



# INFORMATIONAL NEWSLETTER

## Novosibirsk Biblical Theological Seminary

Issue #7, Winter 2017

### CONTENTS

<b>Happy New Year!</b> .....	1
<i>E. A. Genrikh</i>	
<b>Change?</b> .....	2
<i>Russell Phillips</i>	
<b>Interview with</b>	
<b>Dr. Donald A. Carson</b> .....	3
<b>Graduate Testimony</b> .....	5
<i>Vadim Gyra</i>	
<b>News</b> .....	7
<b>Please join us in prayer</b> .....	8

### Happy New Year!

*E. A. Genrikh, NBTS President*

By the grace of God, we are entering 2017. This year is special because there are two significant dates for the Russian Baptist Union. First of all, it will be 150 years from the baptism of the first Russian Baptist Nikita Isaevich Voronin; and on this day Russian Baptism was born.

Secondly, it will be 500th anniversary of the Reformation, this day will be celebrated by the Christians all over the world.

Russian evangelical Baptist movement is connected with the Protestantism, taking its roots in the Russian protest movement, so called religious dissident movement inside the Orthodox church; and with the Western protestant influence on evangelical believers in Russia.

That's how "unique phenomenon in the religious life of Russian society" has appeared. Even secular scholars have to admit this great significance of Protestantism in the world history.

Here's an opinion of S.S. Averintsev, the full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences: "Protestantism has created its culture – both church and secular – which is different from the Catholic or the Orthodox: there is special interest in the Bible (including the Old Testament), family bible reading; focus on the sermon and not only on church sacramental, the shift from obeying the spiritual 'mediators' and the regular practice of confession to individual responsibility before God; there is new work ethic valuing economy, order in business and self-confidence as a sort of asceticism and success is seen as a sign of God's blessing;

there is respectability that stands far both from monastic strictness and aristocratic richness. This culture brought up willful, initiative and thoughtful people. This type of people played a very important role in rising of capitalism and the civilization of the New World in general."

Unfortunately, in the modern world things mentioned above are not appreciated neither by Russian politicians nor by orthodox or any other activists. As an educational institution of our union we have this honor to belong to such an amazing evangelical movement, to participate in the development and reformation of the churches of the Russian Baptist Union and to seek more effective ways to tell the saving Gospel to our nation dying in faithlessness.

One of the special features of the Russian evangelical Baptist movement is that from its 150-year old history it was in chains of government atheism for 70 years. And it has influenced church organization and the service. Besides that, today's focus on individualism exposes to danger the unity and integrity of our Union and brotherhood.

Dear friends, our seminary is among those who is concerned about searching, correcting, transforming and recovering biblical theology and church practice in our fast-changing world, that's not changing for the best neither in secular nor in church context.

It's big and important work. We need perseverance, patience and love to God's word and God's people. May the Lord help us in this holy and godly work!

Happy New Year!



## Change?

The author of the article is **Russell Phillips**, pastor of the church and a visiting professor at the NBTS. BA (Modern and Medieval Languages), University of Cambridge. MSc (Translating and Interpreting), Heriot-Watt University. BTh, University of Glasgow.

It's one of those commonplaces so often repeated and cherished among Christians that we all believe it: **God has changed my life.** I remember the testimony of a young Christian who had come to faith through the popular Alpha course. When asked by our pastor what exactly had changed, he simply answered, "Everything."

Twenty plus years later and now it's me who's the pastor. And I don't think it is as black-and-white or as simple as maybe that young Christian made out.

I absolutely believe, not just as an intellectual conviction, but as an observed reality that the **God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ by his Spirit moulds and shapes and transforms personalities and relationships, families and churches. Christians are different.** We do have plenty of weaknesses, some of them even exacerbated by aspects of faith and practice. But if I lump together all the thousands of Christians I have met and interacted with over the last 20+ years there is something shared, something all of us have in common which I can only trace to one thing - or rather to one person: Jesus. (Sorry if that sounds trite or sentimental.)

