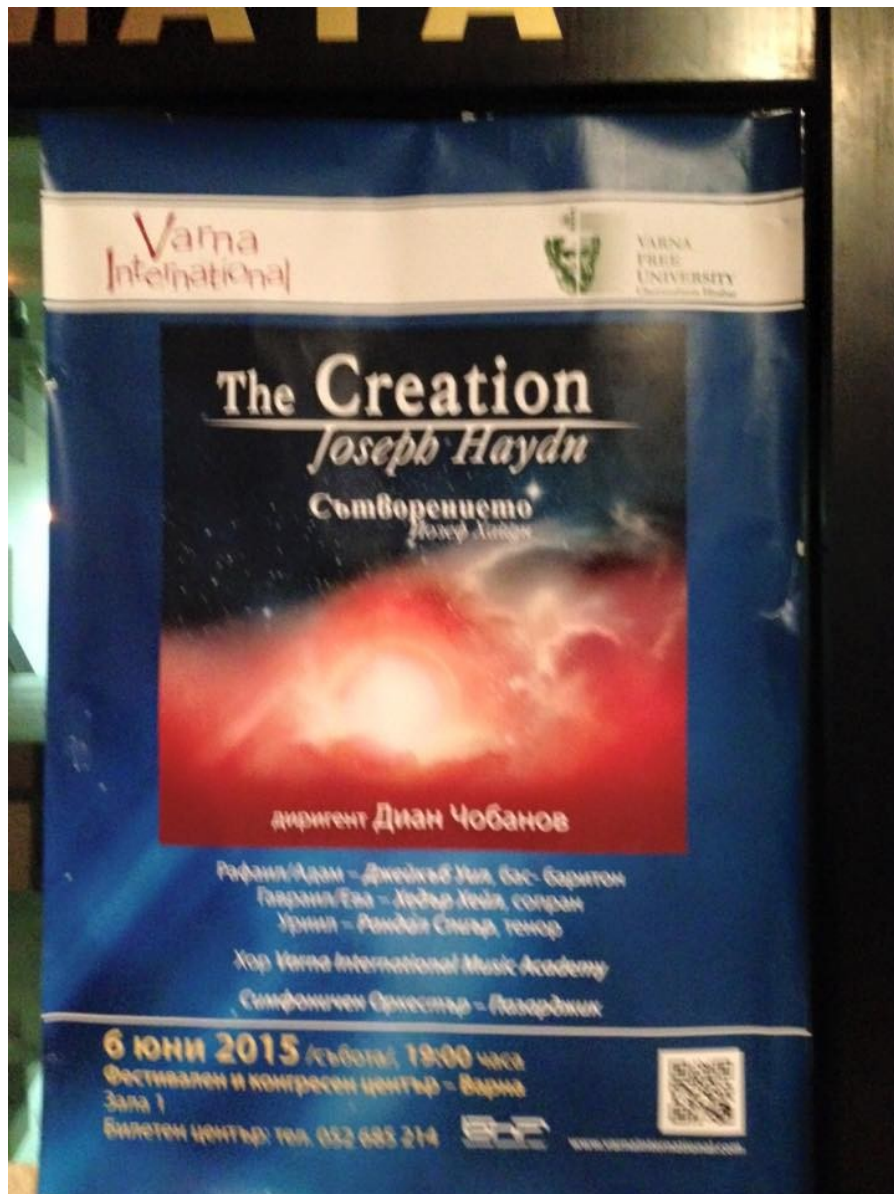


Mission Report BULGARIA 2015

From May 25-June 8, 2015, a team of five students and two faculty from Toccoa Falls College traveled to Bulgaria. We had a dual purpose. First, we participated in an international choir and orchestra that performed Haydn's oratorio "Creation." (Imagine something like Handel's "Messiah," only dealing with Genesis 1 rather than with the coming and ministry of Christ.) More importantly, we were there for ministry. The students worked with local church music ministry teams during their time off from rehearsals, and I was privileged to work with local pastors and youth leaders and with local college student ministries in addition to preaching in two Evangelical churches.



Monday-Tuesday, May 25-6, was travel, a long ordeal involving four planes and five airports: from Atlanta to Charlotte to Paris to Sofia, Bulgaria (the capital city), to Varna, a resort town on the coast of the Black Sea where the international music festival was to be held. Wednesday we jumped right into rehearsals. Friday and Saturday, May 29-30, I left the group behind and traveled back to Sofia. On Friday I met with my host, Pastor Andrey Avramov, who gave me a tour of the city and some background on the situation faced by Evangelical Protestants there. The country is dominated by nominal Greek Orthodoxy. Evangelicals account for only 1 % of the population. Though the more serious time of Communist oppression is past, some persecution of Evangelicals continues. The Orthodox church is fiercely opposed to competition and is not above having Protestant pastors arrested on trumped up charges. On Saturday we had a seminar on apologetics attended by a dozen Evangelical pastors and youth workers. They requested the topics of Theodicy (the problem of evil) and Post-Modernism. The latter surprised me, as I had thought it more relevant to America than to them. But they assured me that the challenge of a world view that denies any legitimate authority to texts, including the biblical text, was moving into their country as well. It will be intensified for them by the cynicism which was the natural result of having been systematically lied to by the Communists for so many years. I found them intelligent, well prepared, and fully engaged. The Lord has a small core of good servants with which to reach this beautiful but spiritually needy country.



