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# 3

## “It Was Easier in Prison!” Russian Baptist Rehab as a Therapeutic Community, Monastery, Prison, and Ministry

Igor Mikeshin

### Introduction

This chapter revisits a Foucauldian concept of “complete and austere institutions”<sup>1</sup> (Foucault 1977 [1975]) using the case of a substance-dependence treatment facility. I use his analysis along with the ethnographic study of therapeutic communities, monasteries, prisons, and religious ministries to draw a line between those concepts, specifically addressing the focus of my study—Christian ministries in the Russian Baptist interpretation. All these four social realities, including prison, could be regarded as religious, in terms of Robert Orsi’s *lived religion* and in line with the definitions of lived religion in the introduction—a set of everyday practices, rather than a phenomenon (Orsi 1985).

The Russian Baptist Church (officially called the Church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists) is an evangelical<sup>2</sup> community that has been active in

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Russia for approximately 150 years. Due to harsh persecutions under Stalin's regime, and especially Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign, Russian evangelicals became marginalized and isolated from their fellow believers abroad, which impacted their liturgy, dogmatics, hermeneutics, and lifestyle (see Coleman 2005; Sawatsky 1981; Nikolskaia 2009). They adhere to the universal tenets of Protestant faith (for instance, Luther's *five solae*), but interpret them in a specific way—as a response to Orthodoxy and Russian sociocultural context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (see Mitrokhin 1997; Karetnikova 1999). Moreover, the Russian Synodal Bible they use was translated in the nineteenth century under the huge influence of the Orthodox Church and Old Slavonic Bible (Tikhomirov 2006).

I take one specific case from my ethnographic fieldwork and unfold the concept of ministry, a paramount one for the Russian Baptists, contrasting it to the Foucauldian austere institutions in order to highlight its *lived* nature. I argue that even though a rehabilitation ministry may use methods and techniques of austere institutions, and even resemble them in their implementation, the distinctive feature of a ministry is its focus on the result, rather than on the process, interpreted as serving God by serving men. Paradoxically enough, despite the ultimate focus on the result, the ways of attaining it are best manifested in a *lived* practice of Christian rehabilitation, which implies bodily discipline, strict regime, and poor living conditions. Coping with these conditions only makes sense in the context of a personal born-again salvation.

## The Ministry of Good Samaritan

This chapter is an ethnographic account of a Russian Baptist rehabilitation ministry called Good Samaritan. The ministry rehabilitates people dependent from drugs and alcohol by converting them to a particular kind of Christianity. At the same time, conversion is achieved through rehabilitation, and substance dependence is seen as a way to reach the people with certain needs and convey the Gospel message to them. Hence, I regard the process of Christian rehabilitation as a twofold process or, in other words, as two aspects of the same process—rehabilitating addicts and converting them to Christ. This process only works in full.

Partial acceptance does not allow for maintaining a stable remission, and those who leave the rehab early or do not experience a radical moral transformation soon relapse (Mikeshin 2017). I conducted my fieldwork in the ministry from January 2014 until January 2015, using both full immersive participation in the rehabs and various other modes of participation in the Baptist community of St. Petersburg and the wider north-western region of Russia.

The ministry was founded in 2004 by a former convict, now a pastor, Vladimir Ezhov. He used the successful model of a Siberian ministry also called Good Samaritan, and further adapted it in the Russian northwest. Initially, the ministry only had two small rooms in the premises of the biggest Baptist Church in St. Petersburg. Since then it has grown up to more than thirty rehabs around the northern and northwestern regions of Russia, one near Moscow (central Russia), and one in Voronezh (south-west Russia). Recently, two rehabs were opened abroad for the Russian-speaking EU residents, who legally cannot spend more than two months in Russia. They are both situated in the regions with big Russian-speaking population: one is next to the Finnish town of Lappeenranta and another one is in a suburb of Rīga, Latvia.

The rehabilitation program lasts for eight months and consists of two stages. The first stage takes two months and is called social rehabilitation (or simply, rehabilitation). The second stage is called (social) adaptation and lasts for six months. Normally, most of the ministers claim that these eight months are not enough for a complete transformation and ensuring further sober life with Christ, but the program is meant to provide people with a direction in their lives, show them the way towards Christ and the "Heavenly Kingdom," and pass them over to their local churches where they seek spiritual and material advice and support.