**I also believe that such transformation is not instantaneous, nor automatic, nor immediately verifiable.** To an extent it can be imitated (faked). In some circumstances it can be learnt. There are plenty of cases where people have genuinely strived towards an ideal of transformation only to find that good intentions are not sufficiently motivating to 'keep it up'. In many cases the old person has never really gone away or been changed. It just takes the right

set of circumstances for the sheep's clothing to become detached from the inner wolf. And people revert to type.

**So what is it that makes genuine, lasting Christian transformation?** What is it that actually transforms a personality so they actually become different, not just trying really hard to be someone who ultimately they are not?

1. I have already said it: **Jesus.** The Lord Jesus Christ of the gospels. The unique, inimitable, untamable, ever-merciful Saviour of the epistles. The reigning Lamb of the Apocalypse. Lasting Christian transformation is Christlikeness, contact with Jesus 'rubbing off' on someone. Or, in Jesus' words, it is the lasting fruit of those who abide in Him, the True Vine.

2. **The gospel.** Not the gospel is something other than Jesus. But the gospel in the sense of the core message of Jesus and the Bible which declares the utter failure of the human race in its moral and spiritual endeavour and the invincible mercy of God in doing for us in the person of Jesus what we could not do for ourselves. Humbly relinquishing all pretence and claims before God and gladly receiving the gift of acceptance, renewal, life - that is where the Christian life starts... and where it continues if we are genuinely to grow and progress. The forgiven debtor, the prisoner released on amnesty, the defeated foe accepted onto the winning side. It is in these gospel capacities that we are compelled to action, transformed from the inside out. If you have 'got over' that feeling, then you have stopped growing and changing.

3. Not just learned behaviour or in-group respectability, but a **realignment of heart.** The person we are, what we are driven by, where our heart wanders when no-one is looking. Means of grace, disciplines and so on are necessary but not sufficient. This can only be the work of the Holy Spirit.

4. **Hour-by-hour choices and habits.** What we really value is displayed not even by the positive choices we make, but what we say No to. It is human nature to take every opportunity. And why would you turn down the Good unless in the interests of the Better? Real change is reinforced by choices: big choices, but also everyday choices and their accumulated force is to form deep-seated, character-forming habits. When I was coming to faith some words from a preacher challenged me: you haven't proven Jesus is your Lord until you want one thing and he wants another - and you choose His way.

5. **Testing.** Our talk of suffering in the Christian life it is often far too generalised. We may all see the merits of suffering, we just don't want it to hurt. The specific trials and difficulties which we face - failures, disappointments, injury, accident, pain, loss, temptation - these are the Fatherly blows discipling the sons whom he loves.



And like nothing else they pressure out of us the real motives of our hearts and purify us as in furnace. We can all tell - in ourselves and in others - the difference between a truth understood and a truth undergone. Martin Luther well described the three qualities of a theologian as prayer, reflection and *Anfechtung* (spiritual battle).

6. **Time.** Someone has said that the only Christian grace which

cannot be imitated is perseverance. Probably even perseverance can be imitated in the sense that we can conceal faults and inconsistencies to the grave. But time sifts much of the wheat from the tares. Jesus spoke of lasting fruit; he also taught about the temporary fruit of the seed which fell in the shallow soil and in the stony ground. Only time showed the difference.

## Interview with Dr. Donald A. Carson

**T**his fall semester seminary had a special guest Dr. Donald Carson. He did a course of lectures for the students and graduates and also participated in a pastoral conference. Donald A. Carson is a research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Dr. Carson received the Bachelor of Science in chemistry from McGill University, the Master of Divinity from Central Baptist Seminary, and the Doctor of Philosophy in New Testament from Cambridge University. He has written or edited more than 45 books on Bible theology, pastoral ministry etc.

