

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

THE TRAUMA OF STALINISM NARRATED IN VARLAM T. SHALAMOV'S *KOLYMSKIE RASSKAZY*: MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA

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Stalinism and the punitive system of the Gulag left an indelible stamp on the entire social matrix of Russia. Because of the multidimensional and multigenerational nature of the trauma of Stalinism, Russian society retains the label of a traumatized culture. This dissertation explores the significance of this phenomenon for contemporary Christian mission in Russia.

The narratives of Varlam T. Shalamov's *Kolymskie rasskazy* provided an empirical (based on sensory evidence) inquiry into the reality of enormous sufferings experienced by the inmates of the Kolyma Gulag. Holy Scripture, on the other hand, provided the theological (faith-based) inquiry into the causes and implications of those sufferings. This study demonstrates that the traumatic *microcosm* of Shalamov's characters belongs to the larger cultural world—namely, the *macrocosm* of everyday Stalinism.

A biblical-theological assessment of Stalinism reveals that a totalitarian system of pseudoreligious theocracy was established. The result was a culture demonically infected by the worldview of Marxism-Leninism. Being not just a sociopolitical system, but a state of mind, Stalinism resulted in the legitimization and institutionalization of a culture of lawlessness and death.

The method of sociotextual interaction utilized throughout this study sets forth a certain concept of Christian mission based on the commitment to liberation, healing, and transformation as envisioned in the Nazareth Manifesto of Jesus (Luke 4:16-21). At the heart of this approach to mission lies the Lukan imagery of a God who has compassion on “the poor” (the traumatized), who enters their dysfunctional *oikos*, casts out its demons, and calls humans to join *Familia Dei*.

The following three missiological strategies should be considered essential to the reality of post-Soviet society. First, the profoundly countercultural power of the worship service needs to be channeled toward healing the worshipers. Second, just as Jesus chose the family/household as both the social structure and spatial location for his ministry, so too the contemporary church-in-culture must consider this approach as her *modus operandi*. Finally, political participation suitable to the healing ministry of the Russian Christian community should be understood in terms of both creating an externally focused self-awareness and practical involvement in the life of the *polis*.