Almost the whole first stage of rehabilitation is devoted to the study of the New Testament and basics of Christian life. Although many of newcomers do not have a slightest idea about Baptist Christianity, they are immediately given a copy of the New Testament, and after a three-day rest (mostly intended for getting sober) they are obliged to start reading and contributing to the discussion. The Scriptures are studied in the forms of free reading, discussion, and application to one's own life. The Christian living is introduced during these discussions, but also through so-called "Seminars" on fifteen various topics, also based on Scripture.

The stage of adaptation is less strict. The adaptants are considered spiritually mature enough to have a full Bible and some supplementary literature. Most importantly, the adaptants also work. This labor has been initially intended to support and maintain the rehab premises, but due to poor physical condition and low skills of former “street junkies” this work mostly aims at keeping them busy. The work assignments often imply going outside and even going to some distant workplaces, like a local sawmill. At this stage, the people on the program are expected to be more reliable and obedient, which is signified by their repentance when beginning the program.

The rehabs survive on occasional donations and sporadic support from the congregations and local communities, and the program is free of charge for the addicted people. Hence, the premises are often old and in poor condition, the food is of the cheapest sort and often expired, and simple commodities like hot water or electricity are luxuries and always economized on. The conditions in the rehabs hence become so harsh that many people drop the program because of them. The ministers, in turn, use these conditions to train obedience and humility among the rehabilitants, teaching them to separate the material *worldly* issues from those that really matter for their eternal salvation (Mikeshin 2015a).

The regime and rules are the same in every rehab with few differences. The daily schedule, especially on Rehabilitation, is very tight, with almost no free time and no time spent outside, in the fresh air. Everyone present in the rehabs, including those who were never addicted (for instance, homeless people or occasional ethnographers) must fully obey the rules, including wake-up and bedtime. Even though my research intentions were clear to everybody from the very beginning, I was regarded as anybody else in the rehab—a sinner and potential convert that should be brought to Christ.

The rules in the rehabs are also strict. There is a free exit, since the ministry cannot legally force anyone to stay. However, for those who chose to stay, there is a long list of limitations and prohibitions. One cannot, for instance, have a mobile phone or any kind of an electronic device, any literature besides Scriptures, or anything else distracting. No alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, or even coffee or pills (besides those prescribed for the chronic illness or HIV) are allowed. Any kind of talk on drugs,

crime, sexual behavior, or any topic that can be considered sinful or even worldly is prohibited. In these conditions, I had no opportunity (and no time in the tight schedule) to take pictures, conduct an interview, and discuss certain topics directly. However, most of these topics came about during the Bible-study as the elements of the old bygone life, or during the chats when an elder was out of the room.

There were people of various, yet typical, backgrounds on the program. Although they represented different professions, families, and regions, addictions and problems related to them transformed their lives into a common story: ruined families, crippled health, prison sentences, homelessness, and total moral failure. This failure was enforced by the stigma put on addicts in Russian society, where they are mostly regarded as immoral and weak-willed offenders, which they themselves ultimately share. Yet, the ones who did not admit such a moral failure never made it or never stayed in the rehab for a long time, for they did not see a good reason to do so.

As I have already mentioned, most of people in the program did not realize that the rehabs are not merely Christian, as they were told by the leaflets and ministers who invited them over, but precisely Russian Baptist. The name "Baptists" in Russian society has a somewhat negative connotation. Although the denomination has been in Russia for almost 150 years, it is often perceived as "some Western sect," presumably dangerous and heretical. Eventually though, the rehabilitants learn that the Bible translation used in the program is actually the same Bible as the Orthodox one (which they have hardly ever bothered to read). Apparently, the Baptists study it meticulously and try their best to apply it to their own lives. This simple fact convinces many of those who stay on the program to take it seriously and, eventually, to convert.

## Christian Rehabilitation

Adopting the simplified version of the ecological approach to substance dependence of Eugene Raikhel (2015), I regard rehabilitation in Good Samaritan as a twofold process, corresponding to the twofold nature of dependence. Substance use dependence (including alcoholism and even

smoking), thus, consists of two aspects. Physical or chemical dependence is caused by the changes in the brain circuit system (Volkow and Li 2005). It is manifested in the state of being high and in eventual cravings when a drug is not taken for a period of time. These cravings are known as hangover or dope sickness, and in the case of opiates they can be really torturous.

Physical dependence, however, can be relatively easily overcome, at least in such big cities as St. Petersburg. There is a multitude of services, both private and offered by the public narcology, cleaning blood of the substances and aiding bodily recovery (Raikhel 2010). Yet, the changes in the brain circuits of an addict are irreversible and the brain ceases production of certain hormones to reduce the risk of their over-production when the drug with a similar effect is taken. In this state, the brain evokes many psychological problems and, at the same time, pushes an addict towards an easy way of solving them by taking the drug. Once the person is addicted, they remain addicted for the rest of their life, and the only solution, according to the secular approach to addiction, is to maintain remission permanently (see Volkow and Li 2005).