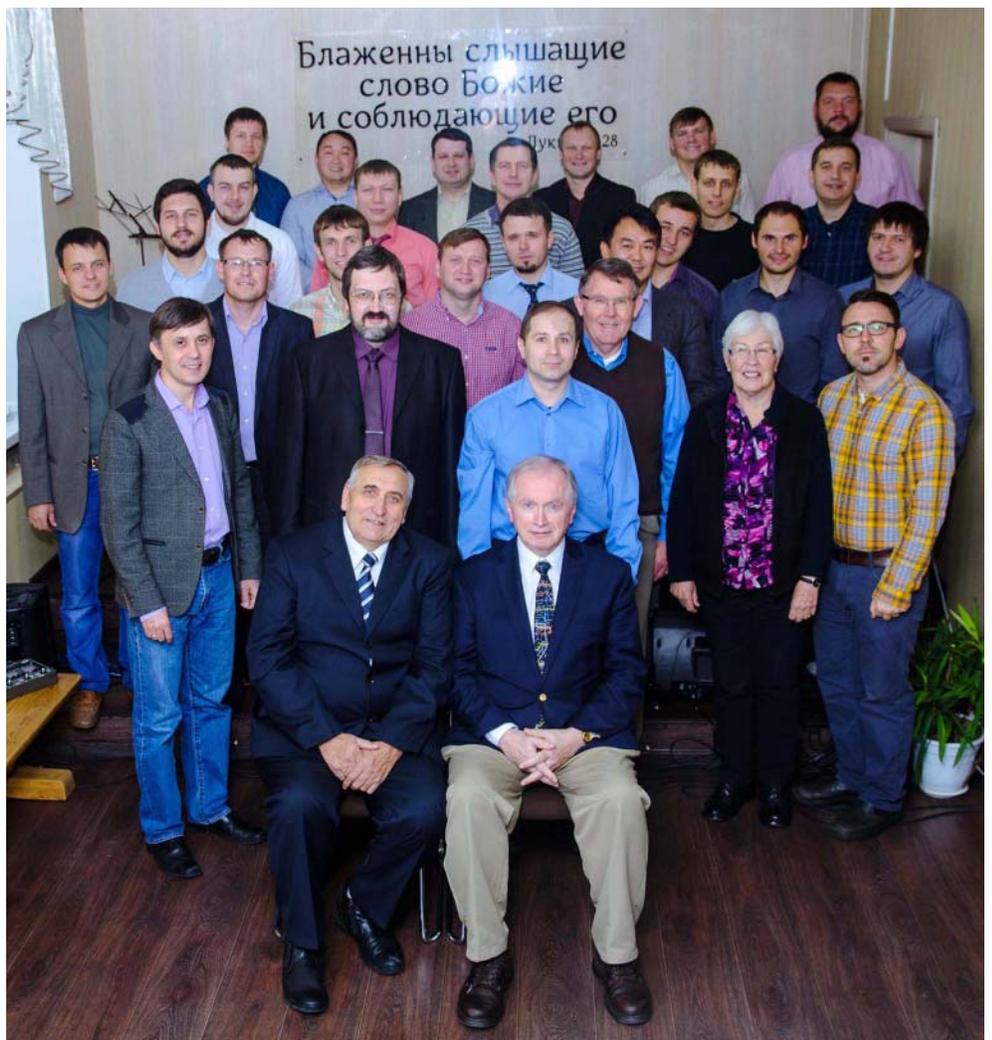
### - How did you come to believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior?

I was reared in a Christian family. And as it's not uncommon for people like me brought up in a Christian family, I don't know if I became a Christian when I was a boy of 8 almost 9 in a Christian camp. I remember the preacher it was a chap called Sam McClaskey. I remember the verse he preached on and I remember going to my room and getting down on my knees and asking God to forgive me my sins. But in retrospect I don't really know if I was converted then or a second year of University. I think that that uncertainty is common among people brought up in Christian homes because they are not quite sure how much of their faith has been inherited. So, I have a mental check-list of things to ask God someday. One of them is: When did you save me? And I suspect He will answer: "From before the beginning of the foundation of the world, my son."

