schools, the brotherhood and their leaders. Every instructor at a UECB school should once a year affirm his confessional unity with the brotherhood. The brotherhood and the leaders of the schools on their part should work to raise the spiritual and professional level of their instructors. The Union leadership has created a new Department for Education in the brotherhood, on which our hopes are pinned for offering practical help to the schools. These are great and blessed tasks, and N BTS is ready to fully participate in their fulfillment. May the Lord help us in this!

**Eduard Adolfovich Genrikh**  
**N BTS President**



## Why Do Russian Students Have to Learn Greek?

**Pavel Togobitsky**

NBTS Professor  
of Biblical Greek  
and Exegesis



We live in a rapidly changing world. Traditional systems and values are being destroyed, and nothing remains secure. The future is less and less predictable. Against this bleak background, our society is beginning to demand instant gratification. People are no longer willing to work for the future. This trend encompasses all aspects of our life – economics, politics, education, families, churches, etc.

Sometimes obtaining speedy results is necessary and genuinely important, but other times it is impossible to achieve truly profound, lasting results without lengthy training.

Learning biblical languages requires considerable time and considerable effort. Therefore preachers ask, “Is it worth devoting years to studying languages, or is it better to devote our time to something that brings nearly immediate tangible benefits?” (Pragmatism)

Today, many students are giving up on learning biblical languages. Many seminaries do not devote much attention to this subject. However, in our seminary, the teaching of biblical languages and exegesis of the original texts are among our top priorities. Perhaps to some, it is not trendy or efficient, but we believe that the rejection of language study leads to serious dangers and consequences. Here I would like to highlight at least four impacts.

(1) Without the knowledge of biblical languages, a preacher is not certain that he is really preaching God’s Word, rather than some translation errors. As an aside, most people in Russia today use the translation created more than 130 years ago, which is not always accurate and not always clear. Available modern translations are not numerous, and are often not of good quality. Moreover, while the overall meaning of Scripture is understandable in a translation, the original text is needed for meticulous analysis in preaching, teaching, and theology.

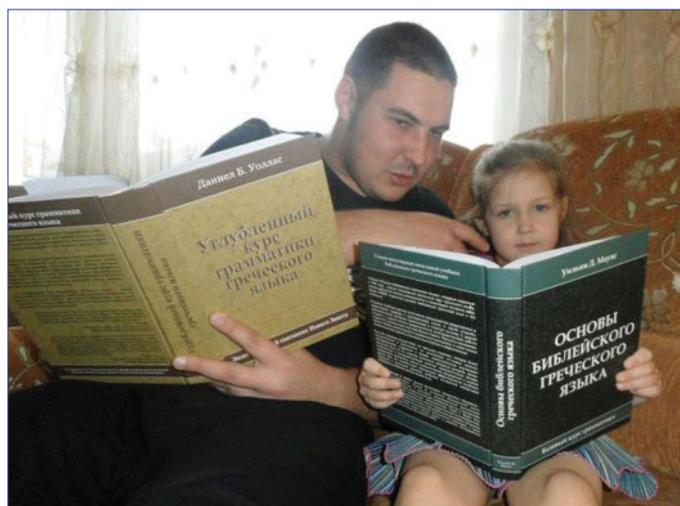
(2) Ancient languages often have a “mystical” effect on people who are not trained in languages. Quite often, preachers take incorrect information about a “true meaning” of biblical words from software programs, comments, and other sermons. Having a good knowledge of the original language protects preachers and churches against many myths and falsehoods.

(3) Today, those who profess heretical teachings are often able to use their knowledge of languages to distort the true meaning of a biblical passage. Quite often, these teachings are defended with reference to the original text. Due to the development of the Internet, people often fall victim to the phenomena. Knowing the biblical languages helps protect against confusion and embarrassment.

(4) Giving up on language study is yet one more step on the dangerous path toward anti-intellectualism. Unfortunately, academics and heart-felt faith often end up being opposed to each other. An anti-intellectual faith ends up being weak and distorted without the serious reflection of academics, and unclear theology gives rise to doubts. This is not theological profundity—it’s superficiality. Serious theology, which implies a good knowledge of languages, is practical.

Of course, not all preachers are able to study ancient languages. Even in our seminary, some students do not study it. And of course, not all really strong ministers know languages. But the church always needs those whose knowledge can provide help, protection and foundation. That is why we make an effort to prepare such ministers.

I am very pleased that ministers and members of various churches often ask our graduates, students and teachers about different issues, most of which demand a careful analysis of the original text of the Scripture. I am pleased that many students entering our seminary choose it because there is serious exegesis of the Scripture here. I pray that God uses us to strengthen His Church. I pray that He prepares our students for careful communication of His immutable truths in our changing world, even though such a study demands considerable effort.