The ministers of Good Samaritan revisit the concept of remission in Russian Baptist dogmatic terms. Once one is converted and born again, they argue, they are free from bodily and psychological addictions. But once one steps away from Christ and morally and spiritually collapses, they inevitably relapse and go back to all worldly vices, of which dependence is the strongest one (Mikeshin 2017). Hence, the ministers refer to their successful protégés as “former addicts.”

The physical dependence is addressed by the presence of a therapeutic community—a conventional term, connoting the isolated group of recovering addicts led by addicts in remission (or *former* addicts, in the Good Samaritan interpretation). Good Samaritan’s rehabs are operated by the ministers who passed the same program (though not necessarily in the same rehab), and the elders who often are still in the second stage of the program. Good Samaritan has no means of obtaining a medical license, hence the only physical treatment they can suggest is isolation for eight months far away from temptations of big cities. Moral transformation, however, is emphasized and manifested in radical conversion.

The phenomenon of Christian rehabilitation corresponds to the two-fold nature of dependence itself. It consists of two major elements, bodily transformation from a regular user to an addict in remission and moral transformation from a perishing sinner to a repentant Christian. As I have mentioned already, physical addiction is relatively easy to treat, yet the psychological dependence persists. When one stops using drugs and overcomes dope sickness or hangover (with or without a medical treatment), one is left with psychological problems that the addicted brain creates due to ceased production of dopamine. An addict feels emptiness, lack of meaning, and no reason to live further. Unlike detoxification, rehabilitation programs do not merely clean the blood of psychoactive substances, but also attempt to fill the life of an addicted person with meaning. Various programs construct this meaning differently, for instance, focusing on family, creativity, labor, or improved self. Good Samaritan offers focusing on Jesus Christ, God's will, and eternal life. The rehabilitants who accept the Gospel message (in the Russian Baptist interpretation) radically revisit their life, refocus it, and try to start it from scratch.

Conversion in the Russian Baptist Church is a continuous process of radical self-transformation, characterized by narrative practices and bodily experience (cf. Harding 2000, 34–35; Wanner 2007, 149). In anthropology, conversion to Christianity is regarded as a process of moral transformation, going far beyond mere change of religious affiliation. The major aspects include self-identification, the meaning of being a Christian (Csordas 1997; Harris 2006); narrative of moral (Barker 1993; Harding 2000; Robbins 2004; Wanner 2007) and bodily transformation (Coleman 2006; Luhrmann 2004); liminality, transitional period of changing state (Gow 2006; Meyer 1999; Priest 2003); cultural contexts (Hefner 1993; Vallikivi 2014; Wanner 2007; Zigon 2011), and social implications of conversion (Buckser 2003; Gross 2012; Vallikivi 2009).

Conversion to Christianity is not always radical (see, for instance, Glazier 2003), yet in Good Samaritan, and generally in Russian Evangelical Christianity, it is. The Evangelical principle of individual responsibility and accountability before God implies a conscious decision of a grown-up individual to acknowledge their sinful nature, incapability to manage their own lives without God's guidance, and accepting Christ's



atonement sacrifice on the Cross. This act is generally known as being born again or repentance. In the Russian Baptist context, it implies a rejection of the bygone sinful life and choosing God's will as a direction.

A rehabilitation program based on such radical transformation may or may not be the most efficient for the addicted people. However, when it does work, it only works as a radical transformation. Any partial acceptance or selective indoctrination, such as picking convenient rules and doctrines and rejecting others, never succeeds. As I have noted earlier, such partial conversion never helps addicts coping with the tough conditions of rehabs and forces them to drop the program and, eventually, relapse (Mikeshin 2017).

How does this transformation from the life in sin to the life in Christ work? Initially, the ministers claim, a sinful individual lives according to their own goals, aims, and principles. Satan abuses such selfishness to take a sinner away from Christ and in due course destroys their life in order to win their soul. When one converts and surrenders their will to Christ, they redefine their life purpose as living according to the will of God. The only available source of this will, besides direct revelation or miracles (which are mostly emphasized by Pentecostals and Charismatic Christians), is the Scriptures. The Scriptures are perceived as an inerrant and sufficient instruction for worship, liturgy, belief, and all aspects of the human life.