**- So how to overcome this feeling of uncertainty when you just don't know if it's your faith or you're copying your parent's faith?**

The question you're asking is part of a bigger doctrine called The assurance of salvation. Luther used to say that the way you increase your assurance of salvation is by fo-

cus on Christ. That is the more you understand what the gospel is the more you have confidence because it doesn't depend on you. As long as you sort of retrospectively looking at yourself and wondering if you're simply duplicating your parents and so on, so on, so on; then you're misunderstanding what the gospel is all about. The way you increase your assurance is not by trying to increase your assurance but by focusing on Christ, by understanding the cross, by meditating on the absolute satisfaction of His sacrifice on our behalf. That's the way you do it. I think that he's right. Others, including Calvin, would add that there're other dimensions including the



testimony of the Spirit to our spirit that we are the sons of God, which is Romans 8 verses 15 and following. And 1 John mentions some other things but the most important thing for gaining assurance of one's salvation, regardless of the background one comes from, is pushing harder to have a deeper grasp of the glory of God and the gospel, a better grasp of who Christ is and what He has done on our behalf.

**- You witnessed a lot of struggles and difficulties that your father faced being a pastor. When did you understand that you also want to become a pastor?**

My intention was not to be a pastor. So, my first degree was in chemistry, I studied mathematics. I was planning on doing a PhD on organic synthesis. So, in my case it's not as if I were a little boy trying to be a pastor, trying to be like my dad or anything. I wasn't like that at all. Our parents didn't push us along those lines either. They left it up to us and supported us in whatever we did, as long as what we were doing wasn't dishonorable. My first move towards pastor ministry was a bit complicated, it wasn't just one thing. For a while I worked in a research laboratory for the Canadian government on air pollution. And I quickly discovered that the scientists in the laboratory were of two kinds. Older men, they were all men, who were anxious to get to retirement and younger men for whom chemistry was almost god. And I didn't belong in either camp. I was too young to retire and although I enjoyed chemistry, enjoyed the project, enjoyed the budget and the work, yet it wasn't god for me. In fact, in the same time I was helping another friend of the valley to plant another church. And I began to realize that the interests of the church were beginning to consume more of my interest and imagination and time and emotional energy than the chemistry. That was only a small step but it was a step. Later that year in September I heard the missionary by the name of Richard Wilkinson preach a sermon on Ezekiel 22: "And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none." That spoke powerfully to me.

There were quite a number of things of that sort that the Lord used before I finally abandoned the chemistry and switched to pursuing theological training for pastoral service.

**- Today there are so many kinds of books on different types of apologetics. What are your thoughts about it and according to you what is the best way to defend your faith?**

I'm nervous about the very concept of apologetics. A lot of students study apologetics but, as far as I can see, most people who are interested in what they talk about are not non-Christians, they are Christians who want to strengthen their faith. And I think that a lot of people begin to study apologetics because this will help them become better evangelists but what they discover is that people who listen to what they have to say are not people who want to get converted or explore the Gospel but they are baby Christians who want to sure up their faith a little better. So, if you're asking what's the best kind of apologetics for Christians to sure up their faith, that's one question. But if you're asking what are the best ways for evangelism, that's another question. In other words, I don't think it's the same thing. The most important thing in evangelism is explaining what the Gospel is. That's the most important thing. You want to do it in such a way that it's winsome; that it engages people where they are. And somewhere along the line you answer objections. But I have yet to see an apologetics program that tries to build up massive structure on the doctrine of Scripture first and then exploring what the scripture says. I have yet to see that be effective in winning anybody to Christ. What's effective in winning people to Christ is a personal testimony, caring for people and explaining what the Gospel is, a Bible study on Mark's Gospel, a Bible study on John's Gospel. That's effective evangelism and along the line it is important to answer some of the objections. So, reading some works of apologetics to help Christians know how to answer some questions, that's a responsible thing. The evangelistic task itself I think is best done by explaining what the Gospel is in a context of answering objections as you go along. In my view the





best book on the subject today is Tim Keller's "The reason for God". It's a bit upmarket, it's not for blue-collar workers. In the English-speaking world, it is the contemporary equivalent of C.S. Lewis "Mere Christianity". It's more advanced than Lewis but it's the same sort of book, explaining what Gospel is and answering questions on objections.