Our student Mark Zuk and his daughter with two Greek textbooks translated and prepared for publication by the seminary:

- Mounce W., *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*
- Wallas D., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basic: Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*



## Our students: Said Protopopov

### NBTS Distance Learning Program

A total of 35 students from all over Russia have taken their first two-week session in NBTS's new distance learning program. The longest distance of all belongs to student Said Protopopov. He is an ethnic Yakut from the city of Yakutsk—known as the coldest city on earth with an average temperature of -40 degrees in January.

Yakutsk is the capital of the Yakutsk republic in eastern Russia. The republic is one-third the size of the United States, with a population of almost 1 million people. About 450,000 are ethnic Yakuts. Although nominally Russian Orthodox, in reality they practice their traditional shamanism.

In the early 1990s, less than a handful of evangelical Christians were known among the Yakuts. But the prayers of many believers who had been sent to labor camps in the far north bore fruit. Among the first fruits of the Yakuts was Said, who came to faith in Christ in 1992. After experiencing the guidance and preservation of the Lord in many ways, Said found his way to a local Baptist church in 1995. He traveled as an evangelist to far remote villages to plant churches and encourage communities of new believers among the Yakuts. Later, he served for six years as coordinator for the Yakutsk-speaking churches in this vast region.

The Yakuts received a translation of the New Testament in their own language in 2005. Unfortunately, the translation contained many theological misinterpretations and a revision was urgently needed. Said was able to bring in his cultural and spiritual knowledge of his people to aid in producing a revised new edition of the NT in the Yakut language. With the steady growth of churches among the Yakuts, Said now sees a major need for sound biblical teaching in these churches. Wherever possible, this teaching should be done in the indigenous language and culture. Said sees his own education at NBTS as the first step in reaching this great goal.



## Our students: Vladimir Lesovetz

### 2011 NBTS Graduate Now Serves NBTS in Carpentry

Vladimir was born and bred in Kazakhstan. During his childhood, he had never heard about God, religion or church. Vladimir was first told about God when he

lived in Novosibirsk. By that time, he was nearly 40 years old and drugs were at the center of his life. His cousin was Russian Orthodox, and he would often come to the apartment where Vladimir and his friends were taking drugs and would tell them about his beliefs. Sometimes they listened to him in silence, sometimes they argued with him or even yelled at him. But he kept coming anyway. The cousin tried to convince Vladimir that he had to be baptized in order to be saved and to go to heaven. Vladimir finally agreed to be baptized, not because he really believed in God, but only to get rid of his bothersome cousin. Vladimir returned to his usual life with drugs.

But he knew that something needed to change in his life, so he investigated one of the UECB drug rehabilitation centers in Novosibirsk. The people there told him that God alone could help him and transform his life completely. Soon Vladimir repented of his sins, and first thing that the Lord did was to set him free from drug addiction. Vladimir finally felt Someone was in control of his life.

In 2002, Vladimir was invited to work at NBTS as a carpenter. When the distance learning program was organized in 2007, he seized the opportunity and entered the seminary. Vladimir successfully finished his studies in 2011.

Before his seminary studies, Vladimir just went to church on Sundays and occasionally shared the Gospel with some people. But through NBTS, God made him ready for ministry. Vladimir learned in-depth study of the Scriptures and the real art of good expository preaching that required historical context and practical advice for everyday life.

Today Vladimir preaches in his local church and he is focused on spreading the Good News among people of his city. His biggest dream is to be a witness for God to the remotest parts of the Novosibirsk region.

## Gratitude and Prayer Needs of NBTS

- 1) We are thankful to all who have been praying for new NBTS students. Praise be to God! The 35 men enrolled in Distance Learning successfully completed their first two-week session.
- 2) We are thankful for the birth of daughter Vasilisa in the family of Dmitri Shlyapin, a fourth-year student.
- 3) We are thankful for the family of Mark Zhuk, a second-year student, who were able to adopt a two-year-old boy, Mikhail.
- 4) We pray that the Lord would help us in preparing all the paperwork necessary for renewal of our license to conduct educational activities.
- 5) We pray for God's help in raising finances to meet the requirements of the fire department, as well as those of the sanitary and epidemiological service. We are required to replace the ceiling and renovate the cafeteria.
- 6) We continue to pray for student visas for our professors who have entered a Ph.D. program, as well as raising funds for their continuing education.
- 7) We continue to pray for the funds needed to reconstruct the Seminary building so that we will have a dormitory for students and their families.

**Phone:** +7 (383) 336-40-01

**E-mail:** newsletter@nbbs.ru

**Web-site:** www.nbbs.ru



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