Consequently, what constitutes a conversion in the Russian Baptist Church, and precisely in Good Samaritan, is adopting the biblical text, language, and discourse. The language of Scripture is learned and interiorized as the language of liturgy, worship, communication, and even thought and reasoning. The more one adopts such a language, the more they are considered spiritually mature or spiritually grown (see also Coleman 2000). Such narrative of conversion can only imply a total acceptance of the whole biblical message, as it is understood in the community, without exceptions. This process of gradual continuous conversion is one of the manifestations of what Orsi calls *lived religion*—it is not some phenomenon of religion, separate from an individual, in which they participate, rather, it is a *lived* experience of converting and growing in faith.

The Bible itself was written in languages other than modern Russian and in a different context. In this condition, any Bible-believing Christian relies on a particular translation and particular hermeneutical tradition of their congregation. In the case of Good Samaritan, such lay hermeneutics are impacted by the 150-year history of oppression and marginalization of Russian Evangelical Christians, Russian sociocultural context, and very precise life-experience of street addicts and former convicts, who have just started learning Scripture through the program (Mikeshin 2015b). Moreover, the particular translation of the Scripture—the Russian Synodal Bible—impacts these hermeneutics heavily.

In the second part of the chapter I attend to Good Samaritan as a therapeutic community, monastery, prison, and Christian ministry. These four regimes are the most common comparisons that rehabilitants, ministers, and researchers make, considering the role of a Christian rehabilitation facility. I further unpack the concept of a ministry by comparing it to Foucauldian austere institutions and demonstrating its different focus and meaning.

## Therapeutic Community

The core of the rehabilitation program in Good Samaritan is a principle known as therapeutic community. Initially coined for mental institutions in regard to substance abuse rehabilitation, this term commonly connotes an isolated residential facility run by addicted people themselves and supervised by those who passed the program or are in an advanced stage. The rehabilitation process involves a therapeutic talk, self-reflection, and group discussion. Most of these techniques were adopted from 12-Step anonymous groups. The addicts receive therapy through the community of people with the same problems. With the help of the most experienced and successful ones—their elders—they work together on moral and bodily transformation step by step.

Good Samaritan is also operated by *former* addicts, who may either serve in the same rehab where they passed the program or be sent to another one, given that the program is the same. There are few exceptions when never-addicted people serve as ministers, and there are some more

non-addicts in the program (mostly homeless people). The founder of the ministry, Vladimir Ezhov, used to be a convicted criminal and served several sentences in prison, but was never addicted to drugs or alcohol, yet abused them from time to time. I met a few other people who were not addicts, but spent some time in the program in training to become a minister.

The concept of the ideology of therapeutic community is proposed and scrutinized by Geoffrey Skoll (1992). Skoll regards the interrelations between residents and staff in the treatment facility, as well as residents in different stages of the program, as contradictory ideologies of individuals, groups, or institution itself. The spatial division of the facility and the availability of certain practices, such as smoking or drinking coffee, allows the construction of this hierarchy between staff and patients in various stages of the program. The ideologies thus make the system of prohibitions and limitations coherent, and give them sense in therapeutic and communal terms.

Another study of therapeutic community by Angela Garcia (2010) expands the ideology of the treatment facility to the whole region where it is physically and culturally situated. Garcia links the drug use epidemics, as well as successes and failures of rehabilitation, with the landscapes of the northern New Mexico and its history of colonization and dispossession of land. In such a context, Garcia argues, every personal story of drug abuse becomes at the same time communal. Heroin addiction becomes a part of life, each one's personal story, and everyday reality.

Jarett Zigon's study of the Orthodox rehabilitation center (2011) regards the process of transformation in terms of morality. The rehabilitants, he argues, are taught to live a normal life, to have normal values and interests, at least for the time of the program. According to Zigon, this normality, in the context of the church-run rehab, is based on Orthodox belief and dogma (and this approach is criticized by him in the end). A successfully transformed and rehabilitated individual thus inevitably comes to Christ. Hence, the Orthodox addiction treatment is based on what Baptist ministers call "good works theology." The concept of normality refers to the idea that humans are justified by both, faith and pious living, which directly contradicts the Protestant tenet of *Sola Fide*—justification by faith alone. According to evangelical interpretations of

*Sola Fide*, good works and pious living are consequence and evidence of a transformed heart of a converted individual, and it can never be the other way around. That is why in the Orthodox rehab described by Zigon the proper conduct and moral behavior are emphasized in the Christian context, while in the Baptist ministry they are also highly valued and constantly pushed for, yet they are regarded in a Weberian perspective—as a quest for the proof of one's genuine repentance (Weber 2002 [1905]).