Orthodox Cathedral in Sofia

I got back to Varna after midnight on Sunday and was up early Sunday morning to preach at Varna's Second Baptist Church on "The End of Salvation: the Glory of God," from Ephesians 1. We also participated in their worship service, with the students supplementing their worship team. I met Pastor George again later that week at one of our cantata performances, and he told me that he was so impressed with the importance of what I had shared that he was going to turn it in to a series! That is a pretty gratifying thing for a preacher to hear.




Preaching at 2nd Baptist, Varna

Monday, June 1, it was back to rehearsals, but I took a break from that in the afternoon to do a lecture at the International Students Center in Varna on "The Historical Case for the Resurrection of Christ," sponsored by the local chapter of Agape (what we in the states call Campus Crusade for Christ). They went all out to attract non-Christians, including making the beautiful poster you see here below. In the end they were disappointed that only two Atheists showed up, along with ten Agape members. But the believers were strengthened and the atheists challenged. Pray that the Lord will bring forth fruit.


Запознайте се с исторически доказателства за смъртта и възкресението на Исусе Христос!

ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЯТ СЛУЧАЙ ЗА ВЪЗКРЕСЕНИЕТО НА ХРИСТОС

МЯСТО: Младежки дом, зала 17
ДАТА И ЧАС: 01.06.2015 г. от 17:00 до 19:00 ч.
ЛЕКТОР: Д-р Доналд Уилямс



Д-р Уилямс е научен сътрудник и професор по английски език към колежа Тосони Falls, щата Джоржия. Също така е член на Богословското общество на САЩ, Филологическото общество в Джоржия и Обществото на К.С. Луис в Калифорния. По настоящата тема е дългогодишен лектор и често е канен като гост-говорител в различни европейски страни.

ОРГАНИЗИРА СЪБИТИЕТО:  **Агапе България**

I said that while I believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures, I was not going to appeal to them in that way but simply treat them for the sake of argument as historical documents. What are the criteria that historians use to evaluate testimony? Multiple attestation, proximity to the event, basic consistency in reportage (but not *too* consistent, or you suspect collusion—you want discrepancies but not contradictions), hostile witnesses supporting the testimony, testimony that is embarrassing to the witness (for people generally spin stories in their own favor rather than otherwise). On all the criteria the Gospels and the Epistles pass with flying colors. They are all within one generation of the events, you have discrepancies (one angel mentioned or two?) but not contradictions (*only* one angel versus two), Paul and James were hostile before their conversion, and the disciples portray themselves as clueless cowards. So if we have to take the testimony seriously, we are left with four facts that virtually every serious historian accepts: Jesus was crucified, he was buried in a borrowed tomb, the body was missing Sunday morning, and almost immediately his followers were claiming that he was alive and they had seen him.

So what are the possible explanations of these facts? All of them but one have fatal flaws in attempting to explain the data. The only problem with the one that does explain it is that you have to believe a miracle happened. Ok. But this is not some random dude in some miscellaneous place we are saying rose from the dead. This was a man whose coming had been prepared by Providence and predicted by prophecy for two thousand years. This was a man whose friends kept asking, “What manner of man *is* this?” and feeling compelled to answer that question in theistic terms. This was the reassertion of the life of a man who had already shown himself to be sovereign over life and death. If ever there were a man about whom we could believe such a thing, it is this man: it is Jesus of Nazareth!



Tuesday-Thursday saw intensified rehearsals and then “Creation” was performed twice, in Dobrich on Friday, June 5, and in Varna on Saturday the 6th. We prayed that the Lord would make His Word fruitful in that medium. Then I preached on Sunday, June 7, at the Evangelical Pentecostal Church of Varna, using the same sermon I had given the Baptists. If the primary purpose of salvation is our benefit, then we must find the suffering and heartache of living in a fallen world a defect in our redemption leading to doubt; but if we see that the primary purpose is God’s glory, then we are set free from that doubt to live boldly for the glory of God.



Preaching at Evangelical Pentecostal Church, Varna

My hearty thanks if you supported us with your prayers or your funds. Keep praying that the Lord will make the ministry fruitful; for unless He builds the house, we labor in vain.

Yours for His glory,

Donald T. Williams, PhD

R. A. Forrest Scholar & Prof. of English, Toccoa Falls College

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"To think well is to serve God in the interior court."

-- Thomas Traherne