**- You've said before that having a ministry in Canada you faced that strong cultural Catholic context which is in a way similar to the situation in Russia with the Orthodox church. How did you share the Gospel under that circumstances?**

First of all, you want to have the witness of your own life that you can talk about. But I think that it's important to try to get them, whether atheist or orthodox, into evangelistic

Bible studies, small group going through the Gospel of Mark or going through the Gospel of John, led by somebody who not only understands the books well but encourages participation. Whether somebody actually thinks there is a god or not or prefers orthodoxy or not, at least they are studying the biblical text and beginning to form personal opinions on who this Jesus is and what he sounds like. Some will turn away after having started for a bit. But I still think that when you have people with strong backgrounds in a parallel religion or strong backgrounds in atheism, the most important thing to try to do is to get them into Bible studies. There are well-designed evangelistic Bible studies. It's not magic. As a second, if you can't manage that, there have been three or four little books written in the last ten years with titles like "Reading the Bible one on one". You can sit down in the Starbucks, read the Bible with somebody for an hour. I have no objections to that too. It's getting people into Scripture whether it's one on one or small group. I think that it's really, really, really important. Now the courses on apologetics and all that stuff are feeding your ability to answer questions but if you go into a conversation like that, primarily ready to answer questions, I doubt that you'll be an effective witness. It's too defensive, it's too confrontational. But if you're reading the Bible together, reading Mark together over a cup of Starbucks or whatever then you're working through the text together and he or she is allowed to have their opinions on what's going on in a frame recognizing that you're a Christian and you have something to say and you have your own testimony to give. But to my mind that's far more natural, less confrontational and far more likely to produce fruit than something that is primarily apologetic first.

## Graduate Testimony

*Vadim Gyra*

**M**y name is Vadim. I was born to non-Christian parents in a city of Beltsi, Moldova. When I was three my dad came to Christ, mom following him when I turned seven. So I was raised in a Christian home. I remember having all I wanted when I was a boy. This fact turned to be unfortunate for me later for I learned I could do whatever I wished. My innate pride added up to it and made me really spoiled.

At a classical teen age of 13-15 I found friends who were not friends with Jesus Christ, just like me. We smoked, drank and were heading down the slope. I would come home drunk and face conflicts with my parents. My folks insisted I stopped

living like that, but having been raised with no limitations I couldn't get why they would ask this of me now. I felt great about my life. My interests were centered on entertainment, hanging out with friends and alcohol. The Bible tells about it: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Soon I started to resent my friends and my lifestyle in general. I started feeling emptiness in my soul.

The question is, if my parents were Christians, why didn't I attend church? I didn't, indeed. I came several times when I was little but got no interest in it. I had other values. I reckoned people there were dull and the youth was forced to come by

their parents, like I was. I proved myself wrong when I got to know young people from the church as a teen.

I remember spotting a Christian girl on the street one day. She came up to me and invited me over for a church service. I said I would think about it. It took me several months before I shook off my peer embarrassment and decided to go. It was Sunday. I entered the church hall and looked for the remotest seat in the corner for a faster escape in case I didn't like it there. But I did like it! The atmosphere was warm and free. I got to know adequate guys. After that I started to attend church frequently. Several months later my older brother came to Christ by coming up front and praying out loud publicly during the service. I found myself also wanting to do so while I didn't

understand what it really was. I made my friend to go with me as I also came up front and said my premeditated prayer. I thought this is what repentance really is, followed by 1800 turn of my life including priorities and values, hatred to sin and burning love for God. But I didn't see all this happening in me because I didn't understand why I did it, I was not sincere in my public prayer like the majority of people.

I left the church that day same old person only with a desire to attend services more often. Also, I started coming to the youth meetings regularly during the week. Still, the unfulfillment and some discouragement bothered my soul. Only Christ gives joy and purpose but my sinful nature didn't allow me to break my pride and accept Christ. God kept working in my heart. He revealed to me my sinfulness, my empty and pitiful condition, "for all have sinned and fell short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23). Gracefully, He showed me His love, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."(Rom.5:8) I started seeing God's love to me and my own spiritual bankruptcy. As God was putting down my pride, I saw my real self. I also found out I couldn't change my life only someone from the outside could do it, someone like God.

In June 2003 the breakthrough happened: I asked for God's forgiveness for my self-centeredness, my fight against Him, my pride and disobedience. When my heart humbled down before Him He started changing my values:

1. My bad habits disappeared one by one.
2. My inner anxiety gave way to peace and assurance of going not to hell but to God in heaven in case my life ends at any



moment, since this is what Christ died for and what God promised, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life". (John 5:24).