Good Samaritan is also a therapeutic community. Its ideology involves strict rules and a regime of spatial segregation by both sex and people in different stages of the program (Mikeshin 2015a). However, such an approach gives a limited, if not superficial, overview of the rehabilitation process in Good Samaritan. The rehab ideology is based on the set of Christian values that the Russian Baptist regime of hermeneutics extracts from the Scripture. It is not merely a specificity of Christian rehabilitation, compared to the programs based on secular psychology, psychiatry, or Orthodox Christianity. The purpose and aim of the rehabilitation in Good Samaritan is to be found in evangelism, rather than in substance abuse treatment. The ministry was founded and is now acting in order to address a certain group of people—substance abusers. Yet, its primary goal is to bring people to Christ, and it is Christ who sets them free from drugs.

## Monastery

A rehab may be regarded as a monastery, and is often compared to one.<sup>3</sup> Isolated community, segregated by sex, aimed towards moral transformation and spiritual growth amid ascetic conditions—all these traits may resemble a monastery, at least from a profane point of view. Moreover, sometimes never-addicted people or members of the church experiencing some sort of moral collapse, losing faith or confidence, spend one or two months in the rehab for strengthening. In their natural conversations, somewhat ironically, the rehabilitants often refer to the rehab as a *bogadel'nia*. (A poorhouse, literally a shelter for God's sake): "I could have never imagined ten years ago that I'd end up in a *bogadel'nia*. Or twenty

years ago that I'd end up in prison, then homeless, then in a *bogadel'nia*." (Misha,<sup>4</sup> a homeless alcoholic.)

However, Protestant dogmatics, and especially Evangelicalism, turn down the concept of monasticism, considering it selfish. Monks and nuns are considered escapists, egocentrically concerned about their own salvation and focused on their own piety. A proper Christian ought to be an active evangelist, spreading the Gospel message amongst their family, friends, colleagues, peers, and neighbors. There is some ambiguity in Scriptures concerning celibacy, which legitimize monasticism, for instance: "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry..." (1 Corinthians 7:8–9, NRSV). However, the Russian Baptists interpret these verses as an instruction for those who are unsuccessful in finding a spouse or those exceptionally blessed to live a devoted life of ministry. They mostly emphasize the message in the book of Genesis: "Be fruitful and multiply..." (Genesis 1:22, NRSV)

What is more important than celibacy for Evangelicals in monasticism is its escapism and asceticism. In Good Samaritan, isolation, abstinence, and asceticism are considered as good and fruitful practices for moral and spiritual transformation, growing in Christ, and breaking with the old way of living (Cf. Abbruzzese 2014), "for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin" (1 Peter 4:1, NRSV). However, the major advantage of such isolation is its temporality and liminality. The secluded communities take away distractions and temptations in order to signify the most important matters in life. But the isolation itself is not an ultimate goal, rather it is a mechanism of a liminal transformation into a morally and spiritually stable convert, who is able to live a life on their own, with help and support of the local congregation.

Opposing the doctrines of monasticism and clergy, Protestants adhere to the principle of universal priesthood. Following one of Luther's five tenets of the Protestant faith, *Solo Christo* (Christ alone),<sup>5</sup> Evangelicals claim that Christ is the only mediator between God and men, and no human being can serve as one.<sup>6</sup> Evangelical pastors are considered older brothers. More spiritually mature, more versed in scriptures, and experienced in life, but yet mere ministers performing one of many important ministries. Every believer, especially a member of the church, can and

should preach the Gospel. Women are not allowed to preach in churches in the conservative communities like the Russian Baptists, but it is their Christian duty, as well as men's, to testify their faith to the unbelievers with words and with the example of their Christian living.

## Prison

"It was easier in prison," Tolya, a 30-year old rehabilitant, injected drug user (IDU), who served four prison terms, ten years behind bars, once told me. Why? "There was more freedom: a cell phone, packages, drugs. I could drink tea at any time." Tolya explained this to me in about an hour after I entered the dormitory in the biggest rehab in the ministry. This was the first day of my fieldwork immersion as a full-time participant on the first stage of the program—Rehabilitation. However, such a comparison did not come to me as a surprise, because I already knew that many of the rehabilitants had served prison sentences. Besides, this topic echoed the impressions I got during the first hour in the dormitory.

The dormitory for the stage of Rehabilitation contained wooden two-tiered beds, a wardrobe, and a small table around which twelve males were sitting and reading their New Testaments, some of them taking notes. The door to the Rehabilitation area, separated from the dormitory by a long corridor, was immediately locked when I entered. During the reading time, the people were asking an elder for permission to go to a toilet, and those who distracted during reading were reprimanded. Although I have never had any lockup experience, the setting immediately reminded me of a jail cell or especially a prison barrack.

Many of the rehabilitants spent considerable parts of their lives in prison for drug-related crimes or crimes committed while intoxicated. They found themselves somewhat comfortable in a secluded space of the rehab with a strict regime. Yet, most of them have soon found the rehab regime and rules tougher than prison, like Tolya did. Some of them complained when in a bad mood or having a conflict with elders, like Slava, a 37-year old IDU, who was still on parole after doing time for aggravated assault causing death: "This is the first time in my life that I wanna go back to prison!" Yet, some of the most experienced convicts recalled

that they had seen even worse. Andrey, a rehabilitation elder, 34-year old IDU, four times behind bars, once retorted: “Is this a regime? You haven’t seen the *real* regime!”

Much of the language in the rehabs is influenced by prison terminology. Although it is generally not approved, some practices or objects are often called by their prison names, like *dal’niak* for toilet or *shkonka* for bed. Most of the time in the rehabs I spent with groups of adult males, yet there were much fewer references to the army. The military service is mandatory for males in Russia, but state-registered addicts or convicted criminals cannot serve in the army, and fewer rehabilitants had such an experience.

The biggest rehabs in the ministry, usually the ones that host both males and females, are the strictest in the implementation of rules and especially in spatial discipline. Sexes, different stages of the program, and the minister’s or guest premises are strictly separated with walls, different floors, and locked doors. The minister and elders have their access regulated by the number of keys they have. The working spaces, like workshops, kitchen, or storages, are also segregated by sex, constructing the concepts of *manly* and *womanly* labor. (Mikeshin 2015a)

Such a spatial discipline calls for parallels with the concept of “complete and austere institutions” by Foucault (1977). Foucault’s overview of criminal punishment in Europe, evolving from public torture to secluded discipline and control, emphasized the shift of criminal penalty from the body of a convict to their self, from public execution of the sentence to total control in a correctional institution. Foucault even goes as far as claiming that penal institutions aimed towards the control of thought of the inmates through strictly regulated discipline, mandatory education, and engagement in religious activities of the prisoners (Foucault 1977, 236).

Russian prisons, however, do not perfectly fit into the Foucauldian model of penal institutions. Unlike jails, where arrestees or convicts serving shorter sentences are held, most of the prison camps are built as fenced territories with barracks as housing, which makes the constant panoptic supervision difficult. Russian prisons are particularly known for their deep, hierarchical, and very detailed (sub)culture (see, for instance, Oleinik 2001), which does not serve as evidence of total control either.



I have demonstrated most of the common features of a prison and rehab center. There is, however, one substantial and complex difference. Good Samaritan is not a penal or a correction institution, it is a ministry. It may use some techniques and methods from prisons, as well as monasteries and therapeutic communities, but its aims, principles and mission are radically different. I will address this difference in the next section, using the Foucauldian model as the most remarkable comparison.

## Ministry

The main specificity of Good Samaritan is that it is a ministry. What does this term imply exactly? In the Russian Baptism, any activity within the Christian community aimed to help, support, and serve others, not necessarily fellow believers, may be considered a ministry. From the pastoral ministry of leading, preaching, and representing the church down to very minor services, like wiping the floors or washing dishes, everything counts if it is done as a fulfillment of Christ's two great commandments:

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37–40, NRSV)

With respect to ministries, these two commandments mean that a Christian should serve God by serving others (Koosa and Leete 2014). One can only truly love, care, and help others when one loves and knows God, the Russian Baptists claim. There are few things that a human being can do to please God directly, rather than obeying his commandments, which include personal individual salvation ("Love God with all your heart") and helping others ("Love your neighbor as yourself"). Respectively, all ministries, even the most benevolent ones, are considered as serving God, for "[t]ruly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these [my brothers], you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40, NRSV)



The ministry of Good Samaritan does not directly aim towards rehabilitation of drug addicts and alcoholics, as I have claimed earlier. The mission of the ministry is to preach Gospel to the particular kind of Gentiles, as God commanded in Acts 13:47. The Good Samaritan's specialization and target group is addicted people, just like there is also a prison ministry, soup kitchens for homeless people, and many more different ministries for specific groups of sinners. Addicted people should be treated according to their particular needs and troubles, just as any group of Gentiles would be addressed in their own language. This treatment takes time and specific efforts. Hence the ministry of Good Samaritan takes a form of a rehabilitation facility.