3. I got a purpose in my life, love for God and the Bible (putting God first, the other goals after) and I can say with Apostle Paul, "For to me to live is Christ" (Philipp.1:21)
4. I had new priorities. Instead of sinful partying I chose fellowship with Christians where God is glorified. Instead of doing evil I wanted to do good.
5. I got joy. Even in trials I have an assurance that God will see me through. With God filling my life I can't lose heart but have joy. The Bible calls, "Rejoice ye always" (1 Thess.5:16)
6. There are positive changes in my character. The Bible tells, "...he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philipp.1:6).

The list of changes is a lot longer because God is great and makes a great difference by filling my life with purpose and happiness.

After graduating from the Bible Institute in 2008 I decided to continue my education. After considering many seminaries and many recommendations I made a decision to study in the NBTS. I got my bachelor degree in theology in 2016.

Before the seminary, I preached at my church, I lead a Bible study group and the "Foundations of faith" group (for those who want to join the church). Because my ministry is connected with teaching, seminary education is very important to me. It gives me good instruments and it also gives me access to so much information.

## NEWS

2016 has come to its end. Once again, our Seminary has gained some new students and new graduates. So many interesting and exciting things have happened! Here are just some of them:

- The first intake of students for the Christian counseling program. For now, students are going through the basic theological training. The program will be fully functioning from the beginning of a new school year.
- Opening of the distant-learning program in Voronezh, Nizhny Novgorod and Saint Petersburg.



**Gaining of New Students**



**New Graduates**

## Please join us in prayer

**D**ear beloved brothers and sisters, we are wholeheartedly thankful to you for your prayer support! God is merciful, He takes care of the seminary and richly blesses it. Praise Him for that! Please join us in our thanksgiving and prayer for the seminary to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God in 2017.

### We thank God

- For all the students who entered the seminary last year;
- For the opportunity to open a Christian counseling program;
- For the new experience of organizing distant programs in Saint Petersburg, Voronezh and Nizhny Novgorod;
- For participation of our professors in different church programs of Siberian region;
- For the opportunity to study at the PhD program that our professors have;
- For the good work of our staff;
- For the fellowship of wives of the seminary students;
- For the opportunity to celebrate Christmas together with staff, students and their children;
- For sacrificial contributions of churches from all over the world for the Seminary's operation;
- For special care about the Seminary through SGA.

### We ask God

- For the fruitful ministry of our students and graduates, for them to become a blessing for their local churches and community;
- In behalf of families of students, faculty and staff workers of the Seminary;
- For understanding the need of theological education in ECB churches, for development of sound biblical theology and beneficent input of our seminary into this process;
- For the Lord to put headwinds to the spread in our brotherhood of false teachings which reject the authority of God's Word;
- For the building up of unity in our brotherhood based on sound biblical teaching and Christian love; for ministers' ability with God's wisdom to deal with various conceptions and theological dispute;
- For needed resources for further ministry of the Seminary;
- That seminary would be the place where His name is glorified; where life and ministry of students, faculty and staff serves as display of sound Christian teaching;
- For the effective beginning of the Christian counseling program;
- That the professors who currently study at the PhD program (Pavel Togobitsky and Gerhard Rehwald) could finish and defend their dissertations in 2017;
- For the plans to open a PhD program in the NBTS in the future.

**May the Lord bless you all in your prayer, ministry and walk before Him!**



## DONATION

**Slavic Gospel Association**  
**6151 Commonwealth Drive**  
**Loves Park, IL 61111**

<http://www.sga.org/donate/?=67021>

or by the Russian bank transaction:

<http://nbbs.ru/pozhertvovat/>

## CONTACTS

**Address:** 9 Okeanskaya st.  
 Novosibirsk  
 Russia  
 630117

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

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

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



[www.facebook.com/pages/Novosibirsk-Biblical-Theological-Seminary/113786095396788](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Novosibirsk-Biblical-Theological-Seminary/113786095396788)