Yet, is it a "complete and austere institution," even though it does not bear a punitive function? Foucault claims that in many cases the prisons attempt to function as rehabilitation facilities (see, for instance, Foucault 1977, 417–418), which Russian prisons tend to fail at (Piacentini 2004). However, it is obvious that rehabilitation in the context of prison and drug treatment refer to completely different processes. Even the concept of freedom is regarded differently in austere institutions and a rehab ministry. Prisons are built for deprivation of freedom, as a punishment and isolation of the inmate for the safety of others. Christian rehabilitation, in turn, is the process of gaining freedom, just like Jesus put it: "[A]nd you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:32, NRSV)

Foucault points out that total prisons attempt to not merely control the body of an inmate, but their thought as well (Foucault 1977, 236). This is clearly not the case with most of Russian prisons, counseling programs which are very formal and obscure (Piacentini 2004). Good Samaritan, in contrast, is mainly concentrated on the soul, thought, and feelings of the rehabilitants. Paradoxically enough, in this context the body is even more tightly controlled than in some of the prisons, as I have demonstrated earlier. However, the reasons for such control are the various weaknesses, temptations, and cravings of the body that distract a rehabilitant from their conversion and spiritual growth. As the above mentioned elder of rehabilitation, Andrey, brilliantly put it: "Your flesh will never repent."

Unlike prisons, there is obviously a free exit in Good Samaritan. According to the law, a rehab cannot force anyone to stay and courts do not appoint a compulsory substance abuse treatment in religious ministries. Even though ministers try their best to talk the people out of dropping the program and leaving the rehab "for perdition," the drop-out rate is very high. My rough estimation is that only one of ten rehabilitants makes it to the end of the program, even though the majority of them at least claim repentance in the beginning of the program.

The individual motivations and rationalizations of spending time in both rehab and prison vary. However, generally speaking, in the rehabilitation program the emphasis is put on the result, rather than on the process itself, as is often the case in prison. The prisoners have to make sense of such a huge waste of time, and they also have to make it to the end of their sentence safe and sound.<sup>7</sup> In the rehabs, there is also a lengthy period of time that has to be spent. One can as well serve eight months in jail or prison for a petty crime. Yet, the ideology of the rehabilitation program is aimed towards the life outside, a proper Christian life, a life with God.

Although Christian rehabilitation is focused on the future Christian life and ultimately on the eternal life with Christ in Heaven, the use of the time in the rehab is vitally important. The rehabilitants are taught to make the best of their program, learning the will of God through scriptures and prayer, since every moment of their lives potentially could be the last one. The eight-month stay in the rehab is a training of growing, nurturing, and basically *living* their faith through the interiorization of the Scriptures.

Prisons ideally serve three general purposes: the punishment of convicts, isolation of dangerous criminals from the society, and rehabilitation of offenders in order to make them good citizens. Normally, an inmate is motivated to serve their sentence as safe and comfortable as possible and not to come back to prison again. An ideal rehabilitant is motivated to make the best of their stay in the rehab, living it through, and not to spend their eight months in vain, which also may be the case in prisons (especially with the converts in the prison ministries), but much less often (Foucault 1977, 417–418; Piacentini 2004).

The process of rehabilitation substantially differs from serving a sentence, although it resembles it on the surface. The lengthy sentences, lack of control, and especially focus on the punishment and isolation, rather than rehabilitation, in prisons provoke peculiar kinds of adaptation to the prison life, living by the prison moral code, and transformation of crimes to fit into the underground prison economy (Oleinik 2001, 2003; Stephenson 2015). Consequently, there are certain groups of people who spend a lot of time in prison. First, there are “professional prisoners,” either thieves—a high caste of outlaws living by the criminal code, or people unable and unskilled to do anything other than engaging in criminal activities. Second, about 20 percent of the prison population in Russia serve their sentences for drug-related crimes (FSIN 2014), and there are many people who cannot stay on the outside for long without committing a crime to support an addiction or obsession of some sort. Third, there are unadapted people who feel safer on the inside, for instance, homeless people struggling to survive in a cold season.<sup>8</sup>

In Good Samaritan, there are two ways to cope with harsh conditions and isolation. One can do what is not possible in prison—quit. It happens when one cannot bear the conditions and strict regime or when one engages in a conflict with elders. Those who do not leave the rehabs experience moral transformation and conversion, because there are few other reasons to stay. There are yet homeless people who accept the rules just to stay inside for a cold season, but they usually leave in spring when it is less dangerous and there are good opportunities to earn money on the street.

Lastly, there is supervision in prisons and in rehabs, but the supervisors play a radically different role. Although there is a chance that a guard commits a crime and ends up in prison (though for the safety reasons former law enforcement officers are held in separate units), they represent different kinds of people. One would never progress from an inmate to a guard, much less to a respected guard.<sup>9</sup> In the rehabs, the elders are the same people. They are called brothers and sisters, just like anybody else. Some of them are still doing their program while others have just recently passed it. Even in this advanced stage, some refuse to abuse power and emphasize their role as an older brother. As Andrey once put it, reprimanding a misbehaving group of rehabilitants: “Why are you making me a guard here? We’re here before God, not before people!”

## Concluding Remarks

This chapter analyzes the process of Christian rehabilitation in the Russian Baptist ministry of Good Samaritan in four comparative perspectives: as a therapeutic community, monastery, prison, and ministry. These four modes of secluded regimes are the most common concepts addressed by people in the ministry and by researchers of substance dependence treatment facilities (Garcia 2010; Mikeshin 2015a; Raikhel 2010; Skoll 1992; Zigon 2011). While all four may be applied to a certain extent, the concept of ministry, in the Russian Baptist sense of the term, describes the implementation of the rehabilitation process in Good Samaritan in terms of *lived* conversion.

Therapeutic community is a generic term, mostly addressing the technique of substance abuse treatment, rather than the ideology behind it. Yet, the emphasis of therapeutic communities is put on addiction and the ultimate goal is remission or, as some programs put it, healing. Good Samaritan uses addiction as a medium to reach perishing sinners, and the ultimate goal of the ministry is their conversion, while bodily transformation, remission, or liberation from drug addiction is merely a positive effect and a consequence of conversion.

A secluded religious ascetic community calls for parallels with a monastery. While both a monastery and rehab are focused on moral transformation and spiritual growth, Russian Baptist dogmatics cannot approve of monasticism, seeing it as a self-centered practice. A Christian is supposed to live in *this* world, actively evangelize, and create families. Asceticism, isolation, and secluded communities are considered a good, but temporary practice, teaching the neophytes how to concentrate on their spiritual state and fighting worldly distractions and temptations.

A prison is the most common comparison to the rehabs. Most of the rehabilitants served one or several terms in prison, and they constantly compare. The most substantial difference between a typical Russian prison and a rehab is in the ways of making sense of time spent there. The emphasis in prison is put in the actual process, which is challenging and full of dangers. The rehabilitants are normally focused on the result, on their life after the program, and, ultimately, on the afterlife, yet they are trying to make the best of their stay. The Foucauldian model of penal

institutions highlights this difference with the discussion on the incarcerated body, control, supervision, and punishment.

This chapter centers on the discussion of the drug treatment facilities of Good Samaritan, and on the phenomenon of ministry. A ministry is a paramount concept for the Russian Baptists. It signifies every *lived* social activity meant to serve God by serving others, both fellow Christians and unbelievers. In such a context, an organization of rehab, its spatial discipline, rules, regime, hierarchy, and even harsh conditions are explained and rationalized within the doctrine of individual born-again conversion. Hence, some spend eight months in such a place when “it was easier in prison.”

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## Notes

1. The term was initially coined by a French architect Louis-Pierre Baltard (1829, 3).
2. Evangelical Christianity (also called born-again or Bible-believing Christianity) is a conventional definition of a specific kind of Protestantism, emphasizing individual born-again conversion, focus on Christ as the only savior and mediator between God and men, and evangelizing activism (see, for instance, Bebbington 1989).
3. Rehabs are compared to an imagined model of monastery, and obviously, mostly Russian Orthodox monasteries are in mind. Hence I use the term “monastery,” rather than “convent,” which commonly connotes a Catholic institution.
4. All names are replaced with pseudonyms.
5. The other four solae are *Sola Fide* (justification by faith alone), *Sola Scriptura* (Bible is the only authority for faith and practice), *Sola Gratia* (salvation by God’s grace alone), and *Soli Deo Gloria* (glory to God alone).
6. Neither a patron saint nor Virgin Mary can be a mediator. This is a response to yet one more Orthodox and Catholic doctrine.
7. I do not refer to life sentences here, for it is a very specific type of sentence, especially in Russia, where lifers are separated from the general population and are held in the maximum security units.

8. This is a very old phenomenon even described by O. Henry in his “The Cop and the Anthem” (1906 [1904]).
9. There are inmates who serve as informal guards in cooperation with the prison administration, but they are one of the most hated and despised groups of people by the general population.

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